



## SCOTTISH COURTS AND TRIBUNALS SERVICE BOARD

MEETING: Monday 9 October 2023, Parliament House, Edinburgh

**Present:** Lord Carloway, Lord President (Chair)  
Sheriff Principal Anwar  
Dr David Caddick MBE  
Maggie Craig  
Lady Dorrian, Lord Justice Clerk  
Dr Sophie Flemig  
Ruth Innes, KC  
Eric McQueen  
Sheriff Olga Paspornikov  
Anne Scott  
Lynsey Walker

**Attended:** Noel Rehfisch, Deputy Chief Executive, SCTS  
Karen Lawrie, Head of Secretariat, SCTS

**Apologies:** Steven Dickson  
Sheriff Jillian Martin-Brown  
Lady Wise

### 1. Minutes of the SCTS Board Meeting on 14 August 2023

1.1 The Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

### 2. Declarations of Interest and Matters Arising

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

2.2 The Board received an update on the continuing resource and delivery challenges faced by GEOAmev, who provide the prisoner transfer service to courts. Whilst significant concerns remained in relation to staffing levels, the guidance issued by the Sheriffs Principal which set time limits on the duration of custody courts appeared to have reduced the number of custody courts sitting late into the evening. Further guidance, which removed the requirement for in-person attendance at procedural hearings for those held on remand or serving custodial sentences, had allowed GEOAmev resources to be deployed in other areas.

2.3 The Board welcomed the steps taken by SCTS to support the wellbeing of all involved in the custody courts. They acknowledged that these were only short-term measures which were intended to manage current pressures. The Executive confirmed that they would continue to liaise with the Scottish Prison Service and the Scottish Government to ensure that the contract was managed effectively.

### 3. Finance Report

3.1 The Board considered a report on financial performance to the end of August 2023. The 2023-24 budget was projected at £195.8m, including the anticipated in-year funding transfers from the Scottish Government. Full year expenditure was currently forecast to be slightly below

budget. There were a number of emerging financial pressures that would require careful management. The Board agreed that available resources should be utilised to support an improved pay settlement for staff. Civil fee income had largely returned to pre-pandemic levels. The effects of inflation would continue to place pressure on the budget.

3.2 The Board recognised the ongoing budget pressures facing the organisation. The Executive provided assurance that budget forecasting and expenditure would be closely monitored for the remainder of the financial year.

#### **4. SCTS Pay Settlement**

4.1 The Board were informed that a formal pay offer had been submitted to the PCS Union. The offer was now being considered. If the PCS approved the offer, PCS members in the SCTS would be balloted.

4.2 If a pay settlement was agreed on the basis of the current offer, staff would receive payment in their November salaries, which would be backdated to 1 April.

#### **5. Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Update**

5.1 The Executive informed the Board of the work which was underway to identify, access and, where necessary, manage any issues arising as a result of the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Concrete on the SCTS estate.

5.2 Of the 70 buildings in the SCTS estate, only 10 were constructed or had major works carried out during the period when RAAC was used. In order to understand the position, detailed structural surveys had been instructed at all 10 of those properties. Five of those surveys had been completed with the remaining 5 due to be completed by the end of October. RAAC had only been identified in one building to date; Airdrie Sheriff Court.

5.3 Remedial work had commenced in Airdrie to ensure that the building remained safe for all users. A more detailed assessment was being carried out to establish any longer term arrangements that may be required to ensure continued safety. SCTS was part of the Scottish Government's RAAC cross sector working group which was providing guidance on appropriate steps to take.

5.4 The Board were assured by the steps being taken to assess the relevant buildings across the SCTS estate and to ensure the building at Airdrie remained safe for all those using it. The Executive would discuss the financial implications of remedial works and the longer term options with the Scottish Government.

#### **6. Annual Review of Scorecard Measures**

6.1 The Board completed its annual review of the SCTS Board Scorecard to ensure that the measures used remained relevant and appropriate for measuring the effective performance of the SCTS.

6.2 The Board agreed to remove one indicator (2b) as the information it reported was already provided by other indicators in section 6 of the scorecard. In its place which the Board agreed that an indicator which provided an overview of the performance of the Office of the Public Guardian should be included in the revised scorecard. These changes would be developed and presented to the Board for approval at the next meeting.

#### **7. Court Users' Satisfaction Survey Update**

7.1 The three phases of the biennial Court Users' Satisfaction Survey had now been completed. Fieldwork on phase 3 (covering summary criminal business) had been completed

in-person during February and March at Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Courts. Over 900 court users were interviewed. Satisfaction levels had remained high with 92% of those surveyed satisfied with the service provided, 94% finding court staff to be helpful and 96% agreeing that staff were polite.

7.2 The Board welcomed the results and discussed whether there were any additional ways in which insights and feedback could be gathered to help assess and improve the service. The judiciary and local partners could be engaged to help make court users aware of when the survey was active, in order to promote higher levels of participation.

7.3 The results of phases 2 and 3 of the Survey would be published on the SCTS website.

## **8. SCTS Committees Update**

### *People Committee*

8.1 The Chair of the People Committee provided an update on the matters discussed at its last meeting in August. The Committee had completed its annual scrutiny of SCTS attendance levels and discussed the development of the SCTS People Strategy 2024-29. The Committee had welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the ambitious plan and agreed, in-principle, with the key themes and aims. Further discussions would take place at a forthcoming Committee workshop.

8.2 The Committee had reviewed their draft Annual Report to the Board. The finalised report would be submitted to the Board in November.

## **9. Any Other Business**

9.1 None

## **10. Papers for Scrutiny/Exception Reporting Only**

10.1 The following papers had been circulated for scrutiny:

- the SCTS Decision Tracker
- Court Interpreters – Usage and Costs

No matters were raised by exception.

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

11.1 The next meeting would be on Monday 27 November 2023.

## **12. Deep Dive Session – Digital Strategy and Developments**

12.1 The Board welcomed Colin Lister, Director Change and Digital Innovation and Lora Crabtree, Head of Cyber Security and Risk. They provided an update on the substantial work that had already been carried out to develop new digital infrastructure and systems, in order to support the organisation. They also provided an overview of plans for further development.

12.2 Lora spoke of the considerable investment which had been made to enhance infrastructure which had proved essential in supporting new ways of working. The importance of making use of up to date services and systems, supported by a reliable network, was acknowledged. Colin summarised the work currently under way across the four change labs. These introduced new ways of working with a longer term aim of consolidating SCTS processes and systems. This would ensure that the best use was made of resources by creating a single, high quality resource for functions carried out across different business areas such as scheduling, document management, making and receiving payments and virtual meetings.

12.3 The Board commended the work of all involved in achieving real progress at speed. They recognised the role played both by the digital teams and the organisation as a whole, as it adapted to new ways of working. The need to maintain investment in cyber security was recognised as the organisation continued to place greater reliance on digital systems.

12.4 The Board thanked Lora and Colin for their information presentation.

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service  
October 2023