

Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Areas of early interest

Letter from the Scottish Police Authority to the Convener

Thank you for your letter of 2 April highlighting the areas of early interest likely to be considered by the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing.

In terms of the areas your letter highlights, a number of those are operational in nature, whether under the direction and control of the Chief Constable in the case of counter-terrorism, or the Chief Executive of the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) on the provision of ICT services. These will of course also be areas of scrutiny for the SPA as well as the sub-committee and it may in the first instant be more relevant for each of them to provide an update at this initial stage.

The relationship between the SPA, Police Service of Scotland and Scottish Government is clearly a new one and an issue that MSPs have already taken evidence on. The Board would be happy to discuss that with the sub-committee at its convenience, as we would with the SPA strategic plan which was laid before the Scottish Parliament last week. The document can be found also on the SPA website at:

<http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/128635/strategic-police-plan-web>

A number of the issues raised in your list have been the subject of recent papers considered by the SPA and I hope it is helpful for the Committee to have sight of these.

Budget allocation and staffing

At the Board's meeting on 28 March we considered and agreed a budget allocation and related efficiency savings for 2013-14. The Board will be keeping the budget under close review and options are likely to be presented to us in the first quarter of the financial year, and I would advise that an update to the sub-committee might be appropriate after the summer recess when we have more data and practical evidence of spend against budget at our disposal. This is also likely to be a sensible timeframe for setting out in more detail for the sub-committee how the restructuring necessary to deliver efficiencies will impact on overall staff headcount.

A link to the associated paper which sets out the background to the budget allocation is attached below:

<http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/147077/Item02-budget-final>

Scheme of arrangements

A scheme of arrangements was agreed at the Board meeting on 28 March and is published on the SPA website at the link attached below. This document is intended to be dynamic and be amended over time to reflect practical experience and changing circumstances. To provide the sub-committee with the best evidence available, it may be sensible to allow the new arrangements to bed in for at least a quarter of the financial year and to have been reviewed by the SPA Board before being subject to scrutiny of the Sub-Committee.

<http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/147077/ITEM03-SCHEMEOFARRANGEMENTS>

Complaints and independent custody visiting

The SPA's approach to its role in handling of complaints and initial approach to the delivery of independent custody visiting have also both been agreed and published in Board meetings in recent weeks. Links to those are attached below. We would be happy to engage with the sub-committee to explain the rationale behind that approach at its convenience, though again we would ask the sub-committee members to note the need for the new arrangements to be tried and tested before we are in a position to provide practical evidence on how they are working.

<http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/140136/ITEM07-COMPLAINTSANDCONDUCT>

<http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/135005/item-05-custody-visiting>

We note the sub-committee's interest in fact-finding visits, including the Scottish Crime Campus at Gartcosh. I would encourage you to also consider a visit to a forensics facility such as the new laboratory at Rushton Court in Dundee as part of that. This was the first new forensic facility to be built in Scotland in 15 years and will also give members a sense of the forensic facility that will in due course be part of the complex at Gartcosh.

If you are interested in arranging such a visit, or require assistance in visiting any other facility that falls within the responsibility of the SPA, then please contact our Interim Director of Public Affairs who will be able to ensure the necessary support and arrangements are made.

Finally, I can reassure you that the SPA Board takes very seriously its obligations to transparency in all its public considerations and decision-making.

The Board will by 10 April have held eight formal, public meetings in less than 100 working days since we established ourselves formally at our first meeting on 3 December. That is equivalent to the number held by the former authorities in over a year.

As a Board we are committed to publishing our papers well in advance of our meetings and on the small number of occasions where this has not been possible we have apologised to all interested members of the public for the late issue of papers. You should be reassured that this will be an exception to our practice and procedures.

The members of the SPA Board welcomed the recent opportunity to engage with the members of the sub-committee on an informal basis at the Parliamentary briefing that you kindly sponsored last month. We look forward to continuing to inform, and to engage with, the sub-committee going forward.

Vic Emery
Chair, Scottish Police Authority
8 April 2013