

## MINUTES OF THE SCOTTISH PRISON SERVICE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD IN THE BEN CLEUCH MEETING ROOM, SPS COLLEGE, POLMONT ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2024

**Present:** Ann McKechin, Non-Executive Director and Advisory Board Chair  
 Teresa Medhurst, Chief Executive, SPS  
 Linda Pollock, Deputy Chief Executive, SPS  
 Sarah Angus, Director of Policy, SPS  
 Lynne Clow, Non-Executive Director  
 Ian Harley, RMAC Chair and Non-Executive Director  
 Andy Hodge, Director of Operations, SPS  
 Adam Jobson, Director of Organisational Development, SPS  
 Sharon Lawson, Executive Personal Assistant, SPS (Minutes) (attended virtually)  
 Gerry O'Donnell, Director of Finance, SPS  
 Gareth Rose, Head of Communications, SPS  
 Gill Stillie, Non-Executive Director  
 Lisa Taylor, Head of OCE Branch and Acting Head of Strategy and Planning, SPS  
 Stephen Uphill, Non-Executive Director  
 Billy Watson, Non-Executive Director

### Introduction and Welcome

1. The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting, in particular, to Mr Hodge who was attending his first meeting as Director of Operations, a role he was undertaking on a job-share basis with Mr Whitehead. Ms McKechin referred to several issues that had arisen since the last meeting, including the continued rise in prison numbers, the early release scheme, and investment and in-year budget pressures.
2. Ms McKechin advised that the agenda for this meeting would follow the new arrangements agreed previously, with the first half of the meeting concentrating on Advisory Board business and the second half providing members with an opportunity for in-depth discussion.

### Apologies for Absence

3. Apologies for absence were received from Messrs Evans and Whitehead.

### Declarations of Interest

4. There were no new declarations of interest.

### Draft Minutes of the Advisory Board Meeting Held on 31 July, Action Points and Matters Arising

5. The draft minutes of the meeting held on 31 July were agreed as a true record. The Action Tracker was updated during the discussion, with several items being closed.

**Action: Ms Lawson**

### Chief Executive's Update

6. The Chief Executive's update included the following points:
  - As a result of the early release scheme, there had been a short respite in population pressures during August-early September, with 477 people being released; she commended the immense efforts by community partners in supporting the scheme.
  - As a result of the continued rise in the prison population, the Permanent Secretary had held 3 meetings with criminal justice partners and his intervention had been warmly welcomed.

- SPS colleagues have worked well across the estate to ensure that SPS is on track to deliver the 35 hour working week by December.
- There had been good progress on both the HMP Glasgow and Highland projects.

### **Prison Population**

7. Following on from the Chief Executive's update and subsequent discussion on population, Mr Hodge advised that the prison population on 25 September was 8,296.

8. Pressure continues to rise within the women's estate, with numbers remaining high and acute mental health challenges being significant at HMP Stirling. Many complex cases are also being admitted across the estate, which is adding to the current challenge.

9. The NEDs expressed their concern for the wellbeing of the Chief Executive and Directors, and for establishment teams, agreeing that the current position was unsustainable. Ms Medhurst advised that she had raised the same concerns with Scottish Government colleagues and had discussed this with Directors at a recent Executive Management Group (EMG) meeting. The NEDs were keen to offer their assistance and the Chief Executive agreed to advise them of any actions they could take to bolster SPS' position. Meantime, it was agreed that the Chair would write to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs to suggest a meeting to highlight the NEDs' profound concerns regarding pressures on SPS and she undertook to advise Advisory Board members once contact had been made.

**Action: Ms Medhurst/Ms McKechin**

10. Members thanked Ms Medhurst and Mr Hodge for their updates, and all SPS staff for their continuing efforts in the day-to-day operation of the prison estate.

### **AB(SEP)01/24: Improvement Framework Report**

11. The Improvement Framework (IF) provides an integrated account of organisational performance and risk, and this report provided a summary update as at the end of Q1 of the 2024-25 reporting year.

12. Q1 was a complex quarter in terms of significant operational fluctuation, covering a period of rapid rise in population, a brief period of stabilisation and the start of the early release tranches at end June.

