

## **Justice Sub-Committee on Policing**

### **Police Scotland's Custody Provision**

#### **Supplementary written submission from Unison Scotland**

Thank you for your correspondence dated 20 February 2018.

While there are currently 18 PCSO vacancies, this does not reflect the true picture. We have witnessed the loss of 75 PCSO posts, since the inception of Police Scotland.

These have been deleted from the Custody establishment on account they were lying vacant for a long period of time. This is entirely attributable to a recruitment freeze forced by budget constraints and the need to keep an established ceiling of FTE Police Staff numbers to offset 17,234 police officers.

As such, although the filling of these 18 vacancies will go some way to help ease the burden on police staff working in the affected sites it does not address all the issues.

It is difficult to say how many staff would be required to address the issues as the provisions and solutions are pretty fluid. And there is some national disparity on account of closures across the custody estate (Stirling, Paisley are two examples) and cluster staff within the affected stations are moved elsewhere. This makes getting an accurate picture of the current shortages and demands more complicated.

In addition, the legislative changes introduced by the 'Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016' implementation in January 2018, have contributed to a potential decline in custody numbers. It is too early to consider this as a clear indication that custody numbers will continue to fall and these figures should be measured over a considerably longer period before we can accurately assess the impact of the change.

There is and will continue to be a requirement for police officers to backfill within Custody Division after the 18 vacancies are filled. To date 60 police officers have been transferred from Local Policing to Custody Division for a period of one year to allow Custody Division to implement a sustainable and self-sufficient operating model.

We understand 'Phase 1' will see the introduction of 45 new posts across 3 sites but there are concerns with the proposed timelines. Recruitment is underway and Custody Division is looking to have them in place for the start of June but previous experience has highlighted that this may not be possible due to delays with applicant vetting and training.

Whilst UNISON has been consulted during the development of Phase 1 and welcome the new posts - we are cautious about the aforementioned timelines and whether the proposed 'Omni-competent' role will be a viable solution. We are still unclear as to how the full business case for phase 1 will look. This is not due to be

presented to us until 12th March 2018. The precise detail, to this point has been vague with the primary focus being on the formation of three Criminal Justice Hubs and the introduction of the Criminal Justice PCSO's.

UNISON is concerned that 'Phase 2' is not scheduled to deliver until late 2018/2019.

We understand that Police Scotland needs to assess the value and benefit of the newly developed 'Omni-competent' role but our fear is that any delay will contribute to timeline slippage and the probability Custody Division will have to return the 60 police officers to the Divisions they are seconded from. This would return us to the flaws and inconsistencies of the previous operating model of ad hoc backfill which increases the risk to policing, our members and the wider public.

We recognise there is a real drive from the organisation to deliver a self-sufficient sustainable Custody operating model. Our concern is the tight timeframes to deliver significant organisational change at a time when the significant impact of the legislative changes from the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 are not yet fully realised and understood.

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