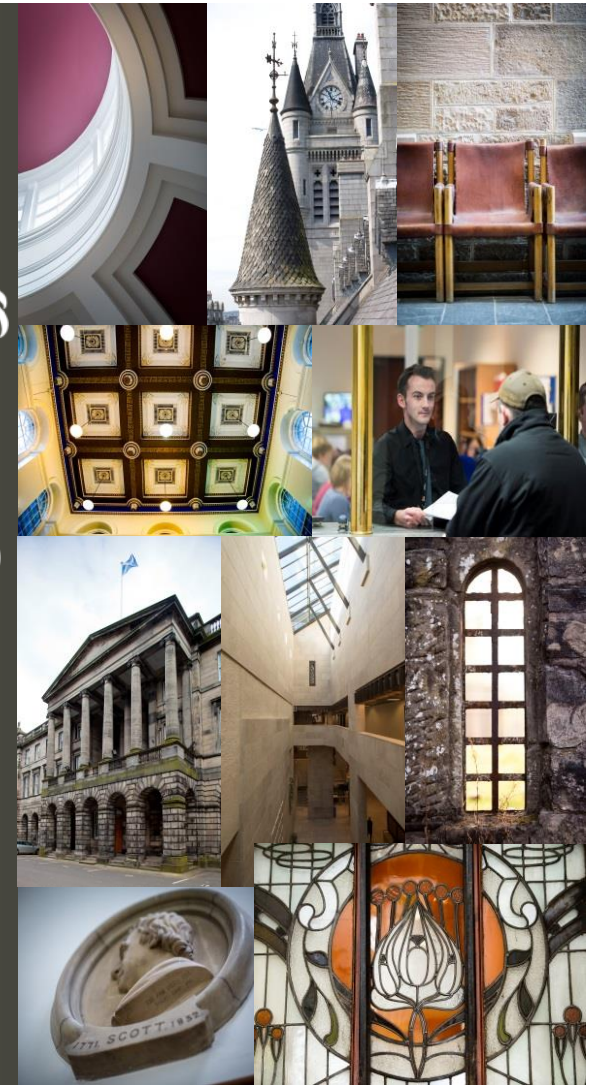
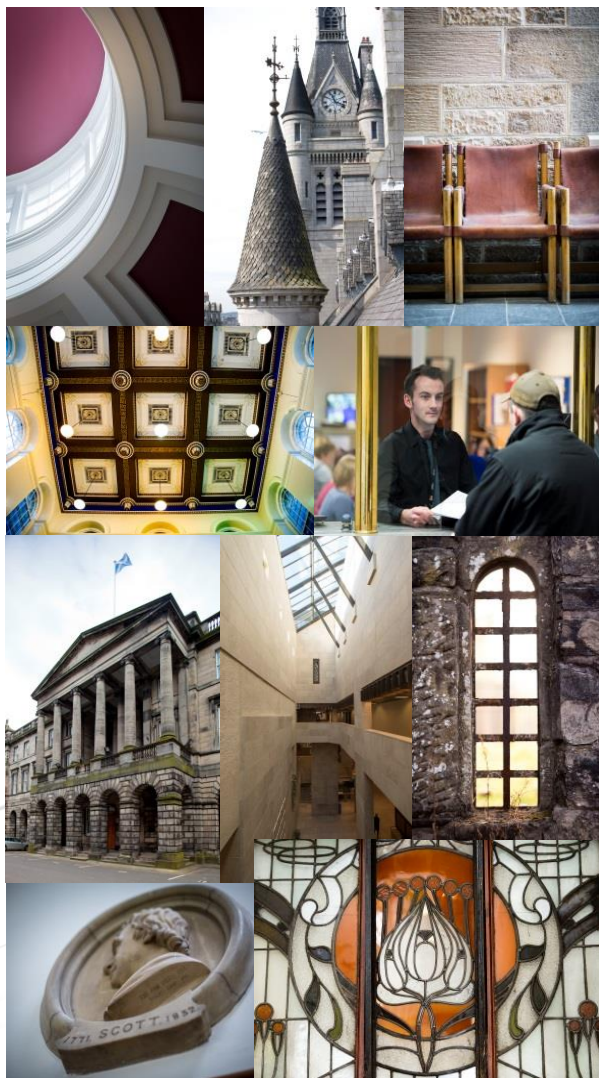


Scottish Courts
and Tribunals Service



Corporate Plan 2017-20





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Chairman's Foreword



**Rt. Hon. Lord Carloway, Lord President and
Chairman of the SCTS Board**

This Corporate Plan sets out the strategic priorities and objectives of the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) to 2020.

Scotland's justice system is on a journey of modernisation and reform. It is often said that things change only very slowly in that system. Over the period of our last plan the SCTS achieved a successful merger of the courts' and devolved tribunals' administration; implemented the civil court reform programme including the creation of the Sheriff Appeal Court and the all-Scotland personal injury court; managed the introduction of a new judicial tier in the form of summary sheriffs, and supported the establishment of the first-tier and upper Scottish Tribunals.

Each of these changes was significant in its own right. They were achieved whilst the business of our courts, tribunals and the Office of Public Guardian continued to operate smoothly. It is a testament to all those who work in the system daily to ensure we achieve our purpose – of supporting justice.

We must continue on this journey, to realise our vision of a stronger courts and tribunals service. The public rightly expect that we will take advantage of new technologies to provide a system that is accessible, fair, efficient and effective. We must never lose sight of our core duty to administer justice. We must also be open to ways in which we can improve.

The SCTS has been given the responsibility of leading proposals for system-wide change. This plan sets out how we will use that responsibility. We will work across the justice system over the coming three years. The main themes running through this plan include: completion of the civil court reform agenda; the realisation of a single, cohesive structure for tribunals administration; and the development of transformational proposals for our criminal justice system through the work of the Evidence and Procedure Review.

Alongside these major changes we will continue to learn from experience. We want to make practical improvements in areas such as the management of solemn criminal cases, the development and consolidation of case management systems and investment in our built estate. We will be developing a world-class facility in the Inverness Justice Centre. This combination of transformation and iteration will allow us to provide the best possible service. It will ensure that our justice system remains fit for purpose in an increasingly digital age.

It is a privilege to serve as the chairman of the SCTS Board. It is a task that continues to be made easier by my fellow Board members, whose commitment, insight and support are essential and much valued. We are able to set out our ambitious agenda with confidence because of the diligence, expertise and dedication of staff across the courts, tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian. Their continued commitment to providing a high-quality service is the cornerstone of our success.

Chief Executive's Introduction



**Eric McQueen, Chief Executive
Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service**

During this Corporate Plan period we will continue to deliver the most significant and visionary changes to Scotland's justice system in over a century. We do so in a time of continued financial constraint and against a backdrop of further constitutional change. Given those challenges it is essential that we plan carefully, manage effectively and work collaboratively.

We have a strong base from which to build – over the past three years our track record has been strong. Many changes have been visible to those using our services, but there has also been considerable work behind the scenes to ensure that the organisation is fit for the future. We have reduced the levels of backlog maintenance on our estate, completely upgraded our IT infrastructure to ensure it can support future innovation and maintained record levels of customer service and satisfaction throughout. This gives me confidence for the next three years – during which a range of further changes to the way in which we provide services will be achieved through innovation and the use of technology.

As an organisation we have grown, with the merger of courts and tribunals administration in 2015 creating the SCTS. In the coming years we will welcome staff currently working in tribunals administered by Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service. They will join a skilled, engaged and committed workforce that provides support to all of Scotland's tribunals, courts and the Office of the Public Guardian, whilst leading change and improvement across the organisation and beyond. If our people are to continue delivering a high-quality service we must ensure that they are supported with the right facilities, systems and skills – making the SCTS a great place to work, learn and develop for all our staff.

We were established as an independent body in 2010 – and whilst we value that independence we appreciate that real change can only be made to the justice system by its independent partners working together. We support the direction set in Scotland's Justice Strategy and Justice Digital Strategy. Central to that will be the work under way to explore how our criminal justice processes can make best use of technology to improve fairness, accessibility, efficiency and effectiveness. The proposals of the Evidence and Procedure Review have the potential to lead to a step-change in the longer-term, whilst delivering valuable improvements to the way in which our system deals with child and vulnerable witnesses in the shorter-term.

