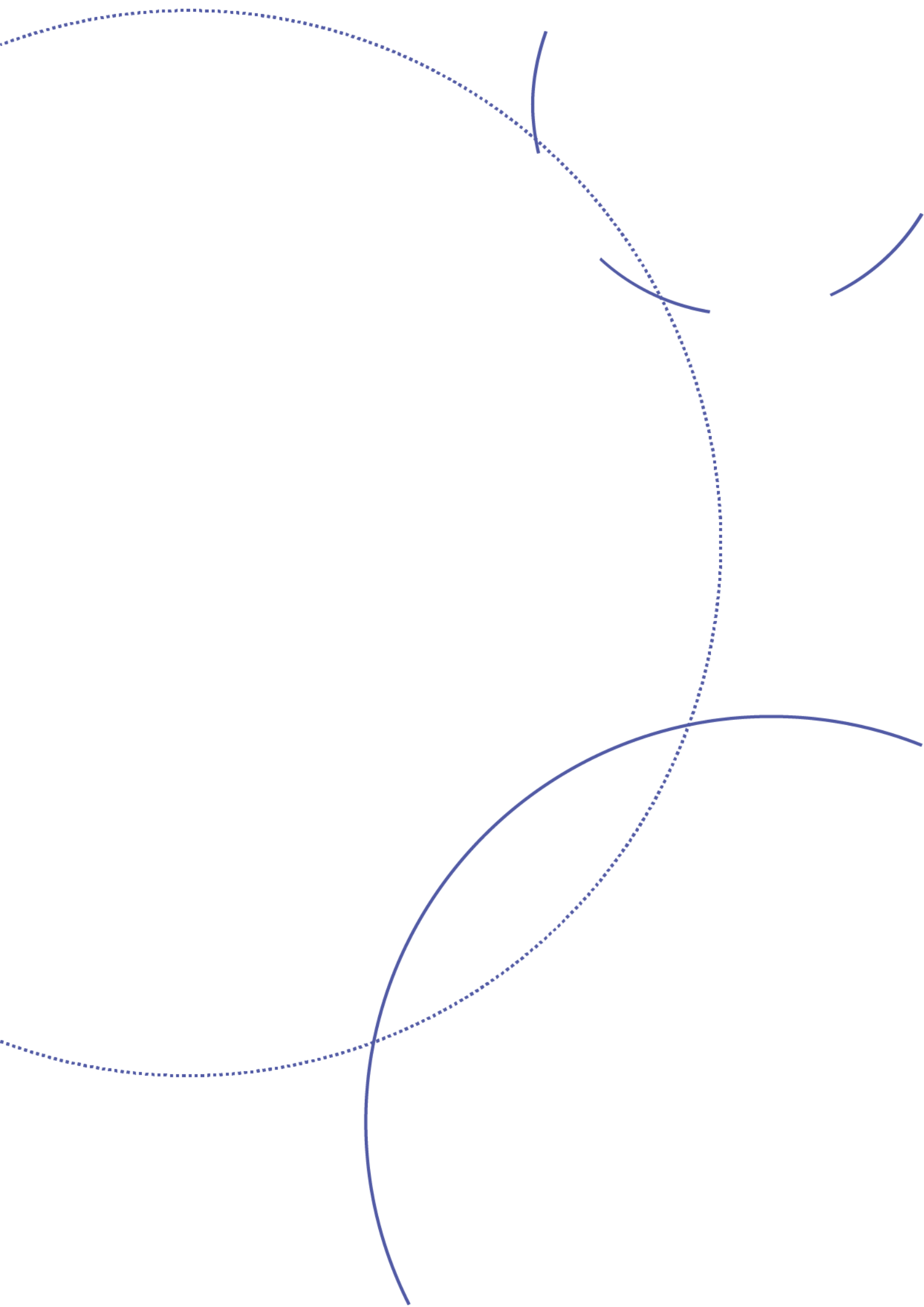




# HMICS Strategic review of the Scottish Police Authority

June 2024

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# HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

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HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) is established under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 and has wide ranging powers to look into the 'state, effectiveness and efficiency' of both the Police Service of Scotland (Police Scotland) and the Scottish Police Authority (SPA).<sup>1</sup>

We have a statutory duty to inquire into the arrangements made by the Chief Constable and the SPA to meet their obligations in terms of best value and continuous improvement. If necessary, we can be directed by Scottish Ministers to look into anything relating to the SPA or Police Scotland as they consider appropriate. We also have an established role in providing professional advice and guidance on policing in Scotland.

- Our powers allow us to do anything we consider necessary or expedient for the purposes of, or in connection with, the carrying out of our functions
- The SPA and the Chief Constable must provide us with such assistance and co-operation as we may require to enable us to carry out our functions
- When we publish a report, the SPA and the Chief Constable must also consider what we have found and take such measures, if any, as they think fit
- Where our report identifies that the SPA or Police Scotland is not efficient or effective (or best value not secured), or will, unless remedial measures are taken, cease to be efficient or effective, Scottish Ministers may direct the SPA to take such measures as may be required. The SPA must comply with any direction given
- Where we make recommendations, we follow them up and report publicly on progress
- We will identify good practice that can be applied across Scotland
- We work with other inspectorates and agencies across the public sector and co-ordinate our activities to reduce the burden of inspection and avoid unnecessary duplication
- We aim to add value and strengthen public confidence in Scottish policing and do this through independent scrutiny and objective, evidence-led reporting about what we find.

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<sup>1</sup> [Chapter 11, Police and Fire Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2012.](#)



Our approach is to support Police Scotland and the SPA to deliver services that are high quality, continually improving, effective and responsive to local needs.<sup>2</sup>

**This review was undertaken by HMICS in terms of Section 74(2)(a) of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 and is laid before the Scottish Parliament in terms of Section 79(3) of the Act.**











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<sup>2</sup> HMICS, [Corporate Plan 2021-24](#), 1 February 2022.



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## Our review

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The aim of this strategic review was to assess the state, efficiency and effectiveness of the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) in fulfilling its core role and meeting its statutory obligations.

These are:

- To maintain the Police Service
- To promote the policing principles
- To promote and support continuous improvement in the policing of Scotland
- To keep under review the policing of Scotland
- To hold the Chief Constable to account for the policing of Scotland.

HMICS has undertaken four inspections of the SPA, or the forensics services that it provides to Police Scotland, since the inception of the service in 2013. In the early days of Police Scotland and the SPA, there were considerable challenges – both in the creation of the police service and the body overseeing and providing its scrutiny. The intervening years have seen difficulties and tensions between the SPA and the police service, often arising from differing personal views and approaches.

Our last inspection of the full SPA was in 2019, and progress made since then has been professional and considered, enabling a strategic scrutiny body that supports the service and all those working within it. The last inspection came at a time of significant change for the SPA, with the current Chief Executive having only been very recently appointed. That report resulted in 14 recommendations, all of which have since been closed. Some issues remain to be taken forward but actions for the SPA have all been discharged. This time round, a full, detailed inspection was not considered proportionate, so this strategic review took the format of validating a self-evaluation conducted by the SPA, as well as analysis of other documentation, interviews and observations.



The SPA differs from other public bodies, and the governance of policing in Scotland is an innovative model with a collaborative and open approach. This can leave room for differing interpretations, and there has been much talk over the past 11 years about the independence of the role of the Chief Constable. It is therefore interesting to observe the very public scrutiny of board and committee meetings where SPA members seek assurance on activities and outcomes delivered by policing. These public sessions are well prepared and supported by both the SPA and Police Scotland, and seek to show effective governance of a large public body.

The role of the SPA in scrutinising the activity of the service is complex and – on the evidence available to HMICS – this is done in good faith, with an ambition to improve services for the public of Scotland. We observed candour and appropriate challenge on both sides, and this can only be strengthened by enhanced scrutiny in some areas. As a result, we are confident that – with the strong leadership now in place, and the support provided by the SPA’s corporate function and board members – the necessary longer-term vision and sustainable policing model can be achieved, through continued collaboration with Police Scotland.

HMICS is clear that the Scottish Government’s “On Board” guidance for all statutory boards applies to the relationship between the SPA Board and the SPA Chief Executive, and its relationship with the Chief Constable. We see evidence of steps to ensure that these standards are maintained and delivered effectively, and are satisfied that the SPA is now in a position of compliance with this guidance. We found no evidence of board members acting outwith their non-executive role.

The self-evaluation conducted by the SPA that formed the basis of our strategic review was detailed, well evidenced, and conducted effectively. This has allowed a wider understanding of issues that it faces and how it intends to provide assurance that it is meeting best value expectations. The [Best Value in Public Services: Guidance for Accountable Officers](#) that was used as the basis of the self-evaluation was published in 2011 (superseding previous sector-specific documents). HMICS intends to work with partners to develop a set of policing-specific expectations for use in future work, to assess whether best value is delivered by Police Scotland and the SPA. This work will take time, but will be based upon the 2020 [Best Value revised statutory guidance](#) issued by the Scottish Government.



Our inspection has been well supported by the SPA and Police Scotland, and provides a clear description of the progress and positive developments made since the last inspection, and the evident drive to provide value for money in the expenditure on policing in Scotland.

This inspection was headed up by lead inspectors Dr Annie Crowley and Tina Yule, with a team of inspection professionals. We are grateful for the input and support provided by colleagues from Audit Scotland. We would like to thank all those who contributed to the self-evaluation and the fieldwork for their professionalism and diligence.

