

Criminal Justice Committee
Wednesday 5 November 2025
29th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

Police Scotland and Scottish Police Authority – Pre-budget Scrutiny

Note by the Clerk

Introduction

1. Each year, subject committees in the Parliament carry out pre-budget scrutiny in advance of the publication of the Scottish Government's budget for the forthcoming financial year.
2. The aim is for the committees to collect evidence on spending priorities and make recommendations to the relevant Cabinet Secretary before the Scottish Government finalises its budget.
3. At this evidence session on the proposed 2025/26 budget, the Committee will hear from:
 - Chief Constable Jo Farrell, Deputy Chief Constable Alan Spiers, and Lynn Brown, Head of Finance, Police Scotland

Followed by

 - Fiona McQueen, Chair, Alasdair Hay, Vice Chair, and Chris Brown, Chief Executive and Accountable Officer, Scottish Police Authority
4. At subsequent meetings, the Committee plans to hear from other organisations within the criminal justice sector and then from the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs. Thereafter, the Committee will produce a short report with its recommendations.
5. The written submissions that have been submitted from the above organisations is set out in **Annex A** to this paper.
6. Other relevant submissions that may be of interest include:
 - [HM Inspector of Constabulary Scotland](#)
 - [Police Investigations and Review Commissioner](#)
 - [Scottish Police Federation](#)
 - [Association of Scottish Police Superintendents](#)

Focus of the Pre-budget Scrutiny

7. As with last year, the focus of the Criminal Justice Committee is a general one on the financial pressures on organisations in the criminal justice sector. Of particular interest to the Committee is the pressure on capital budgets and investment in policing, the fire and rescue services, prisons, courts, community justice, criminal social work and the third sector.

Action

8. Members are invited to discuss budget matters with the witnesses at today's meeting.

Clerks to the Committee
November 2025

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

SUBMISSION FROM POLICE SCOTLAND

Overview

Police Scotland has a 2030 vision to deliver safer communities, less crime, supported victims, and a thriving workforce.

Our vision was published in September 2024 with milestones we'll meet to build a digitally enabled and sustainable model which prioritises investment and support for the frontline to provide the visible, responsive, and effective service communities deserve and need to keep the people of Scotland safe.

Financial year 2026-27 is the final year of the first three-year business plan and policing can evidence strong progress to work more efficiently and thoughtfully with partners, and to prioritise our frontline.

Reform is an innovative and ambitious response to public finance challenges and policing in Scotland is an exemplar of reform, achieving efficiencies while protecting and improving services and enhancing professionalism.

Police Scotland's operational competence has been evidenced by our successful response during COVID-19, COP26, the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the visit of the US President, through our world leading murder detection rate and our improved approach to tackling violence against women and girls.

Recognising the acute pressure on public finances, we remain committed to further reform, using technology, prioritisation, and improved practices to eliminate bureaucracy, duplication, and inefficiency.

Continued efficiencies are reinvested to frontline services and are in the context of around £300m removed from the annual cost of policing following the establishment of Police Scotland, including through a workforce reduction from around 24,000 in 2013 to 22,500 now.

Over the same period, while overall crime has remained broadly flat, there has been significant growth in complex, digitally enabled and globally driven crime including reported sexual offending and fraud, for which Police Scotland has developed our response, as well as increased demand through new legislation.

Poverty, inequality, new and changing criminality, as well as recent and developing geo-political issues are driving vulnerability and harm, including the exploitation of children by organised crime groups and individuals, as well as civil unrest which has been demonstrated by weekly protests.

There are clear indications the rapidly intensifying operational environment is placing our reduced workforce under pressure and that policing performance is straining,

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

including the public's confidence to report crime and in policing's ability to reduce harm through prevention and proactivity.

These factors have informed the Chief Constable's professional view that urgent support is required to strengthen frontline services.

This will support us to strengthen our resilience against terrorism and organised crime, protect our children from online abuse and exploitation and continue to investigate "cold cases", and engage with public and fatal accident inquiries. Investment will enable us to successfully embed a strengthened community policing model across Scotland, vital to underpin our national and specialist response.

Investment in prevention and intervention is necessary to drive a shift from crisis response and head-off warning signs of social disengagement. Society and policing are an eco-system. Each element of this funding requirement is connected and dependent on the others and must be viewed as whole. Policing in Scotland is at a crossroads. Investment will support us to address pressures on social cohesion, confidence in policing, increased vulnerability and harm, and support our workforce to deliver for communities.

Police Scotland seeks investment in officer recruitment during 2026-27 and 2027-28, while continuing workforce modernisation which releases existing, experienced, officers to roles which need the powers of a constable.

We expect the additional national insurance and reform and modernisation £25.2m funding in 2025-26 will be baselined as part of our 2026-27 funding settlement. In addition, we require £79.7m of additional revenue funding to cover the recent pay award offer, non-pay inflation, new legislation and other unavoidable cost pressures. This means a minimum cash terms revenue uplift of £104.9m in 2026-27 is required.

