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Police officers in Scotland are working under “diminishing resources”, a situation impacting their ability to do the job, a report has found.

Today's 'Evaluation of Police and Fire Reform' carried a series of warnings about the future of Police Scotland, just four years after it was created by the SNP.

The report comes on the back of a number of apparent single force blunders which are now being investigated by the official watchdog, and two of the force's most senior figures under the spotlight amid allegations of bullying.

It stated: “The perceptions of those involved in the routine delivery of local services was that they are operating with diminishing resources, that work to strengthen connections with communities was often hampered by other organisational pressures, and the reductions in the budgets of other public services sometimes frustrated attempts to work more collaboratively.”

The engagement between officers and their local communities had worsened, the report said, and people were dissatisfied about the performance of the non-emergency 101 number.

Morale among rank-and-file officers was also said to be low.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“This is a damning report, exposing the great many problems that exist within the SNP's single police force.

“It shows clearly that the Scottish Government is expecting officers to operate with fewer resources, and creating a context in which they are not being given sufficient time to properly engage with the public.

“The report suggests that morale is at rock bottom among the rank and file which is understandable if they are being prevented from doing a very hard, intense job by decisions taken at Scottish Government level.

“There's no doubt that on the SNP's watch, things have gone downhill.

“Its project was meant to make Scotland safer, policing better, and establish

a more transparent and accountable force.

“Instead, this report suggests the opposite has occurred and our dedicated, professional and brave police service are being held back by political decisions.

“The SNP has some very serious questions to answer on this.”

Notes to editors:

To see the full report, visit:

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00523031.pdf>