

**MINUTES OF THE SCOTTISH PRISON SERVICE RISK MONITORING AND  
AUDIT COMMITTEE (RMAC) MEETING HELD IN SPS HQ, ROOM G0.9, ON 26  
NOVEMBER 2025**

**Present:** Ian Harley, RMAC Chair and Non-Executive Director  
Teresa Medhurst, Chief Executive, SPS  
Linda Pollock, Deputy Chief Executive, SPS  
Michael Beardmore, Head of Strategic Planning, SPS  
Rebecca Murray, Head of Improvement, SPS  
Lisa Taylor, Interim Director for Engagement and Change, SPS  
Lynne Clow, Non-Executive Director  
Stephen Uphill, Non-Executive Director  
Dougie Shepherd, Senior Internal Audit Manager, Scottish  
Government  
Jennifer Inglis-Jones, Director of Internal Audit and Assurance,  
Scottish Government  
Tommy Yule, Audit Scotland  
Michael Oliphant, Audit Scotland  
Adam Jobson, Director of Organisational Development, SPS (for  
items 02/25 to 05/25)  
Natalie Beal, Divisional Head of Operational Support, SPS (for item  
07/25)  
Andy Hodge, Director of Operations, SPS

**Introduction and Welcome**

1. The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

**Declarations of Interest**

2. There were no new declarations of interest.

**Apologies for Absence**

3. Apologies for absence were received from, William Wilkie and Alison Malone

**Draft Minutes of the last RMAC Meeting Held on 24 September 2025**

4. The draft minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2025 were agreed as a true record, with an update to the attendees requested.

**Action Log following Last RMAC Meeting**

5. The Chair and members reviewed the Action Log and agreed the update against each action.

**Action: Ms Blackburn**

6. In relation to outstanding Internal Audit actions from pre-2024 reviews, Mr Beardmore confirmed that there were 7 audits, with 18 actions. Mr Beardmore advised members that of these 18 actions, some could likely be closed owing to changes in approaches and structures within SPS. Others, however, remained valid recommendations, against which progress is being made.

7. It was agreed that a further discussion would be arranged out with RMAC to review these in more depth.

**Action: Mr Harley/ Mr Beardmore**

### **Update on External Audit Approach**

8. Mr Yule provided an update on the Audit approach for the coming year, highlighting that they would be taking a broadly similar approach to previous years, with additional controls testing being undertaken to comply with auditing requirements. Mr Yule advised members that Audit Scotland were aware of risks being reported in relation to HMP Addiewell, population pressures, staffing resources and ongoing FAI work.

9. Mr Oliphant noted that a planning meeting has been scheduled for January 2026. Members were advised that the intended focus will be on Wider Scope project work, such as HMP Glasgow and the JPECCS contract.

10. Members noted this update with thanks.

11. Mrs Medhurst highlighted that one of the many challenges faced with an increasing population is staffing, staff absence and the overall impact on staff mental health. Mrs Medhurst added that staff deserve recognition for their continued efforts in supporting those in SPS care, and while managing an increasingly complex population, they need to be looking at ways to support staff.

12. Ms Pollock highlighted it may be beneficial to invite Scottish Government policy colleagues to a future meeting to discuss emerging risk from SG side and this was agreed.

**Action: Ms Pollock**

### **RMAC(NOV)01/25: Risk Management Progress Report**

13. This report provided an update on the current position of the Corporate Risk Register, the recent and planned risk management developments and a Major Project risks update.

14. A CRR deep dive was held with Directors on 04 November 2025. The purpose of this session was to review the register in its entirety and to determine whether each risk, its context, and its score remained relevant, with cross-functional input across all Directorates. As a result, changes are now in the process of being made to the register. There were two risks within the CRR session where adjustments to their overall score was agreed.

15. The overall risk score for the Justice Partners Prisoner Escort Court Custody Service has decreased. This reduction reflects the current position of the contract, which is out for tender, with a new provider expected to be appointed by early 2026.

16. As part of the CRR session, risks relating to HMP Addiewell were discussed and reviewed. This risk had been sitting on the CRR, after being escalated from the Operations Directorate Risk Register. With the operation of HMP Addiewell having stabilised, this risk has transferred back to the Operations Directorate for ongoing management and monitoring.

