



MINUTES

SCOTTISH COURTS AND TRIBUNALS SERVICE BOARD MEETING: Monday 23 March 2026, Parliament House, Edinburgh

Present: Lord Pentland, Lord President (Chair)
Lord Beckett, Lord Justice Clerk
Sheriff Principal Anwar, KC
Dr David Caddick MBE
Maggie Craig
Steven Dickson
Dr Sophie Flemig
Sheriff Frank Gill
Malcolm Graham
Ruth Innes, KC
Sheriff Olga Paspornikov
Anne Scott
Lynsey Walker
Lady Wise

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

Apologies:

1. Minutes of the SCTS Board Meeting on 2 February 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 to the end of February, covering 11 months of the financial year. The total budget for the year was £219.8m.

3.2 A number of budget transfers had been successfully secured from the Scottish Government as part of the budget revision process. The end year forecast was projected to be around 1% within budget. The final budget had been several million pounds greater than anticipated at the beginning of the financial year due to higher fee income, a one-off rent rebate and in-year funding transfers from the Scottish Government. These resources had been invested to support a number of projects and to address a range of digital and maintenance priorities across the estate.

3.3 Opportunities to use the remaining resources would continue to be taken until the end of the financial year. Close monitoring of expenditure would be maintained.

4. Quarterly Performance Review and SCTS Board Scorecard

4.1 The Board carried out its quarterly performance review of the organisation, considering progress made on delivery of the outcomes contained in the 2025-26 Business Plan and the Board Scorecard for Q3 of 2025-26. They commended the good progress made on the majority of the ambitious plan and discussed the outcomes that were reporting as amber and red, some of which were beyond the control of the SCTS.

4.2 Members discussed the Office of the Public Guardian transformation project which would, when complete, achieve efficiencies to address the growing business volumes and backlog pressures. The challenges presented by case backlogs were recognised. A review of implementation was under way and the Board would be updated on this following its completion.

4.3 The Executive provided an update on the audit carried out by the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) in 2025. The audit had made recommendations relating to governance, evidence-gathering, KPI monitoring, risk management and DPIA processes. An interim follow-up assessment was undertaken in February, after which the ICO noted that significant progress had been made by SCTS with a number of recommendations fully or partially completed. A final follow-up assessment would take place in August. The Audit and Risk Committee would continue to be updated on progress following the audit at each of its meetings.

4.4 The Board discussed the approach to the use of Artificial Intelligence by the organisation. It was agreed that the strategic approach of the organisation in relation to AI needed to be properly articulated. The Executive confirmed that the development of a new Digital Strategy was in progress and that this would encompass the proposed approach to AI at a strategic level.

5. Draft SCTS Corporate Plan 2026-29 and Business Plan 2026-27

Corporate Plan 2026-29

5.1 A draft of the Corporate Plan setting out the purpose, values, priorities and high-level objectives of the SCTS for the coming 3 years had been shared with the Board in February. The Board had been involved in the development of the plan over the last year. The final draft was presented to the Board for approval.

5.2 The Board approved the Corporate Plan, subject to a number of minor changes. The plan would be submitted to the Scottish Ministers for formal approval before being laid in the Parliament and published. It was anticipated there would be a delay in the publication due to the forthcoming Scottish Parliamentary elections.

Business Plan and Budget 2026-27

5.3 The Board noted the broad range of outcomes covered in the annual Business plan. They observed that, while it had been possible to produce a balanced budget in the 2026-27 Business Plan, resources were challenging as the organisation had received £11m below the full level of funding that had been requested from the Scottish Government – creating a higher level of risk around both service delivery and making good progress on change. Budgets would be carefully managed during the year and early discussions would commence with the Scottish Government in relation to in-year funding and the future budget position. The Board approved the 2026-27 Business Plan and budget for publication.

5.4 The Board complimented the Executive on the style and layout of both plans. They acknowledged there may be a delay in publication due to the forthcoming Scottish Parliamentary elections.

6. People Survey Results

6.1 The People Committee had scrutinised SCTS results and analysis from the People Survey 2025. The Committee had been updated on discussions that had taken place between SCTS management and the PCS Union in relation to the results. The participation levels and engagement index score were commended. Members were satisfied with the progress made to date on the previous two-year action plans and were in agreement that the themes of leadership and managing change should continue, alongside support for managers. The Committee were reassured that action continued to be taken by the Executive to understand and address the score relating to bullying and harassment, which had increased by one percentage point compared to the previous year.

6.2 Members agreed that work should continue in line with the Corporate People Survey Action Plan. Local action plans would also be developed. The Committee would explore the metrics being used to demonstrate and measure performance at the next People Committee meeting. Further updates would be provided to the Committee throughout the year.

7. Resilience and Cyber Security – Proposed Board and Audit and Risk Committee Reporting Cycle

7.1 At the February meeting the Board reviewed work under way in relation to cyber security and incident response – including the steps being taken to manage risk, protect the organisation, detect events and minimise the impact of any incidents should they occur.

7.2 The Board agreed that this was a critical area of focus, given the impact that a significant incident could have on our operations, the service we provide to the public and maintenance of the justice system as a whole. A proposed schedule of updates and formal discussion sessions was presented, to ensure the Board and the Audit & Risk Committee were appropriately engaged in this important area. The Board approved the programme. Members agreed that an additional member should be appointed to the Audit and Risk Committee, with cyber security experience to ensure suitable oversight.

8. SCTS Committees

People Committee

8.1 The Chair of the Committee updated the Board on the discussions at their last meeting. The Committee had reviewed the HR and ELU Business Plan objectives for 2026-27 which contained objectives covering developmental and core service delivery activities. Progress on delivery of the objectives would be reviewed throughout the year. They had also scrutinised the People Survey Results 2025.

Estates Committee

8.3 An update was provided from the Chair of the Estates Committee on the discussions at their last meeting. The Committee had received a quarterly finance update. This would include oversight of a portfolio of maintenance projects prioritised by risk going forward. An update on the capital projects currently underway was presented. The Committee were updated on the ongoing monitoring of radon gas levels in SCTS buildings. Mitigations proportionate to the level of risk at each location were in place, which provided the necessary assurance to members.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 The Board were informed that this was Steven Dickson's last meeting as his period of appointment was ending. The Chair thanked Steven for his insight and contribution to the Board and Estates Committee during his tenure.

9.2 The recruitment process for a new Board member to succeed Steven would commence shortly.

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 8 June 2026 at Glasgow High Court.

12. Post Meeting Session with John Logue, Crown Agent

12.1 The Board welcomed John Logue, the Crown Agent and Chief Executive of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) to a discussion session focusing on the current priorities, work and pressures faced by COPFS.

12.2 John outlined the levels of business faced by COPFS, noting that the level of reported serious criminal cases continued to rise. There was an additional short-term pressure caused by time limits reverting to pre-COVID levels. COPFS were dedicating additional resources to solemn business, particularly in the High Court, but there was a recognition that case volumes would remain high for the foreseeable future – driven by increased levels of reporting from the police.

12.3 The importance of joint working across the justice system was recognised. John explained that the introduction of summary case management had presented a quite significant challenge for both the Police and COPFS as it required the “front-loading” of a lot of preparatory work in order to secure earlier case resolution. It was confirmed that the benefits were worth the required investment, with COPFS keen to explore the scope for similar improvements across solemn court business, in partnership with the judiciary and SCTS.

12.4 The Board thanked John for his insights and agreed on the importance of further joint working to deliver improvements to services.

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
March 2026