



# Scottish Police Federation

5 Woodside Place Glasgow G3 7QF

## JCC Circular 44 of 2017

Ref: CS/KB

3 November 2017

Attachments: SPF response

Dear Colleague

### **Justice Subcommittee – Financial Planning by the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) and the Police Service of Scotland (PSoS) for 2018-19**

Please find attached self-explanatory documentation for your information.

Yours sincerely

**Calum Steele**  
General Secretary



## SCOTTISH POLICE FEDERATION

Established by Act of Parliament

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Justice Committee  
Room T2.60  
The Scottish Parliament  
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EH99 1SP

Ref: CS/KB

3 November 2017

By email to: [diane.barr@parliament.scot](mailto:diane.barr@parliament.scot)

Dear Ms Barr

### **Justice Subcommittee – Financial Planning by the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) and the Police Service of Scotland (PSoS) for 2018-19**

I refer to the above and to your correspondence dated 26<sup>th</sup> October and thank you for inviting the Scottish Police Federation (SPF) to contribute to the work of the Subcommittee.

It is with considerable regret that the SPF has to advise that the position we articulated at Committee on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and 20<sup>th</sup> April 2017, insofar as they related to lack of involvement in any discussions with either the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) or the Police Service of Scotland (PSoS) around the budget, prevail for the financial planning for 2018-19.

The position now is like then. The SPF continues to have general awareness of the financial issues through our own experiences and publicly available documents and commentary but specific detail is not made known to us. It is worth highlighting that whilst the SPF recognises that the SPA and PSoS do not have budgetary clarity for 18/19, analogous to the position that prevailed in November 2016 for the year ahead, that even once that clarity was provided, the SPF was not involved in subsequent discussions on how the budget was to be utilised.

We trust the Committee recognises therefore that our contributions can largely be little more than observational when it comes to financial details albeit we consider our observations should be taken seriously.

In absence of budget specifics the SPF wishes to highlight the following areas which touch upon the impact of reduced funding on the delivery of policing. Were the SPF submission to detail the impacts in their entirety, this submission could run to several hundred pages in length.

## **Custody Capacity**

The SPF recognises that the move to a dedicated custody division within the PSoS has meant that the care and attention provided to those in custody has never been greater. That being said and whilst the “cell care” is greatly improved there can be absolutely no doubt that wider issues associated with custody care have diminished significantly and it is arguable that as a consequence the human rights of prisoners are being ignored.

It is an inevitable reality of policing across the world that the behaviour of individuals can be such as to necessitate their being locked up by the police. No amount of ideology in terms of diversionary or multi agency approaches will change that.

The significant reduction in geographical locations in which prisoners can be held (without restriction of provision) has created circumstances where prisoners are now routinely conveyed over vast distances to be accommodated in cells. Many prisoners are now conveyed for longer than could arguably be considered acceptable whilst in handcuffs, or insecure in a cage in the back of a police vehicle. This is a practice that prevails from the time of the original “lock up,” as well as the now almost routine ritual of shunting prisoners from one custody holding facility to another.

Such is the pressure created by fewer custody facilities that the finding of a cell in the first place does not represent the full scale of the challenges faced by police officers. The inherently wasteful realities of spending hours with prisoners to find cells should be self-evident but the problems do not end there. Once at a custody facility waiting times of several hours to process prisoners are not uncommon and this inevitably creates internal friction over who “owns” the processing responsibility if the prisoner came from out with the area.

Travelling these distances and delays at centres resulting in prisoners being kept in cages or handcuffs for even longer create considerable stress for police officers as well as stress for prisoners. Even the patience and good will of the most compliant prisoner can be tested in these circumstances which increases the risk of assault and injury to police officers as well as the inevitable additional charges against the accused.

It is also worth noting that the SPF understands that circa 118 PCSO vacancies across the country have simply been deleted. Whilst there may be legitimate accounting reasons for this, this suggests there is no urgency to address the lack of custody staff any time soon. Whilst the zig-zagging of the country with prisoners self-evidently results in significant diminution of local policing resources, that diminution is exacerbated with 118 police officers having to perform these duties in their place.

The SPF also wishes the Committee to be aware that increased bureaucratic demands, for example vulnerability assessments add to time delay and pressure upon staff. These bureaucracies will increase yet further as a consequence of the implementation of the provisions of the new Criminal Justice Bill in January.

