



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

**Thursday 17 September 2020**

**Session 5**



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**Thursday 17 September 2020**

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**JUSTICE SUB-COMMITTEE ON POLICING**

**8<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2020, Session 5**

**CONVENER**

\*John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab)

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)

\*Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD)

\*Shona Robison (Dundee City East) (SNP)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Lynn Brown (Scottish Police Authority)

James Gray (Police Scotland)

David Page (Police Scotland)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Diane Barr

**LOCATION**

Virtual Meeting



## Scottish Parliament

### Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Thursday 17 September 2020

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:30]*

### Decision on Taking Business in Private

**The Convener (John Finnie):** Madainn mhath, a h-uile duine, agus fàilte. Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing's eighth meeting in 2020. We have received apologies from Liam McArthur and Fulton MacGregor, who are both attending other parliamentary meetings.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on taking in private item 3, which is a review of the evidence that we will hear today. Do we agree to take item 3 in private? I note agreement, so we will take item 3 in private.

## Pre-budget Scrutiny 2021-22

10:31

**The Convener:** Our next agenda item is an evidence session on the requirements for the police budget for 2021-22. I refer members to paper 1, which is a note by the clerk, and to paper 2, which is a private paper.

I welcome our witnesses. From Police Scotland, we have Mr James Gray, the chief financial officer, and Mr David Page, the deputy chief officer. Our talented technical staff are working hard to ensure that, at some point, Lynn Brown, the interim chief executive of the Scottish Police Authority, is able to join us. I hope that that will be the case. I thank the witnesses for providing written evidence, which is most helpful to the sub-committee, and for accommodating the change of time to today's meeting, which has meant that some of our members cannot attend.

I remind members that it will be helpful to the broadcasting team if they indicate, in advance of asking their question, to whom it is directed.

I will start. My first question is to Mr Page. Has Police Scotland had any preliminary discussions with the Scottish Government on this year's draft budget? If so, what representations have been made, and how have they been received?

**David Page (Police Scotland):** We work closely with the Scottish Government and—*[Inaudible.]*—providing it with very early sight of our budget requirements and of progress in our budget management. We work with officials in the Government's policing and finance divisions and we speak to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice. We will be meeting him and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance later this month, to lay out the annual policing budget requirements and discuss the long-term financial sustainability of Police Scotland and how we address the structural deficit in policing. We have good engagement.

**The Convener:** Other members will touch on those issues. It would be good to hear from the SPA on the question that I have just posed. I understand that efforts to have Ms Brown join us are continuing.

My next question is to Mr Gray. The Covid-19 outbreak and the associated economic fallout have had, and will continue to have, a significant impact on public finances. How concerned are you that any expectations that you might have for this year's draft budget will simply not be able to be met?

**James Gray (Police Scotland):** We have already done an initial assessment of the impact of Covid-19 on our budget for this financial year. One

of the biggest impacts has been a reduced level of income as a result of policing fewer events, including sporting events. That has had an £8 million impact on the budget, and we expect the impact to continue into 2021-22. There will be a residual impact relating to airport passenger numbers and the number of events that are held. That is a risk. Additional costs relating to personal protective equipment have also been significant.

We expect an overall pressure on this financial year's budget of more than £7 million, in addition to the £8 million of lost income that had already been built into the budget in March. Taking those two figures together, the impact on the current financial year's policing budget has been £15 million. As I said, I expect some impacts to continue into 2021-22, which will contribute to the difficulties in setting a suitable budget for next March.

I am concerned about the additional costs that we have been incurring and those that will carry on into next year. I am also concerned about how the general pressure on public finances in Scotland and across the rest of the United Kingdom might make the settlement for 2021-22 more challenging than it would otherwise have been had we not had the pandemic.

**The Convener:** You touched on the issue of PPE. I accept that you are here to discuss next year's budget, but you will be aware of the correspondence that the Scottish Police Federation has shared with the sub-committee. To what extent has the provision of PPE for staff been tempered—if it has been at all—by budgetary restraints?

**James Gray:** No financial constraints have been put on the purchase of PPE and there have been no delays in the purchase of PPE. We have followed the Scottish Government's guidelines on homologation and retrospective approval, so governance has not held up decision making on the purchase of PPE.

To be honest, the budget was not a consideration in the early days of the pandemic; the focus was on ensuring that officers and staff had the PPE that they needed. That was not without challenge, because of the lack of availability in the supply chains, orders falling through and other difficulties in trying to secure PPE. However, those difficulties were not in any way linked to financial constraints.

The only financial consideration that I pushed in relation to PPE was to try to quantify the run rate of PPE as soon as we got into a bit of a rhythm—withstanding the fact that it has been a dynamic situation—so that we were better able to reorder PPE in time before it ran out and to avoid ending up with too much PPE. Therefore, there has been

general management around ensuring that we have not been ordering without knowing what quantities are required. However, in the first couple of months of the pandemic, when we did not know how much PPE we would be using, no financial constraint was put on the PPE budget. No financial constraint has been applied since that time. As I said, the only financial intervention has been trying to establish proper controls in relation to run rates, distribution and so on.

