



SCOTTISH COURT SERVICE BOARD

MEETING: MONDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2011 in PARLIAMENT HOUSE, EDINBURGH

Present:

Rt Hon Lord Hamilton, Lord President, (Chair)
Eleanor Emberson
Elizabeth Carmichael CBE
Mark Higgins
Tony McGrath
Johan Findlay OBE JP
Rt Hon Lord Reed
Sheriff Principal Alastair Dunlop QC
Sheriff Derek Pyle
Robert Milligan QC

Also Attended:

Neil Rennick, Executive Director Strategy & Infrastructure, SCS
Eric McQueen, Executive Director Field Services, SCS
Margaret Peattie, Secretariat Business Manager, SCS, (Minutes)

Apologies:

Rt Hon Lord Gill
Debbie Crosbie
Sheriff Iona McDonald

In opening the meeting, the Chair congratulated Johan Findlay on receiving an OBE in the New Year Honours list and welcomed Sheriff Pyle back following his accident in December.

1. Minutes of the Meeting of 13 December 2010

1.1 The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

2. Matters Arising

2.1 Action Points from the previous meeting were cleared.

3. Strategic Planning (SCS/Feb11/01)

Voluntary Redundancy Scheme

3.1 The Board heard that the voluntary redundancy scheme (VRS) had been announced in January. A total of 215 staff had applied. A sifting process had been carried out to assess each application against set criteria to determine the operational and financial impact to the organisation if those individuals were to be released. The aim remained that the VRS should release savings of at least 5% on baseline SCS staff costs by early 2011-12.

3.2 The Executive had carried out some benchmarking of staffing levels in each of the courts and offices within SCS and discussions with operational managers had taken place to ensure that the loss of posts within the organisation, combined with streamlined processes and some realignment of resources, would minimise the impact on front line services.

- 3.3 A panel of three senior managers had met, with officials of the PCS Union in attendance, to review the results of the sift. Those applications that had been approved to go forward to the next stage of the process were being sent to the Department for Work and Pensions, which would provide a formal quotation offer for each individual.
- 3.4 Communications with staff about strategic planning and VRS were ongoing through discussions with managers and regular updates on the SCS Intranet. All those who had applied for voluntary redundancy would meet with their managers individually to discuss the decision reached, whether or not their application had been taken forward to the next stage.
- 3.5 The Board noted that final decisions on voluntary redundancy would be taken before the end of March. The Executive had agreed a policy that those leaving through this route would be asked to work a minimum of three months notice, so it was expected that the majority would leave by the end of June 2011. **It was agreed** that the Executive proceed with this plan and that a further update be provided at the March Board meeting.

Pay and Reward

- 3.6 *The record of the discussion under this agenda item is considered confidential and exempt from publication.*

Budget Projections 2011/12

- 3.9 The Board considered indicative projections on the revenue budget for the coming year. The projected reserve was less than had been forecast in the December Board paper, largely because implementation of three months notice for those staff departing on voluntary redundancy terms would mean that three months salary costs would be met from the 2011/12 budget. Until such time as decisions on acceptance of offers had been taken, there would be some uncertainty around the exact pay cost figure.
- 3.10 Requirements for capital expenditure, including investment in IT, exceeded SCS's allocation from the Scottish Government by £0.3m and **the Board agreed** that this shortfall be funded by a transfer from the revenue reserve.
- 3.11 The Executive would bring forward more refined budget projections for the Board's consideration at the March meeting.

4. Measuring Performance (SCS/Feb11/02)

- 4.1 Further progress on the development of a quarterly Board-level balanced scorecard was reported. High level key performance indicators were being developed to inform the Board about the organisation's performance across key areas of activity. Below that level, there would be a range of indicators which the Executive would monitor, flagging up any significant issues for the Board when required.
- 4.2 The new scorecard would be a living document with key performance indicators being reviewed and refined over time. Some concern was expressed that the burden of data collection may be too high but it was noted that some information was already being gathered and electronic data systems could be modified to lessen the administrative task.
- 4.3 The outputs from this work were linked to the strategy map and five strategic themes headlined at the recent staff engagement days. The draft Corporate Plan also contained those themes and further communications to staff would follow as the work progressed.

- 4.4 The Board **approved** the format of the scorecard and the performance indicators selected, subject to any final comments from the short-life performance Management Working group members. It was broadly content with the red, amber and green thresholds for each performance indicator, although some further testing would be undertaken, in particular to consider the impact of any seasonal variations.

5. Corporate Plan (SCS/Feb11/03)

- 5.1 The outline structure for the 2011-14 Corporate Plan had been agreed at the last meeting and the Board reviewed a more detailed draft. This reflected the strategic priorities over the three year life of the plan, reflecting the Board's vision for building a stronger SCS.
- 5.2 It was a statutory requirement that the Board submit a Corporate Plan to Scottish Ministers by the end of March. A number of specific suggestions were made. The Board **agreed** that a revised draft should be brought back to the Board in March for approval.

6. Any Other Business

Shared Services

- 6.1 The Board heard that discussions were taking place with the Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service about a possible shared service arrangement, including for estates matters. A feasibility analysis had been completed and suggested that significant financial and practical benefits might be achieved. The Board was content for the Executive to further explore this option. It was **agreed** that the Executive should include in its discussions with COPFS consideration of appropriate governance arrangements for any shared service.
- 6.2 The Board would consider this matter at a later date when more information was available but the Estates Committee would oversee the detailed dialogue as this developed.

Representations to the Board

- 6.3 The Sheriffs' Association had met with the Lord President and had raised with him a question about the most appropriate way in which judicial groups were able to bring forward matters for consideration by the SCS Board.
- 6.4 The Board had given this matter some consideration when developing a communications strategy shortly after being established. It remained content that all judicial groups had access to the Board primarily through their quarterly liaison meetings with the Executive Team, which include the Chief Executive Officer, who is a member of the Board. One possible option was for the associations to prepare a strategy paper if there were specific strategic issues that they wished to raise with the Board, but which could not be addressed appropriately through the liaison meetings. The Sheriffs' Association had agreed to consider this idea.

Audit Scotland – Review of the Justice System

- 6.5 Alongside their responsibilities for routine external audit of public bodies, Audit Scotland carries out structural reviews of public services. The Board noted that it had recently announced its plans for a wide-ranging review of the Justice sector. The Executive had been involved in discussions around the scoping exercise and would discuss with the Scottish Government official co-ordinating its response how SCS's contribution might fit into the overall review. The Board noted that the timescale for the review is tight, with a final report due in the Autumn.

Board Development

- 6.6 Three members of the Board had attended a seminar on Board Effectiveness for Non-Executive Directors recently and fed back on the areas covered in the programme.

Staff Survey

- 6.7 The results of the recent staff survey had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Executive Team had published on the staff Intranet a corporate action plan for addressing the three main priorities for improvement as a direct result of the feedback from the survey. The Board agreed that further detailed consideration of the issues raised by staff within the survey should be taken forward by the People Committee.

SCS Chief Executive – Tenure of Office

- 6.8 This item was discussed outwith the presence of Eleanor Emberson and members of the Executive.
- 6.9 Following discussion, it was agreed that Eleanor Emberson be invited to remain in post as Chief Executive of the Scottish Court Service until at least Spring of 2013.

7. Date of the Next Meeting

- 7.1 Friday 11 March 2011 in Hamilton Sheriff Court.