13. Members noted this report, and thanked Ms Taylor for her update.

### **AB(SEP)02/24: Financial Update/Budget Monitoring**

14. This paper provided an update on the 2023-24 financial position as at 31 July and was discussed and noted by members.

### **AB(SEP)03/24: Workforce Metrics Report - Q1 2024-25**

15. This paper and report provided the Quarter 1 update on SPS' workforce metrics.

16. In May 2024, Organisational Development refreshed its approach to how people-related data is reported via internal organisational governance arrangements. An update on core people metrics across many people-related areas of the business will now be provided on a quarterly basis, with other mechanisms developed over time to support people-related insights, decision-making and scrutiny.

17. Due to time constraints, the paper was not discussed in detail at the meeting, but members noted and thanked Mr Jobson for the updates contained therein. The Board welcomed the introduction this week of the Lifeline Services facility for staff, particularly at this a time of acute pressure for the Service. The Chair asked that details of staff grievance cases be included in future updates.

**Action: Mr Jobson**

#### **AB(SEP)04/24: Estates Development Programme**

18. The Estates capital and revenue funded projects are categorised into several different programmes of work, with the 2 principal programmes being the Major Infrastructure Works programme and the Planned Preventative Maintenance programme.

19. This paper summarised the progress of the Major Infrastructure Works and Maintenance Works programmes since the previous progress report in March 2024, providing updates on HMPs Glasgow, Greenock, Highland, Kilmarnock and Stirling, and was noted with thanks by members.

#### **AB(SEP)05/24: Healthcare of Prisoners**

20. [Ms Calder, Head of Health, joined the meeting for this discussion.] This paper outlined progress against key strands of work within the Health Policy Team and set out the vision for a person-centred, trauma-informed approach to health, wellbeing and social care.

21. The Mental Health Strategy was published on 5 September. The next stage is to develop an outcomes-based Implementation Plan with key partners, which will be part of an over-arching Health and Wellbeing Framework which aligns to shared actions with other related strategies.

22. Arrangements are currently being made to hold a death in custody summit which will bring together partners to map out and agree pathways for keeping people well in custody, preventing death and where appropriate, agree minimum standards to allow someone to have a dignified and compassionate death. The summit will also look at the progress and next steps against the Independent Review of the Response to Deaths in Prison Custody. It was noted that there also needed to be further analysis of the increase in deaths by natural causes to assist future policy.

**Action: Ms Angus/Ms Calder**

23. The National Care Service (NCS), a new national body under the Scottish Government, is planned to be established in 2026 with the intention of reforming how social care, social work and community health services are delivered in Scotland. The Body will result in a shift of responsibility for social care in prisons from SPS to NCS.

24. The Advisory Board noted this update and thanked both Ms Angus and Ms Calder [Ms Calder left the meeting following this discussion].

#### **RMAC Chair's Verbal Report**

25. As the RMAC meeting was not being held until later in the day, Mr Harley did not provide members with an update. He did, however, advise on the agenda items which would be discussed at the meeting and members thanked him for this.

#### **Major Projects Management Group (MPMG) Verbal Update**

26. As Mr Evans was absent from this meeting, no update was provided on MPMG.

#### **Any Other Business**

27. Members noted and welcomed that a joint meeting would be held with Governors-in-Charge in March 2025.

28. The Chair asked that the timing of the September 2025 meeting be amended.

29. There was no further business discussed.

## Draft Agenda for November Meeting

30. The agenda for the November meeting was agreed as drafted. The NEDs noted that the Chief Executive and Board Chair from the State Hospital would be attending this meeting and asked that a briefing note be provided to them in advance.

**Action: Ms Taylor**

## Date of Next Meeting

31. The next Advisory Board meeting will be held on Wednesday 27 November from 0900-1200hrs in the Dumyat Meeting Room, SPS College, Polmont. This would again be followed by the RMAC meeting.

## Deep Dive Discussion

### AB(SEP)06/24: Annual Delivery Plan 2024-25: Corporate Priorities

32. [Mr Beardmore joined the discussion at this point.] Ms Pollock set out the background to the paper advising that it detailed the prioritisation principals and high level organisational plans for SPS for the next 18 months (the remainder of the 2024-25 operating year and 2025-26).

33. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs recently wrote to SPS setting out the very challenging fiscal position across the whole public sector. The letter set out the actions core Scottish Government colleagues are taking to reduce in-year budget pressures, and asked that all public bodies take the same stance.

34. During the past reporting year, EMG meetings and individual challenge sessions with Directors were held which resulted in programmes being managed in such a way as to respond to the growing pressures of managing the population. A planning session was also held with Directors in August to discuss SPS' priorities and the status of key development activity for this reporting year in light of the fiscal challenge.

35. During the discussions, 3 priority areas of work were identified:

Core Business-As-Usual (BaU): these are the essential functions of the Directorates that are required for the legal, safe and secure operation of the organisation. Normally, we do not include these BaU activities in our Corporate ADP, however, given the challenge to maintain core business with such high population numbers, it was felt important that this work be recognised and included in the planning.

Non-Negotiable Developments: these are developmental or exceptional activities that, at this point in time, must proceed, ie SPS is contractually obligated to do; and/or the cost of stopping them is likely greater than the cost of continuing; and/or are part of on-going legal compliance; and/or will deliver significant cost/efficiency/effectiveness benefits (including contributing to Public Service Reform ambitions); and/or non-delivery would threaten the viability or credibility of the organisation.

Priority Activities: these are pieces of work that the organisation should continue to deliver due to their benefits for public service delivery, the effectiveness of functions and mitigation of our principal organisational risks. While these are important, impactful pieces of work, they can be scaled up or down or de-prioritised/slowed down according to capacity.

36. SPS is required to produce an Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) each year, setting out its key targets and milestones. The plan should also contain relevant budgeting information and align plans to the National Performance Framework. Because this planning is taking place mid-way through the 2024-25 year, the 2 Annual Delivery Plans will be published within a single document and if significant updates are required, a revised version will publish during 2025-26.

37. Ms Pollock invited the NEDs' views on the shape of the programmes and advised that an update on key activity work for SPS and budget alignment, including information around work being managed in such a way as to allow it to continue, would also be made to the Cabinet Secretary.

38. It was confirmed that milestones over the period would feed into the quarterly Improvement Framework reports. The planning approach recognised the need to be flexible and Mr Beardmore confirmed that the published Plan is not fixed; it is recognised that it is not realistic to be static and as a result, it is a changing document which can flex and adapt, subject to appropriate approvals and governance.

39. The NEDs were content that the items listed were sensible and high priority, though questioned the positioning of 'Cyber Security'. They were pleased to note that 'BaU' was included as it is important to recognise other priorities that may arise throughout the year, and asked that 'Staff Potential' and 'Promoting Attendance' also be included as priority areas. NED members felt it would be helpful for them to have an understanding of the business items which had been excluded or de-prioritised, together with those items which were likely to next be removed if required.

**Action: Mr Beardmore/Ms Taylor/Ms Pollock**

40. The NEDs were keen to know how they could engage and share their experiences within the priorities as it may be helpful for other colleagues to be aware of these.

**Action: Mr Beardmore/Ms Taylor/Ms Pollock**

41. The Chief Executive asked that more be done to promote SPS' reputation, both internally and externally, to highlight the other work the organisation continues to push and promote, despite the significant challenges and huge pressures being faced.

**Action: Mr Rose**

42. Mr Hodge advised that he and Mr Whitehead were working with Governors-in-Charge to provide a safe space for them to work together and have conversations. Although everyone recognised the pressures, the role of a Governor can feel very lonely and it was important that that too was recognised. It was also proposed to invite key stakeholders to attend future Governor-in-Charge meetings to allow colleagues to hear from them directly, and for stakeholders to also hear about the daily challenges from Governors.

43. The Chair summed up the discussion, and the meeting overall, by thanking members for the full and rich discussion that had taken place throughout the course of the meeting, and Directors for their immensely helpful papers which, although not all were discussed in detail at the meeting, had been read by NEDs in advance.

**Advisory Board Secretariat  
September 2024**