**The Convener:** I advise members that we have been joined by Ms Brown, so I will revisit my first question and put it to her in a moment.

I see that Mr Page wants to come in. Will you also comment on the suggestion that there is only one mask—that is all—for each officer?

**David Page:** To reiterate Mr Gray's points, at the very start of the pandemic, the guidance and direction—[*Inaudible.*]*—*which was that the health and safety of our officers was paramount, and we worked to do everything that we could to ensure their health and safety. That included having the right guidance from our health and safety people, Public Health Scotland and the Health and Safety Executive. We very much used that as a platform for determining the requirements. As Mr Gray said, no budget constraints were placed on the provision of PPE.

We also ensured that we did not work in isolation from our partners. My procurement teams worked closely with the national health service, the Scottish Government and the National Police Chiefs Council, so a co-ordinated approach was taken. The biggest challenge was not about financing but about supply, because everyone was looking for PPE.

In relation to there being one mask for each officer, every officer is provided with PPE. No consideration is given to a one-and-done approach. If an officer uses their mask, we will provide them with another. Mr Gray mentioned the run rate. We built supplies to ensure that our stores have sufficient stock and can be refreshed.

Have we had issues with that supply chain and logistical management? Absolutely, because the situation is unprecedented. However, there were no constraints around getting only one mask, or one of anything. The approach was always about ensuring that everyone has what they need and that enough PPE was available to resupply everyone.

The system is not perfect, because this is obviously an incredibly challenging time, but there have been no constraints, and it has always been about saying to people, "Use your equipment and we will make sure that we get you some new stuff."

**The Convener:** Thank you. It is helpful to hear that. This is a meeting about budgets, so we will not go into the operational aspects of that at this time.

Welcome to the meeting, Ms Brown. I do not know whether we will see you, but I understand that we will hear you. Were you able to hear the first two questions that I posed?

**Lynn Brown (Scottish Police Authority):** I connected at the end of the first question, convener. I apologise for being late to the meeting, but I had technical difficulties that my colleagues at the Scottish Parliament were very adept at sorting out. If you would not mind repeating the first two questions, convener, I would be more than happy to answer them.

**The Convener:** You have been a bit hard on yourself. I know that you tried to connect long before the meeting started. Thank you for joining us.

My first question was about any preliminary discussions that the SPA had with the Scottish Government about the coming year's draft budget. What specific representations were made? How were those representations received?

My second question was about whether any expectations that you have will not be able to be met as a result of the Covid outbreak.

**Lynn Brown:** Thank you, convener. I will start with your first question on representations.

We made it clear in our submission that the issues going into 2021-22 are not new or dependent on Covid-19 and that there has been an on-going debate about them for a while with our colleagues in the Scottish Government. Therefore, they are well aware of the issues. In fact, because they were aware of them, they were able to approve our deficit budget for 2020-21. They understood the structured deficit and the reasons behind it.

Liaison and discussion with the Scottish Government are on-going. Issues often have resources implications. In governance terms, our policy is that there should be no surprises and that the Scottish Government should understand the issues and the decision that might be made. Therefore, consultation on resources is on-going.

I think that Mr Page referred to a meeting that will be held in a couple of weeks between the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, which the SPA, the chief constable and Police Scotland will attend. That is to build on the previous conversations and dialogue so that they can understand the position on financial sustainability.

I think that your second question was to do with the impact of Covid on the public sector and the possibility of our budget being met.

**The Convener:** Yes, indeed.

**Lynn Brown:** As a public body, we are acutely aware of the issues that are impacting on Police Scotland, the forensic services and the SPA because of Covid-19, and we ensure governance in relation to those issues through the resources committee and the board. We are acutely aware of our own issues, but we know that we will not be alone—other public organisations are going through the same challenges, particularly those that have income streams. We have a relatively small income stream that is not covered by grant. There will be hard choices for ministers, and the meeting that was referred to is part of the ministers getting an understanding of the issues. There will be difficult choices to be made between competing public sector demands, so it is very important that we give evidence to support our bid for resources. However, we do not underestimate the difficulties that the public sector will face in 2021-22.

**The Convener:** Okay. Thank you very much. Our next questions are from Shona Robison

**Shona Robison (Dundee City East) (SNP):** I want to return to James Gray, who touched on this issue in answer to John Finnie's question. Will you go into a little more detail on the impact of Covid-19 and other major events on the budget? You touched on how difficult the situation will be for 2021-22. Can you give us any more detail on the impact of those events on resources, or is that work still being done?

