



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Professor Susan Deacon
Chair
Scottish Police Authority

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Dear Susan

Scottish Police Authority Board

The Justice Sub-Committee on Policing is aware that a recruitment process is currently underway to recruit 5 new members to the Scottish Police Authority board.

The Sub-Committee assumes that you will be part of a panel to interview the candidates and recommend to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice who should be appointed. It is important to ensure that the Board has the correct mix of skills, geographical diversity, and gender balance. The Sub-Committee is therefore pleased to note that the SPA is advertising for applications from groups currently under-represented on Scotland's public bodies, such as women, ethnic minorities, disabled people and people aged under 50.

However, we would also like to be reassured that new Board members understand their independent scrutiny role and are able to proactively critically assess information and challenge decisions.

The demonstrable effective performance of Board members is essential to restoring public confidence in the SPA's ability to maintain policing, promote policing principles and continuous improvement of policing, and to hold the Chief Constable to account.

The Sub-Committee shares the Public Audit and Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee's concern about the performance of those Board members who have been in post throughout a period of continual under-performance. The Sub-Committee would therefore appreciate it if you could provide details of how the performance of Board members is reviewed, the frequency of these reviews, and how identified areas of improvement are implemented.

During the recent evidence session at the Justice Committee you gave a commitment to keep that Committee, and the Sub-Committee, informed of the steps you are taking to improve the performance of the SPA.

The Sub-Committee would appreciate it if you could provide details of the steps you have taken to ensure that the SPA Board has the right mix of skills, is diverse, is aware of its roles and responsibilities, and is able to act independently and without undue interference.

Currently, three out of the five members of the SPA's Senior Management Group - Kenneth Hogg, Interim Chief Officer, Stephen Jones, Director of Planning and Corporate Support, and John McCroskie, Director of Communications and Relationships - are either on secondment from, or have previously worked for, the Scottish Government. The Sub-Committee would appreciate your view on this position, and how it might impact on the public's confidence in the SPA being able to carry out its independent scrutiny role without any political interference.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Finnie', written in a cursive style.

John Finnie MSP
Convener, Justice Sub-Committee on Policing