



SCOTTISH COURTS AND TRIBUNALS SERVICE BOARD MEETING: Monday 14 August 2023, Glasgow Sheriff Court

- Present:** Lady Dorrian, Lord Justice Clerk (Chair)
Sheriff Principal Anwar
Dr David Caddick MBE
Maggie Craig
Steven Dickson
Ruth Innes, KC
Eric McQueen
Sheriff Jillian Martin-Brown
Sheriff Olga Pasportnikov
Anne Scott
Lynsey Walker
Lady Wise
- Attended:** Noel Rehfisch, Deputy Chief Executive, SCTS
Karen Lawrie, Head of Secretariat, SCTS
- Apologies:** Lord Carloway, Lord President
Dr Sophie Flemig

1. Minutes of the SCTS Board Meeting on 12 June 2023

- 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 June 2023. The total 2023-24 budget was now £196.6m. This included the anticipated in-year funding transfers from the Scottish Government. Full year expenditure was currently forecast to be on-track. Fee income had returned to pre-pandemic levels, although the effects of inflation would continue to place pressure on a number of budget areas.

3.2 The Board acknowledged the ongoing budget challenges facing the organisation, noting that budget forecasting and expenditure may be influenced by future events, including the 2023-24 pay negotiations and in-year budget transfers. The Board welcomed the commitment to re-prioritise funding to Estates backlog maintenance where possible.

4. SCTS Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report and SCTS Annual Report and Accounts

- 4.1 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee provided a summary of the matters discussed at its last meeting. An update was received regarding implementation of the Oracle Fusion

Shared Services Programme. Members had welcomed the assurance from the Scottish Government that ongoing support would be provided for the current financial system should there be further delays in the roll out of the new system. The ongoing recruitment and staff retention challenges facing the Finance and Procurement Team were acknowledged. An internal audit of Procurement Governance had been completed. A substantial assurance rating had been received. External Audit had commended the Finance team on the high quality of the draft annual report and accounts. They had provided an unqualified view of the Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23.

4.2 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee presented the Committee's Annual report. This reflected the work of the Committee during the 2022-23 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 would allow 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 (Audit Scotland) and Internal Audit, the Committee recommended approval of the SCTS Annual Report and Accounts for 2022-23. 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 2022-23**. 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 clearance from Audit Scotland

5. Quarterly Performance Review and SCTS Board Scorecard

5.1 The Board carried out its quarterly performance review. The current position on the delivery of the outcomes in the 2023-24 Business Plan and the Board Scorecard were scrutinised. Work had commenced in all areas of delivery in the Plan. One outcome, the provision of video access and live streaming of significant civil hearings in the Court of Session, had been completed.

5.2 The Board were updated on ongoing resource challenges being experienced by GEOAmev, who provide the prisoner transfer service to courts. These were impacting severely on court business and the Board sought assurance that steps were being taken to raise the issues and their impact. The Executive reported that they were in regular dialogue with the Scottish Prison Service, who manage the prisoner escort contract.

6. Kirkcaldy Sheriff Court Improvements

6.1 Members of the Board had visited Kirkcaldy Sheriff Court in June 2022. Following their visit the Board asked the Estates Committee to explore the extent to which it may be possible to deliver further improvements to the main court building, within available resources.

6.2 A range of external works including roof and window repairs, a refurbished entrance and relocation of the criminal administration team to the criminal annexe building, had been completed. The works allowed improvements to the working environment for staff in both the main court and annexe through improved layouts, redecoration, replacement floor coverings and new furniture.

6.3 The Board welcomed the works that had taken place. They agreed that the long-term vision to re-develop the current criminal annexe to create a single facility should be maintained but would require significant funding.

7. SCTS Committees Update

Remuneration Committee

7.1 The Remuneration Committee had met prior to the Board meeting. In accordance with the Scottish Government's Public Sector Pay Strategy for 2023-24, the Committee agreed to recommend a £3.08 (0.91%) increase in the daily fees for those members of the SCTS Board and its Committees who were not already in receipt of remuneration from public funds. This was approved by the Board.

7.2 The Committee had ensured that the proposed increase was in-line with the Scottish Government policy, which reflected the current squeeze on public finances. In supporting the increase Board members agrees that the value and experience brought by the external Board members to the Board was exceptional and an essential part of its operation.

SCTS Estates Committee

7.2 The Chair of the Estates Committee reported on the discussions at the Committee's last meeting. An update on the Edinburgh Justice Campus and other major Capital Projects had been presented. Members were content with progress on all capital projects. The Annual update from the Health, Safety and Security Works Committee was considered. The Chair also confirmed that Dr David Caddick, would join the Committee following his recent appointment to the SCTS Board. Three new external members had also been appointed to the Committee.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 None

9. Papers for Scrutiny/Exception Reporting Only

9.1 The following papers had been circulated for scrutiny:

- the SCTS Decision Tracker
- UK COVID Inquiry
- Review of service standards for victims and witnesses

No matters were raised by exception.

10. Date of the Next Meeting

10.1 The next meeting would be held on Monday 9 October 2023.

11. Deep Dive Session – Summary Case Management Pilots

11.1 Sheriff Principal Anwar gave a presentation to the Board outlining the design, delivery and evaluation of the Summary Case Management Pilot. The [pilot](#), which was developed from earlier pilots, built upon the recommendations of the [Evidence and Procedure Review](#). The pilot launched in September 2022 in Dundee, Paisley and Hamilton.

11.2 The aim of the pilot was to reduce the number of cases that are set down for trial unnecessarily and reduce the volume of late pleas of guilty and late decisions on discontinuation by the early disclosure of evidence and early judicial case management. The pilot placed particular focus on cases involving domestic abuse. Objectives set for the pilot were to reduce the number of witness citations issued; to increase the percentage of cases resolved at first court appearance; to increase the percentage of cases resolved at the "continued without plea" stage and to reduce the number of trial diets at which no evidence is led.

11.3 The way in which the pilots had been developed and delivered had been instrumental in their success to date. Key elements in the development included:

- Ensuring that all agencies understood and were signed up to the approach;
- Developing and considering proposals at both the national and local levels;
- Addressing issues and concerns raised to build support during development;
- Collecting robust data by which the performance of the pilots can be monitored.

11.4 Performance data for the first 9 months of the pilot (September 2022 – June 2023) demonstrated improvements across all targets set when compared with areas not taking part in the pilot, with a 30% reduction in the number of witness citations issued in domestic abuse cases in the pilot area. The pilot would run until March 2024, with monitoring and evaluation taking place throughout, to inform any future roll-out.

11.5 The Board thanked Sheriff Principal Anwar for a very informative presentation.

12. Glasgow Sheriff Court Overview

12.1 Following the meeting Neil Christie (Sheriff Clerk, Glasgow and SBM for Glasgow and Strathkelvin) gave a presentation to the Board which set out the changes in design and use of the Glasgow Sheriff Court building since it was opened in 1986.

12.2 The building had proven to be versatile and resilient, having managed the move from paper-based to digitally supported ways of working, accommodating additional courts and staff to deal with growing business levels and achieving listed building status in recognition of its design.

12.3 The Board thanked Neil for an informative presentation. They acknowledged the accommodation pressures faced as a consequence of business levels in general and the impact of the recovery programme.

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
August 2023