10:45

**James Gray:** The impact on our income budget has been wide ranging. We are working on a set of assumptions as to what the impact will be for the remainder of the current financial year between now and 31 March 2021, and we are also starting to plan for next year, which is more complicated, given that we do not know where we will be as regards the timing of fans returning to sporting events and the starting up of concerts and other events. In March 2020, we made assumptions that we thought were quite severe—we forecast a 20 per cent reduction in income, but that turned out to be an understatement as we went through the summer and we experienced the impact of lockdown and the knock-on impact on events. That will continue to be an issue for months to come.

As well as the impact on our income from football matches, music events and other big events, our airport income, which is significant to us—it is worth more than £5 million—has been

affected. Given that the footfall of passengers into the main airports has been so low, we have—with the agreement of the Scottish Government—reduced our airport policing charges to reflect the situation. For example, in April, Edinburgh airport would have expected 1.2 million or 1.3 million passengers to go through it, but only 5,000 passengers did so.

If we look to next year, given the knock-on impact on other public bodies, which was mentioned earlier, we anticipate that the decrease in the income that we rely on from local authorities and other public sector bodies—which has been decreasing over a number of years and has already decreased by £11 million—might accelerate into 2021-22, as other public sector bodies have to pull back to their core activities.

At the moment, it is hard to quantify what the impact on next year's income budget might be, but it will be significant. We are updating our work on that on a monthly basis as more information becomes available.

**Shona Robison:** I had not thought about the loss of income from the airports, which now seems obvious. It would be helpful for the committee to get a bit more detail in writing once the information begins to crystallise on what those income streams are likely to generate in the current climate, compared with what they would normally generate.

My other question is about the scope to make reductions to non-pay costs, which there is always pressure to do, given that most of the budget goes on pay. Do you think that Police Scotland has reached the limit of what can be achieved on non-pay costs, or is that an area in which the potential for reductions still exists?

**James Gray:** In relation to your first point, I undertake to write to the committee to provide information on our income projections for next year and a breakdown of the various areas.

Your asked about non-pay. The non-pay budget has been reduced by more than £80 million since Police Scotland came into being, so significant reductions have already been made. That would have been anticipated as a result of the merging of organisations, the cutting out of elements of duplication and a larger organisation having better purchasing power.

However, when we set the budget in the current financial year, we took a zero-based approach, which involved building our non-pay budget from the bottom up, and we found that we had underprovided in the non-pay area. We had suspected that, but we wanted to have a proper evidence base to demonstrate it, which we could share with colleagues in the Scottish

Government's finance and police divisions, so that they could fully understand it.

That resulted in us increasing the non-pay budget for 2020-21. The increase was in order to address issues such as maintenance of the estate—which has come up in the past and is included in the SPA's submission—and making sure that officers are properly equipped to do the job.

In Police Scotland's written submission, we highlighted that the non-pay budget in policing is 14 per cent in Scotland, compared with an average of 22 per cent across the UK. It is hard to draw comparisons between the different operating models but we are an outlier in the UK in relation to how much of the budget goes on non-pay.

The £85 million or so that has been taken out to date is at the maximum. That is based on my experience of the risk assessment outcomes of where we had got to in 2019-20 by continually reducing non-pay budgets, and on the bottom-up build in the current financial year, which gave an evidence base to suggest that the non-pay budget is tight. I hope that that answers your question.

**Shona Robison:** Thank you; that is helpful. That was my final question, convener.

**The Convener:** Thank you. Our next questions are from Rona Mackay.

**Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** Good morning. My questions follow on from those of my colleague; the first one is for Mr Gray.

Approximately 85 per cent of the entire police budget is spent on workforce costs, and that proportion has been rising rather than falling for the past number of years. Given the challenges that Scotland faces now and in the future, do you think that that is a sustainable position? If it is not sustainable, how do you intend to address it?

**James Gray:** You are right to ask that question, which is linked to the previous one, in that it is about the balance between the pay costs and the non-pay costs. The non-pay costs have been reduced over time in order to sustain the workforce numbers. What I took to be your observation is correct: it is not sustainable to continue with that trend of squeezing the non-pay element in order to sustain the pay budget.

Fundamentally, a combination of options is required to address the sustainability issue. Continuing with a deficit is not a satisfactory way to proceed, because setting a deficit budget every year has a destabilising effect on the organisation and is a pressure that we would rather not have to deal with; it even affects cash-flow management on a month-to-month basis.



The alternatives are to address the issue through increased levels of Government funding or to look at the size of the workforce and, through workforce planning, agree an approach to reduce that workforce. I say that with a caveat: as the written submission says, in the view of the chief constable, looking ahead operationally, with the continuation of Covid-19, Brexit and its implications, and the COP26 conference that is scheduled for November 2021, the next 12 to 18 months would not be the time to reduce police officer numbers.

However, from a purely financial perspective, reductions to the workforce—of which police officers are the biggest part—would have to be a consideration for bringing the budget back into line; indeed, that had been a key part of the 2017 financial plan, which was to reduce police officer numbers by 750 by this financial year. If that had been done, we would have had a balanced budget in the current year.