Working in partnership with the judiciary will remain crucial to our success – we now provide the support to a broad range of tribunal judiciary and will manage the transition to the new tribunal chamber structure over the period of this plan. Through our judicially-led Board we will continue to develop strong working relationships and support for all those who use our services.

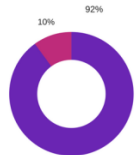
Our work is underpinned by strong risk, performance and change management systems. These allow us to monitor progress and account to the public, as we carry out the crucial task of supporting justice.



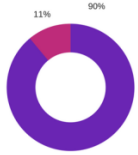
We operate in **51 geographical locations**, with **53 courts**, **70 tribunal venues** for hearings, and **15 remote video witness sites** and administrative centres.



92% OF STAFF HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCOTTISH COURTS & TRIBUNALS SERVICE PURPOSE



90% OF JUDGES SAY THEY FEEL VALUED BY SCTS STAFF



89% OF COURT USERS ARE VERY SATISFIED OR SATISFIED WITH THE SERVICE THEY RECEIVE

ANNUAL BUSINESS VOLUMES*



1742 staff



*BASED ON SCTS ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2015-16; FIGURES ARE THE NUMBER OF CASES REGISTERED

About SCTS

The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) is a non-ministerial department established by the Judiciary and Courts (Scotland) Act 2008. Its statutory function is to provide administrative support to the Scottish courts, devolved tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG). On 1 April 2015 SCTS became responsible for the administration of Scotland's devolved tribunals.

The SCTS has a presence in communities across Scotland. Court and tribunal business is conducted daily across the country in over 40 locations and, in the case of tribunal business, some 70 further remote locations.

In addition to administering Scotland's courts and tribunals SCTS supports the Office of the Public Guardian and Accountant of Court. The OPG provides guidance and undertakes investigations to protect vulnerable people under the terms of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000. The Public Guardian is also the Accountant of Court.

SCTS also provides the staff and administrative support to:

- the Scottish Civil Justice Council, which drafts rules of procedure for the civil courts and advises the Lord President on the development of the civil justice system;
- the Scottish Sentencing Council, responsible for preparing sentencing guidelines, publishing guideline judgments and information about sentences imposed by the courts in Scotland.

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service



Corporate Plan 2017-20

Our Purpose, Vision and Values

Our purpose

The purpose of SCTS is **supporting justice**. We fulfil that purpose by providing the people, buildings and services needed to support the judiciary, the courts, tribunals and Office of the Public Guardian.

Our vision

Our vision is to **build a stronger Courts and Tribunals Service** focused on improving access to justice, reducing delay and cost within the justice system and maximising the use of technology to improve our services. Scotland's courts and tribunals have a long and proud tradition of supporting justice and, whilst it can be easy to take this for granted, it is a function that every strong, successful, democratic nation needs to value and uphold. In doing so, the SCTS will ensure that the services provided by Scotland's courts, tribunals and OPG match the expectations of its people.

Our values


The core values we observe and seek to promote in others are **respect, service** and **excellence**.

“The SCTS has provided a very well respected and consistently high quality service over the twelve years since it first achieved Charter Mark accreditation for selected courts in 2004 through to CSE accreditation in 2013.”

Assessment Summary, CSE Report, 2016, available [here](#)

Our purpose → Supporting Justice

Our vision → Building a Stronger Courts and Tribunals Service

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service 

Our Behaviours – We will...

Our values

RESPECT

SERVICE

EXCELLENCE

- Be courteous** – co-operate, treat everyone with dignity and value diversity
- Be open & fair** – encourage good performance, give and receive constructive feedback, challenge and change inappropriate behaviour
- Work as one team** – lead and manage well; trust, empower and inspire each other

- Deliver a professional service** – get the basics right, recognise individual needs and manage information responsibly
- Learn in all we do** – build our skills and knowledge; respond to feedback and reflect on learning and experience to improve our service
- Set an example** – always do our best, share and explain what we do and show how it relates to our priorities, policies & values

- Innovate** – think creatively to find solutions, evaluate ideas and deliver continuous improvement
- Collaborate** – work with our customers and partners to share experience and lead change to improve the justice system
- Be accountable** – explain our plans and performance, understand the risks we face and make clear decisions that deliver improvement, sustainability and efficiency

Our Structure – The SCTS Board

The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service is an independent, judicially-led, public body, with the composition of the Board set in statute.

Chaired by the Lord President, Scotland's most senior judge, its membership is drawn from those holding judicial office, members with a legal background and independent members from outwith the justice system. More about each Board member is available [here](#) on our website.



From left to right (back row): Eric McQueen, Dr Kirsty J Hood QC, Sheriff Principal Duncan L Murray, Sheriff A Grant McCulloch, Dr Joe Morrow QC, Mrs Johan Findlay JP OBE, Colonel (Retired) John David McIlroy BSc CEng FICE, Lord Justice Clerk Rt. Hon Lady Dorrian
From left to right (front row): Prof R Hugh MacDougall, Rt. Hon Lady Smith, Rt. Hon Lord Carloway, Lord President, Sheriff Iona McDonald, Mr Simon J D Catto, Mr Joseph Al-Gharabally

The Board sets the strategic direction of the SCTS, makes the key decisions and monitors progress to ensure delivery of our strategic priorities. The Board is supported by four committees covering audit and risk; people; remuneration; and estates, health & safety, fire and security.

Each of the committees oversees major projects and programmes relevant to its area, providing specialist direction and guidance to ensure effective project and programme management at a strategic level.

Our Structure – The Executive Team



Day-to-day management responsibility for the staff and operation of the SCTS is delegated to the Chief Executive, who is also a member of the SCTS Board. The Chief Executive is supported by four executive directors. Together they make up the Executive Team responsible for corporate and operational delivery. The Judicial Office for Scotland is a separate office established within the SCTS to provide support to the Lord President in fulfilling his responsibilities as the head of the Scottish Judiciary.

Our Work

The work of the SCTS covers a broader range of issues than you may think. In providing support to Scotland's courts, devolved tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian we touch the lives of many people on a daily basis – be that through formal court or tribunal business, fulfilling your civic duty as a juror, paying fees or fines, seeking help in managing the affairs of an incapable adult or dealing with the estate of a loved one who has passed away. To achieve all these things we focus on working as one team and take pride in our high levels of customer service.



£ 120m

Our expenditure in 2015-16: Over 85% invested in the front line including 28% on our historic and diverse estate

c. 130,000 criminal cases registered annually

c. 70,000 civil cases registered annually

c. 5,000 tribunal cases registered annually

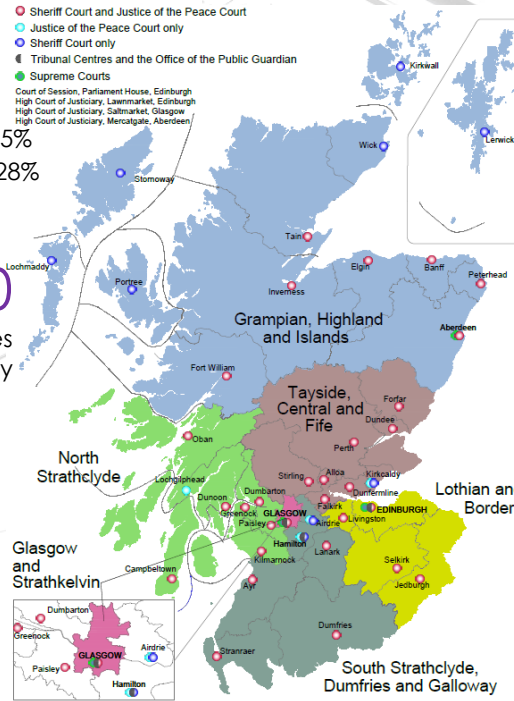
c. 55,000 powers of attorney registered annually by OPG

1742 staff

Our estate comprises 71 buildings with 86% being historic, listed and pre-1900

Scotland's devolved tribunals deal with a broad range of matters including housing, tax, mental health and educational needs

As at February 2017, 88% of the value of Sheriff Court fines imposed over the past three years had either been successfully collected by SCTS staff or is on track to be collected.



Supporting Justice – 2017-20

i. Trends, Challenges & Opportunities

As we move into a new planning period it is important to consider the key external factors influencing our work and the key trends in society that may affect us over the coming years.

Court Business

Whilst recorded crime is at a record low the level of cases entering the court system has remained relatively static in recent years, with notable increases in certain case types such as those relating to domestic abuse.

