

## **MINUTES OF THE SCOTTISH PRISON SERVICE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD IN THE BOARD ROOM, SPS HEADQUARTERS ON 30 JULY**

**Present:** Ann McKechin, Non-Executive Director (NED) and Advisory Board Chair  
Teresa Medhurst, Chief Executive, SPS  
Linda Pollock, Deputy Chief Executive, SPS  
Sarah Angus, Director of Policy, SPS  
Lynne Clow, NED  
Ian Harley, NED and RMAC Chair  
Sharon Lawson, Executive Personal Assistant, SPS (Minutes)  
Simon Little, NED  
Gerry O'Donnell, Previous Director of Finance, SPS  
Amy McDonald, Director of Finance, SPS  
Gareth Rose, Head of Communications, SPS  
Gill Stillie, NED  
Lisa Taylor, Head of Corporate Strategy and Governance, SPS  
Stephen Uphill, NED  
Billy Watson, NED  
Ian Whitehead, Director of Operations, SPS

### **Introduction and Welcome**

1. The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting, noting that this was the last meeting for 2 members of the Advisory Board:

- Gerry O'Donnell, previously Director of Finance, who was retiring on 31 July. Members thanked Gerry for his contribution, advice and steady counsel during his term and wished him well in his future endeavours. Amy McDonald had been appointed as the new Director of Finance and had taken up post on 7 July. She was welcomed to SPS and the Advisory Board more generally by NEDs.
- Gill Stillie, the Advisory Board's longest serving NED, was leaving her role to take up post as one of 4 Chairs of the Death in Person Learning and Audit Review (DIPLAR). The Chair thanked her for her dedication and service on behalf of all members, and the NEDs particularly, who had benefitted from her knowledge and experience in SPS.

### **Apologies for Absence**

2. Apologies for absence were received from Mr Jobson.

### **Declarations of Interest**

3. There were no new declarations of interest.

### **Draft Minutes of the Advisory Board Meeting Held on 28 May, Action Points and Matters Arising**

4. The draft minutes of the meeting held on 28 May were agreed as a true record. The Action Tracker was updated during the discussion.

**Action: Ms Lawson**

5. Ms McKechin asked that a copy of the Annual Delivery Plan be sent to the NEDs.

**Action: Ms Taylor**

6. The NEDs had previously asked for a training session on Cyber Security and Mr Ironside had been asked to provide availability for an online course in October.

### **Chief Executive's Update**

7. The Chief Executive's update touched on the following points:

- The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) had visited SPS at short notice, but despite this, establishments and staff had coped admirably with the additional workload. Ms Pollock undertook to share their full report with NEDs once received in November.

**Action: Ms Pollock**

- A project structure was now in place for actions responding to population pressures and the Chief Executive had discussed the proposals with the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, Governors-in-Charge and the Trade Unions.
- Following the recent Supreme Court judgement, action was underway to review policies and procedures in response.
- A strategic oversight group, the Prisoner Escort Strategic Multi-Agency Liaison Group (SMALG), led by the Scottish Government on behalf of Ministers, has now been established in relation to the new prisoner escorting contract.
- A business case for additional resource has now been approved in relation to the FAI Taskforce.
- An engagement meeting had been held with the Sentencing Policy Commission.

8. The Chair thanked Ms Medhurst for her informative and helpful update.

### **AB(JUL)01/25: Population Management Highlight Report**

9. The prison population on 30 July was 8,238, with 99 people on HDC. Members noted that in custody numbers continue to rise steadily and both the Chief and Deputy Chief Executives have engaged with the Permanent Secretary and Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs in this respect.

10. To ensure continuing engagement and assessment of impact profile, each establishment now submits a weekly capacity indicator assessment to the Operations Population Management Team. This assessment is completed by all SPS prison sites and establishes a compilation of a weekly overall Red/Amber/Green (RAG) status.

11. There followed a lengthy discussion on the impact of the continuing pressure on custody numbers. The NEDs recognised that there is no easy solution to the problem, but they were keen that SPS continues to strongly advocate its position and that the recommendations made by SPS based on their insight are highlighted to others for their awareness.