With 86% of our revenue budget spent on pay, any funding allocation which does not provide that support would require immediate review of recruitment plans.

To strengthen frontline policing in Scotland, we seek a further cash terms revenue uplift of £33.7m, representing a 2.2% increase to our revenue budget in 2026-27, with continued support for the full year recurring costs in future years.

While we recognise the scale of this request in the context of current public finances, even with this in investment policing in Scotland would continue to exceed savings described by the outline business case for reform. Hard-won efficiencies already achieved, and which continue to be driven with rigour, have also offset the overall request by 500 officers.

We continue to seek more appropriate funding arrangements, through multi-year allocations to support long term planning, the ability to carry forward financial reserves and statutory borrowing powers to support capital investment.

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Public sector reform

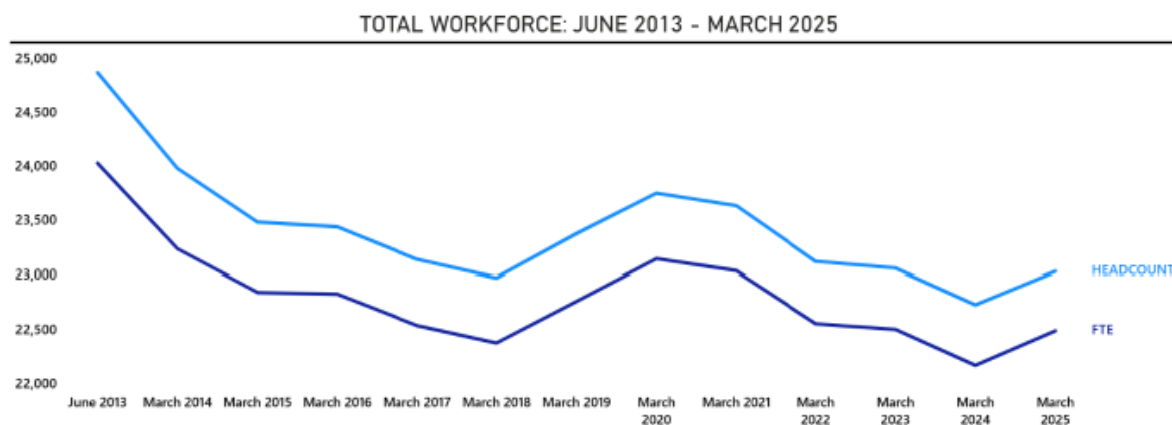
We welcome and support the Scottish Government's Public Sector Reform Strategy published in June and endorse and share the goal of delivering for Scotland more effectively and efficiently.

The strategy includes a challenge for the Scottish Government and public bodies to make significant savings in the next five years on the cost of corporate functions, with plans for a managed downward trajectory for the devolved public sector workforce in Scotland of an average 0.5 per cent per annum over five years, protecting frontline services.

Policing is encouraged that the establishment of a single national service was highlighted as a highly successful example of public sector reform in the strategy. Policing in Scotland is an exemplar of public service reform, achieving significant efficiencies while maintaining and improving services and enhancing organisational learning, professionalism and governance.

As a result of the funding allocations from the Scottish Government to policing since 2013, around £300 million has been removed from our annual cost base compared to legacy arrangements. Policing has delivered cumulative savings of over £2.5bn – more than double the outline business case for reform.

Policing in Scotland's workforce has reduced since 2013, including significant reductions at chief officer level and in the superintending ranks.



In September 2024, we outlined the next phase of Scottish policing reform which aligns strongly with the principles of the public reform strategy. This includes prioritisation of frontline services to deliver for communities, a stated commitment to working collaboratively with partners, and deploying AI enabled automation technologies to unlock capacity, reduce costs and improve the experience for citizens and staff.

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Delivering further efficiencies in policing

Our 2030 vision to deliver safer communities, less crime, supported victims, and a thriving workforce was published in September 2024, supported by our first three-year business plan outlining milestones for 2024-2027.

The vision provides the Service with a clear, aspirational direction of travel to shape our development and to align strategic decision making, prioritising the frontline.

A second three-year business plan taking us up to 2030 will be developed during 2027 which will inform our financial planning from year 2027-28 through to 2029-30. Significant workstreams as part of the 2030 vision are delivering improvements and efficiencies including:

- Changes to policy and consultation on shift changes to make more officers available for frontline deployments, including at weekends and on high demand days.
- A proportionate response to crime and an appropriate approach to direct measures, including recorded police warnings, so officers can focus on addressing threat, harm, risk and vulnerability.
- Stronger collaboration with health colleagues and the third sector including to refer more calls to health colleagues and to streamline in-community support for officers responding to instances of distress.
- Working with criminal justice partners to achieve improvements and efficiencies that reduce how often officers are cited for court but don't give evidence, along with the implementation of the Scottish Government's Digital Evidence Sharing Capability (DESC) which has saved time physically collecting evidence like CCTV on discs and pen drives by allowing files to be uploaded.
- The ongoing roll-out of body worn video which is helping to de-escalate incidents, reduce complaints, support officer and staff safety, and bring wider benefits to the criminal justice system.
- Continued development of Core Operational Solutions to allow officers and staff to access and share data across the country, while also reducing "double keying".