In summary, the options are reductions in the size of the workforce, increases in funding, a continuation of the deficit or a combination of all three.

**The Convener:** I will bring David Page in at this point.

**David Page:** I will build on what James Gray said. The fundamentals are exactly as he said—the workforce, the funding that is available and the deficit. The other dimension is investment. We have been asking for some time for a considerable injection of capital investment to support the transformation of Police Scotland. We have shown what we can do with investment in things such as the legacy project and the contact assessment model; if we improve our systems and our processes utilising technology, we can increase the capacity of Police Scotland to deliver services. If we get that investment, that will reduce the requirement for the workforce to be the size that it is. We can adjust the workforce alongside the digital capability of the organisation to function.

Having said that, there is the chief constable's point, which is that the reality of policing is that, under certain scenarios, we just need bodies; we need police officers to go out and to intervene. *[Inaudible.]*—COP26, Brexit, the European football championship, depending on what happens with that, and the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a requirement for the physical presence of police officers on the ground. We cannot get away from that, no matter how much technology we put in play.

However, long-term sustainability must come off the back of an appropriate level of investment, not only in Police Scotland to help us to make an efficient model but in the broader justice sector,

because we are part of that system. We need investment in Police Scotland and in other areas, so that we can help the broader system to be more efficient. That would improve services across multiple areas and would reduce costs.

There is a system component and an investment component. With additional investment, we can become more efficient.

**Rona Mackay:** If I understand you correctly, you are saying that workforce reduction would be an absolute last resort, but it might have to come into play, and if you could boost technical investment, that might be the case. If that is the case, can you give us an idea of what numbers you are talking about? How many people would you have to lose?

**David Page:** *[Inaudible.]*—going forward—*[Inaudible.]*

**Rona Mackay:** I think that we have lost the sound for David Page.

**The Convener:** Mr Page, is your sound back? Are you able to answer that?

**David Page:** I can—*[Inaudible.]* Can you hear me?

**The Convener:** Yes, indeed.

**David Page:** Okay. Shall I continue?

**Rona Mackay:** Yes, please.

**David Page:** I would not say that workforce reduction is the last thing that we would look to do. We have been working on getting the right size of workforce, and we should move to the right size of workforce as quickly as we can. The strategic workforce plan is the underlying platform for determining that.

The right size of workforce is a combination of what the demand is on policing, what the expectations of the public and the Government are about the role of policing, how efficient we can be, which is where the investment in technology comes in, and what the political appetite is.

We have argued for some considerable time that it should be the effect of policing—the policing capability—that should be the measure of the level of investment that is required for policing but, as we widely recognise, the headlines tend to be about police officer numbers. That has been happening in England and Wales, with the additional 20,000 officers, and with the additional 1,000 officers that came into Police Scotland—*[Inaudible.]* That has become a sort of bellwether number. We have tried to move away from that towards looking at productivity and the capacity of the organisation to work. We are not trying to protect a given number. What we are trying to do is ensure that, when it comes to the number that

we have, we have the right mix of police officers and staff, with the necessary technology and—*[Inaudible.]*—data, that will enable Police Scotland to police our communities in the most efficient way possible.

11:00

We also recognise that we must have the ability to deliver a mass mobilisation of police officers to intervene in relation to public order issues such as those around COP26 or Brexit, or in relation to the protection of public health with regard to issues such as Covid. We need to be able to deploy people on the ground. There needs to be a recognition of the fact that we will never get to a point where technology can replace having an officer on the street who can intervene in a critical situation in which we need bodies on the ground.

The issue is not that we do not want to reduce the workforce. What we want to do is reduce the workforce to the right size, supported by the technology to do the job that we are asked to do.

**Rona Mackay:** Lynn Brown, what is the SPA's view on workforce reduction?

**Lynn Brown:** The SPA's position is that, in the absence of the strategic workforce plan that is being worked on and which has to be underpinned by real evidence on demand and productivity, we cannot say what the right workforce mix is or what the right number is. We are looking at gleaning that information so that we can form a view. That is being worked on. However, until that plan is in place, we cannot say what the right number for the police workforce is.

**The Convener:** I see that James Gray wants to come back in.

**James Gray:** Just for completeness, on the issue of non-pay costs, when I said that there was no scope for further reductions based on the bottom-up build, that view is based on our current operating model. To pick up on what Mr Page said, we are seeking investment in the estate's transformation plan and the decarbonisation of the fleet through a move to electric vehicles. There are some saving opportunities there—between those two aspects, perhaps £10 million might be saved, although those savings will be over the medium term rather than being immediately available.

That goes back to the point about investment. If there was investment in the fleet, running costs would be cheaper, because electricity is cheaper than the fuel that is currently used by the fleet, and electric cars have fewer moving parts, which means that the maintenance costs will be significantly lower. If we can change the operating model through investment on the non-pay side, there are further opportunities for savings,

although they would not be so great that they would be able to address the current deficit position.