**Craig Naylor**

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

June 2024





## Key findings

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- The SPA has a strong commitment to self-evaluation to support improvement. Its detailed [2023-24 Best Value self-evaluation exercise](#) has been carried out effectively, involving staff and using appropriate statutory guidance. It has also been transparent in reporting its approach and results and demonstrating clear ownership of the outputs.
- The SPA recognises the need to continuously improve its approach to self-evaluation against best value characteristics. Future exercises can be further strengthened by inviting even wider participation in the self-evaluation exercise, and more fully encompassing all of its roles, including its role in holding Police Scotland to account.
- Stronger leadership, vision and direction than during our last [inspection of the SPA in 2019](#) is now in place, provided by the SPA Board and Chief Executive. Consolidating and building upon this progress will help mitigate any risks associated with future changes in key positions.
- The SPA's strategies and plans clearly set out what it wants to achieve over the short to medium-term, but further work is required to develop a longer-term vision and sustainable policing model, with longer-term strategic partnership and engagement working clearly integrated.
- The SPA has a wide range of effective partnerships, but could be clearer about the purpose, range, impacts and intended benefits from partnership working and stakeholder engagement. This would help guide future work and the next iteration of its Engagement Strategy. There is also scope for the SPA to strengthen its advocacy role for specific issues, especially where ownership or responsibility is complex or unclear.
- The SPA has appropriate governance arrangements in place. Its decision-making processes are consistent with public sector best practice in being generally open and transparent.



- The SPA is committed to continuous improvement in its governance and accountability, supporting board members with appropriate training and development and identifying where improvements can be made through annual committee effectiveness reviews.
- Board and committee meetings provide a healthy environment for members to offer constructive challenge, with members generally demonstrating effective scrutiny and challenge of reports. However, we identified scope for the SPA to consider more overt, improved and systematic co-ordination across its committees to support scrutiny.
- As an organisation, the SPA has effective, award-winning risk management in place, and regularly reviews its own risk position and reports on this to the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC). However, we also found that the SPA could strengthen its oversight and governance of strategic risks and transformational change within Police Scotland.
- We consider that the SPA, both as an organisation and in its scrutiny of Police Scotland, could demonstrate a more consistent focus on outcomes to give a better assessment of how well the strategic aims of both organisations are being met.
- The SPA demonstrates effective financial planning and management, and its Resources Committee provides appropriate and effective oversight and scrutiny of Police Scotland's financial performance. Its scrutiny of other resource areas (including ICT, fleet and estates) has been less visible and is constrained by a lack of overarching asset management.
- In conjunction with Police Scotland, the SPA urgently needs to refresh its medium-term financial strategy to reflect projected funding settlements from the Scottish Government. The SPA has identified the need for a new policing model – underpinned by a strategic workforce plan to ensure future financial sustainability – and it should keep pushing for this.
- The SPA recognises that both its own and Police Scotland's performance management and reporting could be improved. This would facilitate more effective scrutiny and provide the public with more easily accessible information.



- The SPA promotes a culture of equality and is working closely with Police Scotland to embed equality into all aspects of working. While demonstrating improvement from its last annual Best Value self-assessment, the SPA recognises the need to better demonstrate how it assesses its equalities impact.
- The SPA is making progress on sustainability issues, driven by its corporate sustainability plan, but recognises that this aspect of best value requires noticeable further improvement. It has identified individuals to lead relevant work and is putting measures in place to monitor progress.



## Recommendation and areas for development

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### Recommendation 1

The SPA should put in place measures to monitor progress against the areas for development outlined in this review, ensuring regular public reporting to allow assessment of progress.

Areas for development	Number
The SPA is considering how to enhance its self-evaluation process, in particular moving away from compliance-based assessment. Future iterations would benefit from: inviting wider participation; reviewing the assessment criteria to take account of all relevant guidance; and by more fully encompassing all of its roles, including its role in holding Police Scotland to account.	1
The SPA should reflect upon its self-evaluation as well as on the findings from this review to consider what further development work is needed to fully meet best value expectations.	2
The SPA should plan how it can best continue to support and challenge Police Scotland in both its continuous improvement and best value commitments.	3
The SPA should invest time in reflecting upon its current leadership, with the aim of capturing successes and good practice as well as any challenges. It should then translate these into learning to ensure that robust structures and processes are in place for any subsequent changes in personnel.	4
The SPA, both as an organisation and in its scrutiny of Police Scotland, should continue to develop performance and outcome measures to improve transparency and reporting against strategic aims.	5
The SPA should continue to develop its work to enhance scrutiny of Police Scotland's development of a longer-term vision and sustainable model for policing. This should focus upon progress and should be developed with consideration of, and in alignment to, the joint strategy.	6
The SPA should consider streamlining its plans and subsequent reporting, ensuring that it effectively prioritises its work for most impact, with effective use of its resources.	7



The SPA should further develop its strategic partnership role, and its engagement strategy should clearly set out the levels and intended outcomes of engagement.	8
The SPA should review the agendas of its committees in line with their core purpose and consider reporting all committee effectiveness reviews in public, involving other stakeholders in the process.	9
The SPA should improve both the recording of decisions in minutes and the use of rolling action logs to ensure that acceptance of assurances, and any follow-up requests or agreed actions, are recorded and delivered.	10
The SPA should, in conjunction with Police Scotland, review the quantity and quality of reports going to board and committee meetings to ensure that they are clear and concise to support effective scrutiny, and do not over burden board members.	11
The SPA should improve its scrutiny, challenge and monitoring of Police Scotland's risk reporting, risk register and mitigating actions.	12
The SPA needs to ensure that it is exercising effective scrutiny and oversight of Police Scotland's change programme and associated benefits.	13
In conjunction with Police Scotland, the SPA should urgently refresh its medium-term financial strategy to reflect projected funding settlements from the Scottish Government.	14
The SPA should consider improving its website content to provide increased clarity and accessibility on engagement and performance reporting.	15
The SPA should consider how interdependencies and duplication across its committees could be better managed.	16
The SPA should consider how to ensure that seldom-heard voices are systematically and effectively engaged in its own and Police Scotland's work.	17



## Background

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1. HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) committed to a strategic review of the Scottish Policing Authority (SPA) as part of its [Scrutiny Plan 2022-25](#).
2. HMICS has consistently set out a position expressing a need for a balanced system of governance and accountability for policing in Scotland. Our reports demonstrate that governance over policing is a complex endeavour, with an extensive landscape of stakeholders attempting to exert influence and accountability. We accept that any system of governance is likely to have associated risks and issues, but believe that it should be possible for a country the size of Scotland, with a single national police service, to successfully implement an effective and efficient model.
3. The SPA was established under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 ('the Act') and its main functions are:
  - To maintain the Police Service
  - To promote the policing principles
  - To promote and support continuous improvement in the policing of Scotland
  - To keep under review the policing of Scotland
  - To hold the Chief Constable to account for the policing of Scotland.
4. Since 2012, HMICS has conducted four inspections of the SPA:
  - [Assurance Review of Scottish Police Authority Forensic Toxicology Provision \(2023\)](#)
  - [Thematic Inspection of the Scottish Police Authority \(2019\)](#)
  - [Thematic Inspection of the Scottish Police Authority Forensic Services \(2017\)](#)
  - [Thematic Inspection of the Scottish Police Authority - Phase 1 Review of Openness and Transparency \(2017\)](#).
5. Since our last inspection of the SPA in 2019, there have been major changes including a new executive and staffing structure, a new Chair, a permanent Chief Executive and new board members. While a full, detailed inspection was not proportionate at this time, it is important that we continue to apply regular focus to the SPA and the effectiveness of its new arrangements.



6. The overall aim of this strategic review is to assess the state, efficiency and effectiveness of the SPA in fulfilling its core role and meeting its statutory obligations. The review takes the format of a validated self-evaluation, an approach designed to encourage reflection by the SPA and its continuous improvement, while ensuring an element of independent assurance on its core role and its governance.
7. The specific objectives of our review were to assess the SPA's journey of improvement since our 2019 inspection, and to provide assurance on:
  - The effectiveness of board members in fulfilling their core responsibilities of maintaining policing, supporting continuous improvement and holding the Chief Constable to account
  - The results and supporting evidence provided from the SPA best value self-evaluation
  - The quality and effectiveness of the SPA's self-evaluation process
  - The readiness of the SPA to fulfil its statutory best value duties.
8. During 2023, the SPA conducted a [Best Value self-evaluation](#) which was presented to ARAC in November 2023. It is this self-evaluation that has been assessed as part of this review, so as not to duplicate work already undertaken. The SPA structured its self-evaluation around [Best Value in Public Services: Guidance for Accountable Officers \(2011\)](#). To reflect this, we structured our review around these best value themes. However, this review has not taken the form of a full best value audit or inspection and therefore we have not made an explicit best value judgement of the SPA. Rather than making specific recommendations, we have highlighted where the SPA can develop further in each of the best value areas.
9. In carrying out this review, we have examined the strategic role of the SPA and not inspected day-to-day operations in detail. The SPA self-evaluation that forms the basis of this review is limited to the SPA's corporate functions. As such, neither the SPA's Forensic Services nor its Independent Custody Visiting Scotland (ICVS) functions have been inspected. We have, however, examined its role in holding Police Scotland to account and considered our previous inspection findings on the effectiveness of the SPA Forensics Committee (see our [Assurance Review of Scottish Police Authority Forensic Toxicology Provision – April 2023](#)).



