

Mr John Finnie MSP
Convener
Justice Sub-Committee on Policing
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

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Our ref: SD/CW

Dear John

Scottish Police Authority Board

Thank you for your letter of 23 February regarding the recruitment of new SPA Board members and the Sub-Committee's wider concerns regarding the performance of current Board members. I should stress that both the recruitment process and other measures to review and improve Board performance are 'work in progress', however I welcome this opportunity to provide an early update to the Committee. As I indicated to the Justice Committee when I appeared before them on 23rd January, I will keep the Committee, and the Sub-Committee, updated as further as this work progresses.

Since I was appointed as SPA Chair on 4 December 2017, I have made the recruitment of new SPA Board members a priority. An open and regulated appointments process was put in place with an initial public 'trail' in December and a formal launch in January. This attracted a large number of high quality applications which have since been shortlisted.

Interviews are taking place this week and I would anticipate that appointments will be announced, subject to Ministerial approval, later this month. Thereafter, it is anticipated that new Members will take up post on a phased basis from April onwards. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the support of the public appointments and sponsor teams within the Scottish Government and the Office of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland in moving quickly to expedite a robust recruitment process for these important appointments.

With regard to current Board members, I believe it is important to acknowledge the range of work and contribution that SPA Board members have undertaken over the early years of the Authority's life. The level of commitment and input has been significant. Going forward, however, there is a need to transition into a more strategic and 'non executive' role with a stronger public service ethos and to ensure that SPA Board members, and the organisation as a whole, commands the confidence and trust of the public, Police Scotland, Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament and other key stakeholders.

I note the wider concerns about Board performance expressed by the Sub-Committee and the Public Audit and Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee and am now taking forward a series of 1:1 discussions with Board members as a pre-cursor to a formal performance

review process. The latter is an annual requirement for me as Chair and was last completed by my predecessor in the Summer/Autumn of 2017, however I intend to bring forward this year's performance review process to the Spring of 2018.

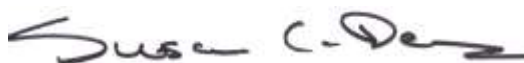
In addition to a focus on individual performance, it is essential that the Board works effectively as a collective with a shared sense of vision, values and purpose, and also works effectively with the executives of both Police Scotland and the SPA. I have therefore set in train a number of measures to develop the Board as a whole, including several strategic Board workshops which will, going forward, be integrated with a programme of induction activities for new Board members. This work is taking place in tandem with work to develop the capacity and capability of the SPA executive team. At last week's SPA Board meeting, the Interim Chief Officer and I provided complementary update reports on SPA improvement work from our respective positions, and I attach links to these below for the Sub Committee's information.

- SPA Chair's Update:
<http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/441011/441165/445320/445624>
- SPA Interim Chief Officer Update:
<http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/441011/441165/445320/445332>

Finally, I note the Sub-Committee's continuing interest in the SPA's ability to fulfil its statutory role as an arms-length public body operating as an important 'buffer' between government and policing and your request for my views regarding the fact that several members of the SPA's Senior Management Team have either previously worked for, or are temporarily seconded from, the Scottish Government. I do not believe this in any way compromises the SPA's ability to carry out our functions. Indeed, I think it is important to recognise that these staff are professionals who fully understand their duties and responsibilities while working for the SPA. Given the SPA is a major national public body it is to be expected that we will from time to time recruit staff who have worked for the Scottish Government and who bring with them valuable and relevant skills and experience. Furthermore, as I said at the Justice Committee, I welcome the fact that the Cabinet Secretary has indicated his commitment to work in partnership with the SPA to support us in a period of intense improvement work and believe that drawing upon the skills and experience of relevant Scottish Government officials, including through secondments, is a vitally important way of so doing.

I trust this response is helpful and would be pleased to provide further updates in due course. As I said to the Justice Committee, I believe that the most effective way to keep public bodies at arm's length is to have bodies that are led effectively and which function effectively and I am determined to continue to make progress in this regard so that the SPA can play its full part in scrutinising, monitoring and supporting the development of policing in Scotland both now and in the future.

Yours sincerely



Susan Deacon CBE
Chair, Scottish Police Authority