



**UNISON Scotland response:  
Scottish Parliament Policing Sub Committee  
Budget Evidence . January 2020**

**Introduction**

UNISON is Scotland's largest public sector trade union representing over 160,000 members delivering services across Scotland. UNISON represents the majority of Police Staff in Scotland.

**Response**

Unison Scotland welcomes the opportunity to take part in the Committee's scrutiny of the the draft Scottish Budget. This contribution focuses on the response, given by the Scottish Government after the budget statement, to the Sub Committees report on Police Scotland's capital Resource published in November 2019.

We are very disappointed with the Cabinet Secretary's response to the sub committee's report. He makes much of a £12m increase in last year's budget. This was a wholly inadequate sum – and obviously so. Had it not been, the Sub-cttee would not have set up their inquiry.

The sub cttee's report concluded "there is a pressing need for the level of capital funding to increase if the police service is to transform its estate, fleet and ICT infrastructure.". Two of these three areas are not seeing capital increases in the draft budget . The one which is, the fleet strategy, gets an uplift of 1/3 of that needed annually to deliver the necessary investment over ten years.

The Cabinet Secretary also mentions of an increase in the overall policing budget of 3.6%. Which has limited relevance to the committee report which was about capital resourcing. The 52% increase in spend last year is also made much of – but a big increase in a woefully inadequate amount of money does not necessarily deliver a sufficient amount of money. Which is the case in this instance.

Despite one of the main areas of the report being the need for investment in the estate, and the Minister waiting until after the budget before providing a response. There is no outline of any future action in his response on improving the estate – merely a reference to plans in place before the inquiry started. There is a similar lack of discussion in the Scottish Governments Budget which says merely that they will "provide funding to ensure Police Scotland can maintain and modernise its estate" (p135)" with no further detail.

**ICT**

The sub cttee asked the Cabinet secretary "to scrutinise the funding requirements of the digital data and ICT strategy as a matter of urgency and come to a view on the relevant level of ICT funding required for the police service. " It's disappointing that he says the PS plans are to be caught up in a review of "wider public sector". This postpones the specific assessments and consequent necessary investment even further.

That this process is similar to one which has been used for the Fleet strategy –which has provided a wholly inadequate amount of investment is not a recommendation to us.

## **Efficiency Savings**

In his response the Cabinet Secretary makes no distinction between genuine efficiencies and costs having to be cut because budgets are inadequate. The fact that what has been being experienced by police staff are primarily the latter can be seen by his acknowledgement that despite 'efficiencies' Police Scotland is "operating with a budget deficit"

His response to Paragraph 97 of the report is inadequate. The Justice committee had concluded that the outline business case for efficiencies was not robust. The Cabinet Secretary stating where that business case came from is merely a point of fact – it is not a demonstration that it is robust, nor an argument for further cuts based on its methodology.

It's worth noting from the report:

*Para 123 It is therefore disappointing that despite initial assurances from senior staff in Police Scotland and from the Cabinet Secretary, that Police Scotland has indicated that information on the number of officers backfilling staff roles is a matter for the Chief Constable and that it is unable to provide those figures"*

*124 The Sub-Committee does not consider this to be an acceptable position. It has been unable to fully understand the extent to which police officers continue to back-fill police staff posts and the financial impact of this on-going practice. Whilst the Sub-Committee accepts that certain decisions are operational matters for the Chief Constable, nonetheless it requires information to be provided to Parliament to better understand how public money is being spent and whether best value is being achieved.*

Despite Savings and operational efficiencies being one of the few topics that the Cabinet secretary addresses in his response – this is not considered. This is unsatisfactory particularly as the Cabinet Secretary has boasted on social media about achieving his politically driven target of uniformed officers.

## **COP 26**

The Cabinet Secretary discusses which government should be bearing the policing costs at some length. This is of course a significant matter for him and the Scottish and UK Government's. Our concern is that Police Scotland has an infrastructure that is resilient enough to bear the weight of the extra demand that is going to be placed upon it. There is no sign from either the Cabinet Secretary's response or the Budget that sufficient improvement is likely before the COP meets in November

## **Other Issues**

UNISON Scotland has had indication from the Chief Constable that there are officers who are in effect paid for by Local Authorities. Given the significant cuts to Councils discretionary spending announced in the budget we have doubts about whether that funding will be sustainable. This gives rise to concerns about what pressure will be put on Police Scotland to fill that funding gap.

The Minister makes no reference to the likely Barnett consequential of the uplift in police numbers in England. Whilst specific figures can't be available before the UK

government budget on 11 March they are likely to be considerable. Any such consequential would be available to the Scottish Government to spend as it sees fit. In previous budgets the Scottish Government has announced that all consequential they received from Health spending would go to Health. We strongly urge that the sub Committee press upon the Scottish Government the idea that any consequentials from Policing budget increases be spent on policing in Scotland

**UNISON Scotland**

**January 2020**

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