## Overall assessment

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10. The SPA has a strong commitment to self-evaluation to support improvement. Its detailed [Best Value self-evaluation exercise 2023-24](#) has been carried out effectively, involving staff and using appropriate statutory guidance. It has also been transparent in reporting its approach and results and demonstrating clear ownership of the outputs.
11. The SPA recognises the need to further develop its approach to self-evaluating against best value characteristics and has proposed revisions to its scoring system, among other areas for improvement. We consider that future exercises should encompass all of its roles (including its role in holding Police Scotland to account) and should involve wider participation, including of SPA board members and other stakeholders.

### **Area for development 1**

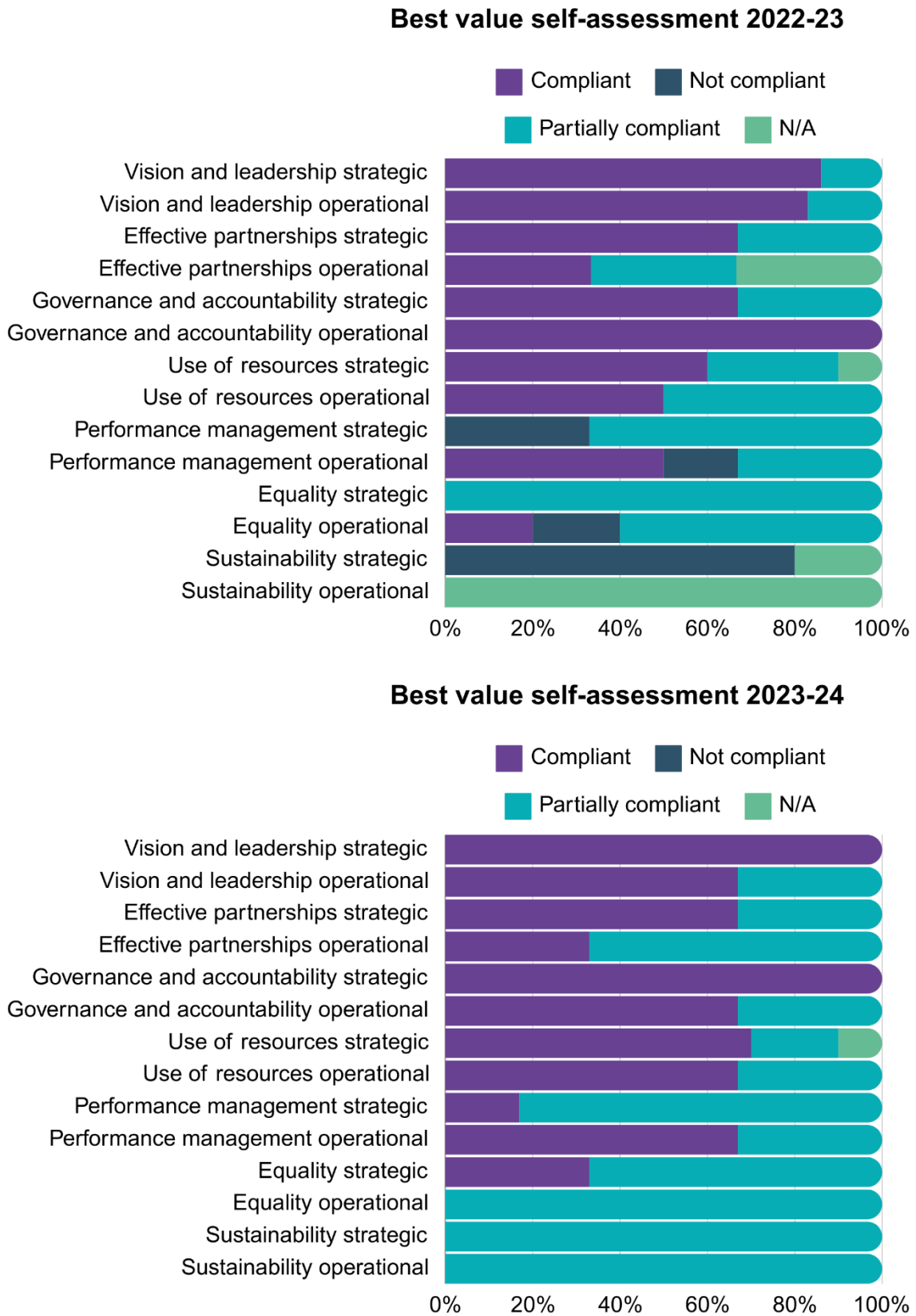
The SPA is considering how to enhance its self-evaluation process, in particular moving away from compliance-based assessment. Future iterations would benefit from: inviting wider participation; reviewing the assessment criteria to take account of all relevant guidance; and by more fully encompassing all of its roles, including its role in holding Police Scotland to account.

12. The SPA's own comparison of 2022-23 and 2023-24 self-evaluation results across 76 descriptors (classified as either strategic or operational) shows that staff believe there has been noticeable improvement in complying with aspects of good practice (see Figure 1 below). More widely, it can clearly demonstrate continuous improvement in most aspects of best value over recent years, the pace and scale of which are generally in line with improvement plans. The fourteen recommendations from our 2019 [Thematic Inspection of the Scottish Police Authority](#) (see Appendix 1) have also been closed. Some issues remain to be taken forward, but actions for the SPA have all been discharged.





Figure 1 - Overall comparison of self-evaluation results between 2022-23 and 2023-24



Source: [Best Value Results: SPA Corporate](#) – Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (November 2023)



13. The Auditor General for Scotland (AGS) has also observed improvements – having previously consistently reported concerns identified from the annual audit of the SPA through statutory reports to the Scottish Parliament (from 2013 to 2020). The last statutory report in [December 2020](#) highlighted improvements to financial planning and management, stability in the leadership of the SPA and Police Scotland, and good progress by the SPA in developing both the capacity of its corporate function and its organisational governance.

### **Area for development 2**

The SPA should reflect upon its self-evaluation as well as on the findings from this review to consider what further development work is needed to fully meet best value expectations.

14. To deliver the future ambitions for policing, the SPA needs to ensure that there is a clearly defined operating model, a medium-term financial plan and a workforce plan in place, to support a financially sustainable and high-performing police service. It is paramount that the SPA is able to drive the improvements needed across the whole policing system, including using its oversight role to ensure best value and continuous improvement within Police Scotland.
15. In planning to support and challenge Police Scotland in its continuous improvement and best value commitments, there is scope for the SPA to draw upon other existing models, such as the [College of Policing Continuous Improvement Self-Assessment Matrix](#), developed specifically for police leaders, the [Healthcare Improvement Scotland Quality Framework for Community Engagement and Participation](#) and the [Care Inspectorate Self-evaluation for improvement guide](#).

### **Area for development 3**

The SPA should plan how it can best continue to support and challenge Police Scotland in both its continuous improvement and best value commitments.



## Best value themes

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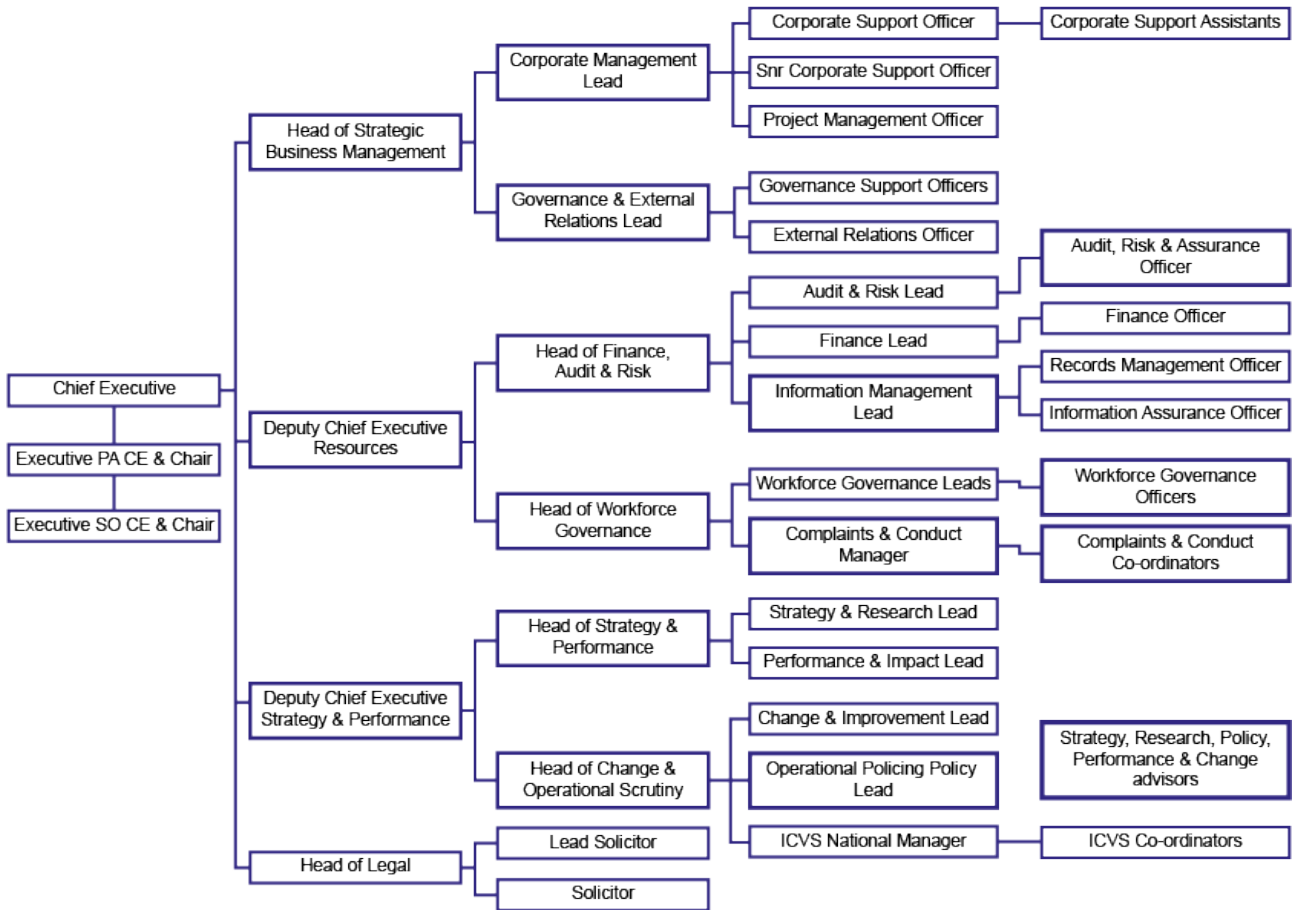
### Vision and leadership



