

Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Police Scotland's Custody Provision

Supplementary written submission from the Police Scotland

Response to Justice Sub-Committee on Policing's correspondence dated 20 February 2018

The purpose of this letter is to provide the Scottish Parliament's Justice Sub-Committee on Policing with replies to the questions raised in their letter dated the 20th of February 2018. The Sub-committee requested information regarding CJSD vacancies, an update relating to the transportation of prisoners and an update on the progress of the project initiated to reduce the impact of the Custody function on Local Policing.

Current vacancies

Out of the 18 vacancies previously reported, work continues to progress these recruitment processes to a conclusion. To date, 9 of the 18 vacancies now have successful candidates in post (3 commenced employment on 29th January; 2 on 26th February; 3 on 28th February and 1 on 5th March). The remaining 9 vacancies are at various stages of our recruitment process and continue to be monitored at an Executive level to ensure that successful candidates are appointed at the earliest possible opportunity. Priority is now given at a Force level to PCSO vacancies, with all key stakeholders involved in the overall process (e.g. vetting) to ensure continued prioritisation. Due to this it is anticipated the remaining vacancies will have candidates in post by the end of May at the latest.

The addition of 45 new staff were approved by the Police Scotland Executive in December. This, in addition to the creation of the new hubs, is the first stage in the development of a self-sufficient custody function. The recruitment of these posts began on the 7/2 with internal divisional recruitment. The internal and external Police Scotland recruitment began on the 23/2 and will run for two weeks. The 45 staff are anticipated to be in post to begin their training in June 2018.

Once filled the existing vacancies and new posts will reduce the local backfill demand considerably and allow the division to take a step forward in reducing the overall demand on Local Policing.

Transportation of prisoners

Police Scotland is continuing to review the extent of its Custody estate in an effort to reduce/eradicate the requirement to transport prisoners wherever possible. Due to this and the impact of the new Criminal Justice Act the current need for such transfers has all but been eradicated, with the only exceptions generally being those custodies who require to be transported due to their place of apprehension not aligning to the court at which they require to appear, or for the purpose of providing enhanced levels of care (generally medical/wellbeing provisions).

Throughout February 2018 a total of only 6 prisoners required to be transported to an alternative Custody facility as a direct result of capacity issues and these transfers only took place due to impact of essential maintenance being carried out on the custody estate. To try and put this into context during the month of February 2015 a total of 104 prisoners were transferred to an alternative facility out with the commend area of their original detention or arrest.

Progress of the custody project and stakeholder engagement

The Custody project business case outlining options, potential spend and the associated benefits of a self-sufficient custody function will be presented to the Police Scotland Executive for approval in April 2018. It is the project and division's belief that the two phased approach being proposed will deliver a long term, self-sufficient custody function fit for the division, the organisation, our partners and the individuals who spend time in custody.

If approved the first phase of the project is intended to deliver 3 Criminal Justice Hubs (Falkirk, Inverness and Aberdeen) and dramatically reduce the need for Local Policing backfill in A Division, N Division and C Division. In addition, due to 45 new multi-skilled PCSOs, the hubs will deliver benefits to the productions and records branch functions within CJSD.

Following successful delivery of Phase 1 and assessment of that delivery the second phase will use the learning from phase 1 to inform its delivery and scope. Formal engagement and approval of phase 2 will take place, (as with phase 1) through the project and programme boards and other governance boards (e.g. JNCC) where appropriate.

The business case will contain an indicative number of new PCSOs required to deliver a self-sufficient function however we will require the learning from phase 1 to accurately predict a final figure.

The staff associations, unions, the federation and other appropriate stakeholders have been involved in the development of the hubs (and the new role) through their membership of the project and programme board and through on-going divisional engagement. In addition a special JNCC workshop was arranged in January to help members understand the new PCSO role better. Training and communication planning and delivery is on-going and as with the new role, the staff associations, the unions and other appropriate stakeholders are engaged with this process through the relevant governance boards and divisional engagement.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Garry McEwan
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Criminal Justice Services Division
6 March 2018