



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>15 August 2024</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Virtual</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>SPA Best Value Oversight</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>John McNellis, Head of Finance, Audit and Risk</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>Yes</b>

**PURPOSE**

To provide the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC) with an update on the oversight of best value across Police Scotland, SPA Forensics and SPA Corporate.

*The paper is presented in line with the corporate governance framework of the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) and Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC) terms of reference and is submitted for consultation.*

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Authority, Chief Constable and Accountable Officer have specific responsibilities with respect to Best Value.
- 1.2 Audit Scotland and HMICS have independent inspection roles and may choose to undertake an audit of the Authority and Police Scotland's arrangements for achieving Best Value.
- 1.3 Since the creation of the single national police service there has been no dedicated Best Value audit of policing, however, the Auditor General has now signalled that a Best Value audit of police and fire will be conducted in 2025 at the earliest.

## 2. FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC

- 2.1 The following paper (**appendix A**) provides detail of:
  - the requirements for Best Value in policing;
  - background to the Best Value related audit and inspections to date;
  - the approach to demonstrating Best Value across SPA Corporate, Forensic Services and Police Scotland; and
  - next steps including Authority's expectations.
- 2.2 We note that discussions are ongoing between Audit Scotland and HMICS on their planning as well as expectations / guidance for the audit.
- 2.3 At this time, there is no specific policing Best Value guidance. HMICS have noted they intend to work with partners to develop a set of policing-specific expectations for use in future work, to assess whether Best Value is delivered by Police Scotland and the SPA. Until this guidance is available the SPA have adapted the 2020 guidance so that work can commence within Forensic services.

## 3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are financial implications associated with this paper. Use of resources is a key Best Value characteristic which includes financial resources that require to be considered.

## 4 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are personnel implications associated with this paper. Use of resources is a key Best Value characteristic which includes people resources that require to be considered.

**5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There may be legal implications associated with this paper, given that Best Value principles include all accepts of how the service operates effectively.

**6 REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There may be reputational implications associated with this paper, if the Authority is not able to demonstrate good stewardship of public money and fair/ equitable use of all resources for the benefit of the public.

**7 SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are social implications associated with this paper. Partnership work and working with communities are key Best Value characteristics that require to be considered.

**8 COMMUNITY IMPACT**

- 8.1 There are community impact implications associated with this paper. Working with communities is a key Best Value characteristic that requires to be considered.

**9 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are equalities implications associated with this paper. Fairness and equality are key Best Value characteristics that requires to be considered.

**10 ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are environmental implications associated with this paper. Sustainability is a key Best Value characteristic that requires to be considered.

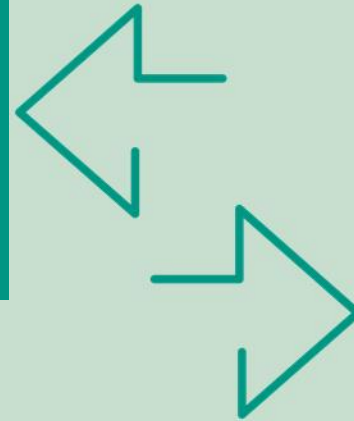
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are requested to discuss the progress made and next steps.

# Appendix A

## Best Value oversight

August 2024



SCOTTISH POLICE  
**AUTHORITY**  
ÙGH DARRAS POILIS NA H-ALBA

# Executive Summary

01

## Best Value requirements

- The Accountable Officer and Chief Constable have legal responsibilities to ensure Best Value is achieved and demonstrated.
- ARAC has the primary oversight role to ensure that these responsibilities are being achieved.

02

## Audit and inspections to date

- External auditors provide commentary on Best Value arrangement in all their annual audit reports.
- The Authority has engaged its internal auditors twice, in 2019 and 2024, to review Best Value arrangements. The most recent review highlighted concerns with the status of the work and lack of progress within Police Scotland.
- HMICS considered the Authority's Best Value self-assessment and were very positive on the approach taken.

03

## Approach to demonstrating Best Value

- SPA corporate has robust arrangement in place which have been partially evaluated by HMICS. Whilst we will respond to their identified areas for development, no significant further changes are required.
- Forensic Services are in the early stages of being able to demonstrate how Best Value is being achieved. The service now has an agreed approach and way forward, supported by SPA colleagues.
- Police Scotland developed a plan to demonstrate Best Value and have been providing update reports to ARAC. Progress to date has been limited and Committee Members are concerned about the lack of progress with a revised plan requested.

04

## Next steps

- A joint Audit Scotland / HMICS Best Value audit of policing will be undertaken.
- This is at the planning stage with the earliest anticipated reporting in the second half of 2025.



# What is Best Value?

Best Value is about ensuring that there is good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on continuous improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public.

