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Scottish Parliament

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20 February 2018

Dear Margaret,

## **BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE INTEGRATION**

Thank you for your letter of 8 February in which you requested an update on a range of matters relating to the integration of the BTP in Scotland into Police Scotland. I thought it would also be helpful to update the Committee on the overall status of the programme. The Joint Programme Board overseeing the integration of BTP in Scotland into Police Scotland met this morning. Significant progress has been made on a number of aspects of integration such as secondary legislation and pensions, and on mapping BTP terms and conditions to ensure they are transferred intact. Further details on these areas are provided below.

Under the auspices of the JPB, Police Scotland and BTPA have established a joint project to deliver the operational aspects of the programme. As part of that joint work, a workshop including members of the senior command teams from both Police Scotland and BTP met earlier this month to review progress on operational matters and found that a number of significant issues remained to be resolved. As a result of this assessment, the JPB was advised this morning that further time is needed to deliver integration most effectively and safely for railway passengers, staff and officers. Their assessment is that the current scheduled date of 1 April 2019 will not be achieved.

Ministers have accepted this advice and a detailed re-planning exercise will now take place over the coming months to ensure robust delivery plans are in place for all of the key elements of the programme and to establish a new delivery date. This approach reflects Ministers' commitment to Parliament to keep the programme under review and to give any issues raised by the Joint Programme Board due consideration. This, in turn, reflects the importance I place on ensuring that a smooth transition is achieved which delivers continuity of service for rail users and staff. I would stress that I remain committed to ensuring the Act is fully implemented to ensure the benefits of a single command structure and improved access to the full range of capabilities of Police Scotland is delivered.

While a later-than-planned integration date is disappointing, I am clear that it also provides all partners on the JPB with an opportunity to enhance the process of engagement, in particular with officers, staff and their representatives on key issues, including those highlighted in your letter. The re-planning exercise will seek to ensure that additional opportunities for engagement are built into the timetable going forward. Ministers agree with the Committee's view that reaching agreement on the terms, conditions, benefits and pensions of BTP staff and officers is critical to achieving a seamless transfer of railway policing to Police Scotland.

In relation to pensions, the Scottish Government is in discussions with the Trustee of the British Transport Police Force Superannuation Fund and of the British Transport Police Shared Cost Section of Railways Pension Scheme to ensure that BTP officers and staff who transfer into Police Scotland retain access to their current pensions. A proposal to achieve this has been put to the Trustees for discussion, and once we understand their position on key issues we will be well placed to consult representatives of pension scheme members, including those representing retired members such as the National Association for Retired BTP Officers on the proposed way ahead. This approach will ensure that there is meaningful engagement which reflects the views of the Trustee on how such arrangements can best be made to work.

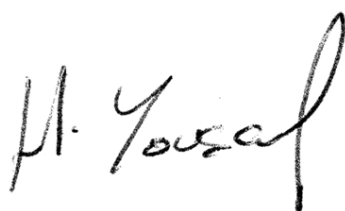
The JPB has agreed and published a Q&A for officers and staff which covers a number of issues related to pensions and terms & conditions, and I attach this for reference. The publication of the Q&A has prompted further questions from officers and staff, and we are working through these with a view to updating the Q&A on a regular basis.

Members of the Joint Programme Board (JPB), including officials of the BTPA, SPA, Police Scotland and the Scottish Government met recently with representatives of the BTPF on 13, 14, 15 December and 9 January in full-day workshops to compare BTP/Police Scotland terms and conditions of service, including pensions. These full-day workshops will continue this week on 20, 21 and 22 February, with more workshops expected as this mapping work progresses. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that the existing terms and conditions are understood at a level of detail which will allow work to progress on ensuring no detriment during the transfer process. Officials met with TSSA on 20 December, 1 February and again jointly with TSSA/BTPF on 12 February with another joint meeting to follow on 19 March. We are also planning to step up engagement with the SPF in the period ahead. An early part of the engagement plan will be to hold an event for BTP officers and staff in March.

Draft Scotland Act Orders for the transfer of BTP officers and staff in Scotland into Police Scotland are at an advanced stage of preparation by UK and Scottish Government officials and we expect to be in a position to commence engagement on these with key partners and other stakeholders in the coming weeks. This will include unions and staff associations.

With regard to the future membership of the SPF by railway policing officers in Police Scotland, I confirm there has been no change to the position as in my letter to you of 15 November, however, we remain open to further engagement with both BTPF and SPF on this point.

The next JPB meeting will be held at the Department for Transport in London on 6 March when the JPB will further consider the re-planning exercise. Both the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and I are committed to supporting JPB partners to maintain momentum towards the seamless transition that we're working collectively to achieve. We will keep the Committee updated on how that work is progressing.



**HUMZA YOUSAF**