17. Additionally, three new risks have been identified and agreed for inclusion on the CRR:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Fatal Accident Inquiries
- Effective Responses to Scrutiny

18. With the recent changes, the Corporate Risk Register will contain 19 risks, meaning no change to the number of individual risks.

19. Members noted this paper with thanks and acknowledged the on-going high level of risk and challenge faced by the organisation.

20. Members noted that one of the difficulties faced by SPS is that mitigations to some of the most persistent risks are external to the organisation. It was therefore suggested that SPS should consider identifying and documenting these.

**Action: Mr Beardmore**

### **RMAC(NOV)02/25: "In-Depth" Review of One Corporate Risk - Recruitment and Retention**

21. The presentation provided an in-depth analysis on Recruitment and Retention policies across SPS. In addition to an overview of recruitment campaigns, workforce capacity and leavers.

22. SPS continues to expand our staffing numbers, with the organisation having more staff than ever. The majority of recruitment campaigns (72%) resulted in a successful appointment, however, Pay Bands B, F, and G have more vacancies than successful appointments. Members were made aware that there have been improvements in hard to fill functions such as Digital Services and Estates, whilst Psychology are attracting large numbers of candidates for some roles. At this time, Finance remains challenging for recruitment.

23. The presentation highlighted that there is a risk that the Resourcing and HR Teams are under pressure from high, continuous recruitment volumes.

24. Members noted this presentation with thanks.

25. Members discussed the increase in numbers of staff leaving the SPS, however, this was attributed to Operational staff moving to Non-Operational roles and retirement. Ms Clow noted that it may be beneficial to commission a further 'deep

dive' on retention of operational staff at a future RMAC, to help explore and understand these finding.

**Action: Mrs Blackburn**

### **RMAC(NOV)03/25: Internal Audit Progress Update**

26. This report provided an update on progress to date, the below key messages were noted;

- Plan is on track to be delivered in full by March 2026.
- Since the last RMAC, final reports have been issued for the following reviews:
  - a. Data Strategy
  - b. FAI Taskforce.
- A draft report on the Healthcare and Wellbeing Interventions has also been issued.
- Fieldwork has commenced on the Ex-Gratia review and initial planning is underway on the Digital Infrastructure review.
- Fieldwork is also continuing on both the role of Operational Audit and Public Sector Reform/Transformation Advisories.
- We are due to embark on the annual planning round for 2026/27 for Internal Audit this side of the festive break and will be in contact with RMAC members as part of this process.

27. Internal Audit is implementing a new automated process for managing follow-up actions. A controlled testing phase will run from now until March 2026, involving 14 clients.

28. There was a Critical Friend Review of HMP Glasgow in July 2025, looking at the risk management approach. The PPPA will be contacting the SRO about a Gate Review during the current phase of the project as recommended in the Gate 3 Review carried out September 2024.

29. In line with the last progress report, the Digital Assurance Office continues to engage with the Scottish Prison Service. There has been no independent digital assurance identified for the current projects, and we will keep members informed should this change.

30. Members noted this paper with thanks.

### **RMAC(NOV)04/25: Annual Review of RMAC Terms of Reference**

31. This report advised that the current version of the RMAC ToR was approved in March 2024, followed by a small amendment in November 2024 to move the June meeting date to July.

32. In July 2025 Internal Audit completed their Advisory review of SPS' governance arrangement. This made a number of suggestions for improvements to our governance groups, including RMAC. This review incorporates these suggestions and subsequent related discussions, along with the output of the most recent RMAC Effectiveness Review (September 2025). Most significantly, these updated ToR decouples RMAC from the Advisory Board in SPS's governance structure.

33. The report set out a summary of the key changes that have been made to the Terms of Reference.

34. Members noted this paper with thanks.

35. Ms Clow indicated that she feels the impact of decoupling of RMAC and the Advisory Board would benefit from further clarification and discussion at the Advisory Board, to ensure there is a clear understanding of what it means.

36. Ms Inglis-Jones noted that a new version of the Scottish Government's Audit and Assurance Committee Handbook is planned for publication in early 2026 and the next review of the RMAC ToR can take this into consideration.