**The Convener:** James Kelly will ask the next questions.

**James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** The main themes so far have concentrated on the size of the pay costs in the budget compared with the non-pay costs. Bearing in mind that that has a big impact on the workforce and its size and composition, what discussions have taken place with the trade unions and staff associations about those issues?

**David Page:** Within a couple of weeks of my joining Police Scotland four years ago, we set out a policy, after meeting union leaders, that we would be very transparent about the challenges that Police Scotland faced and about the direction in which we wanted to take Police Scotland in terms of transforming the organisation corporately to deliver the benefits of police reform, particularly with regard to the financial running of the organisation—that was a clear objective.

As part of that engagement, at the beginning, we made a commitment that we would engage fully with the unions on what our objectives were and how we would go about doing that. Since then, every year, we have looked to improve the level of engagement with the unions and the Scottish Police Federation. We invite representatives of those bodies to the monthly meetings of the corporate finance board and the change board, and we engage them in planning sessions and in the corporate capital investment group that I run, which looks at the investment that we can make available and the choices about where to put it.

Obviously, federation colleagues, the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents, Unison and Unite have good input from their members about where Police Scotland should put its investment to transform the workforce and our capabilities. The key challenge for us, though, is that we do not have enough investment to make everybody happy, which is the case everywhere. However, we ensure that they are involved in the discussions before any decision is made. We then explain why we have made the decisions that we have made and are transparent about what is happening in terms of progress and the investment that we seek. We try to ensure, as far as we can, that they are alongside us and help us on that journey. We hope that federation, ASPS and union colleagues feel that their level of engagement is considerably better than it was three or four years ago.

**James Kelly:** You touched on the level of engagement, which is obviously welcome, but I

want to push you a bit further on the issues that we are identifying for this budget round regarding the proportions of the pay budget and the non-pay budget, and the make-up of the workforce. You acknowledged that you were looking to get the correct workforce figure and the correct composition of the workforce. Clearly, those are big challenges. Has there been specific engagement with the staff representatives and the unions on those issues in relation to this budget round?

**David Page:** Yes. As we go through this financial year, there are a number of restructuring and transformational opportunities that could result in redundancies, so we consult with union colleagues about what we are doing and why we are doing it, and what the intended outcome is. We go through that process fully with them.

In terms of engagement for next year, we need to be transparent about what we are trying to do in setting the budget. We engage with union colleagues as fully as we can and with the best information that we have available at the time. One of the key challenges for us is that we are operating with a significant deficit and we do not get the level of investment that we need to make some of the technology changes that are required. Often, we talk theoretically about what we could do if we had the funding, which is the conversation that we have with federation, ASPS and union colleagues. Towards the back end of the year, we get told how much we have got, at which point we have to cut the plans. It therefore tends to be a last-minute effort to get an agreement on what we will do for the budget that we set for that year.

One thing that would be helpful would be multiyear settlements. If we moved to those, we could have much more meaningful conversations with colleagues in the force, the SPA and other key stakeholders such as the federation and the unions about a strategic plan for improving things, instead of saying, "This is what we'd like to do next year if we get the money," and then having to say, "We didn't get that much money, so this is what we're going to have to do," which tends to be the case at the moment.

**James Kelly:** Your notion of multiyear settlements is interesting and is certainly worth exploring.

My next question is for Lynn Brown. The SPA has stated that there is an expectation that it should follow the Scottish Government's public sector pay policy. Is it the SPA's view that there should be some flexibility to allow variance from that policy, or is the SPA content to follow the strictures of the public sector pay policy?

**Lynn Brown:** I will clarify what that comment in our written submission was trying to convey. We

recognise that there is a public sector pay policy and that it is helpful for planning and negotiations with the unions. The difficulty for us sometimes arises when we apply the public sector pay policy but no financial settlement comes in behind it. However, our written submission was just setting out the parameters and constraints that we have to work within; in no way were we suggesting that we do not follow the public sector pay policy or support it.

**James Kelly:** It is clear that you support the public sector pay policy, but that you are looking for a financial arrangement in the budget that allows the organisation to follow through and deliver on that policy.

**Lynn Brown:** Absolutely.

**The Convener:** The next questions are from the deputy convener, Margaret Mitchell.

**Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con):** The refreshed "Joint Strategy for Policing (2020)—Policing for a safe, protected and resilient Scotland" seeks to deliver a sustainable, modern and flexible police service. The strategy is supported by plans to transform and improve technology, the fleet and the building estate. Can you spell out the extent to which that objective is compromised, given that Police Scotland made the case for capital funding of £246.8 million but there is a shortfall of 45 per cent in the capital budget allocation from the Scottish Government?