Workforce modernisation has allowed police staff members to undertake work which does not need warranted powers, allowing experienced officers to be released to support the frontline, including:

- Contact, Command and Control (C3) Division staff recruitment released 34 officers;
- National Firearms and Explosive Licensing staff recruitment released 44 officers while also removing work from 300 officers who carried out licensing work as part of their duties.

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Support for workforce modernisation during 2025-26 enabled the employment of 40 civilian investigators within Specialist Crime Division to make progress in relation to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service led inquiry into 4,823 Covid related deaths that occurred within a care setting, Operation Koper. The operation also leads and supports 16 Covid related prison deaths, all at the direction of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.

A further 26 police staff have been recruited and employed within the Professional Standards Department, where one of their key roles is working to address delays relating to complaints against the police. Their input has already resulted in a stabilisation of a queue of unallocated complaints and provided additional resources to handle ongoing matters.

Evaluation and assessment report that these investments, changes, improvements, and efficiencies have realised a demand reduction of over 600,000 hours between April 2023 and July 2025, with a recurring total annual hours projected saving of over 480,000.

These changes have released 91 actual officer roles, allowing experienced officers to strengthen the frontline in roles which require warranted powers. We expect further progress across these workstreams and others to release a further 70 officer roles, taking the total to 161 by April 2027.

It is also important to note that Police Scotland maintains vacancy management savings for police staff assumed at 5.4%, which equates to 338 FTE staff posts, additionally we are actively managing recruitment to take conscious decisions about which roles Police Scotland needs now, and in the future. Combined, this means Police Scotland currently has over 380 total police staff vacancies.

Constraints such as officer number expectations and a commitment to no compulsory redundancies have limited opportunities for building a workforce with the skills needed to strengthen the frontline, achieve efficiencies, release experienced officers to roles which require warranted powers and deliver on our vision.

Support for our workforce modernisation requirement will provide some flexibility to enable progress.

Policing in Scotland is currently subject of a joint Best Value audit by Audit Scotland and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland. We have a strong evidence base of delivering best value across vision and leadership; governance and accountability; effective use of resources; collaborations; working with communities; sustainability; and fairness and equality and we're sharing evidence with the audit team ahead of their reporting.

Policing in Scotland has built and will maintain a culture of self-challenge, with further areas being explored including local policing administrative support and our rank ratio.

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

However, many opportunities to achieve efficiencies, particularly within local policing, will be reinvested to support the strengthened community policing model and this has reduced the overall uplift request to strengthen the frontline. All decisions being taken are now difficult and with consequence. Policing's scope for delivering efficiencies and improvements should be viewed against the significant workforce reductions which have already occurred.

Crime, harm, demand, and emerging issues

There is a complex range of issues which affect communities across Scotland and officers and staff respond to a significant number of incidents where no crime has taken place.

Poverty and inequality contributes to harm and vulnerability, including negative impacts on the life chances of children, including through exploitation by organised crime.

In 2024-25, of the more than 1.5 million incidents raised, around 27% resulted in a crime being recorded. Many of these other incidents had a policing purpose such as a missing person, a sudden death or risk with a duty to protect life.

Levels of crime and demand are reported from the Scottish Government's Recorded Crime in Scotland publications and Police Scotland's 2024-25 Q4 Performance Report management information, unless otherwise stated.

While total recorded crime in Scotland has decreased significantly since it peaked in 1991, it has remained broadly flat in recent years, reducing by two per cent over the last 10 years, compared to a 36% reduction between 2005-06 and 2014-15.

Within this, there has been a 45% increase in sexual offences in the last 10 years including a 60% increase in rape and attempted rape. This includes reports of non-recent offending which can be highly complex and resource intensive investigations. While serious assault and attempted murder has decreased significantly over the 10-year period, excluding a Covid related dip in 2020-21, non-sexual crime of violence have increased by seven per cent from 2015-16 to 2024-25, driven by increases in common assault and including crimes under recorded under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, which saw a 26% year on year increase from 2023-24.

As well as increased recorded crime, policing is required to respond to new needs generated by legislation. For example, during 2024-25, 7,296 Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland (DSDAS) applications were submitted to Police Scotland, an increase of 23.4% overall. Power to Tell (PTT) applications increased by 14.5% (659 applications) and Right to Ask (RTA) applications increased by 38.3% (1,048 applications).

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Crimes of dishonesty have been on a long-term downward trajectory, however shoplifting, which is the single biggest offence in this area has been increasing sharply since Covid and there has been a 57% increase over the 10-year period.