37. Members were content to approve the Terms of Reference.

### **RMAC(NOV)05/25: Annual Report on work of Fraud Response Group**

38. Members of the RMAC are invited to note and support the approach taken by the Fraud Response Group (FRG) during the financial year and in particular that:

- The FRG met 4 times in financial year 2024-25;
- There were only 2 new cases of suspected fraud reported in 2024-25, down from 17 in 2023-24;
- The 2 cases were respectively at HMP Stirling and HMP Greenock. No monies were required to be recovered;
- Following reported frauds and allegations of fraud, internal controls were reviewed and procedural changes implemented as appropriate and any learning was shared;
- A Scottish Government Audit carried out in 2024-25 provided a limited assurance rating (Amber) of Counter-fraud and awareness arrangements in SPS;
- SPS continues to be an active participant in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI).

39. Members noted this paper with thanks.

40. Mr Jobson updated that following an investigation the incident at HMP Greenock was no longer classed as fraud, while the incident at HMP Stirling was minor with disciplinary action taken.

41. Mr Jobson confirmed that in response to an internal audit recommendation they drafted a presentation to cover work carried out from the National Fraud Initiative. From this they were given a limited assurance on the counter fraud work, Mr Jobson advised that they have had further meeting to discuss any additional improvements that can be made. Members were made aware that they plan to take this discussion to EMG to seek guidance on their approach.

42. Members agreed with this approach and requested an update and a future RMAC.

**Action: Mr Jobson**

## **RMAC(NOV)06/25: Risk Focused Finance Update**

43. This report provided an update on the 2025-26 financial position. The paper reports on the P6 position, covering 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

44. The SPS resource budget bill increased by £45m an increase of 10%, real terms 4.9% increase after cost pressures in 2024-25 with increases in utility costs, pay award above the public sector pay policy and other inflationary pressures. An in-year resource funding increase was provided of £22.5m to cover these pressures.

45. The SPS capital budget bill increased by £188m and is reflective of the profiling for the major infrastructure projects.

46. In the period, SPS is reporting a forecast resource outturn £1.26m under budget. Currently there is a thorough review of expenditure ongoing as part of the Spending Review Process.

47. HMP Glasgow costs are generally in line with programme. HMP Highland expenditure has been reduced in 2025/26 as a result a delay to the project delivery. This delay increases the capital requirement in 2026/27. This updated capital expenditure position was notified to Scottish Government on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September.

48. There are a number of risks associated with the 2025-26 budget position, which have been noted within the report.

49. Members noted this paper with thanks.

## **RMAC(NOV)07/25: Operational Audit Update**

50. This report provided an update on the activities undertaken by the Operational Audit Team in relation to Operational Audits conducted during quarters 1, 2 and 3 of the 2025/26 financial year.

51. The Prevention of Suicide in Prisons Strategy (PSIPS) audit was suspended to allow for the implementation of a new risk assessment process for Young Offenders at Polmont. To maintain audit coverage, the Complaints audit at Shotts was advanced and completed in Q1.

52. Due to a reduction in the Audit Team resource and to allow time for a review of the audit function audits of Management of Offenders at Risk of Substance (MORS) and Information Security scheduled in quarter 3 were cancelled. Audits of Operational Readiness scheduled in quarter 4 were brought forward.

53. Four audits carried out resulted in Limited Assurance during this period.

54. Summary reports for Security, Searching, PSIPS and Rule 95 and Use of Force have been completed and distributed. The Summary report for Ex-gratia will follow shortly.

55. Due to resource constraints, sick absence and pending the approval of a review of the audit function, the 2025/26 Operational Audit Plan will be scaled back by approximately one-third. Audits of Cell Sharing Risk Assessment and Operational Readiness will proceed.

56. Members noted this paper with thanks.

57. Ms Beal noted that concerns have been raised on the lack of understanding around prioritisation of work, as such, they have requested data analysis on how to address this going forward. Mrs Beal confirmed that this would be discussed at EMG. Ms Beal also updated members with an overview of plans to review the operational audit function, with a view to strengthening independence from Operations and aligning it more closely with wider assurance work carried out by the SPS Improvement function.

### **Any Other Business**

58. Ms Beal highlighted that Annex A was missing from the distributed papers. It was later clarified that this relates to the Action Log and Tracker

### **Date of Next Meeting**

59. The next RMAC meeting will be held on 25 March 2025 from 09:00-12:30 in SPS HQ, Room G.09.

### **RMAC Secretariat 26 November 2025**