16. The SPA has focused on continued improvement in its strategic vision and leadership and now assesses itself as being fully compliant with good practice. It has assessed its operational vision and leadership as strong and improving, with two areas for improvement: fully embedding risk into business planning; and establishing a formal continuous improvement framework.
17. Since the last [HMICS inspection of the SPA](#) in 2019, there have been major changes to the structure and staffing of the SPA. These include a redesigned and refocused corporate structure in late 2020 (see Figure 2) and, in early 2021, the appointment of a permanent new Chief Executive, a new Chair of the SPA, and new board members.



Figure 2 – SPA corporate structure



Source: Scottish Police Authority

18. The SPA has a strong commitment to transparency, openness and accountability. We found the Chair, board members and the Chief Executive to be exhibiting greater leadership, vision and direction since our last inspection. This improvement has been supported by a good range of leadership development and training. In response to a recent staff Pulse Survey (showing that 66 per cent strongly agree or agree that the “leadership team models positive behaviours”)<sup>3</sup> the SPA is striving to further strengthen and improve leadership.

<sup>3</sup> Other key findings from the Pulse survey (2023) included that: 86% of staff agree/strongly agree that the SPA is a great place to work; 84% of staff agree/strongly agree that they get the information they need to do their role effectively; 87% of staff agree/strongly agree that they get the recognition and are valued for the work they do; 91% of staff agree/strongly agree that they have a good work/life balance; 75% of staff agree/strongly agree that their job description accurately reflects their roles and responsibilities in practice.



19. Previous SPA inspection evidence has shown that leadership effectiveness can be influenced by individual personalities and relationships, as well as interpretation of the statutory role of the SPA. It is therefore critical that the SPA consolidates and builds on the good progress it has achieved in both executive and non-executive leadership to mitigate any risks associated with future changes in key positions.

#### **Area for development 4**

The SPA should invest time in reflecting upon its current leadership, with the aim of capturing successes and good practice as well as any challenges. It should then translate these into learning to ensure that robust structures and processes are in place for any subsequent changes in personnel.

20. The SPA has appropriate strategies and plans in place to clearly set out what it wants to achieve over the short to medium term. While objectives are clearly defined, there is scope to include clearer measures of progress and outcomes as part of the regular review of progress (see the performance management section of this report).

#### **Area for development 5**

The SPA, both as an organisation and in its scrutiny of Police Scotland, should continue to develop performance and outcome measures to improve transparency and reporting against strategic aims.

21. While we welcome the existence and development of the three-year strategic plans (both [SPA corporate](#) and [SPA and Police Scotland joint](#)) we found that a longer-term vision and sustainable model for policing is underdeveloped. As we stated in our report on [Strategic Workforce Planning](#) (August 2022), without a well-established Target Operating Model there can be no clarity on what should be delivered and to what standard – or the level of resource required to meet those needs in the future.



22. The new [SPA Oversight Group for the Revised Model of Policing](#) is welcomed, as are commitments and work towards an effective Strategic Workforce Plan and Target Operating Model. However the SPA should continue to enhance its oversight and scrutiny of Police Scotland's development of a longer-term vision and sustainable model for policing, with a focus on progress, and in alignment with the Joint Strategy for Policing as it develops.

#### **Area for development 6**

The SPA should continue to develop its work to enhance scrutiny of Police Scotland's development of a longer-term vision and sustainable model for policing. This should focus upon progress and should be developed with consideration of, and in alignment to, the joint strategy.

23. The SPA has developed its strategies and plans through effective analysis of emerging issues and risks, as well as gathering stakeholder views and perceptions through a range of engagement activities. It is in the process of refreshing its Engagement Strategy and this is an important step in demonstrating the impact and value of its engagement activity, providing greater clarity about its engagement processes and ensuring this work is complementary to that of Police Scotland.
24. The SPA can be over-ambitious and complex in terms of its planning, and should accurately assess how achievable suggested improvements are likely to be. For example, the 2023-24 service plan, underpinning the Corporate Strategy, had 147 actions and 490 milestones; its self-evaluation development plan has 80 actions and 20 areas for improvement. Rationalising planned actions and better linking them to desired outcomes, can provide the SPA with a clearer focus and potential resourcing efficiency. It has started to address this, rationalising actions and milestones within its 2024-25 plan.

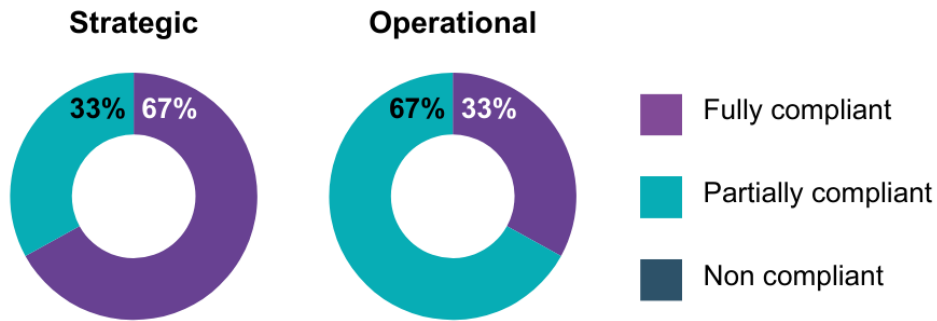
#### **Area for development 7**

The SPA should consider streamlining its plans and subsequent reporting, ensuring that it effectively prioritises its work for most impact, with effective use of its resources.



## Effective partnerships

### Effective partnerships SPA's assessment of compliance with good practice indicators



25. The SPA's performance assessment for this characteristic remains mostly consistent with that of its previous self-evaluation. Last year, it determined that one operational indicator was not applicable for assessment – participation in community planning partnerships and other joint working initiatives, and integrating these into local planning mechanisms to deliver outcomes. With the introduction of its community confidence action research project, it has now assessed itself as being partially compliant with good practice.
26. The SPA has a wide range of partnerships that the Chair has been instrumental in developing and making effective. It has a clear rationale for forming partnerships, with statements of intent and purpose clearly articulated. It provided positive examples of engagement with local government, national bodies and other stakeholders, including collaborative strategic conversations, research and evidence roundtable events, as well as invited input into board and committee meetings.
27. Alongside these many positive examples, we found scope for greater partner engagement and strengthened advocacy work for specific issues, especially those where ownership or responsibility is complex or unclear, such as mental health. We also found that assessment and evaluation of outcomes and impact was missing from many of the engagement activities evidenced by the SPA, as was evidence of next steps.



28. In revising its 2021-2023 engagement strategy, the SPA should be clear about the purpose, range and intended benefits from partnership working, stakeholder engagement and communication, to guide future work. In particular, it would be beneficial for it to outline the aims of strategic engagement and how it intends for this to influence service delivery of specific areas.
29. Consideration of the [Scottish Government National Standards for Community Engagement](#) and the related [Participation handbook](#) may be useful in future planning of engagement.

### Area for development 8

The SPA should further develop its strategic partnership role, and its engagement strategy should clearly set out the levels and intended outcomes of engagement.

## Governance and accountability



30. The SPA has assessed itself as having strong and significantly improved strategic governance. Having adopted higher standards for assessment and a stricter interpretation of best value guidance, it has identified two operational areas for improvement: having more formalised processes for continuous improvement and stakeholder feedback. We have commented above on mechanisms for gathering stakeholder views and perceptions to inform continuous improvement, and comment on continuous improvement in the performance management section below.





