



## **UNISON's response on the Police Staff Voluntary Redundancy Retirement and Scheme for the Criminal Justice Committee.**

UNISON is the largest and most successful union representing Police Staff in Scotland and we welcome this invitation to comment and provide a voice to police staff to the Criminal Justice Committee.

Whilst it is true to say that we were informed about the scheme and its launch date, albeit very late on, we would disagree that we have had any meaningful consultation.

UNISON was made aware of the significant budget deficits being predicted mostly through the presentation to the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) Board and subsequent invites to the formal Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee (JNCC). We repeatedly asked to see the detailed business plans on the potential impact for police staff. This has never been shared which can only lead us to conclude that there isn't one and that sufficient work has not been done in this area. We repeatedly tried to engage with Police Scotland/SPA but the focus remained only on cutting Police Staff numbers rather than addressing meaningful consultation. In order to sell the reduction of police officer numbers a commitment had been made to Scottish Government and the SPA of 3.7% cuts needed from the police staff budget.

We regularly requested consultation and dialogue, but this never materialised. We documented at an early stage several options that we would be prepared to discuss to significantly reduce the deficit and impact for Police Scotland. This remains on the table with no attempt to consult or negotiate. Regrettably, it is a sad reflection on the low value placed on Trade Union engagement.

UNISON do not support or agree with the decision to launch a voluntary redundancy/early retirement scheme at this time. We have seen no evidence or detailed plan to support this decision, other than to reduce the deficit which makes it a blunt and ineffective instrument. There are already not enough Police Staff to undertake the essential work needed to keep Police Officers on the front line working efficiently and effectively for the public. We need to know what work will stop being carried out as the work force reduces, and how workloads will be managed with this significant loss of Police Staff. It is evident that the number of police staff has increased since the inception of Police Scotland's first VR/VER offer that began in legacy forces, it has increased because we needed people to do jobs that allowed police officers to do what is required of them.

Police Scotland intend to pay for this scheme from a one of pension rebate (approx. £17m) after being declined an £22.6m in additional funds for the redundancy scheme asked for in the most recent draft budget. They will need to make the right decisions on who can go and what work can no longer be carried out, they assure staff that no one will be asked to take on additional duties. These decisions will be taken in an organisation who decided to allow the voluntary early retirement of its Head of



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Estates just as it set out on a whole sale consultation of 29 buildings and stations it wants to sell.

For UNISON, history is being repeated and it's clear that lessons have not be learned from that experience which is still very much in the memory of many of our long serving police staff members. Police Officers were taken off the streets to do police staff roles and when this was eventually recognised by the organisation ended up having to recruit to increase police staff numbers at great expense. In the longer term it cost significantly more to make police staff redundant and was never the best use of public money.

We are ready and willing to explore more efficient and effective ways of tackling the budget crisis, but our continued experience and observations remain that the Police Scotland's leadership team do not appear to have the skills to make the many difficult decisions needed to become a more relevant, modern, and cost-effective Police Service for Scotland. It appears that they firmly believe the Scottish Government will keep funding them and/or provide additional funding year on year.

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