There was a 106% increase over the 10-year period between 2015-16 and 2024-25, from 7,400 to 15,253 recorded fraud crimes.

The Scottish Government estimate that cyber-crimes accounted for at least five per cent of total recorded crime in 2024-25, including 27% of sexual crimes, seven per cent of crimes of dishonesty and three per cent of non-sexual crimes of violence. Online child sexual abuse and exploitation continues to be a significant concern, with increasing international referrals on behalf of internet service providers which must be investigated and actioned.

In addition to long term crime trends, global conflict, social and economic factors, and technological changes are contributing to changing crime trends, harm and civil unrest, which has been clear and rapid in recent months.

This includes extensive enquiries by a dedicated team of officers from our Specialist Crime Division, with support from a number of local divisions are ongoing as part of the investigation into targeted attacks in the East and West of the country under Operation Portaledge.

Policing continues to respond to increasing civil unrest, including anti-immigration protests focusing on hotels and counter demonstrations. These events are occurring within the context of ongoing public dialogue and protest in relation to Palestine and the proscription by the UK Government of 'Palestine Action Group'.

While unconnected to the primary purpose of the anti-immigration protests, there is a clear cross-over in causes, resulting in a complex policing environment and for challenging dynamics at protest sites.

Operation Roll 2 to facilitate the visit of the President to the United States of America to Scotland in July 2025 evidences the significant demand placed upon policing in Scotland, with over 6,000 officers, 1,200 colleagues from other police services and the military, over 150 staff and volunteers deployed, as well as significant planning at short notice.

Policing of additional football matches associated with increased European competition, high profile music events and protest has further increased demand on officers, with indications protests will continue to a high-level, with over 50 events per week. A significant policing operation is being planned to support the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2026.

Although a smaller sample period, our management information for the period April to June 2025, indicates a year-on-year increase in overall recorded crime. Other

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

developing areas include the prevalence of drug driving, with pilot programmes to provide officers with field drug test wipes, returning a majority of positive results.

Looking forward, our analysis suggests AI will be increasingly used to generate images of child sexual abuse, other non-consensual sexual images and fraud and disinformation campaigns supported by “deepfake technology”, while cyber warfare will continue with significant financial implications and risk to human life.

New legislation

Legislation which places responsibilities upon policing in Scotland creates costs which have not always been accurately described or illustrated in previous pre-budget evidence submissions. New legislation which has or has had an impact includes, but is not limited to:

- Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019
- Vulnerable Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2019
- Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021
- Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021
- The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (Licensing of Short-term Lets) Order 2022
- Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) (Scotland) Act 2025.

The relevant acts have been assessed to have a financial impact of £4.5m on policing for financial year 2026-27. The additional cost pressure to the organisation is expected to be £22.9m by 2028-29.

Workforce pressure

Although efficiencies are being delivered, this is in the context of a smaller workforce which continues to see daily abstraction for annual leave, absence and officers who cannot be deployed. There are clear indications our workforce continues to be under acute pressure.

In 2024-25, a total of 7,159 assaults against officers/staff have been recorded. This is an average of 20 assaults on officers and staff per day. Assaults against officers and staff have increased from the previous year (up 6.3%, 425 more) and five-year mean (up 3.4%, 232.4 more).

We know some officers are taking fewer and shorter periods of rest. As at the end of 2024-25, our time off in lieu balance was 25,127 hours, while our re-rostered rest day bank was at 28,265 days, illustrating a significant work debt to officers and staff. Officer overtime spend totalled £28.1m for the year - £2.9m or 12% higher than the approved budget. Overtime spend is running at £9.3m as at the end of July 2025 (excluding Operation Roll) - £2.0m higher than the same period last financial year.

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

In September 2024, the Criminal Justice Committee took evidence about wellbeing and mental health support for officers and staff.

Our workforce survey for 2024-25 was conducted last summer and received over 11,000 responses, an overall response rate of 51%. Responses to some questions suggest that officers, staff and volunteers feel under resourced to carry out their duties. Including:

- The statement "has sufficient people resource" scored very low, with an index score of 27%.
- The statement that officers and staff "have the support to rest and recharge from the demands of my job" scored low at 48%.
- The statement that "I have a workload that is manageable" scored low at 48%.

We are currently conducting our workforce survey for 2025-26 and expect to publish the findings later this year.

Performance pressure indicators

Although policing in Scotland has, and continues to, respond effectively to the most serious crimes there are indications that there is pressure on performance.

The Scottish Government's Crime and Justice Survey reported that a lower proportion of crimes were estimated to have been reported to the police when compared to 2019-20 and that the number of adults who believe the police in their local area were doing an "excellent" or "good" job had decreased from 61% in 2012-13 to less than half (45%) in the most recent survey. There were small decreases in confidence around our ability to prevent crime and to investigate incidents.