31. We found the SPA to have appropriate governance arrangements in place and these operate in accordance with a detailed corporate governance framework that is relevant and up to date. Its decision-making processes are generally open and transparent, which is consistent with public sector best practice. Committees only consider a very limited number of reports in private and, where this happens, it is generally appropriate. There is some limited scope for improvement – for example, considering all committee effectiveness reviews in public.
32. As noted above, the SPA also demonstrates good practice in involving partner and representative bodies in its committees – trades union representatives are represented on the People Committee and The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) is represented on the Policing Performance Committee.
33. SPA board members receive appropriate induction and training to ensure that they have the appropriate skills and knowledge to carry out their roles effectively. This includes a detailed and structured induction process, annual appraisals and development plans. They also receive a good range of development opportunities targeted at the SPA's specific role, including training on scrutiny and challenge.
34. We found that the SPA is now in a position of compliance with [On Board](#) guidance for members of statutory boards. All board members attend meetings on a regular basis and perform their duties in a manner consistent with the good practice outlined in this guidance. They carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively and have good working relationships with SPA staff. Views of the support provided by the Chief Executive and SPA staff to board members are positive. There is good co-operation between board members and SPA officers outside of committees. We found no evidence of board members acting outwith their non-executive role.



Figure 3 – SPA committee structure



35. The primary role of SPA committees is to support the Board by providing oversight and scrutiny of relevant issues. As such, committees have little formal delegated decision-making, with agendas made up almost exclusively of reports provided for members to note information (although some committees do have limited decision-making responsibility, for example ARAC annually approves the internal audit plan, the Policing Performance Committee approves the performance framework, and the Resources Committee makes some decisions in line with the corporate governance framework).
36. Despite this, meetings can have extensive agendas and last a long time (sometimes, over six hours). For example, although operational policing matters are the responsibility of the Chief Constable, part of the role of the SPA is to scrutinise these issues – hence the Policing Performance Committee frequently spends a lot of time being briefed on operational policing matters. The committee should review which operational policing reports it actually requires to meet its terms of reference. The SPA would also benefit from providing clearer guidance and rationale over which issues and level of detail it should be briefed. Similarly, all committees should satisfy themselves that their current operation makes best use of members’ and officers’ time and aligns to their terms of reference.



37. The SPA is committed to continuous improvement in its governance and accountability. It conducts committee effectiveness reviews annually to provide the SPA Chair and the Board with assurance over committees' functioning and effectiveness. This is a positive development. There is scope to improve the committee effectiveness process, with all reviews being considered in public and including the views of others who regularly engage with SPA committees.
38. The latest committee effectiveness reviews in 2023 reported that committees had effectively discharged their duties in line with their terms of reference. They highlighted a few areas for improvement, including a desire for clearer and shorter committee reports and for better co-ordination between committees. We have highlighted examples of where committee reports can be made shorter in paragraphs 60 and 61 and 65. We agree that there is scope for improving how critical issues, such as risk, change projects, etc, are co-ordinated between committees to ensure scrutiny and governance can operate most effectively.

#### **Area for development 9**

The SPA should review the agendas of its committees in line with their core purpose and consider reporting all committee effectiveness reviews in public, involving other stakeholders in the process.

39. Following our recommendations in 2019, the SPA has strengthened its corporate function to support the Board to meet its statutory obligations. At the Public Finance Awards in 2022, the SPA's Audit and Risk team won the [Good Governance, Risk Management or Prevention award](#). This award recognised the SPA's improvement in meeting the needs of the Board and Accountable Officer to fulfil their governance duties.



40. Board and committee meetings provide a healthy environment for members to offer constructive challenge and carry out effective scrutiny. Board members generally demonstrate effective scrutiny and challenge of reports. However, we also evidenced situations where the need to scrutinise effectively resulted in members having to repeatedly challenge officers/staff when they did not receive straightforward answers to their lines of questioning. We also found that where some SPA committees have accepted or rejected assurances given, these decisions are not always clearly recorded, and similarly follow-up actions are not always sufficiently captured or monitored. There is scope here for committee chairs to improve clarity over the decisions or actions to be recorded and monitored following meetings.
41. A good example of decision recording can be seen in the [decision log](#) of the London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), which is easily accessible and detailed.

#### **Area for development 10**

The SPA should improve both the recording of decisions in minutes and the use of rolling action logs to ensure that acceptance of assurances, and any follow-up requests or agreed actions, are recorded and delivered.

42. There is also a need for those writing reports to better recognise the capacity of board members in conducting their role, and ensure that board and committee reports are written in the most succinct and understandable way.

#### **Area for development 11**

The SPA should, in conjunction with Police Scotland, review the quantity and quality of reports going to board and committee meetings to ensure that they are clear and concise to support effective scrutiny, and do not over burden board members.



43. The SPA recognises that it can strengthen its oversight and governance of change. To aid more effective scrutiny and challenge, update reports to ARAC could be clearer about: significant programmes in the change portfolio; reasons for risks to any programmes/projects; and project milestones, control measures and delivery timeframes. As per the SPA's planned improvement, the SPA should continue to work with Police Scotland to push for more robust reporting on benefits realisation, to improve transparency on return on investment.
44. In this review we found that the ARAC needs to demonstrate much stronger governance over the high number of significant strategic risks that exist in Police Scotland. Police Scotland is currently reporting 17 strategic risks, 11 of which are significant (rated as red and above tolerance levels). The risk reports that Police Scotland present to ARAC do not capture actions or timescales and we have concerns that risk scores do not accurately reflect the risks faced by Police Scotland. External audit has also found that both the ownership of risks and the timescales to implement mitigations to reduce tolerance levels, are unclear. It has recommended that the SPA and Police Scotland ensure clear timescales are in place to implement planned mitigations, so that risks remain within agreed risk tolerance and appetite levels.
45. During 2023, an in-depth development session was provided for SPA board members on risk management, and we look forward to seeing the translation of this into more effective scrutiny and the addressing of external audit's recommendation.

#### **Area for development 12**

The SPA should improve its scrutiny, challenge and monitoring of Police Scotland's risk reporting, risk register and mitigating actions.

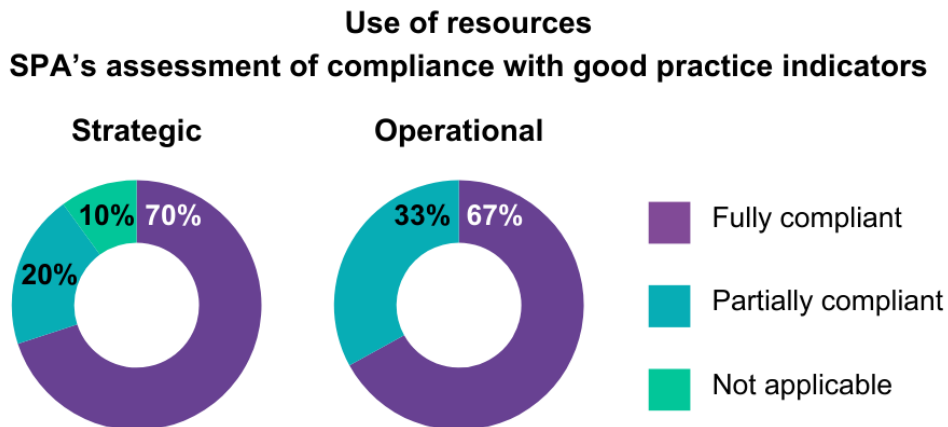


46. As noted above, the SPA has identified the need to understand far more clearly whether the expected benefits from transformation activity, which are outlined in business cases approved by the Resources Committee, are being realised. This is particularly evident in its oversight of Police Scotland’s transformation programme, where there needs to be greater clarity on whether approved change projects and programmes are delivering the proposed benefits that contribute to balancing budgets, achieving strategic outcomes and progressing towards a more sustainable model of policing. This needs to be a priority for improvement, given the pressure of achieving financial sustainability.

### Area for development 13

The SPA needs to ensure that it is exercising effective scrutiny and oversight of Police Scotland’s change programme and associated benefits.

## Use of resources



47. The SPA has assessed itself as demonstrating steady improvement in this area since its last self-evaluation.

48. Financial planning and management are critical aspects of best value. In 2022-23, [external auditors reported](#) that the SPA achieved a balanced budget position against its revenue budget of £1,287.6 million. External audit did not identify any weaknesses in budgeting arrangements and were satisfied that gross variances from budget were appropriately managed in year to deliver the balanced budget. This is a significant improvement on the consistent overspending that the Auditor General for Scotland previously reported to the Scottish Parliament up to December 2020.



49. SPA staff and Police Scotland meet regularly to examine budget issues, and the SPA's Resources Committee provides appropriate and effective oversight and scrutiny of financial reports from Police Scotland. In August 2023, Police Scotland's [financial monitoring report for Quarter One of 2023-24](#) forecasted a budget overspend of £18.9 million by year end. Resources Committee demonstrated good governance by instructing Police Scotland to develop an immediate plan to address the forecast overspend and by increasing the frequency of financial monitoring from quarterly to monthly, strengthening its oversight of financial performance. The SPA's effective scrutiny of actions to bring spending back in line with budget, resulted in Police Scotland reporting a break-even position again in 2023-24.
50. In its annual audit report of the SPA for 2022-23, external audit recommended that the SPA and Police Scotland urgently focus on medium-term financial planning and refresh the medium-term financial strategy to reflect projected flat cash funding settlements from the Scottish Government. We are concerned that there is a significant risk that – where substantial funding gaps are identified in the medium to longer term – effective plans and mitigating actions are not in place to secure financial sustainability.
51. In refreshing the medium-term financial strategy, there is scope for the SPA to benchmark other police forces around the UK. Whilst we recognise that there are some key differences in the financial frameworks of different jurisdictions that need to be taken into account, there are interesting insights and learning that can be drawn from the similarities. In England and Wales, there is a requirement for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), in consultation with their Chief Constable, to identify and agree a medium-term financial strategy. The [Revised Financial Management Code of Practice](#), referenced on page 11 of the [Police and Crime Commissioners Guidance](#), clearly sets this out. Including funding and spending plans for revenue and capital, the plan should 'have regard to affordability and take into account multiple years, the interdependencies of revenue budgets and capital investments, the role of reserves and the consideration of risks', as well as being aligned with the Police and Crime Plan. Links are provided below to two examples of medium-term financial plans from forces in England and Wales.<sup>4</sup> Other examples are MOPAC whose [medium-term financial plan](#) is from 2024 – 2027; and British Transport Police Authority, whose [medium-term financial plan](#) is 2022 – 2027.