An increasing proportion of cases involve allegations of sexual offending – these tend to take longer to progress through the system than other case types. The use of video evidence and complex data allows cases to be pursued that may not have been in the past – this is positive for the justice system although it has an impact on the complexity and length of court cases.

For these reasons we believe that court business levels will remain relatively high over the coming three years, requiring us to maintain resourcing and to continue to work with partners to identify more effective ways in which cases can be managed and resolved.

Tribunals

An ageing population, increasing levels of private rented housing tenure and rising public expectations of the service they will receive from public authorities all create increases in business for tribunals.

With the prospect of the administration of tribunals in reserved areas such as employment and immigration being transferred to the SCTS in the coming years the need to deliver high quality support and administration to meet new, growing and complex tribunal workloads is clear.

Office of the Public Guardian

The situation is similar in relation to the workload of the Office of the Public Guardian, which has experienced significant year-on-year rises in the numbers of powers of attorney and guardianship orders registered. These are trends we expect to continue and detailed business projections will be set out in our annual Business Plans.

“The structured approach of the MA programme has helped me develop personally and gain real workplace experience. All this and a nationally recognised qualification too!”

Nicole Stevenson, Modern Apprentice



View the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service 2017-18 Business Plan, describing our objectives and outcomes for the year



Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service



Supporting Justice – 2017-20

i. Trends, Challenges & Opportunities (cont.)

Changing Expectations

Changes across society are tending to increase demand for some of the services we provide. More generally **digital services** will continue to transform the way we interact with one another, socially and professionally.

Public expectations for 24/7 self-service facilities and real-time information will continue to grow. Over the past three years we have invested significantly in our core digital infrastructure to ensure it is robust and capable of supporting future service improvements. We now have the opportunity to build on our programme of innovation to offer new ways of doing business, which can better meet customer needs and realise efficiencies.

Equally, we need to prepare for the potentially negative aspects that a greater use of technology can bring – the potential impact that cyber-crime can have on systems and infrastructure. We must build IT skills across our workforce whilst ensuring that the justice system as a whole can manage the challenges and realise the benefits of technology developing at pace.

Cultural Diversity

As a major employer and an organisation dealing with people from all walks of life we need to cater for the increasing cultural diversity and working practices of those who work for and interact with us. As people from the “Millennial generation” are increasingly building portfolio careers, we need SCTS to remain an attractive place to work, learn and build skills. We also need to be aware of that diversity across our whole business, ensuring that our services cater properly for the wide range of languages, cultures and methods of communication people use daily.

We will build on recent improvements made that ensure the best possible service is available to victims and witnesses, especially child and vulnerable witnesses for whom involvement in the legal process can be particularly stressful. We will also continue to focus on our equality agenda, ensuring that we provide a high level of service and support to both court users and staff, respecting their different and unique characteristics.

Embracing Change

Finally, the potential for further significant legislative and policy change remains high over the coming three years. We are already planning for the transfer of the administration of a number of reserved tribunals towards the end of this period as a consequence of the recommendations of the Smith Commission.

The impact of Brexit and its associated financial and constitutional consequences is not yet clear, but will need to be factored into our work, alongside other policy and process changes that will help us to improve the support we provide to courts, tribunals and the OPG. Significant change brings with it risks, but also opportunities to work together with partners in new and different ways; to take on new responsibilities and to make positive changes across the system as a whole.

Our Strategy

In 2014 the SCTS Board set out a long-term vision for the organisation, focused on realising the benefits from reform, continually improving services to users and ensuring that the organisation is well managed and affordable in the long term. That vision remains sound, although the breadth of our work and the requirements of those who use our services have changed over the past three years and will continue to do so over the coming three-year period.

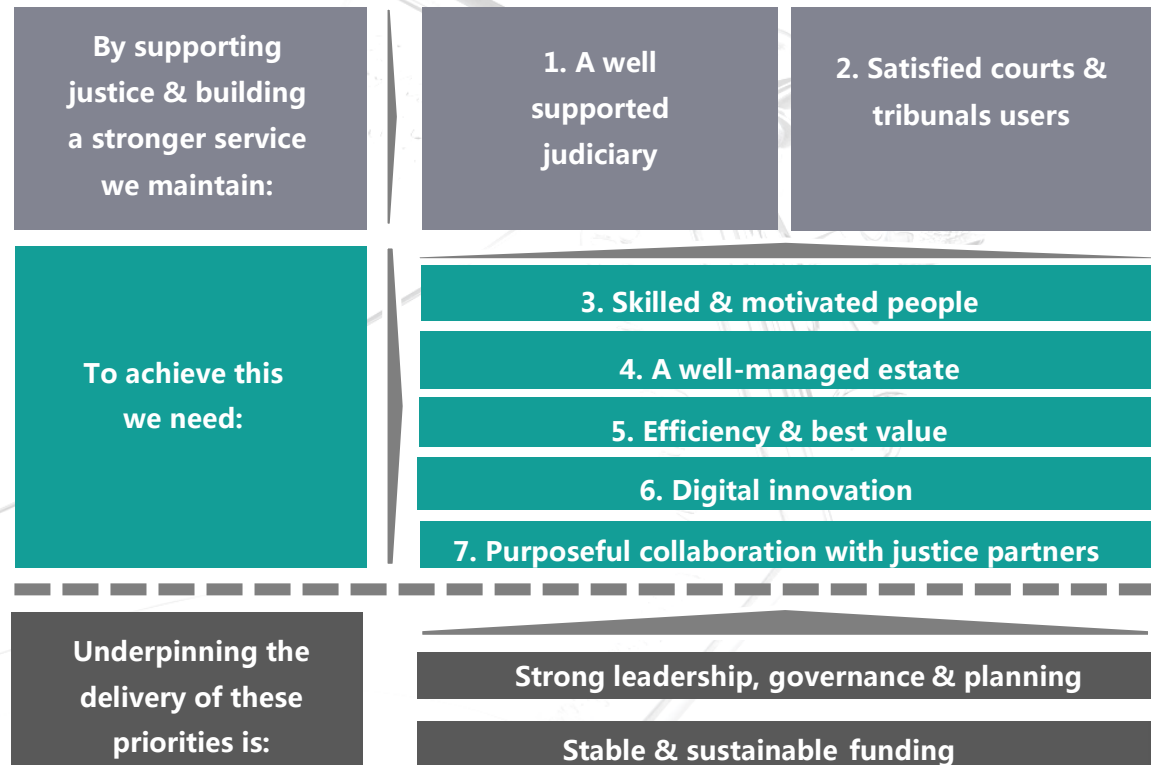
The SCTS strategy map illustrates how our purpose and vision are translated into seven strategic priorities – key areas on which we will focus over the next three years.

Our first two priorities are to ensure effective support to Scotland's courts' and tribunals' judiciary, whilst maintaining or improving levels of satisfaction amongst those who use Scotland's courts, tribunals and the OPG. Our service can only be said to be effective if these priorities are met.

Priorities 3-7 relate to the people, assets, systems, processes and partnerships that we can develop, improve and invest in over the coming years to ensure our service remains efficient, responsive and innovative. More detailed objectives for the coming three years are detailed under each of these priorities from [page 19](#). Whilst these priorities set a clear direction for what we aim to achieve over the coming three years, we will only be successful if the approach we take is underpinned by clear leadership, good planning and stable funding that allows us to invest for the future.

Several key reform areas that we will focus on over the coming three years have been identified that, taken together, will help fulfil our purpose and vision. Further detail on these can be found in the next section of this plan.

SCTS Strategy Map



Key Reform Areas 2017-20

i. Civil Justice Reform

Over the period of our last Corporate Plan we led the introduction of the most far-reaching range of reforms to Scotland's civil justice system in over a century. Based on the recommendations in Lord Gill's Scottish Civil Courts Review, the Courts Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 paved the way for major change including: increasing the threshold under which the sheriff court deals exclusively with civil cases; establishing the new all-Scotland Personal Injury Court and Sheriff Appeal Court; creating the new office of summary sheriff; and allowing the development and introduction of the new civil simple procedure.

