

SCOTTISH COURT SERVICE BOARD

MEETING: MONDAY 8 AUGUST 2011, OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC GUARDIAN,
FALKIRK

Present:

Rt Hon Lord Hamilton, Lord President, (Chair)
Eleanor Emberson
Johan Findlay OBE JP
Sheriff Principal Alastair Dunlop QC
Tony McGrath
Elizabeth Carmichael CBE
Sheriff Iona McDonald
Debbie Crosbie
Robert Milligan QC
Sheriff Derek Pyle

Also Attended:

Neil Rennick, Executive Director Strategy & Infrastructure, SCS
Eric McQueen, Executive Director Field Services, SCS (Item 3)
Stephen Coulter, Director Planning and Performance, SCS
Nicola Bennett, Director Finance, SCS
Margaret Peattie, Secretariat Business Manager, SCS, (Minutes)

Apologies:

Rt Hon Lord Gill
Rt Hon Lord Reed
Mark Higgins

1. Minutes of the Meeting of 6 May 2011

1.1 The Minutes were approved.

2. Matters Arising

2.1 There were no matters arising which would not be discussed elsewhere on the Agenda.

3. Future Court Structures (SCS/Aug11/20)

3.1 *The record of the discussion under this agenda item is considered confidential and exempt from publication.*

4. Strategic Planning (SCS/Aug11/21 and SCS/Aug11/22)

Corporate Plan Delivery – Status Report

4.1 The Board received a summary of the progress made on the project portfolio established to deliver the commitments made in the Corporate Plan 2011-14.

4.2 Key achievements for the period April to July included:

- the rationalisation of split site courts in Perth, Paisley, Kilmarnock and Ayr, where sheriff court and justice of the peace court business was now being heard in the same building;
- implementation of a formal agreement with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service for estates management;
- the award of a contract for the design and development of the Office of the Public Guardian's on-line system for powers of attorney; and
- the development of draft guidance to support staff and build skills and competencies in court programming.

4.3 It was agreed that the format of this report should be adopted as a model for providing regular updates to the Board. A system for tracking decisions taken at Board level, flagging up any decisions required in the months ahead, as well as tracking milestones achieved and those coming up, would be developed to monitor progress.

Action: Executive to develop a tracker for monitoring progress on decisions taken by the Board, recording milestones and flagging up decisions to be taken over time, to deliver the Corporate Plan objectives.

Communications

4.4 In addition to regular liaison meetings with judicial groups to discuss project development, the Executive Team had embarked on a series of visits to all courts, the Office of the Public Guardian and business units. The purpose of these visits was to meet with staff in small groups and follow up on the staff engagement events held at the end of 2010, providing an update on progress and answering any questions.

4.5 A series of Staff Briefings was being published on the Intranet. The project portfolio had already been published and information about projects under the six strategic themes would follow.

Allocation of Reserve Budget 2011/12

4.6 In February the Board had agreed an indicative budget for 2011/12 which included an unallocated reserve. Consideration was given to investing some of the revenue reserve now and bids had been brought forward for discussion.

4.7 ICT is a crucial element in delivering the commitments set out in the Corporate Plan and the Executive was keen to strengthen the capacity within the ICT team. Priorities for investment included developing project management capability and on-line web development to support key business change projects. It was **agreed** that two new permanent posts be created within the ICT team to enable this activity to keep pace with the growing demand for ICT support across the project portfolio.

4.8 Other bids for investment in estates health and safety and compliance projects, energy efficiency projects and a complaints handling system to support Customer Service Excellence were also **approved**.

5. Spending Review 2011 (SCS/Aug11/12)

Fees Strategy

5.1 *The record of the discussion under this agenda item is considered confidential and exempt from publication.*

6. SCS Annual Report and Accounts 2010/11 (SCS/Aug11/24)

6.1 The Board received a draft of the Annual Report and Accounts. Many elements of the content were statutory requirements so the Board was invited to consider the areas of the Annual Report where there was discretion over the content and form; in particular the

management commentary. Aside from a few suggested amendments, the Board was broadly content with the format and content.

7. SCS Committee Updates

Estates: Parliament House Redevelopment – Phase 3

7.1 The Committee had discussed the benefits of progressing with the contract for Phase 3 immediately and sought the Board's agreement to the Executive entering into a contract for works up to the end of the current financial year. This was **approved** by the Board.

Audit

7.2 Two external members had now been appointed and attended their first meeting. A successful induction session had been held for all the non executive members.

7.3 The Committee would discuss the internal audit plan later this month.

People

7.4 At its last meeting the Committee had received a report on untaken annual leave and this was being considered. The next meeting would be held later this month.

8. Board Performance

8.1 The Chair had now had one-to-one discussions with each member of the Board and considered the appraisal process to have been a very valuable exercise. He flagged up some points to which further thought would be given.

8.2 The appraisal process had informed individual performance and development but some questions were raised in relation to measuring the performance of the Board as a whole. From the Executive point of view, it had provided a degree of challenge and scrutiny which had brought forward robust planning and performance data. The Board needed a communication strategy to articulate the strategic direction being developed and demonstrate why some difficult decisions were being taken.

9. Any Other Business

Future Agenda Items

9.1 The Board reviewed the agenda items to be discussed at its meetings in the coming months and members were broadly content with the programme. The next meeting would include a policy update from Scottish Government officials.

9.2 In closing, the Chair thanked the Public Guardian, Sandra McDonald and her staff for accommodating the meeting. She and the Deputy Public Guardian, Debra Allison had given the Board a short and informative presentation on the work of and issues affecting the Office of the Public Guardian.

10. Date of the Next Meeting

10.1 Monday 10 October 2011 in Kilmarnock.