

**FORENSIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
25 OCTOBER 2021**

**Minute of the Scottish Police Authority Forensic Services
Committee held by MS Teams on Monday 25 October 2021.**

Authority Members Present: Tom Halpin (Chair)
Paul Edie
Jane Ryder
Caroline Stuart

In attendance: Forensic Services (SPA)
Fiona Douglas, Director of Forensic Services
Vicki Morton, Scientific Head of Function
Alastair Patience, Operations Manager
Gary Holcroft, Scientific Head of Function
Craig Donnachie, Head of Quality
Vicki Morton, Scientific Head of Function
Helen Haworth, Scientific Head of Function
Derek Scrimger, Scientific Head of Function

Scottish Police Authority (SPA)
Colette Craig, Governance Support Officer
Graham Stickle, Audit and Risk Lead

Police Scotland (PS)
T/Detective Chief Inspector Richy Taylor
ACC Judi Heaton
CDIO Andrew Hendry

COPFS
Kenny Donnelly

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and welcomed T/Detective Chief Inspector Richy Taylor, noting that Police Scotland attendance was not as usual due to COP26.

There were no further apologies.

1.2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

1.3 Forensics Services Committee minute of meeting held 26 July 2021 for approval

Members **AGREED** the Minute from the Forensics Services Committee on 26 July 2021 was an accurate record of the meeting.

1.4 Action Log and Matters Arising

Members reviewed the action log and noted and agreed the written updates provided.

There were no matters arising.

1.5 Decision on taking business in private (items 9 - 16)

Members agreed, in accordance with paragraph 20 of the SPA Standing Orders, to consider items 9 – 16 on the agenda in private for the reasons set out in the agenda.

2. Forensic Services Director's Report – Fiona Douglas

The Chair noted this being the first meeting with Fiona Douglas (FDouglas) in her new role as Director of Forensic Services and further congratulated her on her new position. FDouglas extended her thanks to the senior management team in Forensic Services for their support during the transition into her new role and whilst working towards a new permanent structure for the senior management team over coming months.

Members considered the paper which had been submitted to update the Committee on the recent key activities across Forensic Services. In addition to the submitted report the following points were raised and discussed;

- Members referred to UKAS and Accreditation and sought clarity on how Forensic Services were tracking the time and effort being placed into that. FDouglas advised that annual accreditation visits take place which are well planned in terms of the activity that is required to maintain the scope of accreditation. There is a need to make ongoing changes to that as technology and processes change. FDouglas advised that there was a strategic objective to ensure they are continuously improving their span of services which are accredited, such as scene examination. The amount of days that are taken are captured due to the significant amount of effort that is placed in this

area. Craig Donnachie (CDonnachie) added that this is monitored on an annual basis and confirmed that they have a good handle on the time that UKAS take, the costs associated and what is appropriate. CDonnachie advised that discussions have taken place with digital colleagues in relation to UKAS and practices are being shared as a training tool for work that is ongoing.

- Members noted the number of projects that were ongoing and asked how those projects would be monitored and presented in order to provide assurance to the committee on progress. FDouglas advised that within the 2026 update moving forward and overview of the critical path could be provided which would set out the milestones that are being aimed to achieve.
- Members sought clarity on when there would be a more permanent arrangement in place for the Forensic Services SPA Senior Management Team. FDouglas advised that she was currently progressing the SMT restructure and taking it through the appropriate meetings in order to progress through to conclusion. It is hoped that a permanent arrangement will be in place by spring 2022.

Members noted the report and agreed the following action:

20212510-FS-001: Fiona Douglas to provide a coherent and critical path update within the next Forensics 2026 update in relation to ongoing projects and their milestones.

3. Forensic Services Performance Report – Q2 – Fiona Douglas

Members considered the Forensic Services Performance Report, Q2 2021/222 and were advised that the format was slightly different in order for the report to dovetail into the Director's Report. FDouglas highlighted key areas within the report and in addition to the report the following points were raised and noted;

- Members sought clarity on what impact Covid was having on absence rates. FDouglas advised that the Covid absence rate was running at below 2% of the total sickness absence with approximately 1/3 being Covid related. Covid related sickness is not causing any significant disruption to business at the moment.
- Members referred to outsourcing some of the demand and sought clarity on whether this would be a business as usual approach in order to handle demand when there is an overspill. FDouglas advised that it was not the intention to outsource casework away from Forensic Services unless it became a critical issue. Across other areas with Forensic Services there is a hope to flex capacity and the new operating model will allow that to be done as a matter of

routine. At the current point in time support is provided to different areas from different parts of the organisation and although this is difficult, it is possible. FDouglas added that the Strategic Workforce Planning was looking at the future demand forecast and it is hoped that it will allow the organisation more proactive decisions to be made in terms of where capacity should be placed.

- Members referred to performance data within page 3 of the report and sought clarity on when charts on trending would come forward as it would be beneficial to see how this quarter compared to the previous 3 quarters. FDouglas advised that she would seek to update the performance report in alignment with a revised performance framework for the start of the next financial year, however, prior to that trending information could be supplied to put the data in context in order to show either an improving or deteriorating picture. FDouglas added that the feedback she had received it was an improving picture across most areas of forensic services.
- Members advised that a traffic light system would be helpful in order to identify changes and trends for each quarter. FDouglas agreed that she would seek to do that.
- The Chair referred to the broader point of performance, and noted previous non exec input that had been provided from the previous committee members which Forensic Services found helpful in gaining the external impact that helped refine performance reporting and translate better into outcomes. The Chair asked Paul Edie (PEdie) to provide assistance in terms of improving performance further.

