Dear Mr Henry,

In evidence to the Public Audit Committee last November, the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) and Police Scotland indicated that we expected to progress work on financial planning, organisational reform, performance reporting, and the permanent establishment of the SPA before the end of March 2014.

I thought it would be helpful to the Committee to provide an update on these four areas, and highlight that three relevant papers will be considered by the SPA at its next public meeting in Inverness on Wednesday 26 March 2014.

The Corporate Strategy outlines how Police Scotland will develop the capability to collectively support the delivery of operational policing and the Strategic Police Priorities.

The document contains the overarching strategy, a high-level roadmap and four detailed strategic Police Scotland delivery plans: Our People; Our Technology, Our Organisational Support; and Our Finances. The development of the strategy has benefited from significant input from SPA members through a series of workshops and ongoing engagement activities.

It can be viewed at the following link:

http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/215188/Item15

In line with the expectation given to the Committee in November, the Financial Monitoring Report for the year to February 2014 will show that the SPA expects a forecast year end underspend for 2013-14 of £1.073 million. In short, this indicates that policing has delivered savings of £64m in its first year, which exceeds the original savings target for 2013-14 and has built a solid foundation for the future. £63m of these savings are recurring.

The Authority will also consider this week a Revenue Budget Plan which will set out the approach to police finances for the period 2014-6. That plan also demonstrates how projected savings through to 2025-26 will more than deliver the anticipated £1.1 billion of savings to the public purse.

It can be viewed at the following link:

http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/215188/Item14.1

Performance information and baseline data was another topic of interest for the Committee. You will already have noted that the first SPA report of policing performance was tabled at the Authority meeting on 26 February, and based around the ‘performance on a page’ format. SPA and Police Scotland have also now agreed baseline data for HR, and SPA’s performance team is working on the development of performance metrics in other areas including procurement, fleet, estates, and ICT.
A further report on the development of other aspects of the SPA’s performance framework will be considered at the 26 March meeting and will set out how, from quarter 1 of 2014-15, progress against the Strategic Priorities and objectives will be reported. This report can be viewed at the following link:

http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/215188/Item22

The SPA is continuing to engage with Police Scotland on the methodology and evidence-base for monitoring and reporting on the benefits of reform. Police Scotland has committed to bringing a paper on this to the 30 April meeting of the Authority, and will also be addressed within the SPA’s 2013-14 Annual Review of Policing which we expect to deliver to Parliament before the end June recess.

Progress has also been made in addressing the appointment of a permanent leadership team for the SPA. I was formally appointed as permanent Chief Executive Officer in February 2014 (following my period as Interim CEO). Two of the four permanent Directors were appointed in early March, and recruitment processes ongoing for the remaining two roles. With the Director of SPA Forensics Services already in permanent position, this means that four of the six-person leadership team has been appointed. Formal consultation is now underway with staff and unions on the other tiers of the SPA operation.

The Authority has also moved forward in identifying its permanent location, and clarifying the position around the Bremner House facility. SPA set up a working party to identify, assess, shortlist and recommend accommodation options for a permanent HQ and Bremner House in Stirling was one of the buildings assessed in this review. All options were considered against a set of agreed criteria including viability and cost. The SPA approved proposals in February to make its permanent headquarters at Pacific Quay in Govan and, following approval from Scottish Government, will move into those premises by June. SPA will relinquish the lease on Bremner House on 31 March 2014. There is no financial penalty in relinquishing the lease and we are advised that the landlord has secured a new tenant.

I hope that this update is helpful to Committee members. SPA looks forward to providing any further information or updates as the Committee considers its final recommendations and report.

Yours sincerely,

John Foley
Chief Executive Officer