At the same time we continued investing in our estate and digital infrastructure: reducing levels of historic backlog maintenance, upgrading our IT networks and improving courtroom technology – including Wi-Fi availability in all courts. With these significant policy and structural changes now largely in place the challenge over the coming three years is twofold:

- to ensure that we realise the **long-term benefits** of reforms fully, bedding in the new structures, reviewing their effectiveness and, where necessary, making changes to the way we administer, resource and organise civil court business. This will require us to provide a continually high level of support to the judiciary, equip our staff with the right systems and skills and assist our partners – sharing information with them to ensure that cases are fairly and efficiently managed.
- to develop and invest in **technology and digital service provision** to improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil justice system. This is not about trying to digitise the old system – we will work to develop new court rules, processes and systems that allow us to transform the way in which civil court business is transacted. In making this change we recognise that involving all those who use the system is as important as making use of new capabilities.

“This is not just about fixing the problem of the current system, tinkering with what we have; it should be about taking advantage of new technologies to design a justice system that will meet the requirements of society in years to come.**”**

Lady Dorian, *Digital Justice Strategy: A view from the courts*, available [here](#)



The new **Sheriff Appeal Court** accommodation, Lawnmarket, Edinburgh

Key Reform Areas 2017-20

i. Civil Justice Reform (cont.)

Towards the end of 2016 we introduced a new **civil case management system** into the sheriff courts which provides an advanced, user-friendly and resilient platform on which to build. In 2017 it will be rolled-out to the Court of Session and the ability to submit simple procedure cases online will mark the beginning of a move away from the need to have large volumes of case papers submitted to (and presented in) court.

Moving towards full digital provision of civil court business will take a number of years and will require us to work across the justice system, supporting the goals set out in the justice digital strategy. We will publish our own **digital strategy**, setting out in detail the key priorities and activities we will take forward to increase digital service provision and ensure that these benefit all those who use the system.

Over the coming three years we expect to see the expansion of digital evidence presentation for cases heard in court. This will be accompanied by an increase in the online management of procedural business by both parties and the judiciary, where formal hearings are not required. This increased use of technology will reduce the need for physical attendance at a court or tribunal to those hearings where it is genuinely necessary.

In addition to court and tribunal business we will maintain a clear focus on the work of the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG). Power of Attorney applications continue to rise year on year, with the OPG registering over 200 POAs per working day on average. Skilled people, high-quality systems and processes are required to ensure that these powers are quickly and efficiently registered. Over the period of this plan we will completely upgrade the OPG case management systems, using the platform provided by the civil case management system already introduced into the sheriff courts.

The role and responsibilities of the OPG and the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland may both feature as the Scottish Government conducts a review of existing adults with incapacity legislation in 2017/18. This could lead to changes in the way in which guardianship orders are granted. Around the same time the United Nations will audit the UK's adults with incapacity legislation. We will play a full part in these processes, to ensure that the operational expertise of the OPG, tribunals' judiciary and our staff are all included in any analysis of the current system and proposals for reform.

Office of the
Public Guardian (Scotland)



“Working towards amending guardianship supervision brings us closer to a tailored approach. We aim to offer proportionality in supervision without dilution of the essential safeguards.**”**

Fiona Brown, Office of the Public Guardian



Key Reform Areas 2017-20

ii. Supporting Scotland's Tribunals

Tribunals play a crucial role in Scotland's justice system. Whilst the courts deal with a broad range of business in a well-recognised setting there are a number of areas of the law where issues can be heard or disputes resolved more effectively in the tribunal setting – drawing on the expertise of specialist panel members, who often combine that role with a distinct professional career, making use of bespoke and, in some cases, less formal procedures and rules.

The Tribunals (Scotland) Act 2014 created a new, coherent structure for the leadership and administration of Scotland's devolved tribunals. Supported by the SCTS and under the leadership of the Lord President and the President of Scottish Tribunals the devolved tribunals will transfer into the new structure on a phased basis. This transfer commenced in December 2016 with the Private Rented Housing Panel and the Homeowners Housing Panel forming the new First-tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing and Property Chamber).

The establishment of the SCTS in April 2015 brought the administration of Scotland's devolved tribunals within the responsibility of the judicially-led SCTS Board, pooling resources and expertise to support Scotland's judiciary. The creation of a distinct Tribunals Operations unit within SCTS has ensured that the specialist support required to manage tribunal business has been maintained within the unified organisation.



“Scottish Tribunals will deliver high-quality decision-making, equal treatment for all parties and effective case management that is proportionate to the level of complexity.**”**

Lady Smith, President of Scottish Tribunals



Tribunals and their panel members often work remotely – their judiciary are principally part-time and the operating practices of each tribunal vary in order to provide the greatest level of accessibility and support to those who use the tribunal.

Our investments in technology and new facilities will allow us to offer flexible, responsive support to the tribunal and panel members who support the operation of this highly-regarded system – there are over 500 such members at present and this will rise to around 1,000 as the administration of reserved tribunals is transferred.

Key Reform Areas 2017-20

ii. Supporting Scotland's Tribunals (cont.)

In the coming three years our work to support the tribunals will be focused around three main areas:

1. Managing the transition of Scotland's devolved tribunals into the new tribunal structure on a phased basis. With the legislation establishing the First and Upper tier Tribunals for Scotland in place and the first transfer delivered successfully, we must maintain a clear focus on transferring all the devolved tribunals into the new structure – to realise the consistent and cohesive structure and leadership envisioned by the Tribunals (Scotland) 2014 Act.

There will be a range of transfers in 2017-18, including the Tax Tribunal, the Additional Support Needs Tribunals (into the Health and Education Chamber) the Scottish Charity Appeals Panel (into the General Regulatory Chamber) and further housing jurisdictions. Scotland's largest devolved tribunal, the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland, is due to transfer in 2018-19 as is the Lands Tribunal for Scotland. Transfers of NHS tribunals and Education Appeals Committees will continue into 2020.

In supporting these transfers it will be crucial to ensure that the day-to-day business of the tribunals is effectively maintained whilst, at the same time, opportunities for collaboration, innovation and the sharing of best practice are taken – so that the benefits of each tribunal sitting within a chamber and each chamber sitting within the overarching structure are fully realised.

2. Leading work to ensure that the devolution of administration of reserved tribunals to the SCTS is effectively managed.

The Smith Commission proposed that responsibility for the administration of Scottish cases falling to be heard by the majority of tribunals whose functions relate to reserved areas of UK law should be devolved to Scottish Ministers. Section 39 of the Scotland Act 2016 implemented that proposal – making it possible for these functions to be transferred to Scottish Ministers.

Whilst detailed planning on the precise time and form of these transfers remains at a relatively early stage it is now clear that the responsibility for administering tribunal business in relation to the vast majority of currently “reserved” tribunals – including employment, social security, tax and immigration – will transfer from Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) to the SCTS towards the end of this corporate planning period (late 2019/early 2020). This is a major undertaking and detailed planning has already commenced.

The transfer of the administration of reserved tribunals to the SCTS poses a number of practical challenges but offers a great number of opportunities – allowing us to build a unified administration for all of Scotland's courts and tribunals, under Scotland's senior judiciary. On a practical level the transfer will also allow us to welcome a number of HMCTS staff based in Scotland into the SCTS, create opportunities for co-location, sharing of services, best practice and the development of consistent case management systems. By the end of this 3-year period SCTS will be the organisation that supports all of Scotland's courts and tribunals in their crucial role of upholding justice.

3. As a consequence of the two significant changes outlined above it will be incumbent on **SCTS to keep developing its understanding of and support for, the tribunals' judiciary.** As mentioned above tribunals, and the judiciary that support them, operate in different ways from formal courts – in the interests of supporting those who use them and reaching the right decisions in the most effective way. We need to fully appreciate this diversity and develop arrangements that complement the way in which tribunals operate.

