Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service

MINUTES

SCOTTISH COURTS AND TRIBUNALS SERVICE BOARD
MEETING: Monday 10 August 2026, Parliament House, Edinburgh

Present: Lord Pentland, Lord President (Chair)
Lord Beckett, Lord Justice Clerk
Dr David Caddick MBE
Sheriff Frank Gill
Malcolm Graham
Ruth Innes, KC
Sheriff Olga Pasportnikov
Anne Scott
Lynsey Walker
Lady Wise

Attended: Noel Rehfisch, Deputy Chief Executive, SCTS
Karen Lawrie, SCTS Secretariat (Minutes)

Apologies: Sheriff Principal Anwar, KC
Maggie Craig
Dr Sophie Flemig

1. Minutes of the SCTS Board Meeting on 8 June 2026

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.

3. Finance Report

3.1 The Board considered a report on financial performance for the first three months of the 2026-27 financial year (to the end of June). The total budget for the year stood at £230.5m. Total Net Expenditure for the year was currently predicted to be £0.3m over budget – with a projected revenue overspend largely offset by a projected capital underspend. At this relatively early stage of the financial year the Board agreed to keep expenditure under close review. They noted that options were available to manage expenditure and that the emerging full year position on key budget areas (including fee income) would become clearer over the coming months. The recruitment process for judiciary in courts and tribunals was discussed. It was noted that lengthy lead times could result in a shortage of judicial capacity, impacting on system capacity and resilience. The Executive acknowledged the challenges faced and the impacts on business. They would consider how best to engage with the Scottish Government and the Judicial Appointments Board.

3.2 Board members discussed the approach to future budget rounds and the wider public service reform agenda. Early discussions had commenced with the Scottish Government and a narrative had been developed, stressing the importance of adequate and stable funding for the organisation in the coming years, while noting the level of reform and improvement both completed and under way. The need for investment and joint work to modernise criminal case management was stressed as a priority – the delivery of which would improve services and be in line with the Scottish Government's public service reform ambitions. The potential risks and missed opportunities from maintaining out of date systems and associated processes would also be outlined.

3.3 The Board acknowledged the current financial position and the ongoing engagement with the Scottish Government regarding future budget rounds and the wider public service reform agenda.

4. Audit and Risk Committee

4.1 The Deputy Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee provided a summary of the matters discussed at its last meeting. An update was received regarding the Oracle Fusion Shared Services Programme. Members commended the work of the Finance and Procurement Team and the quality of the Annual Accounts produced despite ongoing system challenges. The Executive had reported ongoing issues regarding the administration of Civil Service Pensions by Capita. The UK Government were now involved in a recovery plan to address the current pension backlogs. The Committee would be updated on the progress of the recovery plan, any significant impact on some SCTS staff and actions being taken SCTS to mitigate these impacts.

4.2 The Chair presented the Committee's Annual report to the Board. This reflected the work of the Committee during the 2025-26 audit year. It set out the priorities for the coming year. These included: providing direction and oversight of internal audit reviews; detailed consideration of corporate risks (including an annual workshop session with the Board and other committees); and a programme of deep dive sessions, which allowed the Committee to explore areas of particular interest in more detail with the Executive.

4.3 Based on its scrutiny and the assurances provided by the Executive, External Audit and Internal Audit, the Committee recommended approval of the SCTS Annual Report and Accounts for 2025-26. The final version of the Report and Audited Accounts was presented for approval.

4.4 Having considered the Committee's Report and its recommendation, **the Board approved the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service Annual Report and Accounts for 2025-26**. The SCTS Accountable Officer would now sign the Governance Statement. Arrangements would be put in place for the Annual Report and Accounts to be published and laid before the Scottish Parliament, following formal approval from Audit Scotland.

5. Digital Strategy Update

5.1 The Board received an update on the work underway to develop a new digital strategy for SCTS, following the publication of the 2026-29 Corporate Plan. A series of facilitated development sessions had been held involving SCTS staff, colleagues from other justice organisations and jurisdictions beyond Scotland to agree the key themes and outcomes on which the strategy would be based. Members discussed the key themes and agreed they should be used as the basis to develop the revised strategy.

