

House to stand down as Chief Constable of Police Scotland

✘ At a meeting of the Scottish Police Authority held in Stirling this morning Chief Constable of Police Scotland Sir Stephen House indicated that he was handing in his notice and would step down in three months' time.

Sir Stephen said after nearly 35 years as a serving officer, the time was now right for the search for his successor to begin.

Chief Constable Sir Stephen House said: "As the leader of a national organisation that provides a vital public service 24 hours every day of the year, there can never be a convenient time to move on, but after nearly 35 years as a police officer and the last 9 as a Chief Constable in Scotland, I believe the time is right for me to take up a new challenge and thereby allow the process to recruit my successor to begin.

"Much has been achieved since the creation of Police Scotland and I firmly believe that Scotland is better served for it. Not only in managing the changes brought about by reform and substantial financial cuts, but most importantly in the public service we provide.

"I want to take this opportunity to recognise the contribution made to policing in Scotland by Vic Emery and former Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Kenny MacAskill, their support and commitment has been of great value.

"From building confidence in victims coming forward to report crimes, to ending the postcode provision of specialist services, to improving our ability to respond to major incidents and events – I am proud of the hard work and commitment to the public, police officers and staff deliver each and every day.

“I would like to pay my personal tribute to the unstinting work they do in serving the people and communities of Scotland. It is their work that keeps people safe across Scotland and it is their work I would like recognised.”

At the board meeting, Sir Stephen acknowledged the challenges the organisation had faced and the strengths on which the service would continue to build.

He added: “Policing has always faced many challenges and will continue to do so. There remains much to do but knowing – as I do – the quality of our officers and staff, I am confident that the challenges will be met. The dedication and commitment of our people is outstanding and will serve Scotland well in the future under a new Chief Constable.

“I am immensely proud to have been the first Chief Constable of Police Scotland and to lead the men and women in it. I want to use this opportunity to pay public tribute to the men and women of Police Scotland who all deserve the recognition of the public. But the time has come to move on and take up new opportunities.

“I would like to thank the Chair in particular, as this is his last public board meeting, and the Members for their contribution during Police Scotland’s first years and I wish you well in continuing to work together to deliver a policing service that Scotland can be proud of.”

The First Minister said: “I would like to thank the Chief Constable for his dedicated service with both Strathclyde Police and Police Scotland during which time he oversaw the transition to a single police service.

“Strong policing has ensured recorded crime is at a 40 year low. Sir Stephen provided leadership at a crucial time and his strong focus on tackling violent crime made a major contribution to that achievement.

“I also recognise his powerful and long-standing focus on tackling domestic violence and sexual crime. At a time when we are celebrating a century of women in policing, his track record in encouraging and supporting women in the service should also be recognised.

“The policing of major events when Scotland was in the international spotlight such as last year’s Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup was also exemplary.

“Reform of policing in Scotland was absolutely vital to sustain the policing upon which Scotland’s communities depend and Sir Stephen’s contribution to that was invaluable.

“As a result, policing in Scotland continues to perform extremely well and the police service deserves great credit for this. Moving to a single service is safeguarding frontline policing from Westminster cuts.

“Over that period, we have seen record numbers of police officers – more than 1000 higher compared to 2007 – and those additional officers are ensuring communities across Scotland are safe and strong.”

Commenting on the Chief Constable’s announcement and on policing more widely, Cabinet Secretary for Justice Secretary Michael Matheson said:

“I would also like to thank the Chief Constable for his service and contribution to policing in Scotland.

“There have been challenges but we are learning the lessons and addressing the issues. We continue to make good progress on the reform journey to deliver a truly integrated single service and all the benefits that brings and I will expand on this in a statement on policing to parliament next Thursday.

“The people of Scotland deserve exemplary policing delivered by an exemplary police service and we will continue to work

with Police Scotland, the Chief Constable and his successor, and the new Chair of the Scottish Police Authority to ensure this is the case.”

UNISON issued this statement:

“This announcement is unsurprising. Chief Constable Sir Stephen House was put in an impossible position. The problems which beset Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Board are not down to one individual. They will not be fixed by his departure.

“The Scottish government’s arbitrary political target of maintaining police officer numbers should be ended, as it is leading to the dismantling of our modern police force with thousands of civilian posts being lost. We need a fundamental review of the long term funding of our police services in Scotland.

“George McIrvine, branch secretary of UNISON Police Staff Scotland, “I wish Chief Constable Sir Stephen House all the best in whatever he chooses to do in the future. We disagreed on some decisions he made but the problems with Police Scotland are not down to one person. Sir Stephen House was given the impossible task of merging Scottish policing into one police force, while having to meet political targets of 1,000 extra police officers, and at the same time introducing £1.1 billion efficiency savings target. These targets had little to do with good policing.

“Over 1,700 police staff have left their jobs while Police Scotland has been beset with problems. The Scottish Government must now review their manifesto pledge to maintain 1000 extra police officers as it is not working. They must also take a fundamental look at how we properly fund a modern

police force in Scotland”

“Sir Stephen House should have publicly called on the Scottish Government to scrap all political targets and called for proper funding of our police service. Maybe now we can have a proper discussion about these issues.”