

Pre-budget scrutiny 2026-27 – Police Scotland

5th November 2025

Follow up Query: *Further costs to PS on “emerging issues” such as the cost of policing demonstrations etc. at hotels hosting immigrants, policing of ‘Palestine Action Group’ events, costs of US Presidential visits to Scotland, increasing policing costs for sporting and other public events etc.*

Overview

“Over the last 12 months, the demand has increased both in respect of policing serious and organised crime, as well as an unprecedented level of protests and events. Officers and staff are working incredibly hard to deliver for our communities and keep people safe, the organisation is incredibly grateful for all their hard work. The nature of policing is unpredictable, and overtime is a flexible mechanism which can help to ensure we maintain an effective service for all our communities. We remain in discussion with the Scottish Police Authority and Scottish Government about funding allocations for 2026-27, which we have outlined will have a direct impact on our ability to strengthen frontline policing.” *(DCC Speirs recent media response)*

Overtime spend for the year to date to the end of November was circa £19m, a 12% increase from the same point in the previous financial year which demonstrates the significant increasing pressure on the Service. We recorded the costs of Summer Presidential visits separately, with the overtime cost of Op Roll and Op Oclate totalling circa £10m.

Many areas of overtime are experiencing increased spend because of the increased demand described above. The largest components of overtime spend and the movements in year-to-date figures compared to prior year are included in brackets.

- Major Operations and initiatives £3.9m (+68%)
- Detained on / recalled to duty £4.3m (+14%)
- Essential and sickness cover £3.5m (+8%)
- Courts £1.7m (-24%) - a reduction on last year because of a stronger approach to case management.

Significant operations in the year-to-date requiring overtime include:

- Policing demonstrations (Op Leste) £0.8m
- Organised gang violence (Op Portaledge) £0.5m
- Complex homicide (Op Greyfen) £0.4m

Major Operations

The number of homicides committed in the year to date remain consistent to the 10-year average however there has been an increase in the complexities of these investigations with 1 Cat A homicide recorded and 10 Cat B homicides recorded.

In addition, Major crime has seen a significant increase in Large Scale Investigations that are complex and protracted running for several years at time, often at Crown Office instruction with tight timescales for regular submissions and progress updates. In the past 2 years Major Crime has taken ownership of 17 Large Scale Investigations, all of which are still live, compared with 7 Large Scale Investigations in the first 10 years of Police Scotland.

Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation referrals received by the Police Scotland continue to experience long term sustained increases from 509 in 2015 to predicted demand of circa 4250 by financial year end of 2025/26 equating to a 750% increase. These enquiries are detailed and time-consuming requiring specialist expertise.

Policing demonstrations

Often information relating to the size and potential for disorder is received with very little notice. Additional resources are required and are extracted from other areas to support the protests.

c300 officers per weekend, average of over 42 protests a week.
Additional overtime spend alone is circa £800k by end of November.

Sporting

Timing of the SPFL “split” and announcement of post-split fixtures means there is limited or no notice to allow for planned surges in demand. This limits the ability to cancel rest days and as a result incurs higher overtime costs.

Costs of policing within the stadiums are borne by the clubs however fixtures require additional policing in the surrounding urban centres to prevent disorder.

Overtime for sporting events has increased significantly from c£487k to £777k in 2025-26 with additional European football fixtures.

Unprecedented demand is being seen across multiple fronts resulting in increased overtime, impacting the wellbeing of officers and staff and incurring significant expense. Police Scotland recognises overtime has a role in the resourcing of our teams but needs to ensure it is sustainable. We continue to closely monitor team wellbeing and overtime costs.