



Meeting	Policing Performance Committee
Date	10 December 2024
Location	Video Conference
Title of Paper	COSLA Update Report
Presented By	Cllr Maureen Chalmers
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

This paper provides the SPA Policing Performance Committee with an update on key areas of COSLA’s work of interest to the Committee. The update focuses on strategic developments and cross-COSLA activity that links to policing.

Feedback from PPC Members would be welcome on the items covered in the paper and specifically on any additional areas that Members would wish to see covered in future COSLA updates.

1 National Community Justice Event 14th October 2024

- 1.1** COSLA and Community Justice Scotland co-hosted a national event targeted at Elected Members and Community Justice Scotland Board Members to discuss key challenges and opportunities in community justice. The focus was to explore Local Government's contribution to preventing offending and reducing the prison population, including through strengthened partnership working with other community justice partners. Attendees engaged in discussions about some of the current key issues in community justice, offering perspectives on key considerations for policymakers at a national level such as informing the ongoing work to reduce the prison population and delivery of the Community Justice Strategy.
- 1.2** The Cabinet Secretary attended the event through a hybrid link, where she provided an overview of the key achievements and challenges currently faced in Justice. Further information was provided on upcoming proposals for Prisoner Release legislation and the ongoing work to shift the balance from custody to community. Attendees were also provided with an opportunity to ask questions.
- 1.3** Conference attendees heard from partners on some of the key issues in Community Justice and took part in a Q&A panel with all presenters.
- Community Justice Scotland: An overview of the work and priorities of Community Justice Scotland followed by the voice of lived experience, navigating the care and Justice system.
 - Police Scotland: Policing and Mental Health - looking at how policing, Local Government, health, and a range of partners, can collaborate to support those who have mental health needs at a time when mental health demand is increasing, and resources are stretched
 - Association of Local Authority of Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO): Adhering to the (Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone) SHORE standards to support all people leaving custody to have access to suitable housing appropriate to their needs and to avoid them falling into homelessness,
 - SOLD Network and People First Scotland: Impact on people with learning disabilities who are involved in the community and criminal justice system. Bringing the voice of lived experience to identify challenges, promote opportunities, influence change and to provide support for people with learning disabilities in the justice system.

- 1.4** Discussions and key points pulled from the day will help inform COSLAs ongoing policy work in the Justice space and partnership work in Community Justice and addressing the rising prison population.

2 COSLA Police Scrutiny Convenors Forum

- 2.1** The biannual COSLA Policy Scrutiny Convenors forum was held on the 21st November, with good attendance from Justice Convenors and Member leads across Scotland's local authorities.
- 2.2** The SPA emphasised the importance of local scrutiny and the role of the Committee in promoting continuous improvement in policing. Members were reminded of the Partnership Delivery Plan between the SPA, Police Scotland and COSLA, underpinning collaborative activity.
- 2.3** Police Scotland provided an overview of 2030 Vision and Three-Year Business Plan, the proposed Police Scotland Budget for 2025/26, and Mental Health Distress and Policing. There was also an overview of the proposed Police Scotland Estates Masterplan.
- 2.4** HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) attended the meeting to provide an update on the work of HMICS and the development of the next scrutiny plan. The importance of improving policing across Scotland was highlighted and the role of HMICS in conducting inspections to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. An overview was shared on recent and ongoing inspections, upcoming inspections, and areas of concern. Members provided feedback during the session and were also encouraged to complete the online questionnaire to help guide HMICS to set their scrutiny plan for the next 3 years.

3 Prisoners (Early Release) (Scotland) Bill

- 3.1** On the 18th November 2024, the Prisoner (Early Release) (Scotland) Bill was introduced to Scottish Parliament. The emergency legislation is one of several measures being taken to reduce pressure on prisons by considering changing how long people spend in prison custody as part of their sentence. If passed, it is expected that the Bill will be enacted in February 2025.
- 3.2** The Bill has further provisions to amend the point of release for long-term prisoners on non-parole licence, by secondary legislation. This is a reinstatement of a power which applied before the

Prisoners (Control of Release) Act 2015 changed the release point to a fixed period of time - 6 months before the end of the prisoner's sentence.

3.3 In advance of the announcement, COSLA officers had been working closely with Scottish Government and partners to consult on the drafting of the Bill and Financial Memorandum. The COSLA Community Wellbeing Spokesperson also met with the Cabinet Secretary to discuss the functions of the Bill and also to raise any potential impact on Local Government.

3.4 COSLA will continue to work in partnership to support with implementation of the Bill if it passes through the Scottish Parliament. We will also monitor any potential impact on Local Government and continue to work together in preparation for the proposed secondary legislation in respect of long-term prisoners.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

5 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no personnel implications in this report.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

7 REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no reputational implications in this report.

8 SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no social implications in this report.

9 COMMUNITY IMPACT

9.1 There are no community implications in this report.

10 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no equality implications in this report.

11 ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the report.