Key Reform Areas 2017-20

iii. Criminal Justice Reform: Evidence and Procedure Review

Whilst the 2014-17 planning period was characterised by significant reforms to Scotland's civil justice system the coming three years will see the development and introduction of major changes to Scotland's criminal justice system. The source for most of these changes is the work of the Evidence and Procedure Review – a multi-agency collaboration led by the SCTS, building consensus around reforms that can be made to our criminal justice system to ensure it realises the benefits of modern technology. Its propositions are designed to improve the quality of evidence presented in criminal trials whilst improving efficiency, effectiveness and fairness for all those involved in it. The work of the review has explored two distinct areas:

i. Redesigning summary criminal procedure

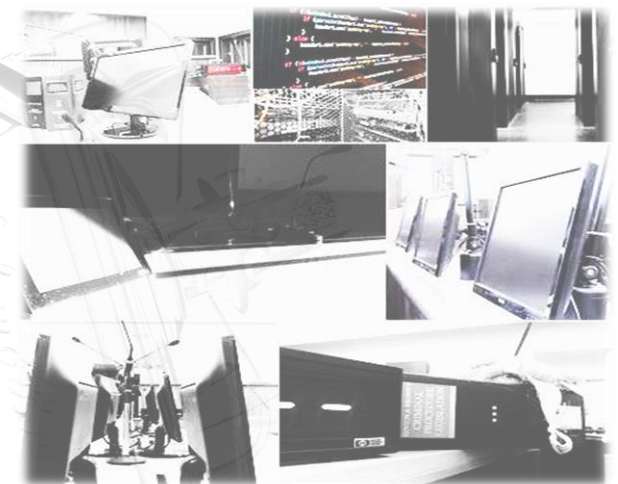
The case for further reform of the summary justice system is strong. In 2015-16 approximately 52,000 trial diets called in the sheriff courts but only 9,000 proceeded with evidence being led. In the same year it was estimated that some 460,000 witnesses were cited to give evidence but only 92,000 were required to do so. The propositions made by the Evidence and Procedure Review seek to improve the operation of the summary justice system putting stronger case management at its core, based around the following key principles:

- Wherever possible all pre-trial procedure should take place as part of a **digital case management process**, with court hearings reserved for contested pre-trial preliminary pleas or case management issues.
- Intermediate and trial diets should **not be allocated upon the lodging of a not guilty plea** as they are at present. Trial diets should only be allocated (and witnesses cited) after the case management process is complete.
- **Strong judicial oversight** of the case management process should be applied to bring about more agreement of evidence where possible, and to ensure trials focus on what is truly in dispute.
- In those cases in which guilty pleas are tendered, there should be the option for **sentencing to be conducted digitally** without the need for the accused to appear in court.

These changes would represent the most significant overhaul in our criminal justice process in living memory – and will take time to implement. For them to be successful a number of other steps will need to be taken in advance, including the establishment of a “Digital Evidence and Information Vault” for the storage and sharing of criminal case information and the creation of a new criminal case management system – replacing existing court systems to facilitate digital case management and communication between prosecution, defence and court professionals.

“We must look to the radical reform identified in the Evidence and Procedure Review. Exploiting the opportunity which digital technology presents is needed to make sure we continue to have a justice system that matches public expectation in the 21st century.”

Lord Carloway, Lord President, Opening of new courtrooms at Glasgow High Court, 3rd February 2017



Key Reform Areas 2017-20

iii. Criminal Justice Reform: Evidence and Procedure Review

ii. A new approach to taking evidence from child and vulnerable witnesses

Victims and witnesses often find themselves involved in the court system through no action or fault of their own – and the role they play is crucial. Significant improvements in the service provided to victims and witnesses have been achieved over the past few years, including the introduction of service standards agreed by all major justice agencies (which are monitored and reported on annually) and the extension of access to special measures for witnesses in a broader range of circumstances – including the establishment of 10 victim and witness video centres. The work led by the Evidence and Procedure Review noted that the experience of giving evidence in court can be particularly distressing for child and vulnerable witnesses. The Next Steps report recommended that:

“... initially for solemn cases, there should be a systematic approach to the evidence of children or vulnerable witnesses in which it should be presumed that the evidence-in-chief of such a witness will be captured and presented at trial in pre-recorded form; and that the subsequent cross-examination of that witness will also, on application, be recorded in advance of trial.”

This will be another significant change in the way in which a proportion of criminal businesses is managed in future – the longer term vision is to develop an approach to gathering the evidence of vulnerable victims and witnesses that, particularly for child witnesses:

- minimises the likelihood of subjecting them to further harm or trauma;
- takes into account their communication needs;
- allows them to give all of their best evidence as early as possible after the alleged offence is reported.

“*My view is that children should be spared the trauma of giving evidence in a formal court environment. Indeed, I want to eliminate the need for children to attend court at all during the trial.”*

**Michael Matheson, MSP - Cabinet Secretary for Justice,
Keynote speech at Getting it Right for Child Witnesses,
Justice for Children Conference, 12th October 2016**



Over the coming 3 years we will be working in partnership with the Scottish Government, other justice agencies and a wide range of court users to support changes to both law and practice that will make these principles a reality.

SCTS has led the development of these propositions, which provide the opportunity to modernise and improve the justice system but, most importantly, to improve the quality of evidence given, increasing the ability of our justice processes to ascertain the truth.

Key Reform Areas 2017-20

iv. Collaboration and Partnership

Working Together

The significant programme of reform set out in our previous plan could not have been achieved without collaboration at both local and national levels. We work with a range of partners day-in, day-out – providing the facilities, systems and support that keep the courts and tribunals running.

By working together in this way system-wide challenges can be addressed, such as managing increases in case waiting periods experienced in 2014-15 due to the proactive approach taken by the police and prosecution to tackle **domestic abuse**. The change in approach led to a spike in trial waiting periods which has now been addressed through joint action. In the course of 2017 we will ensure that waiting times for domestic abuse cases fall within an 8-10 week period, agreed as optimal with our partners.

Scotland's six **Local Criminal Justice Boards**, led by Sheriffs Principal, support effective joint working and performance monitoring across the country. SCTS provides performance analysis and administration to the Boards, ensuring that proposals and plans are turned into action. The Boards operate within a national framework, but use local knowledge and flexibility to build relationships and working arrangements that keep the system running smoothly. We will continue to support the work of the Boards as further system changes are introduced in summer 2017 – such as reforms to solemn criminal procedure intended to reduce the level of case churn – building on the 2015 Practice Note on solemn procedure issued by the then Lord Justice Clerk.

As members of the **Justice Board for Scotland** we have the opportunity to develop and shape policy, share knowledge and pool resources to support achievement of the vision and outcomes set out in the [Justice Strategy for Scotland](#). This partnership work is crucial if we are to ensure that the justice system achieves all that the sum of its parts is capable of. We continue to support the shared agenda of the Board which includes the proposals on civil, criminal and tribunal reform outlined in this plan.

Community Justice

SCTS is, in terms of the **Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016**, a named statutory partner in the newly created local community justice partnerships. These allow a range of agencies to work together to prevent and reduce reoffending and the harm it causes by supporting and managing people to successfully reintegrate into the community. SCTS is required as a statutory partner to participate in the planning, delivery and evaluation of community justice services but must do so only to the extent it does not conflict with our statutory duties of supporting the courts and the independent sentencing decisions of the judiciary.

Whilst the day in court is only one small part of the experience of victims, those on whom a community penalty is imposed, and their families, it is a crucial part of the justice system and we are working at local level to identify areas where courts can usefully contribute to achieving better outcomes for community justice as a whole.

