



SCOTTISH COURTS AND TRIBUNALS SERVICE BOARD MEETING: MONDAY 24 June 2019, Gleddoch, Paisley

- Present:** Rt Hon Lord Carloway, Lord President (Chair)
Joe Al-Gharabally
Sheriff Aisha Anwar
Simon Catto
Rt Hon Lady Dorrian, Lord Justice Clerk
Dr Kirsty Hood QC
Professor Hugh MacDougall
Sheriff Grant McCulloch
Eric McQueen
Morna Rae, JP
Anne Scott
- Attended:** Noel Rehfisch, Corporate Secretary, SCTS
Karen Lawrie, Secretariat Business Manager (Minutes)
- Apologies:** Colonel David McIlroy
Rt Hon Lady Smith
Sheriff Principal Craig Turnbull

1. Minutes of the SCTS Board Meeting on 25 March 2019

- 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 Digital Recording and the arrangements in place for fees charged in relation to discharged civil proofs. These were issues that had been discussed at the previous meeting.

3. Observations from Visits

- 3.1 Ahead of the formal meeting, the Board had split into three groups to visit courts in Airdrie, Dumbarton and Paisley. Board members met with staff and local judiciary, who gave an insight into the workings of their court. The Board were impressed with the engagement and enthusiasm displayed by the staff in all the courts visited and the strong working relationships with local partners.
- 3.2 The Board advised of matters that had been brought to their attention by staff and judiciary during the visits. The main matters identified would be shared with the Executive Team for consideration of any follow-up that may be required. They included: the security implications of members of staff and the judiciary moving between secure and public areas in court buildings; prisoner escort arrangements; custody cell operations and capacity; the process for obtaining psychiatric opinions for courts; and the effectiveness of current procedures for the citation of witnesses. An update on actions taken forward as a result of the matters raised during the court visits would be provided at the next meeting.

4. Financial Results (SCTS/Jun19/19)

4.1 The Board considered the provisional year-end outturn for the 2018-19 financial year. Total Net Expenditure was some £2.2m ahead of budget, subject to final confirmation of figures with External Audit. In terms of the overall budget SCTS was within its Departmental Expenditure Limit for 2018-19 with an overall underspend of £1.8m. This would be reflected in the SCTS Annual Report and Accounts, which would be presented to the Board for approval at their August meeting.

4.2 The continuing tight financial position faced by SCTS was acknowledged. The Board accepted the ongoing pressure which was faced by the Executive. They were in agreement that any future transfers of responsibility, such as proposed expansions to Tribunals activity, would need to be supported by sufficient funding.

5. Quarterly Performance Review and SCTS Board Scorecard (SCTS/Jun19/20)

5.1 The Board carried out its quarterly performance review, which considered progress to date on the outcomes set in the 2019-20 Business Plan. The Board Scorecard for Q4 of 2018-19 was scrutinised. It was agreed that the measures in the scorecard should be kept under periodic review to ensure that they remained relevant and stretching. The annual review of measures in the Board Scorecard would take place during the second half of the reporting year.

5.2 The programme of summer tour visits by Executive Team members to every staffed SCTS location was viewed positively by the Board. The key themes and feedback from these events would be shared with the People Committee upon their completion.

6. Standards of Service for victims and witnesses (SCTS/Jun19/21)

6.1 The annual report on the operation of shared standards of service for victims and witnesses was reviewed. The Board acknowledged that the overall Standards continued to be delivered effectively. There was nothing of concern raised during the past year through the formal complaints procedure or by correspondence.

6.2 The Board noted that the Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence)(Scotland) Bill had been passed by Parliament on 10 May 2019. The provisions included a new process for the notification to court of applications from deemed vulnerable witnesses for standard special measures. This would streamline and improve the application process.

7. Inverness Justice Centre – progress report (SCTS/Jun19/22)

7.1 The Board reviewed progress on the construction of Inverness Justice Centre. The building would be wind and watertight by the end of June. The Project Board had received an assurance from Robertson Construction that the construction timetable remained on schedule.