We trust the Committee recognises that as a direct consequence of diminished funding, coupled with what should be lauded as a desire to enhance prisoner welfare through a dedicated custody division, police officers and the police service are under intolerable pressures to the point where notwithstanding the best intentions and efforts of all involved, an unacceptably large number of prisoners are treated in a manner which in the view of the SPF, is completely incompatible with their human rights.

## **Reserves & Reform Funding**

Whilst this may be something of a moot point given the financial realities facing the service at this time it is the strong view of the SPF that the inability of the SPA to hold reserves is in itself a significant impediment to delivering efficiencies within the police service.

The SPF does not wish to get into minutiae but a recent example serves to underline this point in the starkest of terms. The PSoS has an allocation of "reform funding" for 2017/18 which in crude terms it has in a use it or lose it manner. The SPF is concerned that in the drive to demonstrate "transformational change" this is forcing the service into making spending decisions in year that might not necessarily deliver the savings promised.

The SPF believes that many of the systemic problems facing the PSoS cannot be resolved by making spending decisions on a year to year basis. We also recognise that "reform funding" will not be made available forever but consider that the basis upon which it is provided is not conducive with allowing the service to introduce truly innovative change to deliver sustainable savings in the mid to longer term.

## **Public Sector Pay Policy**

At its public meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2017 the SPA published papers which identified that by the start of financial year 2018/19 it will have an opening budget deficit of £47.2 Million. It still remains to be seen if that is the case or whether in actuality the deficit will be larger or smaller.

The same papers identified that financial planning by the SPA assumed police pay increases of only 1% for each of the years through to 2020/21. These assumptions themselves are predicated on the expectation that police revenue funding will continue to rise with inflation over the same period.

What is clear from these assumptions is that the SPA has little room for manoeuvre when it comes to consideration of wage growth with a prevailing budgetary deficit.

It is worth highlighting that whilst police pay is not and was not in reality subject to the public sector pay policy, that pay awards have been in line with the policy for each of the last three years. Police officers were also affected by the two year public sector pay freeze prior to that.

As the political narrative surrounding the importance of ensuring public sector workers receive fair wage growth has changed significantly in recent months it is important to ensure that police officers do not find themselves unfairly punished and subjected to the imposition of a de-facto policy of wage stagnation / deflation by the back door.

Police officers are wholly unique in the public sector and this wholly unique status deserves to be respected and reflected in the actions of those who fund the service. Police officers will consider it an act of unforgivable betrayal if at the time wages grow beyond the limits of the historic pay cap for other workers, they are denied the opportunity to secure fair wage growth as a direct consequence of a funding settlement that kills that potential stone dead.

## **The General Economics and Cost of Policing**

The SPF considers that in the bid to cut costs and save money, not enough attention is paid to understanding the economics and costs of policing. The Police service is the only service that cannot say no and has to react to spontaneous (and even planned) events in a manner that does not impact on other services to the same extent.

For example there are presumptions that movements of police officers from one location to another to service the likes of a sporting event, protest or VIP visit has little actual cost for the service beyond the wages of those on duty.

This is nowhere near accurate as displaced resources inevitably create policing pressures in the communities from which they are extracted, as well as logistical and legal considerations over for example the movement and storage of equipment. Every event or activity that results in a police officer being removed from their community results in the immediate diminution of service to that community.

It is often forgotten (or taken for granted) that the ability for citizens to protest or otherwise assemble in the exercise of their democratic rights almost always comes at a cost for the police service. For the avoidance of all doubt the SPF is not in any way advocating or suggesting these rights should be in any way curtailed but we are saying that the full financial costs of ensuring democratic freedoms are upheld are seldom understood or considered when police budgets are drawn up.

The closure of police stations as another example may well save money from the estates budget but undoubtedly transfers costs to other areas of policing. Police officers will spend longer driving and/or stuck in traffic which as well as increasing fleet costs also results in less effective use of police resources. This of course is in addition to the inevitable loss of confidence in policing in general if communities perceive the service they receive is one that is predominantly reactive in nature.

As I advised at the beginning of this submission, this is but a flavour of the issues created by what the SPF considers to be an inadequate funding settlement for the police service. We appreciate these may or may not be of interest to the Committee and we therefore remain willing to assist in the exploration and understanding of challenges surrounding police funding in any manner members may wish.

Yours Sincerely



CALUM STEELE  
General Secretary