## Police & fire reform (Scotland) Act 2012

Make arrangements to secure **continuous improvement in performance** and to contribute to the achievement of **sustainable development** of the Authority and Police service.

### In making these arrangements have specific regard to:

1. **Economy** - minimising the cost of resources used whilst having regard to quality.
2. **Efficiency** - relationship between outputs and the resources used to produce them.
3. **Effectiveness** - the extent to which objectives are achieved. The relationship between intended and actual impact of a service.
4. **Equal opportunities** - prevention, elimination and regulations of discrimination of protected characteristics.



## Best Value Themes

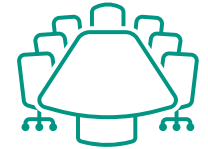
1. Vision & leadership
2. Governance and accountability
3. Effective use of resources
4. Partnership & collaborative working
5. Working with communities
6. Sustainable development
7. Fairness and equality

# Best Value Requirements

There are differing responsibilities on both the Accountable Officer and Chief Constable to make arrangements to secure Best Value. This page summarises the responsibilities, guidance and oversight/ inspection arrangements.



## Board Oversight



The Board's oversight of Best Value is undertaken by the Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee.

## Independent Inspection

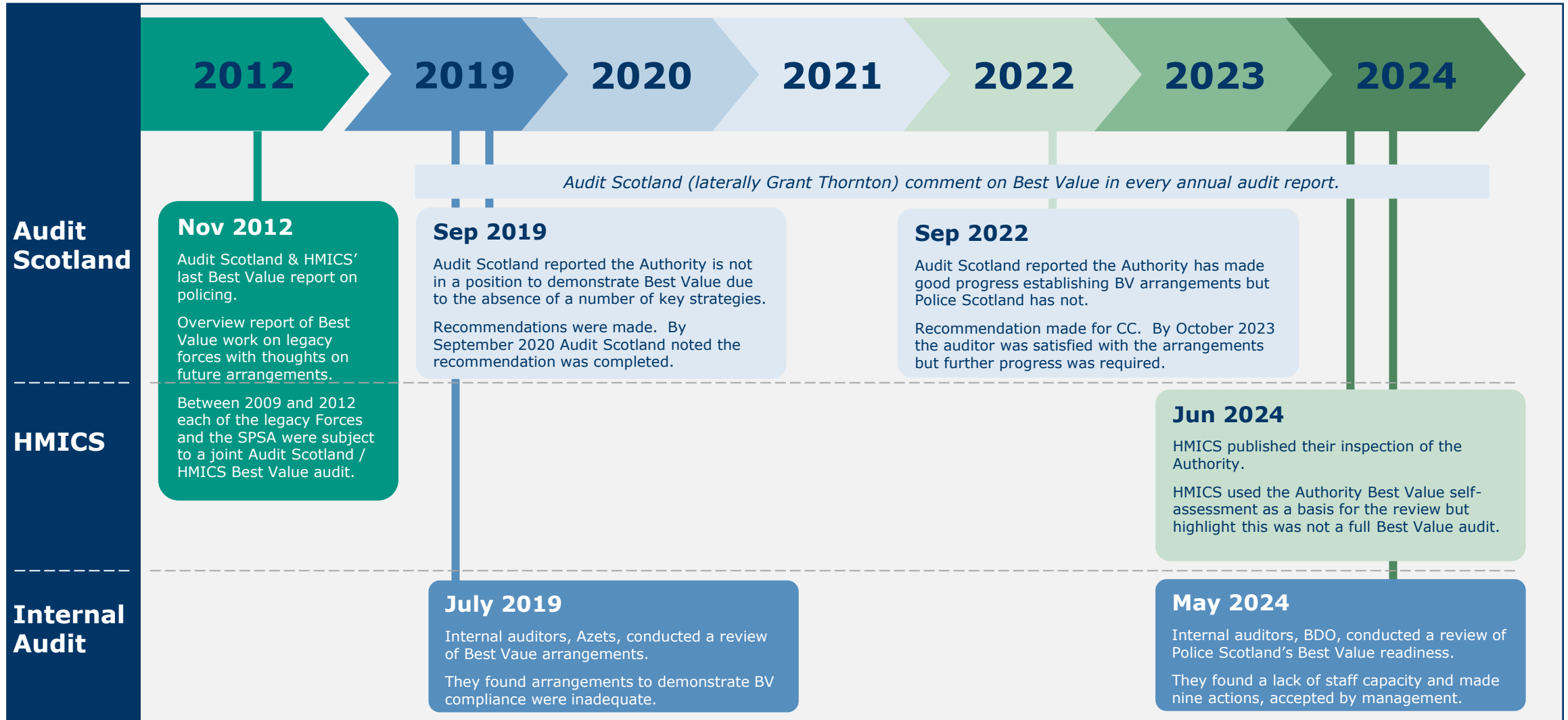


Undertaken jointly by Audit Scotland and HMICS.

