

Budget allows police recruitment to establishment of 16,500

Chief Constable Jo Farrell today, Thursday, 27 March, outlined progress on the first year of her three-year business plan and committed to driving a second phase of police reform for 2025-26

Speaking at a Scottish Police Authority Board meeting in Edinburgh, Chief Constable Farrell highlighted the start of a national roll out of body worn video and progress in achieving efficiencies in the wider criminal justice service and in relation to supporting people in mental health distress.

She said the budget for policing for 2025-26 allowed the Service to recruit officers to an establishment of around 16,500 while also modernising our workforce to release experienced officers to roles which require warranted powers.

She said: "As we move towards 2025-26, I will continue to drive the next phase of reform to implement an effective and sustainable model of policing in Scotland which delivers safer communities, less crime, supported victims, and a thriving workforce.

"Key planning, including my annual policing plan and the budget for policing in Scotland set the parameters for the second year of our business plan to deliver on our vision for

policing.

“Policing in Scotland is an exemplar of public service reform, reducing the annual cost base to the public purse by around £300m compared to legacy arrangements, while maintaining and improving services and enhancing organisational learning, professionalism and governance.

“That has been achieved by a workforce that has reduced from over 24,000 to closer to 22,500, and through significant challenge and effort.

“My report outlines the broad and complex police work delivered by those officers, staff and volunteers to deliver great value and improve the lives and wellbeing of the people and communities of Scotland every day.

“This ranges from our response to murders, human trafficking, exploitation, securing criminal justice outcomes in relation to serious sexual offending and drug dealing to policing events.

“I outline work designed to take a more intelligence driven and technology enabled approach to tackling retail crime, work with partners to build a society which is more resilient to cyber fraud and crucial efforts to take a more compassionate approach to communicating with victims of crime, while also continuing to broaden our understanding and engagement with all the communities we serve.

“All this is delivered through the dedication, skill, expertise, professionalism and goodwill of police officers, police staff and volunteers who maintain and build the support and co-operation of the public.

“At the end of February, at my Annual Bravery and Excellence Awards I was able to meet and personally thank officers, staff, volunteers and their families and other members of the public who had played outstanding roles in that whole-system

mission to build a safer Scotland or to step forward when tragedy or disaster occurs.

“The nominations were powerful examples of the value policing brings to society. I also outline a programme of staff recognition during February as part of a broader campaign across UK policing aimed at highlighting the crucial support and expertise non-warranted police staff bring to policing.

“This week, I thanked Scottish Police Federation representatives at their conference and listened to their perspectives. The conference was an important opportunity to hear from over 100 officers from across the Service and for me to underline my gratitude for their work to drive the efficiency of Police Scotland and support the welfare of officers.

“As part of the conference, along with DCC Speirs, and Federation Chair David Threadgold, I participated in a question and answer session with delegates. I really value these opportunities to hear about what matters to our frontline colleagues.

“This was a hugely positive conversation and I want to thank Federation representatives for their thoughtful questions.

“The challenge and support of our highly valued statutory and non-statutory staff associations plays an important role in improving policing in Scotland and I want to thank the Federation for the invitation and our constructive relationship.

“I want to thank officers, staff and volunteers for everything they do and recognise the personal commitment they make to what is a vital and fulfilling, and very demanding job.

“We know, the demand on policing is increasing and increasingly complex, driven by the ongoing pressure on public finances and cost of living challenges, social issues,

emerging technologies and the growth of cyber enabled crime, and new legislation. These pressures can drive vulnerability across society, including in relation to violence against women and girls.

“From my first day 18 months ago, we’ve driven efforts to focus our response on threat, harm and risk and on problem solving and proactivity which can prevent crime and help to reduce demand.

“We’re taking a proportionate response to crime across Scotland and an appropriate approach to direct measures, including recorded police warnings, so police officers can focus on addressing that threat, harm, risk and vulnerability.

“At the same time, we’ve been working hard to prioritise the frontline and collaborating with partners to provide better services in the criminal justice system and in response to mental health incidents, while reducing demand on police officers.

“My report outlines some of what has been achieved through working with NHS24 and staff at Contact, Command and Control (C3) to refer more calls to health colleagues, to help people get help from those best able to give it, while reducing officer hours spent responding to incidents where they are not needed.

“I also highlight promising signs that a partnership focus on case management is reducing the number of witnesses, including police officers, who attend court but are not called to give evidence.

“Yesterday, we introduced body worn video in the Tayside area as part of a national roll out to equip more than 10,000 officers and staff with the equipment, which will transform policing in Scotland.

“We know the roll out of mobile devices had a positive impact on safety, wellbeing, efficiency and public confidence. Body worn video can help to de-escalate incidents, improve public trust in policing and reduce complaints, and support officer and staff safety.

“It will improve the quality of evidence presented in court, helping to deliver faster justice for victims and reduced court time for victims, witnesses and police officers.

“I want to thank CDIO Andrew Hendry, the change team and the staff in Tayside Division for delivering and embracing this really important technology and I can report that in the first 24 hours we have uploaded almost 200 pieces of evidence and we have trained in the region of 250 to 300 officers who are now trained and equipped in Tayside with body worn video.

“I am confident we are making progress on the next phase of reform and I recognise policing must continue to drive and capture efficiencies to make conscious decisions to reinvest to deliver a sustainable and effective policing model.

“Positive change must be felt by the frontline and the communities we serve.

“Continuous reform and efficiency must be the new normal in public service and we remain committed to delivering best value. Reform achieved should be rewarded and I do believe it has been recognised in our funding allocation.

“Our budget remains challenging, with a built-in savings requirement and anticipated pay pressures.

“However, Scottish Government funding allows us to continue officer recruitment for a full time officer establishment of around 16,500, while modernising the workforce to release experienced officers from roles which don't need warranted powers so that we can prioritise, maximise, and support the frontline to deliver for our communities.

“Our allocation enables policing to progress on the delivery of our business plan. Key plans for 2025-26, include the development of a strengthened community policing model to provide identifiable officers to local areas, and the establishment of a new cyber fraud unit to tackle online crime and better support victims.

“Ensuring Scotland continues to be a safe place to live and work is my commitment and priority. As Chief Constable, my view is that the route to a safer Scotland is through the next phase of policing reform.”