Key Reform Areas 2017-20

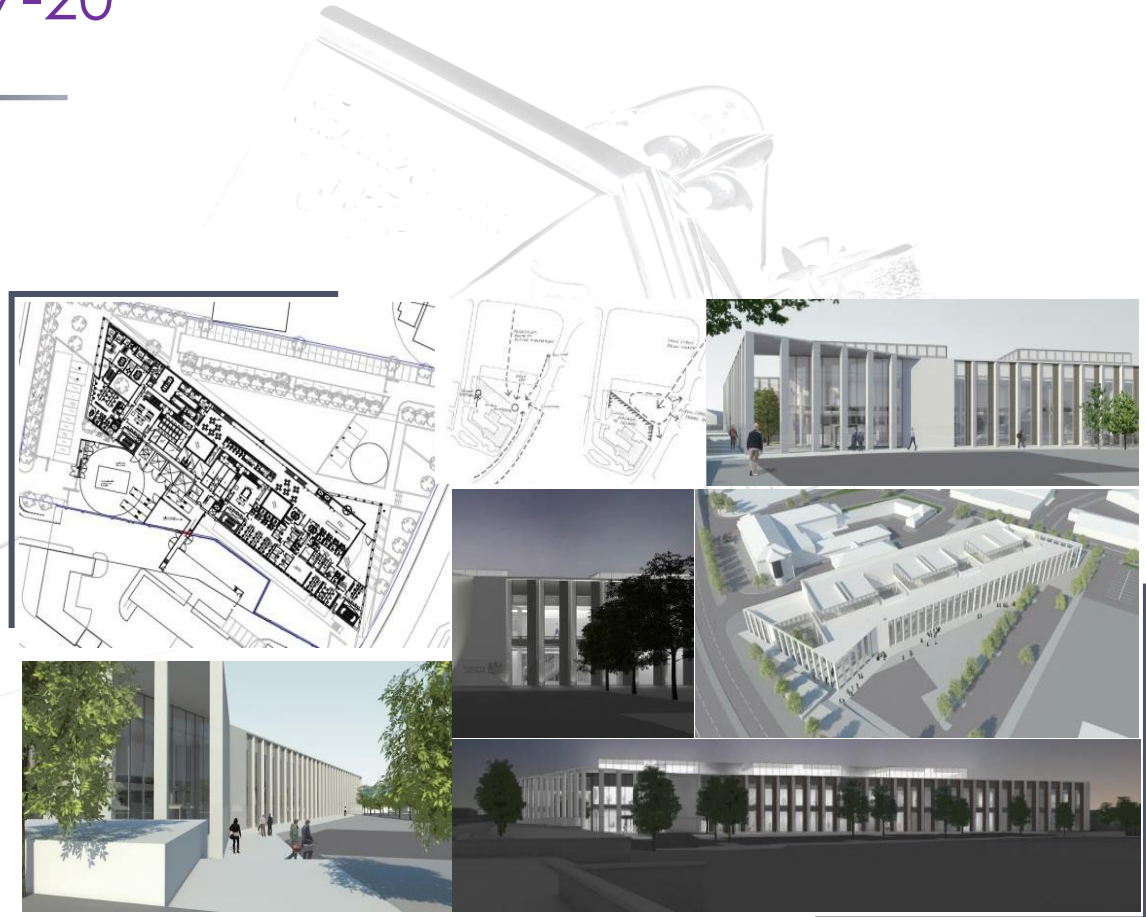
iv. Collaboration and Partnership

Building Together – Inverness Justice Centre

Work has commenced on the development of a major new justice centre which will replace the existing Inverness Sheriff Court and is due to open in 2019. The centre provides the opportunity for a broad range of services to be provided in a secure, sustainable and modern environment – improving efficiency for all the agencies working there and enhancing the experience for all those using the courts, tribunals and support services that will be based in the complex.

As the first of its kind the Inverness Justice Centre gives us the opportunity to design a facility with the future delivery of justice in mind – making use of new technology, combined with traditional high-quality construction to create a space in which the justice system can operate to its full potential.

SCTS is leading the multi-agency project to deliver the justice centre which will set the standard for the provision of justice services – and is an approach we hope to be able to replicate in other areas where facilities are in need of improvement – particularly in Fife, where early plans for the development of a Justice Centre in Kirkcaldy are under development.



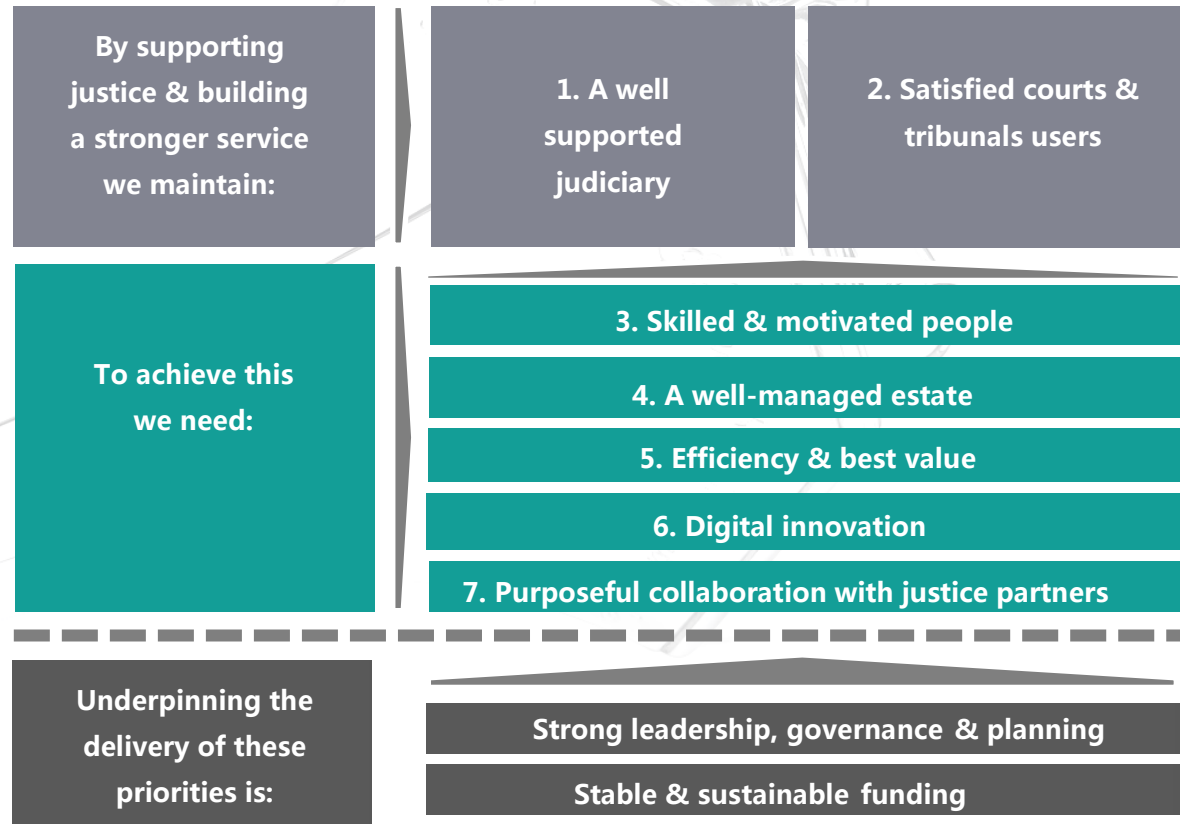
Our Strategic Priorities and Key Objectives 2017-20

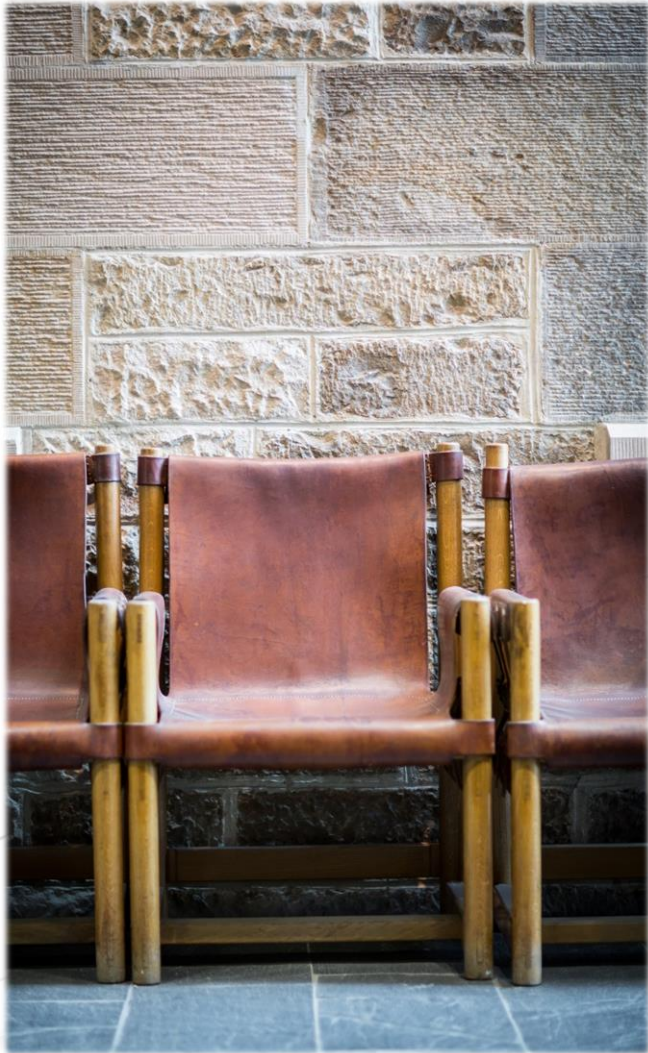
SCTS Strategy Map

Our strategy map identifies **seven key strategic priorities**. By focusing our efforts on these we will be able to achieve our purpose and vision over the coming three years.

For each of these priorities, we have set out what we aim to achieve, over the coming pages, by detailing the **main strategic objectives** that will be delivered over the course of the corporate planning period. These objectives will, in turn, be broken down into greater detail in annual business plans, specific programme and project delivery plans.

