



**SCOTTISH COURT SERVICE BOARD**

**MEETING: Monday 13 December 2010**

**Falkirk Sheriff Court & Justice of the Peace Court**

**Present:**

Rt Hon Lord Hamilton, Lord President, (Chair)  
Eleanor Emberson  
Rt Hon Lord Reed  
Tony McGrath  
Debbie Crosbie  
Johan Findlay JP  
Sheriff Principal Alastair Dunlop QC  
Sheriff Iona McDonald  
Elizabeth Carmichael CBE  
Mark Higgins

**Also Attended:**

Neil Rennick, Executive Director Policy & Strategy, SCS  
Eric McQueen, Executive Director Field Services, SCS (Item 3)  
Gordon Wales, Executive Director Corporate Services, SCS (Item 3)  
Steve Humphreys, Executive Director Judicial Office for Scotland, SCS (Item 3)  
Stephen Coulter, Director Performance & Planning, SCS (Item 4)  
Margaret Peattie, Secretariat Business Manager, SCS, (Minutes)

**Apologies:**

Rt Hon Lord Gill  
Sheriff Derek Pyle  
Robert Milligan QC

**1. Minutes of the Meeting of 18 October 2010**

1.1 The minutes were approved.

**2. Matters Arising**

2.1 Action points from the last meeting were cleared.

**3. Strategic Planning (SCS/Dec10/42 and SCS/Dec10/43)**

3.1 This was the first meeting of the Board since the outcome of the Spending Review had been announced and proposals for SCS's strategic priorities were discussed in that context.

3.2 The Board noted that the capital budget had been hit the hardest and that the Estates, Health and Safety, Fire and Security Committee would look at what might be achieved with reduced funding.

3.3 The budget outcome on the revenue was less severe than anticipated and the planning assumptions discussed at the last meeting had been reviewed. In terms of staffing, fewer posts would have to be cut to achieve approximately a 5% reduction in the pay bill and the prospect of a voluntary severance scheme rather

than compulsory redundancy had been welcomed by staff at the recent engagement events.

- 3.4 Before any voluntary severance exercise could be launched, SCS was awaiting a decision from the Cabinet Office on the arrangements for a UK Civil Service compensation scheme. The Board noted that the Executive Team was developing criteria for determining applications and agreed with the proposal that the criteria should take account of both cost/affordability and operational impact. Actions were being taken to ensure that the process for considering applications was fair and transparent and it was agreed that a PCS Union representative should be invited to have observer status during the selection process.
- 3.5 It was agreed that, subject to confirmation of the final detail and costs proposed by the Cabinet Office, applications would be invited from SCS staff for a voluntary severance scheme in the current financial year. However, if Cabinet Office did not implement the proposed arrangements, this decision would have to be revisited by the Board.
- 3.6 The Board agreed that the voluntary severance scheme should be progressed alongside other measures to reduce demands on remaining court staff and to reduce the SCS's non-pay costs. The Executive Team was in discussion with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and Scottish Legal Aid Board as part of a cross justice project to improve the effectiveness and consistency of court programming and ensure a match of available capacity in court sitting days and expectations. The Board was content to endorse this approach, including proposals to further restrict demand for part-time sheriff sitting days.
- 3.7 Proposals for feasibility studies to determine potential for maximising the use of court rooms and managing and reducing costs of the SCS estate were discussed and the Board approved this approach, in particular for the reduction in split-site court locations.
- 3.8 Improving efficiency of key SCS processes and costs was also being considered, including staff travel and subsistence, publication costs and judicial support costs. These proposals were intended to reduce non-pay costs met from the revenue budget. It was noted that not all of these proposals had been worked up in final detail as yet but the Board endorsed this general approach. Consultation would take place with interested parties, as required, as the analysis work developed.

#### ***Financial Performance 2010/11***

- 3.9 The financial results to end October were discussed. A capital underspend was reported but it was noted that the recent severe weather had given rise to problems with heating systems and remedial work would be offset against these savings.
- 3.10 Scottish Government had asked all bodies within the Scottish Administration to identify any unallocated underspends as early as possible within the financial year and to release these to the central budget for other spending priorities. The Board agreed to surrender the unallocated capital underspend.

#### ***Feedback from Staff Engagement Events***

- 3.11 All but one of these events had been completed with the one for South Strathclyde Dumfries and Galloway being postponed due to the severe weather. The Chief Executive and Executive Director Field Services had both attended all the events and had been pleased with the overall positive response they had received and the contributions made by staff to the discussions around opportunities, risk and the future shape of the organisation.
- 3.12 Board members had attended some of these events and others had heard positive messages from staff following local staff engagement days.

#### **4. Performance Framework Development**

- 4.1 Tony McGrath reported on progress being made by the Performance Management Working Group and, in particular, the move towards developing measures to reflect a strategic balanced scorecard approach. He invited Board members to feed in comments on the new measures.
- 4.2 Eleanor Emberson gave a short presentation on the methodology of the balanced scorecard and outlined the proposed strategy map which set out the SCS's purpose, aims and underpinning objectives, key performance indicators and measures.
- 4.3 The next steps would be to work up the detail of the proposed measures and assess the collection burden these might generate. Further progress would be reported at the next meeting when proposals for the key performance indicators to be included in the Corporate Plan would be brought forward for discussion.

#### **5. Corporate Plan (SCS/Dec10/44)**

- 5.1 The Board considered an outline of the Corporate Plan for 2011-14 and agreed that it was important to set out the strategic direction for the organisation and crystallise what SCS wanted to achieve in the next three years. The Executive would now work up a full draft for the Board to consider and discuss at its next meeting in February.

#### **6. People Committee (SCS/Oct10/45)**

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

#### **7. Any Other Business**

##### ***Update from Estates, Health & Safety, Fire and Security Committee***

- 7.1 The Board had received a report from the Chair of the Committee. A tender exercise for a facilities management contract was in hand and it was hoped that an appointment would be made by the end of January with the contract to commence on 1 April. Clarification was sought on the cost as set out in the report and it was agreed that the Executive would provide the Board with further detail.

***Action: Executive to circulate to the Board information on the cost of facilities management contract.***

- 7.2 In closing, the Board recorded their best wishes to Sheriff Derek Pyle for a speedy recovery after his recent accident and thanked Pam McFarlane, Sheriff Clerk, and her staff for hosting the Board meeting in Falkirk.
- 7.3 The Board noted two senior management departures - Gordon Wales to a senior post within Scottish Government finance and Cliff Binning, on temporary promotion, as Deputy Chief Executive of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority. The Board expressed their thanks to Gordon and Cliff for their contributions and wished them well in their new roles.

#### **8. Date of the Next Meeting**

- 8.1 Monday 7 February 2011 in Parliament House, Edinburgh.