Public confidence in policing is essential to ensure our communities feel able to come forward to report crime and share information. The public's confidence in policing's ability to prevent crime and investigate incidents is deeply connected to social cohesion and the principle of policing with the public.

These considerations go to the heart of Police Scotland's purpose under the 2012 Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act to improve the safety and wellbeing of persons, localities and communities in Scotland, by policing in a way which is accessible to, and engaged with, local communities, and promotes measures to prevent crime, harm and disorder.

Our 2024-25 performance reporting highlights that, even although total number of incidents raised reduced by over three per cent compared to the previous year, the number which required an immediate police response increased from 177,778 immediate response incidents to 180,367. Immediate response incidents can require multiple police resources.

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

As our operating environment intensifies and requires a greater proportion of our resource for a reactive response, this further reduces our capacity for preventative and problem-solving policing which gets ahead of demand. In turn, this puts further pressure on social cohesion, storing up problems for the future, while eroding the confidence of the people we serve.

Efficiencies which realise demand reduction at times involve an element of demand management, and caution must be exercised to avoid creating barriers to the public when accessing police help.

Our communities, and policing, is an eco-system, and diminished confidence can lead to a reduced intelligence picture and increased barriers to future investigations. It is the professional judgement of the Chief Constable and her senior team that policing in Scotland is approaching a crossroads.

Strengthening the frontline

Transformation, efficiencies and workforce modernisation plays an important role in strengthening our frontline. Over 500 existing officers will be deployed to the model through transforming local policing, while 700 existing community officers will also be included in the model. This work means the additional investment to resource an 1800 officer community policing model is 600 officers.

We have a strong track record of scaling up recruitment to maintain our officer establishment against attrition of around 800 officers per year, and to build our workforce when funding is available.

Investment would enable sustained, smooth, and selective recruitment supported by a strong pipeline of candidates to significantly increase officer numbers over the next two years.

At the same time, we seek continued support at a similar level to the current year for a programme of workforce modernisation which employs skilled police staff to release officers to roles which need warranted powers and which achieves efficiencies or delivers additional capability.

The combination of a stronger officer establishment, experienced officers freed-up from jobs which don't require the powers of a police officer and the right police staff members doing the right jobs, will enable us to deliver an enhanced community policing model, develop our counter terrorism capabilities, protect Scotland from organised crime and online harm, while providing necessary resource for non-recent investigations and inquiries.

Strengthening community policing

Over a period of years, local policing has taken on further responsibilities or given up resources to allow effective additional services to be delivered and we must now act to strengthen community policing. We know local police appointments are too often

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

rearranged or cancelled or investigations not progressed quickly enough because of competing demands.

A key element of our vision to deliver safer communities, less crime, supported victims, and a thriving workforce is the implementation of a strengthened community policing model.

Our enhanced community policing model has been developed based on the findings of hundreds of interviews with officers, staff, partners and members of the public and through an industry standard service design approach.

Community Policing Teams will provide high visibility patrols, emphasising prevention and local problem solving; proactively target and address root causes of community issues to reduce crime and disorder; and work closely with partners to support and safeguard vulnerable people and groups, while supporting community engagement and participation.

A Community Investigation Hub will coordinate and manage non-urgent demand, carry out investigations and operational tasks for less serious incidents. This can include collecting CCTV, phone enquiries, door to door, interviewing suspects and obtaining statements for example.

The model is closely supported by an improved approach to national and local public protection which places victim experience at its heart, keeps the focus on operational policing, with an emphasis on strong, ongoing collaboration with partners.

We are phasing-in this model, beginning in Forth Valley (C) Division in the coming weeks, to provide identifiable community officers, work with partners and the public to solve problems and prevent crime, while delivering victim-centred policing.

Strengthening the frontline will enable national implementation of this model by the end of 2027-28, with an additional 600 frontline officers for communities in Scotland. Enhanced community policing is essential to nurture our relationships with the public we serve, essential to maintain the confidence to report crime, assist investigations, provide intelligence and to ensure the principle of policing by consent.

An investment in community policing is an investment in the wellbeing, safety, and cohesion of our communities.

Counter terrorism and capabilities to tackle serious and organised crime

International conflict and geopolitics is driving a heightened assessment of terrorism and counter state threats as well as unrest and protest, all of which has implications for policing resources.

This has been illustrated by Terrorism Act investigations, as well as enforcement in relation to support for a proscribed organisation. The changing demographic of those

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

involved in online and physical terrorist offences continues to evolve with a focus on young people being radicalised at an increasing pace.

Criminals increasingly exploit digital platforms and on a global basis, with serious and organised crime which manifests in violence on the streets of Scotland, co-ordinated from foreign territories and with cryptocurrencies used to facilitate transactions.

Policing must invest to ensure Scotland is a hard target for international criminality, while building the reach and capabilities to identify those driving harm in our communities and work with partners nationally and internationally to secure evidence and bring them to justice.

