

3.0 THE SCOTTISH POLICE AUTHORITY BOARD

3.1 The meeting of SPA Board was held on the 26 September 2024

<https://www.spa.police.uk/what-we-do/governance-meetings/board-meeting/26-september-2024/>

and considered several updates, including: -

- Road safety campaign
- Take Five campaign
- Student safety
- Criminal justice reform
- Policing's role in mental health - mental health index

3.2 Road safety campaign

Police Scotland conducted a campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of speeding. The campaign featured a video highlighting the consequences of losing control due to excessive speed. The campaign's message was clear: speeding is a risk, and even a moment of inattention can lead to a fatal accident. Police Scotland emphasised their commitment to road safety and their ongoing efforts to educate and enforce road traffic laws.

3.3 Take Five campaign

Police Scotland is participating in the national Take Five campaign to raise awareness about financial fraud. The campaign emphasises the importance of "Stop, Challenge, Protect" when dealing with suspicious financial requests. As part of the campaign, the Cybercrime Harm Prevention team supported a physical space called the Stop Inn in Glasgow. The Stop Inn used mind-reading technology to demonstrate how taking a moment to focus can prevent falling victim to scams. Officers used this opportunity to engage with the public and reinforce the message of staying alert and cautious against potential fraud.

3.4 Student safety

Police Scotland is actively working to ensure the safety of students at universities and colleges across Scotland. Officers have been visiting campuses to provide crime prevention advice and information to students. This includes guidance on acquisitive crime, violence, domestic abuse, and other potential risks. Police Scotland is also using social media to share safety tips and engage with students. The goal is to help students stay safe and aware of potential threats during their studies.

3.5 Criminal justice reform

Chief Constable (CC) Jo Farrell highlighted the success of a pilot summary case management process aimed at improving the efficiency of the criminal justice system. The pilot, launched in 2022, has led to a significant reduction in summary trials requiring court dates. The decision has been made to expand this process to all courts in Scotland.

The Chief Constable emphasised the negative impact of criminal justice inefficiencies on Police Scotland's operations, overtime costs, and officer well-being. Over 500 officers are called to court daily, with many not required to give evidence. The associated overtime costs are significant, including those for officers on annual leave. CC Farrell expressed her satisfaction with the progress made through the summary case management process but stressed the need for further improvements and efficiencies throughout the entire criminal justice system.

3.6 Policing's role in mental health - mental health index

Police Scotland has established a mental health taskforce to improve the handling of mental health cases. A key development is the launch of a mental health index, designed to connect officers with appropriate mental health support quickly and efficiently. The index allows officers to consult with clinicians in their area to determine the best course of action when dealing with

individuals experiencing high-level distress. This can significantly reduce the time spent in emergency departments.

Examples have shown that the mental health index can be used effectively to resolve mental health concerns within a short timeframe, often over the phone. This can lead to significant savings in officer time compared to traditional approaches involving emergency department visits. The launch of the index is expected to provide a more consistent and efficient approach to mental health triage processes.

4.0 EMERGENCY SERVICES UNITE WITH NHS TO ENHANCE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

A partnership between NHS 24, Police Scotland, and the Scottish Ambulance Service has created the Mental Health Pathway to streamline mental health support in Scotland. Individuals seeking urgent mental health assistance can now contact the NHS 24 Mental Health Hub (111) 24/7. Non-emergency mental health calls to 999 are also referred to the Hub.

The pathway ensures patients receive appropriate care from mental health professionals, reducing the need for emergency services in non-emergency cases. This benefits patients, police, and ambulance staff. Police Scotland has reported that officer hours have been redirected to core policing, and 99% of officers feel confident making referrals through the pathway.

The Mental Health Pathway is seen as a valuable addition to existing mental health services, providing better outcomes for individuals and communities while improving efficiency and resource allocation.

5.0 HMICS – POLICE RESPONSE TO MISSING PERSONS

5.1 The HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) conducted an inspection to assess the police response to missing persons in Scotland. The inspection involved interviews, focus groups, and a review of police records and practices. The report highlights positive police practices but also offers recommendations to improve the response to missing persons and support for their families. The main recommendations for improvement are:

- Developing a mobile-friendly version of the national missing persons application.
- Strengthening partnerships with other organisations involved in missing persons cases.
- Improving communication with families and carers.
- Coordinating return discussions and safe and well checks.
- Regularly evaluating the effectiveness of missing persons operations.