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<sup>4</sup> Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner, [Medium Term Financial Plan \(2023/24 – 2027-28\)](#) and Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria, [Medium Term Financial Strategy \(2023/24 – 2026/27\)](#).



#### **Area for development 14**

In conjunction with Police Scotland, the SPA should urgently refresh its medium-term financial strategy to reflect projected funding settlements from the Scottish Government.

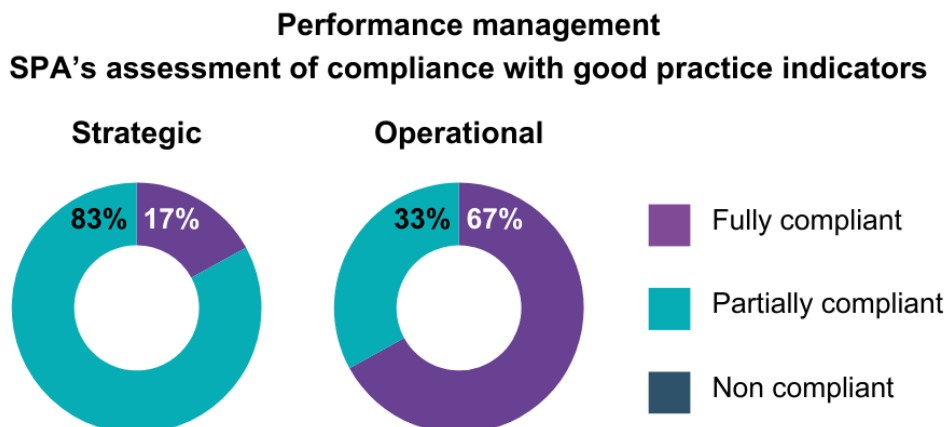
52. [External auditors reported](#) that the SPA had a £3 million overspend above its original 2022-23 capital budget of £57.8 million. External audit previously highlighted that the SPA was overprogramming its capital budget and plan above available funding and was managing this by phasing programmes into future years, which is not a sustainable position. Pushing funding challenges into future years poses a risk that programmes may not be completed with the funding allocated to them. The SPA has taken action to address external audit's recommendation to revisit its capital plan to ensure affordability. Capital budgets are now not being significantly over allocated, with a break-even position being reported for 2023-24.
  
53. [External auditors reported](#) that in 2022-23, the SPA was allocated £25 million of reform funding from the Scottish Government to support the change and transformation programmes of Police Scotland. At the end of the financial year 2022-23, the [external audit report](#) reported a £3.6 million underspend on transformation resource, alongside amendments to several transformation programmes. In quarter three of 2023-24, Police Scotland reported an underspend in its reform budget of £2.8 million to the SPA, but has since reported a break-even position for 2023-24 reform spending in line with its budget of £20 million. The SPA must continue to ensure there is detailed financial reporting to the Resources Committee on this, as well as holding regular meetings between Police Scotland and the SPA, to ensure oversight and scrutiny of 2023-24 reform spending.





54. To ensure future financial sustainability, the SPA recognises the need for a new policing model, underpinned by an effective strategic workforce plan. Our [Assurance Review of Police Scotland Strategic Workforce Planning](#) (August 2022) highlighted the need for the Scottish Government, the SPA and Police Scotland to collectively focus on developing a workforce with the skills required to meet the current and future challenges for policing in Scotland. We also highlighted that – while the People Committee was exerting improved scrutiny over people-based management information – information reported to the SPA did not provide adequate evidence of progress towards planned workforce change (and that the SPA and Police Scotland needed to clearly define how workforce planning decisions will be made and who will oversee implementation). Given budgetary pressures, it is critical that the new SPA Oversight Group for the Revised Model of Policing drives this work and generates progress quickly (see area for development 6).
55. The SPA demonstrates effective financial planning and management, and its Resources Committee provides appropriate and effective oversight and scrutiny of Police Scotland’s financial performance. Its scrutiny of other resource areas (including ICT, fleet and estates) has been less visible and is constrained by a lack of overarching asset management. Recent reporting on estates transformation indicates that strategy is being reviewed and an estates masterplan is in development, which is aligned to a more formal asset management approach.
56. We observed procurement reporting to the Resources Committee as systematic and of a high quality, with robust scrutiny being applied.

## Performance management





57. The SPA has assessed its lowest strategic performance for this best value area, despite highlighting that it has been an area of significant improvement. It has identified a range of relevant improvement actions in its 2023-24 service plan, to support further improvement. These include developing and implementing an SPA corporate performance framework, and embedding a corporate performance scorecard so that every team discusses performance as *“part of the day job”*.
58. The SPA monitors its own corporate performance through clear performance reports and – through its committees – considers a large amount of policing performance information. As such, the SPA needs to be clear about what value its identified improvements will add to existing arrangements.
59. The SPA holds the Chief Constable to account for delivery of the [joint strategy for policing](#). It does this through scrutiny of Police Scotland’s [quarterly performance reports](#). The measures used to judge performance are set out in a detailed performance framework, which is aligned to the outcomes in the strategic police plan. Both the framework and strategic police plan were refreshed in 2023.
60. Police Scotland’s quarterly performance reports to the Performance Committee are consistently over 120 pages. This volume of information places a significant demand on police officers and staff, and on members’ time to read reports, which can potentially inhibit effective scrutiny. The SPA and Police Scotland should determine whether there is scope for streamlining performance reports, including by benchmarking the style, content and quality of reports with those produced by other police forces around the UK, for example:
  - Recent Metropolitan Police quarterly performance reports to MOPAC range from 59 pages in [quarter 1 of 2023-24](#) to 93 pages for [quarter three of 2023-24](#);
  - In July 2023, Greater Manchester Police’s (GMP) [quarterly strategic update](#) on performance to the Deputy Mayor’s Executive meeting was 22 pages long; and
  - the latest [monthly performance report](#) from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to the policing board is 20 pages long.



61. As highlighted above, members have asked (through committee effectiveness reviews) for more appropriate reports to come to committee – and Police Scotland quarterly performance reports are a good example of where reporting can be improved (see area for development 11). More recently, we have observed an improvement in report style; for example, the [quarter 3 performance report](#), which was presented to Policing Performance Committee in March 2024, being reduced significantly to 55 pages.
62. Since April 2020, the SPA and Police Scotland have explored an approach to benchmarking performance that takes account of learning, experiences and best practice from elsewhere. In its [2022-23 Annual Performance Report](#), Police Scotland used only very limited benchmarking to demonstrate relative performance. Benchmark comparisons used in quarterly reporting to Policing Performance Committee are broader, and include *Your Voice Matters* survey results, and stop and search data. In Police Scotland's 2023-24 performance framework, 44 of the 379 performance indicators are comparative indicators (covering call handling, public contact and engagement, assaults on staff, staff views, estates and fleet). While only around 12 indicators can be accurately benchmarked due to data issues, it is encouraging to see the SPA and Police Scotland looking to benchmark a wider range of performance to demonstrate achievement of the strategic policing plan. The consistent use of benchmarks across all relevant reports will further enhance transparency of its performance.
63. As with Police Scotland, Forensic Services and SPA Corporate also give quarterly performance reports. Quarterly performance reporting for Forensic Services is good, and improving, being influenced by SPA scrutiny. SPA Corporate's quarterly reports are a relatively new addition and, as such, are considered internally by the SPA's management team. These reports are good and we consider that, to demonstrate best practice and full transparency, the SPA should be scrutinising them in public.
64. Some performance reports are publicly available on the [Policing Performance](#) page on the SPA's website. In examining this, we found scope to develop and improve public performance reporting, both to make information more easily accessible and more relevant to the public, (for example, ensuring that webpage links are up to date and linked to the most relevant materials).

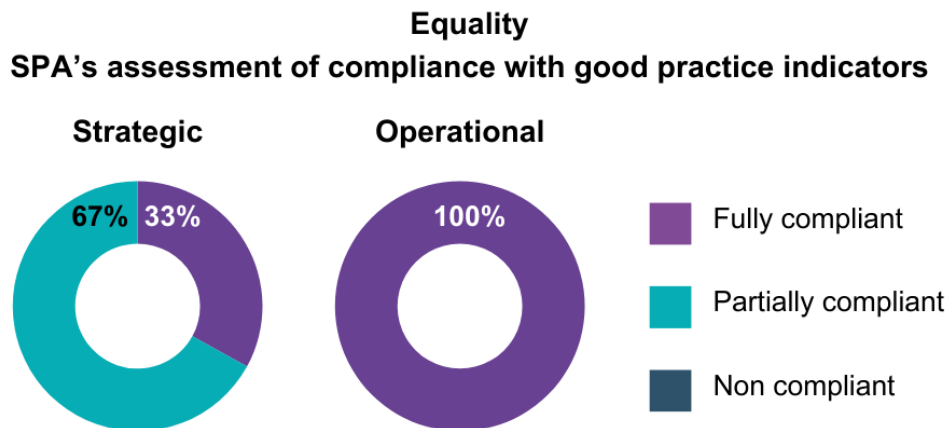


### Area for development 15

The SPA should consider improving its website content to provide increased clarity and accessibility on engagement and performance reporting.

