



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland **Improving Policing across Scotland**

Friday, December 18, 2015

PRESS RELEASE

HM INSPECTOR OF CONSTABULARY IN SCOTLAND ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15

Overall performance across Police Scotland remains strong with officers and staff committed to providing a good service to communities, states the HMICS annual report issued today (Friday, December 18, 2015).

HM Inspector of Constabulary Derek Penman said: "It has been a challenging year for both Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority and, the fact that such positive performance has been delivered, is testimony to the leadership and commitment of staff at all levels of the service. It also compares favourably with other European jurisdictions where police reform has coincided with a drop in performance."

HMICS inspections during the past year have found that local policing remains effective and Mr Penman believes that, while the initial Police Scotland priority has been to promote consistency across the country, there is now scope to give staff greater flexibility in delivering more locally responsive services.

The role of the local police commander has developed under Police Scotland and, working with their partners and their local scrutiny bodies to identify and agree local priorities, these commanders can offer a wider public sector leadership role and contribute to delivering broader outcomes for the well-being of their communities.

Mr Penman repeats his concerns about the need for Police Scotland to review the balance between response and community policing and specialist services to ensure there are sufficient police resources in the areas in which they are most needed.

He also cautions that historic annual reductions in reported crime may be affected by the increasing level of offences, such as fraud and sexual crimes, taking place online. They are more difficult to identify, record and investigate and as Police Scotland improves its

response to the challenges presented by cyber crime, it is likely the volume of recorded crime will increase.

The report also highlights there is pressing need for a long term vision of the future shape of the police service and calls for strengthened financial leadership.

Mr Penman added: "Both the SPA and Police Scotland have to be clear about future structures and put plans in place to deliver sustainable savings.

"There must be an extensive and detailed vision for policing in the future which reflects the challenging public sector financial landscape and seeks to balance the need for community policing with the need to protect communities and respond to new and developing threats.

"It is essential that effective corporate governance is put in place within both the SPA and Police Scotland to set the strategic direction, agree a budget and accurately monitor spend and savings."

Mr Penman notes that the absence of a long term vision and financial strategy creates a risk that savings will continue to focus on reducing the numbers of police staff. "While the current commitment to maintaining an additional 1000 officers is welcomed and has strengthened policing across Scotland, it can only remain effective if these officers continue to carry out operational policing roles. Through our various inspections, I have observed the reduction in skilled police staff, increases in overtime and increased use of police officers in corporate functions and other settings, including projects. This is not sustainable in the medium to longer term."

He continued: "A workforce strategy should be in place detailing the best balance of officers and staff required to police Scotland within a balanced budget. This should be informed by a wider discussion around the new financial settlement for policing, the re-forecasting of achievable savings and which will potentially offer greater flexibility for the SPA and Police Scotland on how to spend this budget."

Mr Penman welcomes the steps taken by the SPA to support local scrutiny committees in developing their roles and the growing confidence within local authorities to seek the information they need to support policing with their areas.

He added: "Effective scrutiny is critical and there is no doubt that policing in Scotland has faced greater levels of political, public and media scrutiny than ever before. This year has been dominated by a number of major issues which have drawn criticism on the service and publicly raised questions over the effectiveness of the SPA and its ability to hold Police Scotland to account. HMICS has responded to each of these issues through a series of comprehensive audit and assurance reviews and identified areas for improvement.

"I fully support the review of governance in policing which the SPA has been asked to carry out by the Cabinet Secretary for Justice. It has the potential to address many of the issues which HMICS has previously identified and strengthen scrutiny of policing in Scotland."

During the past year, HMICS has supported the SPA and Police Scotland through Continuous Improvement Reviews and both organisations are taking forward areas which were identified for improvement.

Mr Penman takes the opportunity in his annual report to acknowledge the significant contributions made by Chief Constable Sir Stephen House and Mr Vic Emery, former Chair of the SPA in leading the policing of Scotland through a period unprecedented change.

In welcoming Mr Andrew Flanagan as the new Chair of the SPA and Mr Phil Gormley as the recently appointed Chief Constable of Police Scotland, Mr Penman stated: “Although significant challenges remain for policing around sustainability, localism and scrutiny, these can be effectively addressed.

“However, confidence in policing will be a key measure of success, not only in terms of strengthening public confidence but critically in building this confidence in all officers and police staff working in Police Scotland and the SPA. Opportunities exist under this new leadership to develop and articulate a clear vision for the policing of Scotland and continue building a sustainable, locally responsive and accountable police service.”

Ends

Notes to Editors

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 and the Scottish Police Authority.

It has a statutory duty to ensure the Chief Constable and the SPA meet their obligations in terms of best value and continuous improvement. If necessary, it can be directed by Scottish Ministers to look into anything relating to the SPA or Police Scotland. HMICS has an established role in providing professional advice and guidance on policing in Scotland.

HMICS’ approach is to support Police Scotland the SPA to deliver services that are high quality, continually improving, effective and responsive to local needs.

Ends notes

For further information, please contact:

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