**David Page:** As you say, we have laid out a clear strategy and plans for technology, estates and fleet. Clearly, not getting the capital investment that we require slows down the speed at which we can implement those plans. That said, we continue to make progress on all three fronts, especially on estates and fleet, on which we have shifted the strategies on to a much more collaborative approach with partners.

We are trying to lead on the electrification and decarbonisation of the fleet. That is consistent with Scottish and UK Government policy, it is benefiting the environment generally and it actually makes it cheaper to run the fleet in the long term. We are grateful for the support that Transport Scotland has provided over and above our normal budget to assist Police Scotland in progressing with our push into that green space.

On technology, there is no doubt that we could do much more if we had more money, but we—*[Inaudible.]*—improvement as we can. The big challenge with not getting the investment that we require, especially for our technology plans, is that technology shifts and moves so quickly. We published the DDICT—data, digital and information and communications technology—strategy a couple of years ago, and a lot of it was principally geared around a three to four-year

profile of investment. However, we are running at a much slower pace, which has an effect on those plans because the profile of technology availability changes considerably. For example, we might not be using the same sort of technology, or there might be different challenges.

At the point of setting the strategies and plans with a clear investment profile to support them, the benefits and outcomes that we see are the ones that we can reasonably achieve. If investment is, as you say, running at 55 per cent of what we are asking for, that slows down the process and means that it takes longer for us to deliver; it also changes the running costs because with the delay in outcome delivery comes an increase in cost. I hope that that answers the question.

**Margaret Mitchell:** I will come back to each of the specific areas that you mentioned of fleet, estate and technology, but I first ask for Ms Brown's reaction to that worrying slowing down of the strategy for 2020 because of a lack of funding.

**Lynn Brown:** The authority continues to make a compelling case, alongside Police Scotland, for more continuing capital, but we recognise that that has to be based on signed strategies. Strategies have been considered and brought to the board by Police Scotland on estates, IT and fleet. We seek to take opportunities where we can do so. Mr Page touched on the green agenda for the fleet, which we are progressing along with Transport Scotland and Scottish Government colleagues.

We realise that there are constraints, and we will continue to make a case for a share of the available resources and ensure that we have signed strategies to support those bids to the Scottish Government.

11:15

**Margaret Mitchell:** You mentioned the fleet, and Mr Page said that Police Scotland has ambitions to make its fleet greener—the ambition is to become the first UK police service with a fleet of ultra-low emission vehicles. However, the SPF's submission states that

"the immediate focus on electric vehicles"

could well be

"to the detriment of our workhorses, the 365/24/7 vehicles that communities recognise as police cars",

which the police presently rely on. How are you ensuring that the priorities are being adequately managed and that the fleet is fit for purpose? I put that to Ms Brown first, and then to Mr Page, seeing as he mentioned the issue.

**Lynn Brown:** On the SPA's governance around that, the authority is mindful of the debate and dialogue around having a green fleet, as opposed

to other types of transport. It supported Police Scotland when it made proposals to access capital expenditure, which is quite often geared towards electric fleets. We would not want to miss out on the opportunity to tap into that investment.

I ask Mr Page to cover the details of the fleet and operational matters.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Greening is a good objective, but are there sufficient funds to ensure that the existing fleet is fit for purpose, given the cost of repairing an ageing fleet and so on?

**David Page:** The fleet strategy did a couple of things. It talked about the ambition to move to ULEVs, but we can move only at a pace that is appropriate in relation to the availability of the right vehicles for policing purposes, the infrastructure and the funding.

Separate from that, part of the purpose of the fleet strategy was to review and address how we were running the fleet. We have made a number of changes, including to the replacement criteria. It used to be the case that we would change vehicles every 10 years and unmarked vehicles generally every five years, or after 150,000 miles for response vehicles. We changed that; it is now half that.

The level of investment that we put into the normal fleet, excluding ULEVs, has not reduced year on year. This year, I think that we have put in £1.6 million—[Inaudible.]. We had allocated, I think, about £3.3 million in total to go into the fleet, but we have directed some of that investment into public order vehicles that needed to be refreshed, which supports our preparations for COP26.

Could we invest more in the fleet? Absolutely. However, our investment criteria for the fleet are constrained by the overall capital settlement. I can safely say that, for every part of the force that puts a demand to me for capital each year, none gets what it needs. We have to cut the pie a lot smaller than what those areas are looking for.

The move to the green fleet has not diminished our ability to support the fleet—it has actually enhanced it, because the additional funding that we have been receiving—[Inaudible.]—has been separate from our core settlement.

We are not where we would like to be, but we have improved on last year. We are improving maintenance and on-the-road availability. We have also improved the number of vehicles that are available across Scotland, so if people need to take their car in to be repaired, we have a car available for them to take back out.

We had good conversations with the federation a year or 18 months ago about some of the issues that we had with vehicles. When cars started to suffer troubles, we did not have enough spare cars

available; when they put a car into the garage, we could not give them a replacement. Officers would try to patch up the vehicles themselves, which led to photographs of gaffer tape holding wing mirrors together and stuff like that.