Audit Scotland's performance audit and Best Value team will also work with our appointed statutory external auditor, Grant Thornton.

\*There is currently no dedicated BV guidance for policing bodies. In undertaking evaluations we will draw on a range of different guidance. Other key sources will include Scottish Government's 'On-Board' guidance as well guidance from other organisations eg Improvement Service (Public Sector Improvement Framework), CIPFA, etc.

# Timeline to date





# SPA Corporate

The SPA has an established approach to demonstrating Best Value. This has developed over the last three years and was recently tested by HMICS with a positive outcome. Whilst we will respond to their identified areas for development, no significant changes in approach are required.

The first SPA Best Value self-assessment was report to ARAC in 2021. Since then, an annual review using the Best Value guidance for Accountable Officers has been conducted and reported to ARAC. This review has identified areas for further 'deep dive' reviews as well as identifying improvements or actions which have been added to the SPA business plan.

The recent HMICS inspection of the Authority used the most recent Best Value self-assessment as the basis for a significant part of the review.

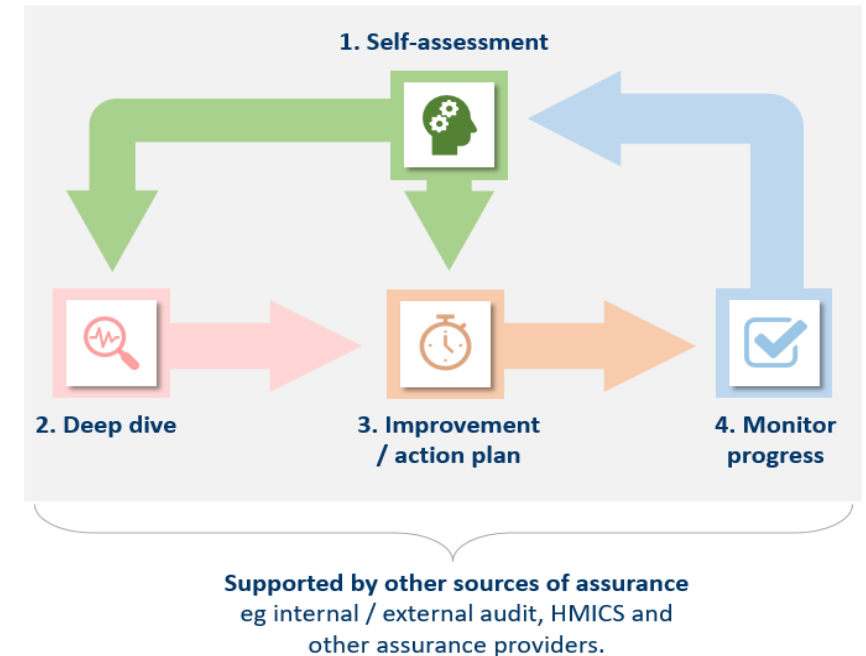
HMICS reported positively on the arrangements in place noting that:

- the evaluation was "detailed, well evidenced, and conducted effectively".
- "the SPA has a strong commitment to self-evaluation to support improvement."
- the evaluation was "carried out effectively, involving staff and using appropriate statutory guidance".
- there was "transparency in reporting its approach and results and demonstrating clear ownership of the outputs".

There are areas identified by HMICS to further the approach such as by inviting wider participation.

SPA corporate staff have shared this experience with Forensic Services and Police Scotland and are actively supporting the work within Forensics.

**Figure 1:** SPA Corporate approach to demonstrating Best Value



# Forensic Services

Forensic Services are in the early stages of being able to demonstrate how Best Value is being achieved. The service now has an agreed approach and way forward, supported by SPA colleagues. Progress will be regularly reported to ARAC.



## Summary approach

- Seven BV workshops – one per theme
- Led by operational staff from across FS
- SMT sponsor for each workstream
- Supported by SPA corporate
- Complete by Spring 2025

Whilst a legal responsibility of the Accountable Officer, the Director of Forensic Services is aware of the responsibility to achieve and demonstrate Best Value.

The need to deliver Best Value features in the Forensics Strategy and is also a key aspect of the senior management teams objectives.

To date there has been limited dedicated work to demonstrate how Forensics achieves Best Value. The service has recently been undergoing a significant restructuring as part of its new operating model which hindered the ability to undertake this work.

The Forensics senior management team (SMT) recognise the need to progress this work. Drawing on the recent experience of the SPA corporate inspection and previous local government experience, all members of the SMT and SPA corporate staff held a workshop in June 2024 to discuss and agree a way forward.

