MINUTES OF THE SCOTTISH PRISON SERVICE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD IN SPS HEADQUARTERS ON 27 MAY

Present:	Ann McKechin, Non-Executive Director (NED) and Advisory Board Chair Sarah Angus, Director of Policy, SPS Lynne Clow, NED Heather Duncan, Interim Director of Finance, SPS Ian Harley, NED Adam Jobson, Director of Organisational Development, SPS Sharon Lawson, Executive Personal Assistant, SPS (Minutes) Simon Little, NED Dr Anna MacKenzie, Interim Head of Corporate Strategy and Governance, SPS Lisa Taylor, Interim Director of Engagement and Change Delivery, SPS Stephen Uphill, NED Gillian Walker, Director of Operations, SPS Billy Watson, NED Ian Whitehead, Director of Operations, SPS
In Attendance:	Shane McQuillan, Partner, Crowe (for AB(MAY)02/26 only) Shannon Scott, Manager, Crowe (for AB(MAY)02/26 only)

Introduction and Welcome

1. The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and noted that colleagues were supporting the SAMH campaign and sporting pink marks on their hands in support.

2. During her opening remarks, the Chair touched on the following points:

- Since the last meeting, there had not only been a change of Chief Executive, but also a change of Cabinet Secretary, with Neil Gray having been appointed to the role of Cabinet Secretary for Justice. The Chair also advised that the Lord Advocate had announced her retirement and an announcement was awaited in respect of her replacement.

- During the election period, prison numbers had continued to rise and members welcomed the active engagement of both the First Minister and Permanent Secretary in this respect.

Apologies for Absence

3. Apologies for absence were received from the Chief Executive who had been called to a Ministerial meeting, and Mr Rose who was interviewing.

Declarations of Interest

4. Mr Harley advised that his brother-in-law sits on the Council of Europe Committee.

Draft Minutes of the Advisory Board Meeting held on 25 March (including Action Tracker and Matters Arising)

5. The draft minutes of the meeting held on 25 March were agreed as a true record and the Action Tracker was updated during the discussion.

Action: Ms Lawson

<u>Chief Executive's Update</u>

6. Given the Chief Executive's absence, the Advisory Board considered some of the points she intended to raise which included:

- Recent months have seen a number of population record highs, on a weekly, if not daily basis, including the current record high of 8,603 on 25 May.

- The seventh and final tranche of Emergency Early Release (EER) was delivered at end of April, releasing a total of 614 individuals, and comprehensive engagement with partners continues on preparedness for delivery of STP30, which will run from 26 May-end June over 3 tranches.

- Discussions on the recruitment of the Deputy Chief Executive role are underway with Scottish Government (SG) colleagues.

- Ms Pollock wished to thank Ms Medhurst for her support in handover, and the on-going mentoring and support she continued to provide. She advised it was her intention to continue in Ms Medhurst's vein of person-centred values of prioritising the needs of those living and working in our care.

Regular Updates on Performance and Priorities

AB(MAY)01/26: Corporate Priorities and Forward Look: Spring-Summer 2026

7. This paper provided the Advisory Board with a summary of upcoming priorities for the forthcoming quarter, including:

- *Prison Population*: the tactical and policy response continues to be the most significant business delivery priority and key corporate risk.

- *Organisational Culture Review and Leadership*: consideration of the review's findings and their organisational impact will be a key focus.

- *Fatal Accident Inquiry (FAI) Response*: a key focus of this work is moving from scoping to implementation of plans across all workstreams - anti-bullying, suicide prevention and response, cell and personal safety, and innovation and technology.

8. Advisory Board members noted the fuller updates contained within the paper. They asked for feedback on current SG structures around prison population and immediate response and Ms Taylor provided an overview on the range of meetings and key outputs of justice and other partners coming together - this included a range of management data sharing. Ms Angus advised that the tactical level meetings are exposing trends and information on what is or is not available to the court in remand decisions (eg availability of Social Work and Community Psychiatric Nurses; CPNs) particularly for very short remands. Messrs Watson and Little requested further information on the social care model which Ms Angus agreed to provide.

Action: Ms Angus

9. Following discussion with NEDs, the Chair advised that she would discuss with the Chief Executive how best the Advisory Board could support the viewpoint of SPS and its priorities with the new Cabinet Secretary and the incoming administration. She also thought it would be helpful in this regard to obtain agreement for a regular yearly date to meet with him/her in person.

10. The NEDs continued to offer their assistance to Directors if they felt this would be beneficial.

Strategic Deep Dive Discussion

Crowe - SPS Corporate Programme Mapping

11. Advisory Board members welcomed Ms Scott and Mr McQuillan to the meeting at this point. They advised that across January and February, Crowe undertook engagement across SPS functions to develop a list of relevant activities, projects and initiatives, and requested information on these activities covering key areas such as the overarching objectives, timelines, major milestones, risks,

resourcing and dependencies. The information presented back to SPS represents a point-in-time reflection of the status of work.

