



# MINUTES

## Strategic Board

Thursday 9 October 2008 at Edinburgh Sheriff Court

**Present:**

Eleanor Emberson  
Eric McQueen  
Alastair Sim  
Gordon Wales  
The Rt Hon Lord Philip  
Sheriff Principal Edward Bowen QC  
Johan Findlay  
Valerie Macniven  
Dugald Mackie

Chief Executive  
Director of Field Service  
Director of Policy and Strategy  
Director of Operational Support  
Non-Executive Director  
Non-Executive Director  
Non-Executive Director  
Non-Executive Director  
Non-Executive Director

**Also Attended:**

Stephen Coulter  
Susan Whiteford

Deputy Director Planning and Performance  
Management  
Head of Corporate Communications

**Apologies for absence:**

Nicola Bennett  
Sheriff Robert Dickson

Director of Finance  
Non-Executive Director

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming Board members and noting that Fiona Duncan had moved to a post in the Criminal Procedure Division of the Scottish Government. The Board recorded their appreciation of her skilled contribution and thanked her for the support she had given to the Board.

## **1.0 Minutes of the last meeting**

- 1.1 The minutes of the meeting of 17 July 2008 were agreed subject to the following amendments: paragraph 2.5 should end “subject to a final paper being issued on the distribution of a small unallocated sum” and paragraph 7.4 should be considered exempt from publication and be redacted.

Action points from the previous meeting were cleared and incorporated into the agenda.

- 1.2 The Board was updated on the progress on the procurement exercise for a strategic partner.

## **2.0 Declarations of interest**

- 2.1 A register of members’ interests had been previously circulated. No amendments were received.

## **3.0 Performance Report to the Strategic Board (SB/Oct08/19)**

- 3.1 The Board received an update on the progress of development of the Scottish Court Service (SCS) Performance Framework and an explanation on the underlying principles of its format. While the Board found the performance framework in general to be a useful guide to the SCS’s performance, there were some queries over detail, including:

- It was not always clear what the baseline figure represented
- Sometimes greater definition was needed of the target/ indicator set
- Some relatively ‘static’ measures which might only change once a year, e.g. court user survey or staff survey results, might usefully be included in the framework.

**Action: SC to reflect these points in revising the performance framework.**

- 3.2 The Board discussed the court and SCS performance indicators. The Board noted the lengthy waiting period for criminal appeals and actions in hand to rectify the position, including the work of the High Court Programming Board. It was noted that the current shortfall of Supreme Court judges was due to be filled by temporary judges although this would still leave the supreme courts one judge short of complement.
- 3.3 The Board were briefed on the financial position and were informed of a predicted overspend in capital and that running costs would be subject to more detailed business unit forecasts from October onwards. A £1m shortfall in the budget for temporary sheriffs was noted and discussed.

- 3.4 The Board discussed the provenance and relevance to the public of the Service Delivery targets. While each individual element of the service delivery targets might not represent an aspect of performance which was crucial to customer satisfaction, taken together the service delivery targets gave a useful picture of whether the SCS was delivering a good quality of customer service.

#### **4.0 Planning and Budgetary Guidance (SB/Oct08/20)**

- 4.1 The Board discussed a pre-circulated paper on strategic priorities for business planning. The annual business planning round is to be commenced shortly and the Board were invited to provide a steer on priorities for investment/ disinvestment which should guide the Service's planning for 2009/10.
- 4.2 Specifically, the Board agreed that options for decreasing expenditure on publications should be progressed but should be supported by training and close liaison with the Sheriffs' Association. The Board also agreed that proposals to appoint two senior staff to support the implementation of the Judiciary and Courts (Scotland) Act should be progressed.
- 4.3 More generally the Board recommended that expenditure on backlog maintenance and "spend to save" initiatives should be prioritised in the event of a budget surplus and ongoing work to secure efficient management of temporary Sheriff resources should be continued as a priority for securing reduced costs. Continuing investigation of possibilities for consolidation of the court estate was also desirable.

**Action:**

- **Strategic Board (SB) priorities to be reflected in SCS planning guidance**
- **SB to be offered a paper on the scope for further consolidation of the court estate**
- **Draft SCS Business Plan to be available for the January SB meeting**

#### **5.0 Headquarters Relocation**

- 5.1 *The record of the discussion under this agenda item is considered exempt from publication at this time and has been redacted.*

#### **6.0 AOB**

- 6.1 The Board were offered the opportunity to view the electronic publication of the 2008-11 Corporate Plan following the meeting.
- 6.2 The Board agreed that a meeting note should be prepared which could be circulated to other interested parties.

**Action: Meeting note to be prepared following future Board meetings**

- 6.3 The Chair noted that this was Lord Philip's last SB meeting and thanked him for his contribution. Lord Philip offered his thanks to the Chair and expressed his enjoyment at being involved with the Board and passed on his good wishes to everyone for the future.

## **7.0 Next Meeting**

7.1 The next meeting will be held on 22 January 2008 at Hamilton Sheriff Court

**Signed:**

**Chair**

**Date:**