5.2 An update on key digital activities already underway, as set out in this year's business plan, was also provided. In relation to the use of artificial intelligence the Board agreed that AI activity should feature as part of the digital strategy – noting work currently under way to consolidate existing services and explore how to get the most out of investments made (such as

Microsoft CoPilot). This would form part of a longer-term approach to introduce AI where it had the potential to increase productivity and improve the quality and accessibility of services provided to the public – backed up by sound governance and planning to ensure appropriate and responsible use.

5.3 The Board welcomed the informative update. They welcomed the proposed approach which would ensure that both staff and judiciary were engaged and aware of key changes from an early stage. A final version of the strategy would be presented for Board approval later this year.

6. Quarterly Performance Review and SCTS Board Scorecard Update

6.1 The Board carried out its quarterly performance review of the organisation, considering progress made on delivery of the outcomes contained in the 2026-27 Business Plan and the Board Scorecard.

6.2 Work had commenced against all outcomes detailed in the business plan with the majority of outcomes reporting as green.

6.3 Members welcomed the update and noted that a revised format for the scorecard was in development and would be presented to a future meeting.

7. SCTS Standards of Service for Victims and Witnesses

7.1 The annual report on the operation of shared standards of service for victims and witnesses was reviewed. The report provided a summary of how the standards, which had been agreed between the SCTS, Police Scotland, COPFS, the Scottish Prison Service and the Parole Board for Scotland, had operated over the last 12 months. The Board observed that SCTS had continued to ensure that the standards were met wherever possible. They also acknowledged the improvement activities under way which had the potential to further improve service standards and support a more trauma-informed approach.

7.2 The Board welcomed the annual service standards report for 2025-26 which would be published in the coming weeks by the Scottish Government.

8. SCTS Committees

Estates Committee
8.1 An update was provided from the Chair of the Estates Committee on the discussions at their last meeting. Ahead of their formal meeting members had visited Dundee Sheriff Court and the Dundee Justice Hub. The visit provided an insight into the workings of the court and the Vulnerable Witness Suites in the Justice Hub. Members agreed that the visits were beneficial with the historic Sheriff Court and the modern, purpose built hub highlighting the challenges faced by the SCTS when managing a historic estate compared to newer sustainable buildings. Members had considered and endorsed the SCTS Estates Strategy 2026-31 which would be presented to the Board in October.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 The Board were informed that this was Sheriff Principal Anwar’s last meeting following her appointment to the Office of Senator of the College of Justice. As a result she would step down from the Board. The Chair thanked the Sheriff Principal for her insight and contribution to the Board during her tenure.

9.2 Recruitment for a new Sheriff Principal member was underway. The recruitment of a new non-Executive member would also commence in August.

10. Papers for Scrutiny/Exception Reporting Only

10.1 The following papers had been circulated for scrutiny:

- the SCTS Decision Tracker.

11. Date of the Next Meeting

11.1 The next meeting would be on Monday 5 October 2026 in Edinburgh.

12. Post Meeting Discussion

11.1 Following the Board meeting Ruth Charteris KC, Lord Advocate, and John Logue, Crown Agent, joined the Board.

11.2 They provided a presentation to Board members on the current priorities and pressures being managed by the Crown Office and Procurator Fisal Service (COPFS). In addition to managing the high levels of indictments currently progressing through the system the Lord Advocate noted ongoing priorities in relation to tackling violence against women and girls; managing serious violence cases (particularly where young people were involved); human trafficking and exploitation; and the investigation of deaths of children and young people.

11.3 The shared challenge of managing increasing levels (and increasing complexity) of solemn business were discussed. Recent growth in solemn business levels looked set to continue and would require both collaboration and consideration of where processes and practices could be improved, drawing insight from reform in other areas such as the summary case management project. The importance of strong joint working between SCTS and COPFS was recognised, both in this area and as initiatives including the Sexual Offences Court and new legislative priorities were developed over the coming parliamentary term.

11.4 The Board thanked the Lord Advocate and Crown Agent for their presentation and discussion and agreed that close joint working should continue in order to share efforts and information in the most effective ways possible.

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
August 2026