These recommendations aim to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of police operations concerning missing persons cases.

The report is available to view at <https://www.hmics.scot/publications/thematic-inspection-of-police-response-to-missing-persons-in-scotland/>

6.0 CONSULTATION ON HMICS SCRUTINY PLAN 2025-28

6.1 The HM Inspectorate for Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) is conducting a consultation to gather input for its upcoming 3-year scrutiny plan. HMICS is seeking feedback from stakeholders, including communities served by Police Scotland and the SPA, on key issues impacting policing in Scotland. The goal is to identify areas that would benefit from scrutiny by HMICS and to inform the development of the 3-year plan.

The online questionnaire is available on the HMICS website [Help us to shape the future of policing in Scotland \(Page 1 of 3\)](#) . Closing date for the questionnaire is **29th November 2024**.

6.2 A draft response has been prepared in consultation with Inverclyde Elected Members, including the chair of Inverclyde Local Police and Fire Scrutiny Panel. This draft response is presented in Appendix 1 of this report.

7.0 VISIT TO SFRS OPERATIONS CONTROL ROOM

7.1 Scottish Fire and Rescue held an event for the Inverclyde Police and Fire Scrutiny Panel on Tuesday 10 September 2024, at the Operations Control Room in Johnstone. The focus of the event was to provide an overview of the control room which is the is first point of contact when you dial 999 to report an emergency. The event was attended by several members of the Panel and the service was thanked by the Convenor of the Panel for hosting the informative event.

8.0 200 YEARS OF SFRS CELEBRATION

8.1 The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) celebrated its 200th anniversary with a special event in Edinburgh on 23 October 2024. Founded in 1824, the SFRS was the world's first municipal fire service. To commemorate this milestone, the SFRS hosted a day of celebration that included a service at St Giles' Cathedral, a rededication of the James Braidwood statue, and a civic reception. While the service itself was closed to the public, there was be a public display of firefighters, fire appliances, and the SFRS Pipe Band in Parliament Square. The service was live streamed on YouTube.

9.0 FIREWORKS SAFETY CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

9.1 The Scottish Government and the SFRS launched a Fireworks Safety campaign ahead of Bonfire Night. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the dangers of fireworks misuse and the rules for safe use. The campaign emphasises the importance of being considerate of others and the legal restrictions on firework use, especially for minors. The campaign provides resources such as a stakeholder toolkit and social media materials to help spread awareness and promote safety.

10.0 INVERCLYDE POLICE & FIRE SCRUTINY PANEL LETTER TO POLICE SCOTLAND

10.1 At the 19 September meeting of this panel a request was made for the Chair of the panel to consider a response to the HMICS 'Frontline Focus – Wellbeing' inspection report, which recognises members support for the recommendations within the report aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of police personnel and a willingness to consider them within local political-decision making where applicable and appropriate.

10.2 Following consideration of this request, a letter was issued by the Chair of Inverclyde Local Police and Fire Scrutiny Panel on the 25 October 2024 to the Chief Constable and the Local Policing Commander for Renfrewshire and Inverclyde to express the views of the Panel on this matter. A copy of the letter is presented within Appendix 2 of this report.

11.0 IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial		X
Legal/Risk		X
Human Resources		X
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)		X
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights & Wellbeing		X
Environmental & Sustainability		X
Data Protection		X

11.2 Finance

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

11.3 Legal/Risk

There are no legal/risk implications contained within this report.

11.4 Human Resources

There are no human resource implications contained within this report.

11.5 Strategic

There are no strategic implications contained within this report.

12.0 CONSULTATION

12.1 There were no consultations required outside those noted in the report.

13.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 None

Appendix 1 – Draft response to HMICS Consultation on future scrutiny plan

1. Please tell us in your opinion where scrutiny from HMICS could add the most value and why?

Inverclyde Council believes that HMICS could add value by focusing on the following areas:

- **Drug Harm Reduction:** Substance misuse, particularly synthetic opioids, remains a significant public health issue in Inverclyde. The police play a key role in addressing the harms associated with drug use, including crime, disorder, and health risks. The planned HMICS thematic inspection on this area could evaluate the effectiveness of police strategies for reducing drug-related harm, such as partnerships with health services, harm reduction initiatives, and enforcement activities.
- **Community Policing and Public Trust:** Building trust between the police and the community is essential for effective local policing. Inverclyde Council places a high priority on community policing initiatives to address local concerns and improve public safety. An inspection could assess the quality of community policing in Scotland, including level of resource, visibility, responsiveness, and the effectiveness of community engagement programs.
- **Use of Technology in Policing:** The use of technology is increasingly important in modern policing. An inspection could evaluate the use of technology by Police Scotland, including body-worn cameras, crime analysis tools, and digital evidence management systems.
- **Protecting Vulnerable Groups:** Protecting vulnerable groups is a key aim for Inverclyde Council. An HMICS inspection could assess Police Scotland's strategies for safeguarding vulnerable individuals, including the identification of at-risk persons, prevention of exploitation, response to incidents of abuse, and the process of sharing that information with relevant local authority services. The planned inspections around Adult Support and Protection and Services for Children at Risk of Harm will certainly contribute towards this theme.
- **Violence Prevention (Including Gender-Based Violence):** Reducing violence, including gender-based violence, is an objective for Inverclyde Council. A multi-agency approach is essential for addressing violence prevention. Continuing HMICS inspections on themes such as Domestic Abuse could evaluate Police Scotland's role in preventing violence, including the investigation of violent crimes, enforcement of bail conditions, and support for victims of violence.
- **Information Sharing Practices:** Effective information sharing between Police Scotland, Inverclyde Council, and other relevant agencies is influential for addressing crime and community safety issues. An HMICS inspection could evaluate the quality of information sharing practices, including the timeliness, accuracy, and security of information exchange. There is also a need to consider the consistency of information sharing across the country as the process seems to vary by division.

2. Are there any significant new or emerging issues in policing that we should consider when we inspect policing in Scotland?

- **Cybercrime and Online Harms:** The rise in cybercrime, including online fraud, cyberbullying, child exploitation, and sextortion is a serious challenge for modern policing. Police Scotland's capacity to deal with digital crimes, as well as the adequacy of training and resources allocated to specialised cybercrime units, should be a key focus area
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** As policing increasingly uses AI, there are concerns about bias, fairness, and transparency in these technologies. Scrutiny should focus on how Police Scotland is integrating AI, ensuring it is used ethically, and evaluating its impact on public trust and decision-making processes.
- **Drug-related Crime and County Lines Activity:** The rise of county lines drug networks and practices such as cuckooing, where criminal groups exploit vulnerable individuals is an emerging issue in many parts of the UK and something we are aware of happening within Inverclyde. Policing efforts to tackle this exploitation and protect vulnerable individuals from being drawn into criminal activity could be scrutinised.
- **Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control:** While domestic abuse has been a long-standing issue, recent legislative changes around coercive control highlight the need for policing strategies that focus on more nuanced forms of abuse. The future planned inspections in this area should consider how Police Scotland is adapting to new laws and providing adequate training to officers on these issues.
- **Hate Crime and Racial Tensions:** As Scotland's diversity grows, so too has the potential for hate crimes. It will be important to assess Police Scotland's handling of hate crime reports, training, and community engagement to ensure effective response and build trust.

Our Ref: IC/PFSP/DW

Your Ref:

Date: 25/10/2024

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Dear Chief Constable Farrell

Support for HMICS Recommendations

I am writing to you today as Convener of the Inverclyde Council Local Police and Fire Scrutiny Panel in response to the recent report published by the HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) regarding the wellbeing of officers and staff within Police Scotland. We appreciate the thorough examination, and the valuable recommendations outlined in the report.

As a local authority, we recognise the critical importance of supporting our police service in delivering high-quality, effective, and responsive services to our communities. We want to reiterate our full support for the recommendations made by HMICS, particularly those aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of police personnel and advancing a culture of open communication and support within the organisation.

We understand that the wellbeing of officers and staff is paramount not only for their personal health but also for the overall effectiveness of policing in our area. Therefore, we commit to taking cognisance of these recommendations in our local political decision-making processes, where applicable and appropriate. We believe that by aligning our efforts with the HMICS recommendations, we can contribute to a more supportive environment for our police service, ultimately benefiting the communities we serve.

We look forward to collaborating with the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland to ensure that these recommendations are implemented effectively, and that the wellbeing of our police personnel remains a priority.

Thank you for your continued dedication to improving policing in Scotland.

Yours sincerely

David Wilson
Convener of the Inverclyde Local Police and Fire Scrutiny Panel

CC: Chief Superintendent Gordon McCreadie