

JUSTICE SUB-COMMITTEE ON POLICING
POLICE GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY
WRITTEN SUBMISSION FROM THE SCOTTISH POLICE AUTHORITY

Introduction

The Scottish Police Authority (SPA) submits this evidence ahead of the Committee's session on police governance and accountability.

The submission seeks to provide the Committee with a summary of Authority improvement made in the last 12-months to strengthen its arrangements for the governance and accountability of policing. These improvements are being made at the Authority's own hand, within the existing legislative framework and are supporting the organisation to more effectively deliver the functions and responsibilities as outlined in the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012.

SPA Corporate Plan & Annual Business Plan

The Authority has developed and published a [Corporate Plan 2020-23](#)¹ which is an accurate, clear, brief and accessible articulation of the role, purpose and responsibilities of the Authority. It describes the context within which the Authority operates and outlines the key strategic outcomes and supporting activities that the Authority will work towards achieving during the lifecycle of the Plan.

The 3-year Corporate Plan has been underpinned by an [Annual Business Plan](#)² which will set out the Authority's priorities for the year and explain how the Authority will measure its own performance.

SPA Excellence Framework and SPA Risk Framework

The Authority has enhanced its internal governance procedures by developing and approving a [SPA Excellence Framework](#)³ and a [Strategic Risk Framework](#)⁴ bringing greater clarity and structure to our oversight of policing. These frameworks provide essential building blocks for effective governance and articulate the Authority's complementary approach to risk and assurance while also addressing recommendations made through external reviews by both HMICS and Audit Scotland.

SPA Oversight of Change

¹ <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/u0xbiwjx/spacorporateplan202023.pdf>

² <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/qcnbp4ol/spabusinessplan202021.pdf>

³ <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/gf1aymbs/rep-b-20200203-item-11b-board-paper-spa-excellence-framework-v0-1.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/3d0dxx00/rep-b-20200203-item-11c-board-paper-spa-risk-framework-v0-1.pdf>

A comprehensive approach to the [Oversight of Change](#)⁵ within policing has been put in place. This approach considers the content, progress, pace and impact of transformational change in policing and commits to doing this in a visible and robust way.

The first of regular 6-monthly public reporting to the Authority summarising the development, delivery and impact of change has been considered by the Authority in August 2020. It brings together a strategic view of change and improvement across Scottish policing and is supported by accompanying reports from [Police Scotland](#)⁶ and [SPA Forensic Services](#)⁷.

Joint Strategic Police Plan

In December 2019, the Scottish Government published a revised set of [Strategic Priorities](#) for policing in Scotland. In response, the Authority reviewed the Strategic Police Plan taking account of the six priorities set by Government. Following a period of public and stakeholder consultation, the Authority approved a [Joint Strategic Police Plan](#)⁸ setting a clear direction for policing in Scotland. This was subsequently approved by Scottish Ministers and laid in Parliament in April 2020.

Revised Performance Framework 2020/2021

A revised [Performance Framework for 2020/2021](#)⁹ has been put in place outlining what and how the Authority monitors Police Scotland's performance against the Joint Strategic Police Plan.

This new framework seeks to improve the provision of performance data by providing transparent, concise, informative and outcome focused information on Police Scotland's performance. It also provides a consistent focus on both national and local activity and seeks to clearly outline the impact of policing in Scotland through context and narrative in addition to data and evidence.

SPA Oversight of policing during COVID-19

In response to these extraordinary circumstances and the introduction of untested police powers, the Authority has continued to exercise its responsibility to provide effective and transparent governance and oversight of policing during the emergency. The Authority set out how we would achieve this in its [Strategic Approach to the Oversight of Policing during COVID-19](#)¹⁰.

⁵ <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/zdhfclra/rep-b-20200203-item-11a-spa-oversight-of-change-in-policing-doc.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/ouxdcovc/rep-b-20200812-item-6b-ps-transformational-change.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/wd0iscpd/rep-b-20200812-item-6c-fs-change-update-final.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/aqmaiflw/joint-strategy-for-policing-2020-v10-spa-amendment.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/bn4nfjjo/rep-b-20200618-item-6b-a-appendix-a-performance-framework-2020-21.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/uu2n0rt0/spa-covid-19-strategy-on-a-page.pdf>

The Authority's oversight is enhanced through regular reports provided by the [Independent Advisory Group \(IAG\)](#)¹¹ Chaired by John Scott QC reviewing Police Scotland's use of new temporary police powers related to coronavirus.

SPA organisational development and design

Significant progress is ongoing to ensure the Authority has the skills and experience it needs to enable public accountability for this vital public service. We are currently recruiting to a number of key posts as part of a wider organisational restructure which aims to strengthen the Authority's oversight of policing and address a number of external recommendations. This change and improvement will be delivered at no additional cost and will not impact on Police Scotland's budget.

Next Steps

While significant progress has been made in the last 12-months to strengthen and enhance the Authority's contribution as the primary oversight body for policing in Scotland, this work continues and the Authority will keep these arrangements under regular review. Improvements planned include the publication of new Board objectives; a revised Governance Framework and further progress against external recommendations made by both HMICS and Audit Scotland.

In addition to the improvements listed above, the Authority has worked closely with the Scottish Government to develop a revised Governance and Accountability Framework for policing which we expect the Scottish Government to finalise in the months ahead. The Authority will also continue to contribute fully and constructively to the Scottish Government's roundtable discussions with all partners to explore areas for future improvement across the wider police governance landscape.

Scottish Police Authority
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¹¹ <https://www.spa.police.uk/strategy-performance/independent-advisory-group-coronavirus-powers/>