

SCOTTISH COURT SERVICE BOARD
MEETING: 5 DECEMBER 2011, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, EDINBURGH

Present:

Rt Hon Lord Hamilton, Lord President, (Chair)
Rt Hon Lord Gill, Lord Justice Clerk
Eleanor Emberson
Rt Hon Lord Reed
Tony McGrath
Robert Milligan QC
Sheriff Principal Alastair Dunlop QC
Elizabeth Carmichael CBE
Johan Findlay OBE JP
Mark Higgins
Sheriff Derek Pyle

Also Attended:

Eric McQueen, Executive Director Field Services, SCS
Stephen Coulter, Director Planning and Performance, SCS
Alan Swift, Director HR, SCS (Agenda Item 6 only)
Ian Clark, Head of Research, SCS (Agenda Item 7 only)
Margaret Peattie, Secretariat Business Manager, SCS, (Minutes)

Apologies:

Debbie Crosbie
Sheriff Iona McDonald

1. Minutes of the Meeting of 10 October 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. Corporate Plan Delivery Status Report (SCS/Dec11/39)

3.1 The Board received a report which summarised the key achievements since the last report in October. These included:

- significant improvement in the number of fines processed using the on-line facility;
- the completion of the feasibility analysis on the transfer of criminal business from St Andrew's Street to the sheriff court building in Glasgow; and
- the submission of the draft People Strategy, which the Board would consider at today's meeting.

3.2 New guidance on information and data handling had been issued to staff to improve awareness and reduce the risk of an information breach and this was welcomed by the Board.

3.3 The report also highlighted the communications which had been completed, including the 27 staff engagement sessions held across the country, and communications and work which was due to be completed by the end of January.

4. Financial Results (SCS/Dec11/36)

4.1 The Board considered the financial results to the end of September 2011 and noted a forecast underspend on revenue. This projected underspend was largely the result of the final confirmed release of pension provision for unification of the summary criminal courts under Summary Justice Reform.

4.2 At the October meeting the Board agreed to allocate further resources from the reserve to fund estates compliance and investment projects. At its November meeting, the Estates Committee had identified further projects which could be established and paid for before the end of the current financial year if the Board was minded to approve an additional allocation of £750K to be met from the forecast underspend.

4.3 It was noted that there was no possibility of SCS being able to spend the full amount of the underspend in the final three months of 2011-12 and there was no possibility of any carry over of underspend into the next financial year. There was also a significant risk of further reductions in the budget for 2012-13 if the justice budget were not able to find the money to cover its financial pressures in 2011-12. After discussion **it was agreed** that Estates be allocated additional funding to allow these specific projects to proceed and that £2.4m be surrendered to the Scottish Government to enable that to be re-allocated within justice this financial year.

5. Future Court Structures (SCS/Dec11/40)

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

6. People Strategy 2012-15 (SCS/Dec11/41)

6.1 The Board received the draft People Strategy which had been formulated to align with the SCS Corporate Plan. The Strategy had been developed through extensive consultation with the Chief Executive and Executive Directors as well as operational managers, those in central Corporate Services, the TUS and HR professionals. The People Committee had monitored progress and had also commented on the draft.

6.2 Subject to some minor changes to reflect the points raised in discussion, the Board **approved** the People Strategy. This would be launched by the end of January 2012 and communications about what it meant for SCS and staff would be issued at that time.

7. Survey Results (SCS/Dec11/)

Scottish Crime & Justice Survey 2010/11

7.1 Stuart King, Principal Research Officer in the Scottish Government, gave a presentation on the outcome of this social survey which asks people about their experiences and perceptions of crime and victimisation in Scotland.

Court User Survey Results

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

7.3 The Chair thanked all those involved in coming along to provide the Board with these most informative presentations.

8. Committee Matters (SCS/Dec11/43 and SCS/Dec11/44)

8.1 Annual reports from the three Committees established by the Board were received along with a copy of their individual remits.

Audit Committee

8.2 The Audit Committee had appointed two external members with financial expertise. During its first year in operation it had reviewed risk and risk management within the organisation and a lot of work had been done to clarify the roles and responsibilities of internal and external audit.

Estates, Health & Safety, Fire and Security Committee

8.3 The Committee had established standing agenda items to be discussed or scrutinised at each meeting which included Health, Safety and Security, Carbon Reduction, Estates Project Performance and Budget Performance. The report set out its priorities for the coming year.

People Committee

8.4 The People Committee had met in different court locations to give local staff an opportunity to engage with its members and to bring to attention or discuss any particular concerns about people matters. TUS representatives attended these meetings as observers.

Review of SCS Committees

8.5 The Board was satisfied that the activities and future priorities set out in the committees' Annual Reports were in accordance with the terms of their remits and that an appropriate balance had been achieved to allow its committees to operate effectively whilst ensuring continuing oversight and control by it.

8.6 The Board considered whether it should establish an IT committee but agreed that the current committee structure should remain unaltered.

9. Any Other Business

Horizon Scan

9.1 The Board heard that there were currently three major reviews, for which no clear implementation plan had been finalised, but would have significant impact on the SCS. These were:

- the Civil Courts Review
- the Review of Sheriff & Jury Procedure and
- the Carloway Review.

In addition the Scottish Government's plan for Police reform and Victims legislation would also impact on SCS.

9.2 It was suggested that there should be a follow up to the joint Board event which took place in January 2011 involving Board members from SCS, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and the Scottish Legal Aid Board. This sort of event was seen as a good opportunity to discuss matters of common interest.

Staff Survey Results 2011-12

9.3 The Executive had received the first summary of results from the recent staff survey and would bring forward a more detailed report for discussion at the next meeting of the Board in February.

9.4 The Board also heard a presentation from the Principal Clerk, Graeme Marwick, and his Deputy Principal Clerks of Session and Justiciary, Gillian Prentice and Robert Jenkins and the Chair thanked them in closing the meeting.

10. Date of the Next Meeting

10.1 Monday 6 February 2012 in Edinburgh – venue to be confirmed.

Scottish Court Service