12. Crowe have now delivered their outputs from this work. These are:

- Mapping Report: this collects together key observations and findings from the information collected, aligning activities with the Corporate Plan and pulling out key messages for each Strategic Objective.

- Mapping Report Appendices: this collates all the information returns from all the activities covered by the mapping.

- Gantt/Dashboard: an overview representation of activity timelines, where these are available.

13. The report will now be shared with all senior staff for consideration. Consideration will also now be given to what effective delivery structures and governance should look like in order to assure priority work across SPS, taking into account the recommendations made and building on the headstart that this work has provided.

14. The NEDs had a number of questions which were discussed at length with Ms Scott and Mr McQuillan. Following this discussion, it was agreed that there are some important reflections which SPS need to capitalise on and consideration should be given to reviewing what resource is available and how it can be used to its full potential. Ms Clow acknowledged that people are working very hard in light of a considerable amount of reactive work, and that ADP planning and consideration of prioritisation of business delivery work had much improved during her tenure, and was thanked on behalf of EMG for her comments. [Ms Scott and Mr McQuillan left the meeting at this point.]

Papers for Noting

<u>AB(MAY)03/26: SPS Risk Monitoring and Audit Committee (RMAC) Chair's Annual Report 2025-26</u>

15. The RMAC Chair's Annual Report is produced for SPS' Accountable Officer to summarise RMAC's work during the year, and to provide members' opinions on matters related to the operation of SPS' audit, risk and internal control arrangements.

16. RMAC acts as an independent scrutiny body, without executive powers, to support and advise the Accountable Officer in their responsibilities for issues of risk, control and governance (including the annual accounts) and associated assurance through a process of constructive challenge. In response to Internal Audit advice on organisational governance, RMAC's Terms of Reference were changed in November 2025 so that it is no longer a sub-group of the Advisory Board, but reports directly to the Chief Executive as a standalone Committee.

17. The Advisory Board noted that overall, the Committee has been satisfied with the arrangements in place to manage corporate risk and implement a consistent risk management approach across the organisation, and thanked Mr Harley for his report.

<u>AB(MAY)04/26: Performance Report for Private Sector Contracts</u>

18. SPS has 2 major private contracts for the delivery of custodial and prison escort services. These contracts are the Scottish Court Custody and Prisoner Escort Services (SCCPES) and the privately operated prison at HMP Addiewell. Additionally, there is the mobilisation of the new escort contract, the Justice Partners Escort and Court Custody (Scotland), JPECCS which is scheduled to go live on 23 January 2027 after the expiry of SCCPES.

19. Members thanked the Contract Management Unit (CMU) for continuing to work closely with all private sector contractors to monitor performance against contractual expectations and robustly hold them to account, while maintaining and developing relationships with them.

AB(MAY)05/26: Annual Delivery Planning 2026-27

20. This paper set out a summary of planning activity undertaken in SPS and the priority items set out for the Annual Delivery Plan, and was noted by members. A number of planning activities took place during January-April 2026:

- Director Discussions: the Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Strategic Planning held a discussion with each Director to gain an overview of current and planned delivery, as well as constraints and challenges to delivery of key activities.

- ‘Pause List’: senior staff were asked to identify pieces of work within their functions that could be stopped, paused or re-timed in order to free up resources to focus on the delivery of priority activities.

- EMG Planning Session: a planning session took place amongst Directors to agree to contents of the Corporate Annual Delivery plan, highlight activities within their own ADPs that should be brought to the attention, and discuss the ‘pause list’.

- Risk Analysis: an exercise has been undertaken to align planned activities with the principal risks on the Corporate Risk Register.

AB(MAY)06/26: Annual Audit and Assurance Plan 2026-27

21. To support the delivery of quality public services and provide assurance to the Accountable Officer, a range of audit and assurance activities take place within SPS each year. This paper provided a summary of the planned audit and assurance activity within SPS for the 2026-27 year and was noted by members. For clarification, although the paper stated that it was for approval, it was in fact for RMAC members to approve, and only for Advisory Board members to note.

Next Agenda and Any Other Business

Agree Agenda for July 2026 Meeting

22. The draft agenda for the July meeting was considered and agreed by members. Due to a diary conflict, it was agreed to move the next meeting from 29 July to 6 August.

23. In closing, the Chair thanked attendees for their support during the meeting.

Date of Next Meeting

24. The next Advisory Board meeting will be held on 6 August from 0930-1200 hrs in Room G.09, SPS Headquarters.

Advisory Board Secretariat
May 2026