By setting our strategic priorities and objectives in this plan we create a clear direction of travel for the organisation over the coming three years, whilst maintaining a degree of flexibility to respond to challenges, opportunities and innovations that may arise.





A Well Supported Judiciary

Strategic Priority 1

We aim to ensure that the right technology, people, systems and processes are in place to assist the judiciary to dispense justice effectively.

Objectives

- 1.1 We will deliver a modern tribunal chamber structure for Scotland, including the transfer of the administration of reserved tribunals to SCTS and improvements in the systems, processes and operational support provided to the judiciary.
- 1.2 We will support the Lord President and Sheriffs Principal in delivering an effective structure for the disposal of court business across Scotland, including the continued deployment of summary sheriffs.
- 1.3 We will provide the staff, resources and tools required to support judicial case management as it increasingly becomes the norm.
- 1.4 We will deliver a state-of-the-art justice centre in Inverness that will support multi-agency collaboration and develop proposals for a further centre in Fife.
- 1.5 We will support the judiciary in the adoption of digital processes and further procedural change aimed at improving the justice system, including changes proposed under the Evidence and Procedure Review.

“Staff act in a professional manner and their contribution to planning, developing and delivering service is much valued.**”**

Assessment Summary, CSE Report, 2016, available [here](#)

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



Satisfied Courts & Tribunals Users



Strategic Priority 2

We will consistently deliver high-quality customer service, inspiring confidence in those who use our services, promoting inclusiveness and developing our understanding of customer needs through ongoing feedback and quality assessment.

Objectives

- 2.1 We will introduce new procedures that will make it routine for the evidence and examination of children and vulnerable witnesses to be recorded in advance of trial, in an appropriate environment that does not confuse, distress or further traumatise the witness.
- 2.2 We will continue to seek the views of all those who use our services through quality surveys and feedback to meet diverse user needs, assess the effectiveness of our service and inform further improvement.
- 2.3 We will use the Customer Service Excellence standard to measure and improve upon the quality of service we deliver.
- 2.4 We will monitor and improve service standards for victims and witnesses – building on the current standards, customer feedback and the opportunities afforded by new technology.

“Overall levels of satisfaction for both professionals and non-professionals were high, with 93% of professionals being either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied and 89% of non-professionals being either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied.”

SCTS Court Users Satisfaction Survey, 2015, available [here](#)



Skilled & Motivated People

Strategic Priority 3

We will maintain a skilled and motivated workforce supporting the judiciary and providing excellent customer service across the tribunals, courts and Office of the Public Guardian (OPG).

Objectives

- 3.1 We will establish a new learning and development framework, transforming the delivery of training, learning and development by using a blended approach that gives access to knowledge and support when and where required.
- 3.2 We will ensure that our resourcing policy gives us the skills and competencies we require to be successful – using a mixture of secondments, apprenticeships and the development of professional qualifications and standards.
- 3.3 We will implement our new People Strategy, taking a strategic approach to succession planning, talent management, career progression and lifelong learning.
- 3.4 We will ensure that we have the right policies, structures and resources in place to maintain a diverse and integrated workforce as our responsibilities expand.

The variety of work I've been involved in has been a great experience for me – my apprenticeship has also allowed me to develop new skills that I will use as my career develops."

Maryth Hunter, Modern Apprentice, Perth Sheriff Court



Major Estates Investments

Scotland's legal system continually develops in response to our changing society. Our estate reflects that dynamic. We have invested significantly over the last decade, maintaining and modernising, rationalising, and introducing new facilities. We continue that commitment for the next decade in our Estates Strategy.

<p>2007</p> <p>New courts in Elgin & Greenock; Parliament House improvement. £26m invested in key local court locations.</p>	<p>2008</p> <p>New Courts in Alloa, Dumbarton, Stirling £22m invested in developing new facilities in Tayside, Central and Fife.</p>
<p>2011</p> <p>Parliament House Project £20.2m invested refurbishing & upgrading - an historically significant building in Scotland: it was the pre-Union home of Scotland's parliament.</p>	<p>2013</p> <p>Aberdeen Civil Centre & Parliament House Project £23.7m invested. Parliament House project delivered on time improving services.</p>
<p>2014</p> <p>Aberdeen Civil Centre and Forfar Court Extension £12.5m invested to deliver essential extensions in line with needs and expectations.</p>	<p>2015/16</p> <p>Additional Courts: Saltmarket, Glasgow & Edinburgh Sheriff Court £8.7m invested providing additional courts in key sheriff and high court locations.</p>
<p>2017</p> <p>Inverness Justice Centre Project Planning and constructions commences on purpose built facility.</p>	

A Well-Managed Estate

Strategic Priority 4

We will develop and maintain our built infrastructure to provide a high-quality, safe, secure and sustainable environment for everyone using our services.

Objectives

- 4.1 We will support the justice reform agenda by targeting investment across the courts estate, facilitating the use of technology and collaboration amongst partners to deliver business effectively.
- 4.2 We will invest in and develop the tribunals' estate, exploring the potential to bring services together and improve facilities for all those who use them.
- 4.3 We will increase the sustainability of our built estate by continuing to target historic backlog maintenance and meeting the challenging reduction targets set in our Carbon Management Plan.
- 4.4 We will explore the potential for the development of further justice centres in key population centres across Scotland – to support multi-agency collaboration should further funding become available.

Maintaining and improving our diverse estate is a key priority for SCTS: making sure buildings are safe, comfortable and modernised, whilst delivering sustainably where we can.”

David Currie, Director
Property Services



effective. reliable
economic. digital by
design

+£120,000 saved citing
jurors 2015-16

Scottish Courts
Tribunals Service

£9m automated
transactions 2015-16

49% fines automated
or centralised 2015-16

SCTS Annual Reports & Accounts 2015-16

Efficiency & Best Value

Strategic Priority 5

We will secure a stable financial base that allows us to continually improve our services and be sustainable in the long term. We will keep our processes under review to make sure that we deliver business in an effective, reliable and economical way.

Objectives

- 5.1 We will work with partners to ensure that Scotland's legal, technical and operational framework ensures that people only attend court in person when there is a clear benefit in doing so.
- 5.2 We will develop a high-quality web presence providing clear user advice, information and access to new digital services as these are developed.
- 5.3 We will continue to review internal business processes to maximise efficiency and effectiveness, thereby achieving best value.
- 5.4 We will review our fee structures to ensure that fees incentivise efficient and effective practice and are matched to the costs of activity.

The success of the One Stage Citation and Hybrid Mail projects brought significant process efficiencies that improved the juror experience, produced significant cost savings for the organisation and delivered important environmental benefits.”

Ian Horne, Business Improvement Manager



Digital Innovation

Strategic Priority 6

We will place digital innovation at the centre of what we do, making sure that we maximise the opportunities afforded by technology to improve processes, provide easy access to information, minimise physical appearance and support quicker outcomes.

Objectives

- 6.1 We will extend our integrated case management system to other business areas, providing an efficient platform for case management and electronic data interchange.
- 6.2 We will invest in systems to support effective mobile working and collaboration for the judiciary and staff.
- 6.3 We will invest in the security and resilience of our networks and systems to underpin our increasing use of digital services and to mitigate the increasing threat of cybercrime.
- 6.4 We will work with our partners to refresh and develop the SCTS Digital Strategy and collaborate to deliver shared capabilities and common best practices.

“The upgrade of court room equipment across the Dundee courts has been invaluable. Having up to date technology means we can work confidently in a modern environment.”

Keith Macleod, Court Officer
Dundee Sheriff Court



Purposeful Collaboration with Justice Bodies

Strategic Priority 7

We will work with justice bodies to deliver significant change and improvement to Scotland's justice system – through collaboration, communication and reform.

Objectives

7.1 We will, as members of Scotland's Justice Board and its six local criminal justice boards, work in partnership with justice agencies, professional groups and the third sector to maintain and improve system performance, integrating long-term policy development with practical operational improvements.

7.2 We will work with the UK Government, Scottish Government and justice partners to deliver a smooth transition of the administration of reserved tribunals to the SCTS.

7.3 We will lead the development of reforms to criminal business set out in the Evidence and Procedure Review, introducing a new approach to case-management, using digital evidence and online case-management to eliminate unnecessary, routine and often repeated hearings in court.

7.4 We will explore the potential to make greater use of online and alternative dispute resolution in civil and administrative cases – avoiding the need for hearings where matters can be settled.

