

Chief Constable under pressure as senior Police Scotland colleague lodges grievance

EXCLUSIVE

Police Scotland is in turmoil after it emerged a grievance has been lodged against recently appointed Chief Constable Jo Farrell by one of her own leadership team.

Deputy Chief Officer David Page, who sits at the top of the Police Scotland executive team alongside deputy and assistant chief constables, has taken sick leave while his complaint is investigated.

Mr Page, a former Army Intelligence officer, plays an integral part in the day-to-day activities and strategic planning of Police Scotland and is responsible for the force's Corporate Support services, which includes finance, procurement, estates, and people and development.



Deputy Chief Officer David Page has lodged a grievance against Chief Constable Jo Farrell

News of the complaint comes at a critical time for the new Chief with her two most senior officers due to retire in the next three months. Deputy Chief Constable Designate Fiona Taylor announced in November that she would take early retirement and will leave the force next month, while this week Deputy Chief Constable Malcolm Graham announced his

retirement and will leave on 8 April.

Chief Constable Farrell has suffered a difficult start to her tenure at the UK's largest police force and within weeks of joining Police Scotland was forced to issue an apology and admit an error of judgement when it emerged she had commandeered a traffic patrol car and an officer to drive her home from Edinburgh to Northumberland at the height of Storm Babet.

While Government advice was not to travel on 20 October, Ms Farrell requested that a police car be made available for the 240 mile round trip to take her home after her train was cancelled.

On the journey, her former Durham Constabulary colleague Gary Ridley was dropped off at his home in Gateshead, Tyneside. It was later claimed that Mr Ridley was in Scotland to provide "unpaid advice" to the Chief Constable on issues including reducing bureaucracy and budget challenges.

As Assistant Chief Officer at Durham Constabulary – which is ranked as the UK's seventh smallest police force with just 1,266 police officers – Mr Ridley is responsible for finance, information technology, estates, business support and personnel.



Gary Ridley has been providing "unpaid advice" to Police Scotland

At a meeting of the Scottish Parliament's Criminal Justice Committee in December, Chief Constable Farrell defending bringing in Mr Ridley to provide support, saying: "Having been in policing for more than 30 years, I have a network of people whom I know bring value to policing, and Mr Ridley is one of them."

David Page began his career in the British Army and served in military intelligence for 10 years before taking up chief executive and chief operating officer level roles in the financial services sector in Scotland, joining Police Scotland as its most senior civilian staff member in 2016.

A Police Scotland insider said: "David is well respected and plays an important role in guiding and assisting in the big decisions that need to be taken in a large modern police force. He is capable and able and will not have lodged a grievance lightly but he feels strongly that his position was being undermined.

"This latest development is the last thing the Chief Constable needs following the 'private police taxi' fiasco and to have one of the force's most capable executives lodge a grievance as your two most senior police officers head into retirement is not a good look."

Police Scotland referred the issue to the Scottish Police Authority. An SPA spokesperson said: "The Authority does not confirm or comment on this type of enquiry. Any complaints or concerns of that nature would be confidential."

However, Scottish Conservative justice spokesman Russell Findlay, MSP, hit out at the Police Scotland and SPA for failing to be open about the complaint made against the Chief Constable.

Mr Findlay told The Edinburgh Reporter: "Since being created

by the SNP government a decade ago, Police Scotland has often been accused of lacking transparency which is unhealthy, unhelpful and undermines public confidence. All public bodies have a duty to be candid about such important issues and I would urge ministers, Police Scotland and the SPA to come clean about exactly what is going on.”



Chief Constable Jo Farrell – issued apology over error of judgement and now subject of a grievance lodged by one of her own executive management team