At the same time, we must continually develop our covert capabilities, including surveillance, to disrupt and detect offending on our communities. We know that these tactics and capabilities, deployed under strict approvals and subject to rigorous scrutiny including through the Investigatory Powers Commissioner, can and do save lives.

Strengthening the frontline will enable us to deliver officers and staff in roles such as counter terrorism, child protection, digital forensics, cyber and fraud, forensic accounting, cryptocurrency specialists, data scientists, and intelligence officers.

Strengthening major crime and public protection

Police Scotland must strengthen our capacity and capability to respond effectively to non-recent investigations and to fully engage with public and fatal accident inquiries when they occur.

Non-recent crime investigations have significant operational and financial implications due to the complexities of the cases and the resource demands of setting up a dedicated team, as well as potential legal costs.

Recent and ongoing investigations include the review of covid deaths in care homes, indecent assaults and murder investigations.

Strengthening the frontline will allow us to meet these increased demands, effectively engage with inquiries, and secure answers for victims and their families.

Budget requirements 2026-27

The additional budget required in 2026-27 to successfully embed an enhanced community policing model across Scotland, and strengthen our resilience against terrorism and organised crime is summarised below:

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Baseline adjustment - £25.2m

Additional funding was received in-year for changes to employer national insurance contributions and reform and modernisation. This requires to be baselined into the core revenue budget for 2026-27 onwards (£25.2m).

Savings in 2026-27 - £3.3m

Non-pay savings of £3.3m have been factored in across our digital and estates budgets for 2026-27. This represents 1.5% of the current non-pay budget which is already very lean for an organisation of our size and when compared to other UK wide police services.

Current commitments and new legislation – £83.0m

- Workforce pay accounts for 86% of total revenue spending. A headline 4% pay offer for 2025-26 and headline 3.5% pay offer for 2026-27 plus changes to maternity terms and conditions was made at the end of July.
- If accepted, this would create a recurring revenue pressure of £61.6m. Any changes to pay award assumptions would require additional funding to ensure the sustainability of the service. Each additional 1% pay increase would require an additional £13.0m of additional recurring funding.
- Non-pay inflation presents a £4.5m pressure across non-pay budgets, other unavoidable cost pressures of £7.4m are also anticipated.
- It is estimated that new legislation will create an additional £4.5m cost pressure in 2026-27.
- In addition to the above, significant legal costs are anticipated as a result of ongoing and upcoming public inquiries. For example, the Public Inquiry into the death of Sheku Bayoh has resulted in costs to Police Scotland of over £25m.

Additional investment to strengthen frontline policing - £33.7m

Additional funding is required to strengthen community policing, counter terrorism, online harm, non-recent investigations and public inquiries, ongoing digital and cyber priorities and a roll out of criminal toxicology across the organisation. This includes:

- Maximise officer recruitment during 2026-27 and 2027-28 - £8.1m in 2026-27 and a further £17.5m in 2027-28. Full year recurring cost by 2029-30 £53.5m.
- Workforce modernisation (staff) - £16.2m in 2026-27 and a further £5.1m in 2027/28. Full year recurring cost by 2029/20 £23.7m.
- Additional costs associated with maximising recruitment, workforce modernisation and additional non-pay costs (£2.4m).
- Investment in priority digital and cyber capabilities (£5.8m)
- A roll out of Criminal Toxicology across the organisation - initial uplift in funding of £1.2m, expected to rise in future years.

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Capital expenditure: £93.9m

Detailed capital planning is ongoing to prioritise and align spending across estates, fleet, technology and operational policing. The changing nature of technology is also resulting in increased revenue costs, for example moving to annual renewals rather than a traditional perpetual licensing model.

Estates In line with our masterplan for police buildings, we are shifting toward land purchase and building with retained building upgrades and custody and production hubs a focus during 2026-27.

Fleet The ongoing replacement of our marked and unmarked vehicles, including the continued development of ultra-low emission fleet. We aim to maintain our vehicles at four years old or 120,000 miles.

Technology Key priorities during 2026-27 include the ongoing roll out of body worn video and further improvements to our Core Operating Systems as well as criminal history and intelligence databases along with the ongoing modernisation of our contact systems to provide a more responsive and user-focused service with self-service options. We want to continue to invest in AI-driven automation which eliminates duplication and improves processes.

Capital profile		26-27 £m	27-28 £m	28-29 £m	29-30 £m
Rolling Replacement	Digital	22.5	14.7	14.1	15.1
	Fleet	15.2	16.6	12.3	13.0
	Operational policing	20.1	12.1	11.7	17.4
	Estates	24.0	67.8	77.3	60.4
	Forensics	3.7	2.9	2.9	2.9
Transformation change capital		8.4	12.0	9.2	8.7
Transforming command and control		-	12.2	20.0	20.0
Criminal toxicology		-	8.3	-	-
TOTAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE		93.9	146.6	147.5	137.5

In addition to the above, we expect ongoing support from Scottish Government to fund the roll out of the Emergency Service Mobile Communications Programme

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

(ESMCP) which will replace the existing Airwave network with a new mobile network providing secure voice and broadband data services to emergency services. This is in addition to our core capital allocation.