7.2 The Estates Committee reported on their recent visit to the site. They had been impressed by the emerging facility. They had sought confirmation on whether the workforce was sufficient to deliver to schedule. Confirmation had been received from Robertson Construction that workforce numbers would continue to increase to meet the programme requirements.

7.3 In view of the significance of the project, a full benefits evaluation plan would be developed. This would review and evaluate both the construction aspects and the benefits anticipated through the co-location and efficient operation of a range of agencies from across the justice system. The Scottish Government would complete a gateway assessment of the benefits of the justice centre following its opening and 12 months later, in order to identify the ongoing benefits. The findings of these evaluations would be used to establish a baseline for the successful delivery of future justice centres.

7.4 The Lord President reported on his recent visit to the site, during which he had met with local primary school children who were following its development as part of a school project.

7.5 The Board agreed to hold one of its 2020 meetings in the Justice Centre, in order to experience its operation first-hand.

8. Annual Review of Standing Orders (SCTS/Jun19/23)

8.1 The Board conducted its annual review of the SCTS Standing Orders. It was agreed that the maximum level of budget that the Chief Executive could transfer from one budget category to another should remain at the current level of £500k. Several minor amendments to the standing orders were considered and approved by the Board.

8.2 The revised SCTS Standing Orders were approved for publication, superseding the current version.

9. SCTS Committee Update

Audit and Risk Committee

9.1 The Committee Chair reported on the key discussions from the last Committee meeting in April. Significant items for discussion at the August meeting included the Annual Report and Accounts for 2018-19.

People Committee

9.2 The Chair of the People Committee provided an update on the matters discussed at their last meeting in May. The objectives contained within the HRU Business Plan 2019-20 had been reviewed with progress to be tracked at future meetings. The importance of planning for future upgrades to the staff payroll system had been recognised and the pay award for 2019-20 was noted.

Estates Committee

9.3 The Estates Committee had visited the Inverness Justice Centre site ahead of their formal meeting in June. During the meeting the Committee had considered and approved proposals to renew a 10-year lease at Hadrian House in Falkirk, which is the location of the Office of the Public Guardian.

9.4 The Committee Chair informed the Board of discussions that had taken place regarding capital investment across the SCTS estate, which included a number of historic buildings. The importance of tackling backlog maintenance, and continuing to ensure that the strategic approach to the estate was kept under review, was recognised by the Board.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 None

11. Papers for Scrutiny/Exception Reporting Only

11.1 The following papers had been circulated for scrutiny:

- Court Programming;
- the SCTS Decision Tracker.

No matters were raised by exception.

12. Date of the Next Meeting

12.1 The next meeting would be held on Monday 19 August 2019.

13. Post Meeting Discussion Sessions

Integrated Case Management System (ICMS) Project

13.1 Claire Taylor, Director of Digital Services, gave a presentation setting out the development, of the ICMS project, from its inception in 2014 until the current day and setting out plans for future development. The presentation outlined the changes in both user expectations and the operating environment that had taken place during the development.

13.2 These changes had led to the introduction of the “Civil Online” system that allows court users to access a fully digital end to end process for Simple Procedure cases. The Board discussed the changes and developments that had taken place during the project’s life-cycle. They welcomed its continuing development, which would support service modernisation and improvement in other areas of the SCTS over the coming years, including the Office of the Public Guardian and Tribunals.

13.3 Neil Christie, Sheriff Clerk at Kilmarnock, demonstrated the new Civil Online system from the perspective of court staff, the judiciary and solicitors. The Board thanked Claire and Neil for their insightful presentation and demonstration of the ICMS system.

Buildings, Services and Key Priorities

13.4 The Board held a working session in which they assessed the 3 – 5 year justice reform agenda to inform future investment decisions in our service delivery and estate priorities. The output from the session would be taken into the development of the next SCTS Corporate Plan, which would cover the period from 2020-2023.

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
June 2019