65. The main performance report that the SPA makes publicly available is its [Annual Report and Accounts](#). The 2022-23 report is 194 pages long and has a degree of duplication with reporting from Police Scotland. As such, the SPA should consider whether there is a way to reduce duplication and effort in performance reporting between itself and Police Scotland.

## Equality



66. The SPA has assessed itself as demonstrating both strategic and operational improvement in this area from its last self-evaluation. Although it has assessed itself as not having any areas of non-compliance against equality indicators, it recognises it needs to better demonstrate application of its impact assessment framework.
67. There are robust structures in place for ensuring that both SPA Corporate and Police Scotland meet the requirements of equality and human rights legislation and [Scottish-specific public sector equality duties](#). There is shared commitment between the SPA and Police Scotland in respect of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) issues being embedded into standard processes through their Policing Together programme. Progress is outlined in a two-year cycle (see the [Joint Police Scotland/SPA Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes Progress Report](#)), and delivered and monitored through the SPA Service Plan.



68. The SPA Policing Together Strategic Oversight Group provides enhanced oversight and scrutiny of the delivery of equality objectives and outcomes. In addition to this, an SPA Equalities and Duties Working Group has been established, with a Terms of Reference document developed, to ensure appropriate scrutiny and challenge on achieving equality outcomes.
69. The SPA recognises that there is work to do in fully embedding equality in all its processes, however there is evidence that it has made a commitment to communicating the EDI aims to staff. There is ongoing work to enhance the use of impact assessments in day-to-day business and to ensure that these are consistently used.
70. The SPA regularly scrutinises Police Scotland on cross-cutting EDI issues in its committees, however it would be beneficial to ensure that there are robust structures in place to ensure that this happens systematically. The handling of cross-cutting issues such as equalities, sustainability, risk, performance and change should all be considered in this way.

#### **Area for development 16**

The SPA should consider how interdependencies and duplication across its committees could be better managed.

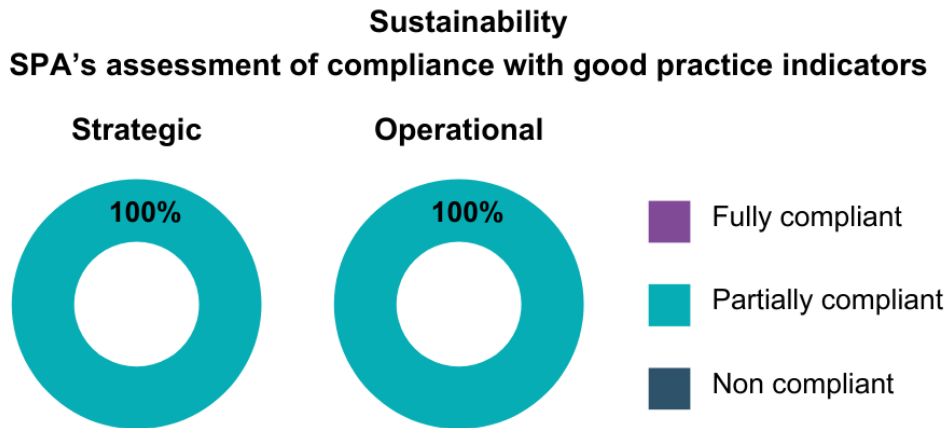
71. The SPA aims to reach and represent disadvantaged groups, protected groups and seldom-heard voices, as highlighted in its [Community Confidence Action Research](#) work. With Police Scotland, they have jointly sponsored projects to support improved engagement between policing and seldom-heard communities, working in conjunction with the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR). There is also ongoing work to monitor the impact of the [Policing Together strategy](#), as well as areas within SPA Corporate on these groups: a recent example was monitoring the impact of the SPA's approach to hybrid working. There is capacity for research and evidence gathering through the [Joint Research and Evidence Forum](#), and the SPA should ensure that research on the impact of *all* policies, services and functions on different equality groups has been considered.



## Area for development 17

The SPA should consider how to ensure that seldom-heard voices are systematically and effectively engaged in its own and Police Scotland's work.

## Sustainability



72. In its previous self-evaluation, the SPA assessed itself as not complying with best practice for any of the relevant indicators in this area. It has now assessed sustainability as the area of most significant improvement, attributing this to its corporate sustainability plan. It recognises sustainability as an area for noticeable further improvement and has identified individuals to lead relevant work, putting measures in place to monitor progress.
73. Sustainable development can be defined as *“securing a balance of social, economic and environmental wellbeing in the impact of activities and decisions”* ([Best Value \(revised statutory guidance\) SG 2020](#)). There are five broad principles within this: *“promoting good governance; living within environmental limits; achieving a sustainable economy; ensuring a stronger healthier society; and using sound science responsibly”* (see [Best Value in Public Services: Guidance for Accountable Officers \(2011\)](#)).
74. The SPA has oversight of Police Scotland's environmental sustainability commitments in a number of areas, including estates and fleet. A joint [SPA/Police Scotland Biodiversity Duty Report \(2021-2023\)](#) has been published and a joint [Climate Change Report](#) is prepared annually by Police Scotland and the SPA. The climate-related reports are published on the [Sustainable Scotland Network](#).



75. The SPA has demonstrated a commitment to financial sustainability and has embedded a number of activities in its plans. We have outlined above our concerns about the SPA securing financial sustainability, and actions that can be taken towards ensuring future financial sustainability (paragraphs 50 and 52).
76. Social sustainability can be defined as *“identifying and managing business impacts, both positive and negative, on people”* ([Social Sustainability](#)). We found evidence of several areas of work relating to this, including protected characteristics and workforce health and wellbeing. A sustainable workforce is one of the outcomes of the [SPA Corporate Strategy 2023-26](#) (Strategic Outcome 4: Our workforce is valued, engaged and skilled) and the SPA provided evidence of monitoring of equality issues in the workplace, along with progress and next steps ([Equality and Diversity employment monitoring analysis report - 2023](#)). In our recent report on [Wellbeing](#) (April 2024), we noted that – while Police Scotland had reported to the SPA People Committee an intention to develop a wellbeing impact assessment – this has not yet been achieved. The SPA should ensure that it maintains a focus in this area.
77. The SPA and Police Scotland are working with communities in their Community Confidence Action Research. This work also includes a [Green Leaders Network](#) which comprises 140 police officers and staff from all 13 Local Policing divisions, and Police Scotland Youth Volunteers, which aims to strengthen the relationship between police and young people. They also provided evidence of the ICVS scheme which monitors the welfare of people detained in police custody.
78. Work is ongoing, but SPA Corporate needs to articulate how it is addressing social sustainability more clearly in its Corporate Sustainability Plan – as well as its governance role for Police Scotland in this respect. The SPA could also make more effective use of noting sustainability implications in the designated section of committee reports, to ensure ongoing monitoring and scrutiny.



## Conclusion

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Our review work has clearly demonstrated a significant difference in the approach and effectiveness of the SPA as a corporate body since our 2019 inspection. There have been real improvements in leadership, governance and accountability – the core statutory role of the Authority. Planning, capacity and capability have all been improved. These improvements have also been acknowledged by external auditors.

We do consider that there remains a risk of varying interpretations of the role, structure and governance arrangements of the SPA, specifically when Chairs and Chief Executives stand down and are replaced. These issues, which became evident in our 2019 inspection, can be partially mitigated by capturing leadership successes, good practice and challenges, and translating these into learning, to ensure that robust structures and processes are in place for subsequent changes in personnel. HMICS also considers that an overlap between the departure of incumbents and the arrival of new appointments is worth consideration by the Scottish Government.

The current strategic policing plan (the three-year Joint Strategy for Policing (2023-26), approved in May 2023) sets out a purpose, values, vision and five strategic outcomes, with supporting objectives for policing in Scotland. One of the specific cultural commitments set out in the strategy is to “promote a culture of change to see a drive for continuous improvement at the heart of every operational team and business area, empowering all officers and staff to be innovative and improvement-focused in their day-to-day practice”. This essentially captures the best value commitment required of both the SPA and Police Scotland.

We have found good evidence of adherence to this best value commitment within SPA Corporate. But the SPA now needs to consider what further development work is needed to fully meet best value expectations, as well as how it can best continue to support and challenge Police Scotland in both its continuous improvement and best value commitments. In our recent [Thematic Inspection of Organisational Culture in Police Scotland \(December 2023\)](#), we recommended that Police Scotland prioritise the completion of an organisational maturity assessment of continuous improvement, organisational learning and best value, involving all improvement-related functions within the organisation, using this to inform a unified approach. We consider that it is now essential that the SPA, through its statutory role in holding the Chief Constable to account, should apply effective focus to this, alongside the development of a longer-term vision and sustainable model for policing.