Scenario modelling

As part of our budget submission, we have considered three potential funding scenarios. Each assumes that a £25.2m baseline adjustment will be made to reflect the additional funding provided in 2025-26 for national insurance and reform and modernisation.

Strengthening the frontline

Baseline adjustment	Additional funding 2026-27	Strengthen frontline funding Future years	Impact
+£25.2m	+£113.4m 2026-27	+£22.7m 2027-28 +£12.5m 2028-29 Full year recurring pay cost £77.2m by 2029-30	Funding for: 850 Officers 348 staff

Current commitments only and new legislation (unavoidable cost pressures)

Baseline adjustment	Additional funding	FTE equivalent
+£25.2m	+£79.7m	~300 FTE workforce modernisation savings to be identified

While this increase would cover the cost of known commitments and cost pressures, it would not fund a strengthened community model, counter terrorism, or strengthen our response to tackling organised crime and online harm. Additionally, savings would be required to cover the £17m costs associated with the current workforce modernisation plans.

Flat cash

Baseline adjustment	Additional funding	Unavoidable cost pressures	FTE equivalent
+£25.2m	-	£79.7m	1,362 FTE Plus ~300FTE workforce modernisation savings

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Flat cash assumes the baseline adjustment for national insurance contributions and reform and modernisation only. The immediate impact of a flat cash revenue funding settlement would be a significant slowdown of police officer and staff recruitment. Even if all recruitment was stopped from January 2026, we could not meet the savings required under a flat cash scenario.

This would have an immediate impact on communities across Scotland and our ability to keep people safe now and in the future. The ability to deliver change and transformation programmes, and our three-year year business plan commitments, would be severely impacted as our reform funding would have to be repurposed to support the required workforce reductions, for example voluntary redundancy and voluntary early retirement exit costs.

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH POLICE AUTHORITY

Introduction

The Scottish Police Authority is the primary governance body for policing in Scotland and was established as a public body on 1 April 2013 by the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. It is independent of both the Scottish Government and policing.

It was set up to hold the Chief Constable to account; promote, support and oversee improvement in policing. It is also responsible for the management and delivery of Forensic Services in Scotland and Independent Custody Visiting Scotland.

The Authority allocates the policing budget and monitors Police Scotland's spending to ensure it aligns with the budget and financial strategy.

We welcome the opportunity to submit our views as part of the Criminal Justice Committee's pre-budget scrutiny process.

General Comment

This submission sets out the context in which the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland are developing the policing budget for 2026-27. The submission highlights the Authority's ambition for developing a budget that is supported by a clear rationale, achievable within the agreed timescales, and presented with outcomes and consequences clearly outlined for public understanding and effective Authority oversight.

The Authority is fully sighted on Police Scotland's separate submission to the committee which outlines the Chief Constable's professional operational perspective on the budgetary requirement and priorities for policing in the year ahead. This is an essential perspective and the Authority respects and supports the Chief Constable's insight and independence. We are working closely with the Chief Constable, her leadership team and the Accountable Officer to understand the actions required and implications of delivering it within a challenging 2-year timeframe.

Police Scotland's submission lays bare a challenging and complex operating environment for policing. While crime trends overall continue to fall, these statistics do not reflect rapidly evolving operating environment. This environment is placing unsustainable demand and pressure on the workforce, impacting performance and affecting public confidence. The Authority supports a more preventative community policing approach to help mitigate these pressures. In addition, policing is being called upon to police civil unrest and divided communities as a result of geo-political challenges. Significantly more resources are currently required and being invested in maintaining order and preventing conflict. Getting ahead of this will be a key challenge.

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Context

The Authority recognises the difficult fiscal environment within which budget discussions are taking place. The Scottish Government's Public Sector Reform Strategy, published in June 2025, sets a clear and unequivocal ambition for more effective and efficient public services. The Strategy sets out commitments to change the system of public services - to be preventative, more joined up and efficient - in order to better deliver for people. We share these principles.

Policing's journey of reform began in 2013 and has delivered £300 million per year of budgetary savings through economies of scale and efficiencies – a significant saving to the public purse. Reform has continued with further efficiency achieved by prioritising services where the greatest threat, risks and harms exist; strengthening partnerships and rolling out technology to improve services provided to the public and through continued efforts to eliminate inefficiency and duplication. It is the Authority's position that further significant savings are not achievable in this context without significant reductions in the workforce.

In 2024, the Chief Constable set out her 2030 Vision to deliver safer communities, less crime, supported victims and a thriving workforce. This vision is fully supported by the Authority, and provides a roadmap to a more effective, efficient and responsive police service in Scotland which aims to strengthen the frontline. The pace at which policing travels towards this vision is dependent on the policing budget – efficiencies made by the service, as well as continued service modernisation and changing practices. Increasing investment would facilitate quicker delivery of improvements.