We listened to the federation and this year we have put more investment into having additional vehicles available to remove the reluctance of officers to put cars into the garage at the earliest stage. If we deal with the problem early, the cost of fixing it is much cheaper than if officers keep the car and try to fix it themselves—eventually, it comes to us—[Inaudible.]—unworkable, if you like.

We continue to improve on normal maintenance, we have reduced the running mileage replacement and we have additional investment for the fleet. We are addressing most of the issues with the fleet. Other than the fact that I do not have enough money to do everything I would like, there has been a significant improvement.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Is the short answer that you can give the SPF the assurance that there will be sufficient funds available to ensure that the “365/24/7 vehicles” are fit for purpose?

**David Page:** The assurance that I can give the federation is that, with the capital I have available, I will do the best that I can.

**Margaret Mitchell:** A qualified assurance, then.

Mr Gray talked about the estate. Police Scotland has previously stated that it was concentrating on health and safety issues, “effectively putting Band-Aids” on the estate and not addressing its overall condition effectively. Is that still the position? We know that there were specific cases—for example, the ceiling collapsing in Broughty Ferry and reports of chairs falling apart and being threadbare. I can testify to that: Hamilton police station looks tired and jaded, and frankly does not inspire the general public’s confidence or appear to me to be a satisfactory working environment for the police.

**James Gray:** I agree with your comments. We are still in a position where the work that we do is about health and safety and is largely reactive work, dealing with failure. We would like to be proactive and have a proper planned maintenance schedule that meets lifecycle requirements to replace things such as roofs and boilers.

As you will be aware, we commissioned a condition survey. That has been delayed because of Covid, but we will get the results of that by the end of this financial year. Based on the feedback that we get, we have factored into the capital table in our submission how much we think the estate will require over the next five years to address some of those issues, get on the front foot and

move away from being reactive and having to deal with roofs that fall in to getting them fixed and improving the fabric of the estate.

An ask of £178.8 million over the next five years has been put into the infrastructure and investment work that the Scottish Government has been doing and into the low-carbon fund. That would help us to get out of the reactive situation that we are in and enable some of the transformation work to happen. That work would allow greater co-location and collaboration opportunities with other public sector partners, reduce the overall floor requirement and—this is most important for the wellbeing of our officers and staff—improve the quality of the fabric of the estate. You mentioned your experience of Hamilton police station, and I see such things in police buildings across the country.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Could Ms Brown comment on that? How much of that is a priority for SPA to argue for?

**Lynn Brown:** It is really important for the SPA to have oversight of that whole area. It has oversight in a public and accountable way, in the first instance through our resources committee, which is able to look at the estate strategy and the plans to fix the estate’s issues. The committee also gets reports on wellbeing and health and safety, so it gets a composite and comprehensive picture of the issues.

We are very mindful of the fact that it is a live issue and that there are plans to address it, and we have appropriate oversight of that.

**Margaret Mitchell:** There is a wish list there, but there is also the here-and-now situation, which needs to be addressed fairly urgently.

I want to look at the investment in ICT. The SPA has awarded various contracts in the current financial year. Has the total figure of £150.6 million, which is set out in the annual procurement report, been updated? Would it be possible to provide details of the contracts that relate specifically to ICT? ICT is so important in modernising our police force, protecting our police officers and making sure that the service can cope with criminals, who are always ahead of the game when it comes to technology.

**Lynn Brown:** You mentioned the annual procurement report, which the authority considered in June of this year. That report, which reported on the spend on all contracts in 2019-20, is very detailed. It sets out the type of expenditure and the value and timescale of the contract. You cited a figure of £150 million. I think that roughly a third of that went on IT, although we will be happy to confirm that. The procurement report sets out the detail.

Next year, we will have oversight of the spend for 2020-21. The detail will be in next year's report. The report that we considered in June set out what we intended to spend on the contracts, including the ICT contracts. The report sets out the type of contract, the value of the contract and its term. We take that approach partly so that we plan our IT investment, but also to ensure that we get best value. If potential contractors and suppliers can see what is coming, they can bid appropriately. We have oversight of the issue and we plan for that spend.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Would Mr Gray or Mr Page like to comment?

**David Page:** As Ms Brown said, we publish all the reports. I would be happy to write to the committee to highlight the technology contracts in the reports that we have published for the past year.

**Margaret Mitchell:** What is your ask for the new financial year?

**David Page:** Do you mean the capital ask for the new financial year?

**Margaret Mitchell:** What would you like to see happening with that? How can the budget help expenditure in that area?

**David Page:** We would like to have a very significant increase, if we can. We have provided the Scottish Government with our profile of the investment that is required. We asked for £74 million for this year. Originally, we thought that we would need about £84 million for next year, but we need to revise that in the light of the changes in the investment that we had for this year, which was less than we wanted, and the changed circumstances.

