



SCOTTISH COURT SERVICE BOARD

MEETING: FRIDAY 6 MAY 2011 in LIVINGSTON SHERIFF COURT AND JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT

Present:

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

Also Attended:

Neil Rennick, Executive Director Strategy & Infrastructure, SCS
Eric McQueen, Executive Director Field Services, SCS (Item 3)
David Morris, Director ICT, SCS (Item 3)
Susan Whiteford, Head of Corporate Communications, SCS (Item 3)
Margaret Peattie, Secretariat Business Manager, SCS, (Minutes)

Apologies:

Rt Hon Lord Reed
Mark Higgins

1. Minutes of the Meeting of 11 March 2011

1.1 The Minutes were approved.

2. Matters Arising

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

3. Strategic Planning (SCS/May11/14) and Presentation

Corporate Plan Delivery

3.1 Eric McQueen delivered a presentation on proposals for the business change programme to take forward the Board's strategic vision for building a stronger Scottish Court Service, set out within its 2011-14 Corporate Plan.

3.2 The Board were shown projected budget figures for the financial years 2011/12 – 2015/16 and were provided with illustrative savings which would assist in closing gaps in funding. One hundred and twenty posts would be taken out of the organisation by autumn 2011, either through the voluntary early severance scheme or by not backfilling existing vacancies resulting from the recruitment freeze implemented during 2010/11.

3.3 A series of specific projects had been set up to enable the SCS to continue to deliver its key functions within reduced budget allocations while bringing system improvements. Some projects were at the feasibility stage or in development, but there were others which were already being implemented; for example the closure of split-site court locations. Governance arrangements were being established to ensure effective co-ordination and scrutiny of the progress of the individual projects. A named Executive Director and Director would lead each of the strategic themes identified within the Corporate Plan.

3.4 Eric McQueen confirmed that a number of key issues would be brought to the Board for consideration as the projects progress, following engagement with the relevant Board Committee, where appropriate.

3.5 Some concern was expressed by Board members that the governance arrangements would demand a great deal of input at Executive Team and Director level and the Board questioned how sufficient time could be freed up for this. It was agreed that these arrangements would be reviewed in the light of experience once the projects began to take shape.

3.5 There was discussion about creating the climate for change and some of the projects which would deliver improvement, such as the review of the systems model introduced as part of Summary Justice Reform, would require constructive engagement by other justice bodies. The Executive confirmed that collaborative work with other justice organisations was progressing well and that they would bring forward an update and analysis of the collaborative projects, alongside a wider report on Corporate Plan implementation, at the October Board meeting.

3.6 The Board was broadly content with the proposals outlined in the presentation noting some concern over capacity and governance arrangements. Judicial consultation and input was seen as vital in informing and progressing the change programme. The Executive agreed to consider how best to ensure that regular and clear communication on business change was provided to staff and to the judiciary.

4. ICT Strategy 2011-14 (SCS/May11/15) and Presentation

4.1 David Morris delivered a presentation on the draft SCS ICT Strategy which enshrined in one document the large number of SCS projects dependent on ICT systems. The Executive had consulted on the document, including with the judiciary and operational staff.

4.2 The Strategy was developed reflecting the approach taken in the Corporate Plan and ICT would help to deliver the efficiencies set out there. The Board noted from a recent government benchmarking exercise on ICT costs, that the cost to SCS of ICT per employee and as a percentage of revenue cost was well below average. This was more stark than figures suggested given the number and complexity of the systems supported by ICT, both in the courts and the wider organisation compared with those of, say, the Scottish Government.

4.4 The Board **agreed** that the ICT Strategy provided an appropriate strategic basis to meet the continuing operational needs of the courts, judiciary and Office of the Public Guardian. It also **agreed** that the Executive bring forward an ICT Implementation Plan which should include:

- 'business as usual' service level categories and performance measures,
- the IT architecture – an 'at a glance' look at what that consists of;
- targets and milestones with a success criteria for change; and
- a summary of the project portfolio and deliverables over the next 12 months.

5. Estates Committee (SCS/May11/16)

5.1 The Committee had recently received a compliance and condition survey report in relation to the SCS estate and sought the Board's agreement to re-profiling £1.3m of the budget allocation to address immediate remedial work in the current financial year. It was noted that there was no headroom within the existing capital budget provision to meet the cost of this high priority work.

5.2 The Board **agreed** that the estates budget be re-profiled and re-prioritised to meet the immediate demand for essential maintenance to address any statutory compliance issues. The Board asked the Executive to ensure that Scottish Government was aware of the continuing risk to court operations of a building failure and the lack of available funding to address such pressures.

5.3 The Committee had also received a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between SCS and the Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) for the operation of shared services, which had been agreed by the COPFS Board. The Committee had scrutinised this document and recommended to the Board that it authorise the SCS Executive to enter into a shared service agreement to provide estate services to COPFS, within the terms of the proposed MoU. An initial draft of the agreement had also been circulated.

5.4 It was **agreed** that Executive should enter into a formal shared service agreement to provide an estates function to COPFS but that it should seek to define the terms of the MoU and ensure that there is an appropriate on-going allocation of savings between the two organisations.

6. Performance Reports (SCS/May11/17) and (SCS/May11/18)

6.1 The Board received the first representation of the new balanced scorecard which illustrated how future reports would be presented for scrutiny. The baseline information for the last quarter of 2010/11 was used to provide the data.

6.2 Quarterly reports would be submitted to the Board for scrutiny and, where this did not coincide with scheduled Board meetings, the Executive would provide information on any anomalies. The Board was content with this approach.

6.3 The initial forecast of financial results for the year 2010/11 was presented to the Board. It was noted that the figures were subject to end-year adjustments which included the final cost of the voluntary early severance scheme. An overall underspend was anticipated, largely due to the actions taken in-year to reduce staff and non-staff costs in preparation for reduced budget allocations in future years.

7. Board Performance (SCS/May11/19)

7.1 At the March meeting, the Board agreed upon an appraisal system based on individual members' self-assessment, discussion with the Chair on individual contribution and sharing views on the operation of the Board to assess and help develop its overall impact and effectiveness.

7.2 Self-assessment forms had now been submitted and the Chair had already met with the majority of members. He would consider the outcome of those discussions and the points raised in the written assessments and the Board would return to this at the next meeting.

8. Any Other Business

Agenda for June Meeting

8.1 There were no substantive issues to be discussed at the June meeting and it was agreed that there would be no formal meeting. Audit Scotland had offered to deliver a presentation on their Justice System Overview Report to the Board and it was agreed that 13 June would be an ideal opportunity for that event.

8.2 In closing, the Chair thanked the sheriff clerk, David Fyfe, and his staff for accommodating the meeting in Livingston, and Elizabeth Noon and Sergeant Ian Fairbairn for their informative tour of the Civic Centre.

9. Date of the Next Meeting

9.1 Monday 8 August 2011 – venue to be confirmed.