“The purpose of introducing a new, digitally enabled case management system should be to allow for the earliest consideration by all parties of the evidence that is being brought in the case, with a focus on those matters on which the case will be determined.”

Evidence and Procedure Review – Next Steps, available [here](#)

Monitoring Progress & Performance

This plan sets out our strategic priorities and objectives over the three-year period from 2017-20. It will be supported by corporate strategies setting out our longer-term direction on Estates, Finance, People and Digital development.

Overall responsibility for the delivery of this Plan rests with the SCTS Board, which meets at least six times per year. Support is provided by formal Board Committees, including the People Committee, Audit and Risk Committee and the Estates, Health & Safety, Fire and Security Committee.

Performance Management

Delivery of specific actions and detailed monitoring of performance are the responsibility of the SCTS Chief Executive, supported by the SCTS Executive Team. Collaborative justice-wide initiatives will be managed, and progress will be monitored, through the Scottish Government's Justice Board.

More detailed performance outcomes for each financial year will be set out in the SCTS annual Business Plan, published at the beginning of each business year. A full report on the performance and expenditure of the organisation for each financial year is published in the form of the SCTS Annual Report and Accounts.

In addition the SCTS Board also publishes a performance scorecard and business plan delivery report annually – providing an overview of key aspects of operational performance and the delivery of the outcomes set out in our annual business plan respectively.

These documents complement this Corporate Plan, providing more information on activities and performance on an annual basis. They can be found (alongside other key corporate information) on the Reports and Data section of the SCTS website.

Risk Management

SCTS maintains a formal Risk Management Framework and the high level corporate risks are subject to regular review by the Executive Team, the Audit and Risk Committee and the SCTS Board. The responsibility for management of the individual risks is delegated to specific risk owners.



SCOTTISH COURTS AND TRIBUNALS SERVICE

Annual Report
and Accounts
2015-16

SCOTTISH COURTS AND TRIBUNALS SERVICE
Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3XD

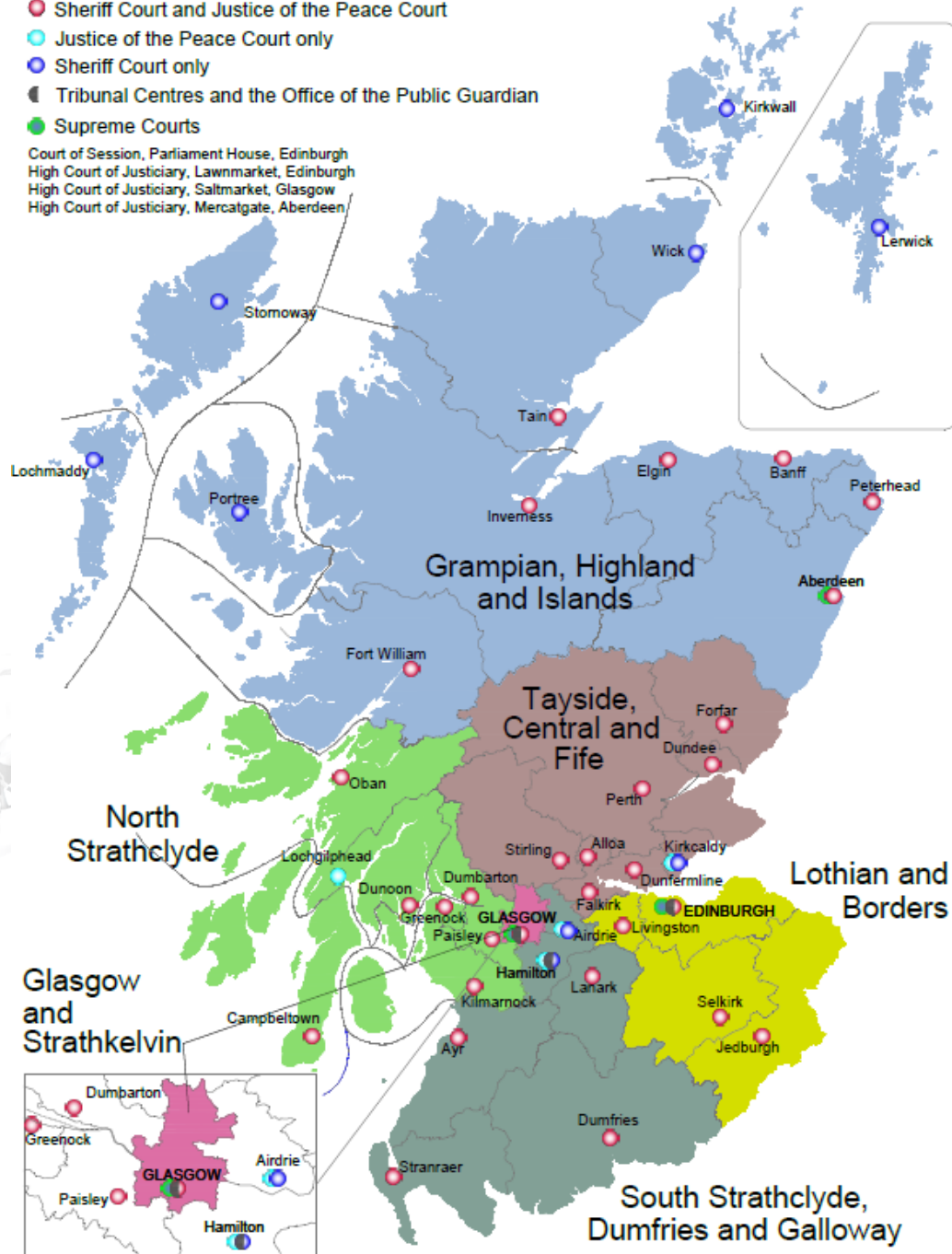


We publish a detailed report on performance and budgets every year, available [here](#)

Annex 1 - SCTS Locations Map

- Sheriff Court and Justice of the Peace Court
- Justice of the Peace Court only
- Sheriff Court only
- Tribunal Centres and the Office of the Public Guardian
- Supreme Courts

Court of Session, Parliament House, Edinburgh
 High Court of Justiciary, Lawnmarket, Edinburgh
 High Court of Justiciary, Saltmarket, Glasgow
 High Court of Justiciary, Mercatgate, Aberdeen



Annex 2 – Strategy for Justice: Priorities & Outcomes

JUSTICE IN SCOTLAND: VISION AND PRIORITIES

VISION

A JUST, SAFE & RESILIENT SCOTLAND

OUTCOMES

We live in safe, cohesive and resilient communities

Prevention and early intervention improve wellbeing and life chances

Our system and interventions are proportionate, fair and effective

We deliver person-centred, modern and affordable public services



PRIORITIES

We will enable our communities to be safe and supportive, where individuals exercise their rights and responsibilities

We will enable our people, economy and infrastructure to respond to major risk, recover from emergencies and adapt to emerging threats

We will modernise civil and criminal law and the justice system to meet the needs of people in Scotland in the 21st Century

We will work with others to improve health and wellbeing in justice settings, focusing on mental health and substance use

We will work to quickly identify offenders and ensure responses are proportionate, just, effective and promote rehabilitation

We will improve the experience of victims and witnesses, minimising court attendance and supporting them to give best evidence

We will use prison only where necessary to address offending or to protect public safety, focusing on recovery and reintegration

Further Information

SCTS website

<http://www.scotcourtribunals.gov.uk/>

SCTS Reports and Data

www.scotcourts.gov.uk/about-the-scottish-court-service/reports-data

SCTS Board

www.scotcourts.gov.uk/about-the-scottish-court-service/the-scottish-court-service-board

Office of the Public Guardian

www.publicguardian-scotland.gov.uk

Scottish Tribunals

<http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/the-courts/the-tribunals/about-scottish-tribunals>

Other Courts & Tribunals

<http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/the-courts/the-tribunals/other-courts-and-tribunals>

Judicial Office for Scotland

<http://www.scotland-judiciary.org.uk/1/0/Home>

Scottish Government

<http://www.gov.scot/>

Scottish Civil Justice Council

www.scottishciviljusticecouncil.gov.uk

Scottish Sentencing Council

<https://www.scottishsentencingcouncil.org.uk/>

Justice Strategy for Scotland

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Justice/justicestrategy>

If you require production of this document in another language or format please contact us at: enquiries@scotcourtribunals.gov.uk

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