James Gray can probably provide a bit more information on the numbers that we have advised the Scottish Government that we will need next year.

**James Gray:** We were looking for in the region of £45 million to take forward the digital, data and ICT strategy next year, and £169 million over a five-year period. Among the key components of work are the rolling out of mobile devices to the remaining police officers, moving ahead on more police systems and taking forward the body-worn video work that the force is looking to do. The figures are £45 million for next year and £169 million over the next five years.

**Margaret Mitchell:** As Mr Page suggested, any additional information would be very helpful.

11:30

**The Convener:** Time is not on our side. I have two very quick questions. The first is on a subject

that has already been alluded to in the evidence. I think that Mr Page talked about a strategic plan for policing. The Auditor General for Scotland has been recommending for several years that a workforce plan be developed, and I know that there have been recent moves on that. Why has it taken so long to get the matter concluded—if, indeed, it has been concluded?

**David Page:** That is a good question. Strategic workforce planning is a complex and challenging issue for all organisations. No one in policing across the entire UK has cracked that nut.

One of the key drivers for strategic workforce planning is demand data and, as part of the transformation work that we have been doing, we developed a demand and productivity unit a couple of years ago to start to get that set up. We were able to establish only a minimal viable product, because of the amount of investment that we were able to allocate to it. A good example of the constraints of a lack of investment is that we cannot get the demand data up to the level of quality that we would want to fully inform strategic workforce planning.

That said, policing is a very dynamic service. In a changing landscape, we need to take into account many different factors, including population growth and changing types of demand. We have to look at the consequences for policing of investment across other public services. Police Scotland acts as, in effect, a last resort when we go to calls that perhaps should be handled by other public sector bodies.

We have had some trouble and challenges in pulling in the data that we need and explaining the methodology. The chief constable has made it clear that that is a top priority for us. In November, we will take our strategic workforce plan to the SPA, and that will help to inform what the future of the policing service in Scotland looks like and what that means for the budget.

**The Convener:** I have another quick topical question. This week, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland published its report "Thematic Inspection of Police Scotland Training and Development—Phase 1", which found that Police Scotland is underinvesting in the training and development of officers and staff. It talked about the people strategy and said that

"priorities were made without the means or resources to deliver them".

You might wish to follow this up in writing, but will you confirm that the implementation of the people strategy was costed and what the spend has been to date?

**David Page:** The people strategy was costed. I will write to the sub-committee on the spend to date.

We are looking for the evidence for what the HMICS report said about leadership, because that is not our experience of the quality of the leadership and strategic thinking of the command team, our chief superintendents and our superintendents.

In relation to our success rate in the UK chief officer selection process, we do very well. Emotional intelligence, strategic thinking and strategic planning are some of the key criteria for chief officers, and our strike rate is incredibly good.

We are a bit surprised by the report's findings, so we would like to follow up with HMICS on the evidence base for the comments that were made. Our experience is different from what was reported.

**The Convener:** Some might say that the criteria for chief officers are quite a narrow measure.

**David Page:** That is one measure. We will reply to the sub-committee in full.

**The Convener:** It is fair to say that representations have been made to the sub-committee on that issue previously. It would be very helpful if you could provide information on the spend.

Is Lynn Brown aware of the SPA's oversight of the implementation of the people strategy?

**Lynn Brown:** I will start by giving some clarification on oversight, in its totality, of the HMICS recommendations. Over the past few months, we have had some really positive dialogue with HMICS. There have been improvements. For example, in order to raise awareness, HMICS presented its plan for the year at this week's audit, risk and assurance committee meeting, and it intends to come back at the year end once it has published its overall report, so there is the chance for that committee to ask questions.

At the same time, we are looking to have more proactive close down of HMICS recommendations on a range of issues. I want to reassure the sub-committee that we value the HMICS recommendations and its expertise, particularly in operational matters, and we are seeking to ensure that the recommendations are implemented.

Our resources committee receives reports on the people strategy, so, as I have said, it can assess against wellbeing and health and safety. That committee has been looking at how the strategy has been developed. At senior level, we have a succession planning and appointments

committee, which looks at issues relating to the chief officer and the people strategy. We will consider the report that HMICS has published and seek to ensure that the recommendations are implemented.

**The Convener:** That is very reassuring.

That completes our questions and concludes our evidence session. I thank Ms Brown, Mr Gray and Mr Page for their attendance, not least because of the change of time, and for providing evidence to the sub-committee. I thank them and members for their forbearance with some of the technical issues, which, I hope, were not too apparent to anyone who was watching. I am very grateful to the technical staff for their assistance.

The next meeting of the sub-committee will be on 8 October, when we will take evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Justice on the Scottish Government's police governance and accountability review. In the meantime, any follow-up scrutiny issues will be dealt with by correspondence, which, as ever, will be published on our website. As previously agreed, I move the meeting into private session.

11:37

*Meeting continued in private until 11:48.*





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