

Major investment planned in Police Scotland's digital, data and ICT capability



An ambitious plan for a major investment in Police Scotland's digital, data and ICT capability will be put before the Scottish Police Authority this week.

It sets out the funding required to modernise the service and give officers and staff the tools they need to protect the public in the 21st century. The investment would also generate savings and public service improvements for the wider criminal justice system.

Deputy Chief Constable Fiona Taylor said: "There has been significant under-investment in technology in policing since well before 2013 and we've not been able to make use of some of the investment that has been available.

"Despite this, our officers and staff have continued to deliver to the best of their ability by making huge personal commitments to get the job done.

“But the present situation is unsustainable. The pressure on our officers and staff to work around the failings in our technology and meet the new threats will move beyond their ability to cope.

“It also has a detrimental impact on the public and our colleagues in other parts of the criminal justice system.

“At a time when the pressure on public services is immense, we are operating an economically inefficient police service.”

An outline business case highlights the scale of the investment.

It shows that:

- Many of IT systems are out of date, are not joined up and cannot be upgraded.
- Policing is facing a growing threat from highly sophisticated organised criminals who ruthlessly exploit advances in technology.
- Officers routinely attend calls with the little or no information about the victim, their circumstances and needs. They may also have little or no information about how dangerous the call may be to them or the public.
- Officers still use paper notebooks to record information and crimes and then waste time travelling back to their stations to then waste more time typing the same information into multiple different systems.
- They cannot share with or receive timely information from partners agencies which would significantly help the victim of a crime or a vulnerable member of the public – and this can result in officers spending hours trying to find the right partner agency and person to speak to.

The new business case has been developed as part of the work to implement a 10-year strategy to meet the future demands on policing.

It sets out a phased delivery approach and points out that Police Scotland now has a much more robust programme management process in place to ensure it can be delivered.

DCC Taylor added: "The business case features a number of projects that have already been put in place by other police services in the UK and around the world. It is proven technology that Police Scotland needs now.

"We'll give our officers mobile devices and access to integrated and up-to-date information on the move, allowing them to spend more time in the communities they serve.

"We'll also give them better technology to capture evidence, speeding up the criminal justice system and making the process simpler for the public.

"It will allow us to improve the way we safeguard, manage and share data, helping to reduce the overall cost of the criminal justice system and improving the service to the public.

"We'll make it easier for the public to report crime to us, using online services to close the gap between the police and the people who need our help.

"And it will put our officers back on the streets, allowing them to work on crime prevention and community-based policing to keep people safe."

The outline business case will be considered by the Scottish Police Authority at its board meeting on Thursday, 27 September.