## Appendix 1 – Recommendations from the HMICS Thematic Inspection of the Scottish Police Authority, 2019

	Recommendation	Status	Date closed	Commentary
1	The Scottish Police Authority Chief Executive should lead and expedite the implementation of a new Scottish Police Authority corporate structure and ensure an appropriate focus on existing staff wellbeing.	Closed	08/07/2021	A new structure was implemented (SPA2020) under the leadership of the new Chief Executive, with improved staff engagement and wellbeing focus.
2	The Scottish Government should clarify in what respects the Scottish Police Authority differs from other public bodies and specify the implications for the system of governance for policing	Closed	16/09/2022	The new Joint Memorandum of Understanding on engagement and communication relating to new and emerging strategy, policy or practice in areas of significant public interest – between the SPA and Police Scotland (see Recommendation 12) – provided improved clarity on the role of the Authority.
3	The Scottish Government and the Scottish Police Authority should undertake an immediate review of the roles of the Chair and Board members in executive work, in line with principles of good governance, empowering the Scottish Police Authority executive team to assume operational management of the organisation.	Closed	24/09/2021	An independent review of the role of the SPA, the Chair and members was commissioned (August 2020). A new executive structure was also implemented (as per Recommendation 1).  Communication was issued by the Chief Executive to all members, emphasising where responsibility lies with directly tasking authority staff, i.e. this is executive responsibility as management.



				SPA Governance and Accountability Framework refreshed (October 2020) providing clear definitions of roles, responsibilities and governance approach. Board member recruitment approach also updated. Member development and induction approach updated for 2021. Committee introductory sessions held.
4	The Scottish Government, the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland should develop a clear system of engagement and governance for reserved policing matters.	Closed	07/12/2021	A Joint Agreement on Engagement and Communication on Reserved Policing Matters was submitted as evidence. COP26 provided a good case example of how SG, SPA and Police Scotland have worked effectively using a clear system of engagement and governance.
5	The Scottish Police Authority should proceed to formally co-opt COSLA to its Board and appropriate sub-committees in order to enhance the link between local and national policing.	Closed	16/09/2022	SPA considers that current legislation does not facilitate co-opting on to the SPA Board. However a COSLA representative is now invited to participate in meetings of the Policing Performance Committee. This is not a co-option, as such, given the nature of the relationship with COSLA. The role and expectations were, however, clearly documented and agreed between the Vice Chair and COSLA's president in January 2020.
6	The Scottish Government, the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland should review the designation of Accountable Officer(s) within policing.	Closed	30/08/2021	A review of the designation of Accountable Officer within policing has been completed from an SPA perspective (see Recommendation 1). The report was accepted by



				SG and SPA and, on this basis, HMICS discharged the recommendation.
7	The Scottish Police Authority should implement effective engagement and feedback mechanisms with staff associations and unions as part of a wider stakeholder engagement and consultation approach.	Closed	30/08/2021	Extensive SPA engagement took place with staff associations, unions, Police Scotland, the SPA Board and the SPA senior management team during 2020-21. This was driven by a direction of travel endorsed by SPA board members at a Board seminar in October 2020. A key element included the need for committee/board papers to be clearer on the position of staff associations/unions on proposals. Staff associations and unions attend and contribute to both the public and private sessions of the People Committee. Regular engagement processes are now in place with the Chair and SPA officers.
8	The Scottish Police Authority executive team should develop proposals for effective governance of change and transformation, bringing forward proposals as a matter of urgency.	Closed	22/06/2020	SPA brought forward proposals for the revised approach to change governance in February 2020. HMICS continues to monitor effectiveness of these arrangements.
9	The Scottish Police Authority executive team should develop and secure approval from the Board for a new corporate plan.	Closed	18/06/2020	SPA now has a <a href="#">Corporate Strategy</a> and <a href="#">Business Plan</a> in place, which have been approved by the Board.



10	The Scottish Police Authority should further develop its self-assessment and performance monitoring approach to include examples and measures of its own impact on continuous improvement.	Closed	30/08/2021	<p>Regular monitoring of SPA business plans is in place and quarterly performance reports are submitted.</p> <p>A formal approach to self-assessment has been developed, incorporating the requirements to demonstrate best value. Annually, SPA self-evaluates against the best value themes and criteria defined within the <a href="#">Scottish Public Finance Manual</a>.</p> <p>The SPA has further developed its approach to self-assessment in relation to staff satisfaction and the output from the regular <i>Your Voice</i> surveys. Survey results are analysed, with the Senior Management Team reviewing the findings and agreeing an action plan to address any concerns raised.</p> <p>Evidence of self-assessment being deployed in other areas of SPA included a self-assessment of whistleblowing, presented at the July 2020 ARAC.</p>
11	The Scottish Police Authority should set out in detail how it will exercise its duty to hold the Chief Constable to account through its system of governance.	Closed	16/09/2022	<p>SPA has included clear actions in its Corporate Strategy and Business Plan to support its 'holding to account' role. These include developing the approach to performance reporting and change governance.</p> <p>Member development has a focus on scrutiny skills.</p> <p>The annual report and accounts include an assessment on the delivery of policing.</p> <p>HMICS observed SPA committees to assess effectiveness and improvement in this area and then</p>



				closed the recommendation. HMICS continues to observe SPA Board and committees to assess their effectiveness in this respect.
12	The Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland should develop a forward planning system of proactive risk awareness and post-implementation scrutiny for policing policy changes that are likely to have an impact on public confidence.	Closed	16/07/2021	Primary evidence was the implementation of a new SPA/Police Scotland <a href="#">Joint Memorandum of Understanding</a> on engagement and communication relating to new and emerging strategy, policy or practice in areas of significant public interest.  The SPA approach to this recommendation included developing the approach to performance reporting and change governance.
13	The Scottish Police Authority should review the role of the Forensics Committee to work effectively with other Scottish Police Authority committees and review the optimum governance and delivery options for Forensic Services.	Closed	30/08/2021	This recommendation was closed on the basis that the SPA indicated it would not be taking forward this recommendation. Following the <a href="#">HMICS Assurance Review of Forensic Toxicology Provision (2023)</a> , the SPA have since followed our recommendation to review the <a href="#">Forensic Services Terms of Reference</a> .  HMICS remains of the view that there is a potential conflict of interest with the SPA scrutiny role and that of its 'delivery' functions (independent custody visiting and forensic services). See <a href="#">Thematic Inspection of the Scottish Police Authority (2019)</a> .
14	The Scottish Police Authority should improve visibility of the work of the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme,	Closed	30/08/2021	This recommendation was closed on the basis that the SPA indicated it would not be taking forward this



	<p>direct scrutiny of custody arrangements and outcomes for detainees. It should also review the optimum governance and delivery options for the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme.</p>			<p>recommendation. HMICS remains of the view that there is a potential conflict of interest with the SPA scrutiny role and that of its 'delivery' functions (independent custody visiting and forensic services). See <a href="#">Thematic Inspection of the Scottish Police Authority (2019)</a>.</p>
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## Appendix 2 – Methodology

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### Scope and exclusions

We considered the fundamental role of the SPA, set against the original policy intentions that created it, and subsequent legislation. The review involved some benchmarking against other jurisdictions and models of governance, and best value. Observation of SPA committees formed part of this review, but was limited to:

- Board Meeting
- Audit, Risk and Assurance
- Resources Committee
- Policing Performance Committee
- Complaints and Conduct Committee
- People Committee
- Legal Committee
- Exceptional Circumstances Committee.

We considered the role of the SPA at a strategic level and did not inspect day-to-day operations in detail. The SPA self-evaluation that formed the basis of this review is limited to its corporate functions. The SPA Forensic Services function was not inspected in this review. However, we took into account our previous inspection findings on the effectiveness of the SPA Forensics Committee. The ICVS function was also not inspected in the review.

### Methodology

We provided assurance that the footprint of this inspection would be carefully managed, making use of existing evidence as much as possible so as not to duplicate work already undertaken or planned. As such, we committed to using the self-evaluation conducted by the SPA, based around the seven best value areas. Self-evaluation and evidence relating to board member development, the SPA improvement journey, and the quality of the self-evaluation process and quality of the evidence supplied, also formed part of our review work.



As part of the inspection process, we engaged with key stakeholders, conducted interviews, observed meetings and reviewed documents.

Between December 2023 and March 2024, we:

- Identified a single point of contact in the SPA to support the review process and to facilitate appropriate access to people and information
- Liaised regularly with the SPA and maintained ongoing engagement with other key stakeholders
- Analysed the self-evaluation and other evidence provided by the SPA and considered relevant documentation in the public domain. Where possible, we minimised the amount of further documents requested
- Conducted a small number of interviews with key stakeholders within the SPA and Police Scotland. These were conducted with the aim of providing further information to fill any gaps and provide context and further detail where required
- Continued to observe SPA committee meetings, and evaluate SPA committee effectiveness statements
- Conducted additional document reviews where relevant, including benchmarking against other models of self-evaluation/best value.

In validating the SPA self-evaluation, we considered:

- The relevance, sufficiency and reliability of data and evidence gathered and what this reveals about strengths and weaknesses
- Outcomes from the implementation of strategy, policy, specific operations, tests of change or other improvement activity; how was this evaluated; what was the learning; was learning cascaded to others to support ongoing improvements
- Evidence of assessing progress and impact of strategy, policy or plans
- The impact that strengths and weakness have on service delivery.





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HMICS operates independently of Police Scotland, the Scottish Police Authority and the Scottish Government. Under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, our role is to review the state, effectiveness and efficiency of Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority. We support improvement in policing by carrying out inspections, making recommendations and highlighting effective practice.

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978-1-910165-83-6

HMICS/2024/05