

HIGH COURT REFORM PROGRAMME BOARD
TRAINING AND COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING GROUP
NOTE OF MEETING HELD AT ST. ANDREW'S HOUSE

ON WEDNESDAY, 16 JUNE 2004

Present:

Ian Walford, JD
Bill Moore, JD
Tom Fyffe, JD
John Scott, SoSA
Sheriff Nigel Morrison
Amber Galbraith, COPFS

Norman Dowie, SCS
Fiona Scott, COPFS
Peter Gray, Faculty of Advocates
Allan Finlayson, SCS
Gerry Brown, Law Society
Anne Keenan, Law Society

Apologies were received from Derek Ogg, Chairman of the Criminal Bar Association, and Ruaraidh Macniven, LPPO.

Minutes of Meeting of 7 May 2004.

The Minutes were approved.

Matters Arising

Act of Adjournal

It was anticipated that most major aspects of the Act of Adjournal would be agreed by early 2005, and the draft would be in a sufficient state of development to be referred to at the road shows planned for November/December. The Act of Adjournal cannot be approved until it has been considered by the Rules Council. The draft would probably be considered by the Council in February of next year.

4th October Events

SCS have written to the Sheriff's Principal asking them to consider keeping Sheriff Court business light on 4th October, in order to allow as many interested parties as possible to attend. A response is currently awaited.

The Faculty of Advocates and the Law Society confirmed that they were intending to hold training events on 4th October, with possible participation by COPFS in the Law Society event. The purpose of these events would be to give some initial briefing to court practitioners rather than detailed training which would come later. The possibility of video-linking the Law Society/COPFS event to a variety of sites was being considered.

Discussion of Progress Paper

Ian Walford introduced the paper that had been circulated in advance. He said that it reflected some encouraging progress in developing plans for the joint events later in the year and in early 2005 and flagged up areas where decisions still needed to be taken.

4th October Events

There was some discussion of the order of events on 4th October. It was suggested that holding separate training events **before** the plenary event, as had been agreed at previous meetings of the group, might be counter productive, in that it could send an unhelpful signal about the priority attached to joint working and because participants at the earlier events would have little to gain from attending the plenary.

On the other hand, briefing events for practitioners could be regarded as separate from the plenary event. The purpose of the plenary event was to enable Ministers, the Lord Justice General and other key figures to signal to a relatively small but joint audience their firm commitment to the Vulnerable Witnesses and High Court reform programmes. The event would be videoed and relevant summaries, footage, papers etc would be disseminated widely through a variety of media as quickly as possible afterwards.

All the 4th October events would be designed to pave the way for the joint roadshows in November/December when practitioners in 6 cities would be given more detailed briefing and have the opportunity to ask questions.

In the light of the discussion JD offered to revisit the timing of the plenary session, subject to the diaries of speakers who were already committed, if there was a consensus in favour of doing so. However it was agreed that the day should proceed as planned subject to the following changes to the programme and draft invitation list for the plenary event:

- The event should be shorter – in particular there was no need for a panel discussion
- The Crown Agent or another senior COPFS official should be invited to speak
- Less practitioners should be invited and more representative organisations, including the various police organisations (only ACPOS were on the original guest list)

It was agreed that JD should take forward the necessary arrangements and issue invitations to all the relevant organisations for onward transmission to members. There will be further discussion at the next meeting about the preparation of delegate packs and speeches.

Road Shows in 6 Cities

All were agreed that these would be very beneficial, and would provide an excellent forum for discussion on the draft Act of Adjournal and other aspects of implementation.

It was agreed that a central organising committee would be desirable to ensure consistency in organising the events. The Law Society offered to take on this role through Update. This was agreed on the basis that the group would continue to have overall responsibility for the events and would thus provide direction to Update. . It was agreed that, given their central role in the new procedures, COPFS would require to be closely involved in the planning of the events. It was also agreed that JD would provide funding. It was also agreed that JD would provide funding for the events and Update would thus need to liaise with JD before committing any expenditure.

Action: the Law Society will draw up a first draft of a specification for the events and circulate it to group members for comment. JD will send to Update such information as they have already gathered about possible venues.

Training Events for Preliminary Hearings

The Faculty and Law Society considered that a joint training event with COPFS would be very beneficial. The event would be structured to look at the potential problems that might arise in connection with the preliminary hearing procedures.

Development of this initiative will be considered further at the next group meeting.

AOCB

It was suggested that a series of articles on the reforms, written by representatives of the various stakeholder organisations involved, might be a useful way of disseminating information.

Ian Walford announced that he would shortly be leaving his current role to take up another post in JD. He would continue to lead on High court reform until mid-July and then hand over to Wilma Dickson. The group thanked Ian for his contribution and wished him well in his new post.

Date of Next meeting.

Planned for mid August in St. Andrew's House.

ALLAN FINLAYSON
JD Secretariat

June 2004.