In considering the Chief Constable's perspective and our support for the 2030 Vision, the Authority would highlight the following points in relation to budgeting requirements for 2026-27:

Revenue

The Scottish Police Authority set a revenue budget for policing in Scotland of £1,480.6 million for 2025-26. Policing requires an additional £104.9m in 2026-27 to maintain the status quo. This incorporates the baselining of £25.2m received in 2025-26 and £79.7m of additional revenue to cover recent pay awards, non-pay inflation, new legislation and other unavoidable cost pressures.

The Chief Constable has set out her view of the budget required to progress her 2030 Vision to strengthen the frontline, address operational pressures and continue to prioritise threat, risk and harm. This represents a further 2.2% cash terms revenue uplift of £33.7m for 2026-27, requiring continued support for recurring costs in future years.

The Authority is working closely with Police Scotland to seek assurance around the timescales, outcomes and consequences which will inform a budget being set in

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

March 2026. We expect the Chief Constable to communicate the budget and policing approach for the year ahead transparently and to demonstrate that any risks and implications of recruiting at pace, clearly outweigh the risks of not doing so. In addition, we will expect:

- Setting a balanced budget that the Chief Constable is confident will keep people safe, and the Accountable Officer is confident can be delivered.
- Clear outcomes that explain what the budget will deliver supported by performance indicators to track, monitor and measure progress.
- Defined efficiencies factored into the budget with explanation of how they are being reinvested.
- A robust recruitment profile demonstrating how an increase in officer numbers can be safely achieved within the timeframes.
- A clear understanding of the risks, dependencies and implications of enhanced officer recruitment on standards and other parts of the policing system, for example vetting, training or local policing.

Capital

The Authority recognises that there is unprecedented demand across the public sector for capital funding. However, underinvestment in the police estate and technology remains one of the most pressing investment issues for policing. Borrowing powers lost in creating a single service has exasperated this position. We continue to seek more appropriate funding arrangements, through multi-year allocations to support long term planning, the ability to carry forward financial reserves, statutory borrowing powers or a mutual investment model to support capital investment.

At this stage in the planning process, the Authority anticipates a need for £93.9m capital investment in 2026/27 to deliver the basic rolling replacement programme of fleet, systems and policing equipment. This does not yet include investment that may be required should the demand for criminal toxicology services for drug driving continue to grow.

This compares with a forecast spend of £71m in 2025/26.

Over the next 4-years we anticipate net capital additional requirement of circa £245.5m related mainly to additional spend on the estate, incremental to current budget levels. We recognise that this is a significant financial outlay at a time of considerable fiscal constraint, however the introduction of borrowing powers as described above could reduce the pressure on capital funding, along with the retention of capital receipts.

Forensic Services & SPA Corporate

The Committee will understand from previous budgetary processes that the policing budget covers three distinct parts of policing. In addition to the budget requirement

ANNEX A: SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

for Police Scotland, the Authority also requires to allocate a budget to Forensic Services and its own corporate function to support governance and oversight arrangements.

Forensic Services are being delivered at a cost of £47.4 million in the current 2025-26 financial year. This represents 3.2% of overall policing budget and while work remains ongoing, we don't expect this percentage to significantly change in the year ahead. Forensic Services remains committed to driving further efficiencies in their own activities.

Notwithstanding this, the prevalence of drug driving in Scotland is a significant concern for policing and placed considerable demands for drug driving toxicology services. Forensic Services has continued to meet the increasing demand utilising inhouse capital and outsourcing services. Police Scotland anticipate enhanced enforcement to counter prevalence which will require Forensic Services to further outsource until a long-term solution can be progressed.

Forensic Services and Police Scotland have been working to develop options for a long-term sustainable model that can meet this demand in the future. While options are still being fully explored and costed, we expect this to require additional revenue and capital funding from 2027 onwards.

The third element of the policing budget we would highlight, are the costs associated with the governance and oversight of policing. The Authority's corporate function supports the Board in its oversight and scrutiny of policing and delivers a range of statutory functions covering complaint and conduct matters and an independent custody visiting scheme. The corporate function was allocated 0.4% (£5.5m) of the policing budget in 2025/26. This included internal and external audit fees for the overall policing system. When benchmarked against other similar policing oversight bodies, this reflects favourably.

The Authority has delivered savings during 2025-26 through reducing its office and utilities costs which amount to circa £300,000 (5.5%) per annum. The Authority does not expect its budget requirement to change in the year ahead; however, we remain committed to driving further efficiencies in our own activities.

Summary

The Authority will continue to support and promote policing while working closely with Police Scotland in the development of a budget for 2026-27 and beyond. The budget must deliver an effective policing service for Scotland's communities, properly resourced and aligned with the Chief Constable's vision, in an increasingly challenging and complex operating environment.