Members noted the report and agreed the following actions.

20212510-FS-002: Fiona Douglas to engage with Paul Edie as external input in order to refine performance reporting for Forensic Services.

4. Forensic Services 2026 Update – Vicki Morton

Vicki Morton (VMorton) thanked FDouglas and the Change Team within Forensic Services and Police Scotland in supporting her with the transition into her new role as Interim Head of Strategic Change.

Members considered the paper which had been submitted to provide the committee with an update on the Forensic Services 2026 Programme.

- Members referred to page 4 of the report where is stated that the core operating system project was on hold pending the recruitment

of a project manager and sought clarity on when that would conclude. FDouglas advised that recruitment for the overall change programme was ongoing which was providing some challenges. It is hopeful that two project managers would be starting within the next few months which should all the progression of the core operating system project again.

- The Chair referred to the capacity to deliver change and sought reassurance that, although there were gaps within the change team, delivery would not be an issue. VMorton advised that the real priority for the change team was around the consultation and then looking to get ready for what could look like a new operating model for Forensic Services and a schedule of work in relation to that is already planned out. FDouglas provided further reassurance around capacity and prioritisation and advised that careful consideration had been taken around change capacity which had been very much prioritised. Forensic Services has a track record of delivering large scale organisational change and a lot of work had gone into getting Forensic Services to this point, ensuring readiness of staff and the management team.
- Members welcomed the fact that the ICT Programme had been paused until a new Project Manager was in place.
- Members asked for a traffic light system to be provided which informed whether areas were being delivered and where problems lay.

Members noted the report and agreed the following action:

20212510-FS-003: Vicki Morton to provide a traffic light system into the report which informs members on what areas were being delivered and where there were issues.

5. Update on HMICS Thematic Inspection of the Scottish Police Authority Forensic Services – Vicki Morton

Members considered the report which had been submitted to Forensic Services Committee members with an update on work to implement the improvements set out in the HMICS Thematic Inspection of the Scottish Police Authority Forensic Services. During discussion and in addition to the report the following points were raised and noted;

- VMorton referred particularly to recommendation 15 and 16 provided thanks to Jamie Picken from Police Scotland for his support around the provision for further evidence in relation to those over the last number of weeks.

Members noted the report

6. Demonstrating Value – Fiona Douglas

The committee were provided with a verbal update in relation to Demonstrating Value. In addition to the submitted report the following points were raised and discussed;

- FDouglas advised that a number of discussions had taken place on Demonstrating Value and noted that it was a challenging area to progress.
- FDouglas referred to a recent publication by Ulster University with regards to the study of value. Within that a framework had been generated which could be valuable for Forensic Services in progressing this area. FDouglas highlighted the four main areas within that report. FDouglas advised that a draft terms of reference has been progressed around how to set up a group in order to start to prioritise this work which would be circulated to members. FDouglas was keen to know how members would like to be involved in that group moving forward and how the learning from Ulster University can be used in order to establish a framework for progressing this importance piece of work.
- Members commended this way forward and advised that they would be keen to engage going forward.

Members noted the report

7. Drug Driving Update – Alastair Patience

Alastair Patience (APatience) provided thanks to colleagues and partner organisations for their assistance since taking over his in his interim role at the start of October.

Members considered the report which provided an update on progress on the Drug Driving Toxicology Service. APatience highlighted key points noted within the report and the following points were raised and discussed;

- The Chair noted that the fundamental point around the report was that when original estimates in demand were put forward it was based on experiences in other parts of the UK at that time, who have now revised their own estimates. The Chair added that Forensic Services were the providers of the analytical service, however, the actual demand starts at the policy and legal position, further upstream, therefore any approach to resource that needs to be a collaborative approach.

- Members sought clarity on when this stops being referred to as exceptional demand and becomes the norm or at least a medium term business as usual assumption. APatience agreed that this was at least in excess of the norm.
- Members referred to 1.7 of the report and sought clarity on how many staff would be required and was there funding available. FDouglas advised that additional staff had been accounted for within the business case for the Operating Model which provides additional but not sufficient capacity. FDouglas added that it was unclear what the full demand forecast could be at this stage. There is an issue that there is not sufficient space within the existing accommodation to grow the toxicology service, and there would be a need for additional accommodation which provide complex issues. FDouglas advised that the total number of staff required would be less than 40, however, that was still significantly over and above the accommodation constraint that would be experienced.
- The Chair noted that the Drug Driving position was an emerging position, and what we do know is that the demand is more than double what was envisaged at that early stage. FDouglas advised that the issue around capacity within this area was complex, with three broad areas of capacity in terms of the analytics, instrumentation and the reporting and gaining a careful balance between those three and doing further analytical work around this.

Members noted the report

8. Forensic Services Committee Workplan

The Chair noted that the workplan required the standing items to be placed into committee dates for 2022/23 when in place. No further items were brought forward to be placed onto the workplan.

Members noted the report