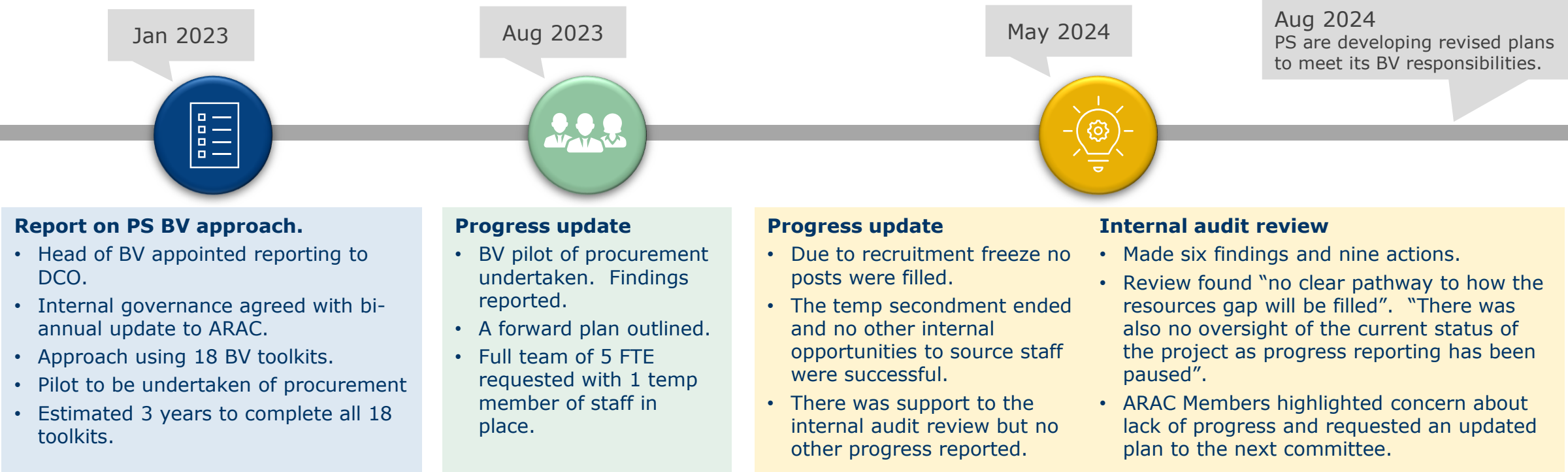
A further update on the way forward is provided by Forensics. In summary, Forensics will seek to replicate the approach undertaken by SPA corporate, recognising the positive feedback received from HMICS. It is recognised that the approach will require to use differing guidance and will inevitably be more complex. The SMT were also keen to involve staff from across the service to lead on each workstreams with a nominated SMT sponsor for each. SPA corporate staff have also committed to continuing to support the process with an initial training session for workstreams leads being undertaken by SPA staff.

The service aims for the first full assessment to be completed by Spring 2025 with progress primarily reported to ARAC and summary updates provided to Forensics Committee as part of the Directors report.

# Police Scotland

Police Scotland developed a plan to demonstrate Best Value and have been providing reports to ARAC. Progress to date has been limited and Committee Members are concerned about the lack of progress with a revised plan requested. Police Scotland is developing a revised plan.

Following Audit Scotland's recommendation that Police Scotland (September 2022) that the service needs to put in place arrangement to demonstrate Best Value, ARAC pressed Police Scotland for a plan. The reporting to ARAC is summarised below.



# Forward look

The Auditor General for Scotland's work programme (2024 – 2026) includes Best Value audits of Police and Fire and Rescue. The earliest anticipated reporting in the second half of 2025.

## Timescales

The Auditor General reported that there will be Best Value audit work on policing and fire and rescue service during the current audit appointment period.

- They are currently conducting research and development work on policing to inform the potential scope and approach to this work.
- Work will be conducted with HMICS as well as involving the Authority's statutory external auditor, Grant Thornton.
- Audit Scotland anticipate reporting in the second half of 2025 at the earliest.
  - Working back this would require audit fieldwork during summer 2025 (at the earliest).

The Authority will continue to engage with Audit Scotland and HMICS to agree firm timescales. At the earliest this would provide the: SPA, Forensic Services and Police Scotland at least one year to prepare for this audit.

The Authority should agree expectations for the oversight of Best Value arrangements in preparing for this Best Value audit.

## Police specific guidance

As part of the inspection of the Authority, HMICS have conducted initial research.

In the published inspection of the Authority HMICS noted they intends to work with partners to develop a set of policing-specific expectations for use in future work, to assess whether best value is delivered by Police Scotland and the SPA.

HMICS note this work will take time, but will be based primarily upon the 2020 Best Value revised statutory guidance issued by the Scottish Government as well as reflecting relevant aspect of the 2011 Best Value guidance and 'On-Board' guidance.

- Until this guidance is available the SPA have already adapted the 2020 guidance so that work can commence within Forensic services.
- SPA Corporate staff have developed a self-assessment checklist using this guidance and share this with both Forensic and Police Scotland staff.