

News release

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Agreement urgently needed on police authority's functions

Greater clarity is needed around the core functions and finances of the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) so that it can build a modern and financially stable police service.

A report today from the Auditor General highlights some progress over the last year amid a raft of new appointments to Police Scotland, including a new chief constable and three deputies, and seven new members to the SPA Board.

The authority overspent by £36 million on a total police budget of £1.1 billion, and it will not achieve financial balance by 2021 as planned. There has been limited investment in modernising the police service.

The Auditor General remains concerned about the SPA's capacity and capability to carry out its corporate functions such as long-term workforce, IT and financial planning.

Improvements over the last year were limited by the absence and subsequent departure of the chief executive. The SPA chair, who had taken a more hands-on role, resigned earlier this month.

Caroline Gardner, Auditor General for Scotland, said: "There is still an absolute need to agree a fully shared understanding about what the SPA's functions and responsibilities are, so that it can fulfil the role envisaged in legislation in 2012.

"There have been improvements, but considerable challenges remain. The SPA now needs a period of stability to build capacity and plan for a modern and financially stable police service."

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Notes to editors

1. This is a section 22 report which allows the Auditor General to bring attention to Parliament and the public matters of wider interest arising from the annual audits of public bodies. It is the sixth successive section 22 report she has presented on the SPA.
2. The Scottish Police Authority was created in 2012 with [five core functions](#) including maintaining and improving the police service and holding the chief constable to account. Today's report is available here (link to website) and is based on the SPA's 2018/19 annual audit.
3. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Auditor General for Scotland. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk
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