12. Members noted the difficulties establishment staff continue to experience and expressed concern for their welfare.

13. The Chair thanked Mr Whitehead for his update.

#### **AB(JUL)02/25: Financial Update/Budget Monitoring**

14. This paper provided an update on the 2025-26 financial position covering the period 1 April-31 May and was noted by members.

#### **AB(JUL)03/25: Annual Report and Accounts**

15. Due to time constraints, this paper was noted without discussion. Members were advised that it would, however, be discussed during the RMAC meeting later that afternoon.

#### **AB(JUL)04/25: Internal Audit Advisory - SPS Governance Review**

16. This paper provided the final report of Internal Audit's (IA) advisory review of SPS' review of governance arrangements and sought views on the main advisory points and discussion on next steps.

17. SPS commenced a review of existing governance structures in November 2023, with an initial paper discussed at the Advisory Board in July 2024. This outlined the current SPS governance structures, suggested proposals for new governance structures and focused discussion on how future meetings could be optimised to allow for more discursive and strategic discussion. Amendments to the structure of Advisory Board meetings have now been in place since November 2024.

18. As part of the 2024-25 IA Plan, IA were tasked with conducting an advisory review of the work that had been undertaken in relation to overall governance and the current structure within SPS. The Advisory Board and RMAC were only one part of that review, which had concluded that the improvement work on-going into SPS' governance structure is fit-for-purpose and should enhance the wider governance structure in the organisation. IA set out some key issues for consideration in relation to accountability, roles and responsibilities, and resourcing and decision-making for consideration, and Ms Pollock invited members' views on these issues.

19. A range of views were set out by Advisory Board members for consideration. Ms McKechin was keen to provide an updated Terms of Reference for approval by the Advisory Board for the September meeting. Mr Harley advised that RMAC had discussed the need for additional members and concluded this was not necessary at the current time, though they had agreed to source additional members when required.

20. It was suggested that the Advisory Board meetings be re-configured to consider fewer standard papers and give members the opportunity for fuller discussion on a particular topic. Non-Executive members were content with the Internal Audit (IA) recommendation that there should be a direct link between RMAC and the Chief Executive

21. The Chief Executive thanked members for the interesting discussion which reflected the levels of expertise around the table, and the Chair thanked Ms Pollock for her paper.

**Action: Ms Pollock**

## **RMAC Verbal Update**

22. Mr Harley advised members of the following:

- RMAC had noted that 2 key risks had increased.
- The Committee had held a 'deep dive' into new HR payroll roll-out.
- Internal Audit had provided their annual opinion and given the Committee reasonable assurance.
- It had been agreed between both Chairs following the IA recommendations that future RMAC meetings would be held prior to Advisory Board meetings.

23. The Chair thanked Mr Harley for his update.

## **AB(JUL)05/25: Major Estates Developments**

24. This paper provided an update on major estate development projects in SPS.

25. HMP Highland will provide 200 places for adult males, as well as a small number of places for women and young people attending court locally. The construction contract was signed on 5 April 2024 and will conclude the construction work in late August 2026; work is underway in line with the programme with the steel structure of the main building being erected in recent weeks.

26. HMP Glasgow, a replacement for HMP Barlinnie, will provide 1,200 places for adult males, 120 doubled places as contingency accommodation, together with additional units for separation and integration, accessible care and observation; the overall design capacity will be 1,344 places. The contractor was awarded the contract to construct the prison in January 2024, and the prison is expected to be completed in late 2028.

27. Members thanked Mr Copeland for this informative paper.

## **Any Other Business**

28. The Chair outlined the draft agenda for the October planning day which would be held in HMP Castle Huntly, and this was agreed by members.

**Action: Ms Lawson**

29. Ms Clow provided an update on the work of the Culture Review Steering Committee.

30. It was noted that the Prison Officers Association Scotland (POAS) had issued a report following a survey of their members on overcrowding, and another was expected from the Prison Governors' Association (PGA).

## **Draft Agenda for September 2025 Meeting**

31. The agenda for the September meeting was agreed as drafted.

**Action: Ms Lawson**

### **Date of Next Meeting**

32. The next Advisory Board meeting will be held on 24 September from **1300-1600 hrs** in Room G.09, SPS Headquarters.

33. In closing, the Chief Executive again thanked both Mr O'Donnell and Ms Stillie for their service and wished them both well for the future.

### **Advisory Board Secretariat**

July 2025