Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service

MINUTES

SCOTTISH COURTS AND TRIBUNALS SERVICE BOARD
MEETING: Monday 6 October 2025, Livingston Civic Centre

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
Anne Scott
Lynsey Walker
Lady Wise

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

Apologies: Sheriff Olga Pasportnikov

1. Minutes of the SCTS Board Meeting on 11 August 2025

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.

2.2 The Board had been advised of the outcome of a consensual audit of SCTS data protection and records management arrangements that had been carried out by the ICO during July, with a summary of the report published on 5 September. The audit had provided a rating of limited assurance and proposed a number of recommendations for improvement. SCTS had accepted the audit findings and the Board were updated on plans for responding to these, including an oversight role for the Audit & Risk Committee.

2.3 The Board agreed that a proportionate approach should be taken to the report. The implementation of the recommendations as effectively as possible and demonstration of a desire to make progress, balanced against other pressures faced by the organisation would be essential. It was agreed that the Audit and Risk Committee should maintain oversight of work in response to the audit, with a progress update provided to the Board in due course.

3. Observations from Court Visits

3.1 Ahead of the formal meeting, the Board had split into three groups to visit courts in Airdrie, Hamilton and Livingston. Board members met with staff and local judiciary, who gave an insight into the workings of their court. The Board were impressed with the engagement and enthusiasm displayed by the staff in all the courts visited and the strong working relationships between staff, judiciary and justice partners.

3.2 The Board reported on the resilience of the staff in Airdrie during ongoing works to remediate RAAC, the new Evidence by Commissioner Suite that had been recently been completed in Hamilton and the multi-agency working arrangements in place at Livingston, made possible through the co-location of a number of agencies within the Civic Centre.

3.3 The Board agreed that the visits were informative and beneficial to their understanding of the workings of the SCTS.

4. Finance Report

4.1 The Board considered a report on financial performance to the end of August 2025. The total 2024-25 budget was £218.1m. This included the anticipated in-year funding transfers from the Scottish Government. Full year expenditure was currently forecast to be £0.4m over budget. Steps would be taken to ensure that a balanced annual budget would be delivered.

4.2 The Board stressed the importance of effective budget management to maintain progress across all planned objectives to the extent affordable.

5. Spending Review 2026-27

5.1 The Board were informed that the Scottish Government had announced that it would carry out a 3-year spending review process during autumn 2025. The process would see a detailed budget set for the 2026-27 financial year and indicative spending levels set for both 2027-28 and 2028-29. The UK Government would publish its budget on 26 November. The Scottish Government planned to deliver its budget on 13 January.

5.2 Board members discussed the approach to the spending review, noting that the Executive had commenced discussions with the Scottish Government early and had stressed the importance of adequate and stable funding for the organisation in the coming years. Indications from the Scottish Government were that budget settlements for public sector bodies would take account of the challenging settlement anticipated from Westminster and incorporate the efficiency targets outlined in the Public Sector Reform Strategy. In view of this they were unlikely to meet current expectations.

5.3 The Chief Executive had been invited to give evidence to the Criminal Justice Committee of the Scottish Parliament on 12 November. The Board agreed this provided an opportunity to set out the budget which was required in 2026-27 to maintain effective operations alongside continued investment in modernisation and change to secure longer-term efficiencies and service improvements.

5.4 The Board supported the preparations underway to ensure that the Scottish Government was well-informed about the priorities and needs of the SCTS. They agreed that they should consider the Board’s approach to future budgets in more detail at the November meeting.

6. Claim for Compensation

6.1 The Board considered a claim for compensation following a data breach in 2024. Members discussed and endorsed the proposed approach subject to allowing some additional flexibility with a view to trying to secure an early settlement.

7. Board Appraisal

7.1 Members discussed the feedback from their annual self-appraisal exercise. The feedback identified key themes for exploration over the coming year and supported the continuation of the deep dive sessions and visits to courts, tribunals and corporate business areas. The provision of information to members outwith meetings was discussed and would be considered further during the coming year.

8. Corporate Plan Development 2026-29

8.1 As part of their ongoing schedule of work to oversee development of the 2026-29 Corporate Plan, Board members reviewed and discussed draft outcomes covering the key reform areas of (i) Tribunals and OPG and (ii) Corporate Development.

8.2 The pressure of rising business levels across the work of Tribunals and OPG was discussed, with the importance of adequate funding to support ambitions stressed. The draft priorities focused on continuing to build the most effective operating model across tribunals and OPG activity, backed up with systems that supported growing case levels whilst improving the service to both staff and service users. The Board felt that some further consideration should be given to the outline objectives with a view to ensuring that the delivery theme of open justice should be more fully embedded.

8.3 The Board recognised the importance of continuing to invest in Corporate Reform areas that supported the core of the organisation – its people (through effective recruitment, training and support); its systems (continuing to upgrade core infrastructure and seek more efficient and effective ways of working); and its premises (improving accessibility, building collaborative spaces and continuing work to promote sustainability). The challenge of realising these goals should resourcing be more limited was recognised. With that in mind the Board agreed that capacity in organisational design and development should also be a focus in the coming period in order to enhance the capacity of the organisation to review and effectively change approach to meet future need.

8.4 A further corporate plan development session considering the Civil and Criminal reform areas would be held at the November meeting.

9. SCTS Committees

People Committee

9.1 The Board were updated on the discussions of the People Committee at their last meeting. The Committee were updated on the good progress being made, in partnership with the PCS and Senior Managers, to review the two key corporate areas; Leadership and Managing Change, and Values and Behaviours. They had also scrutinised the detailed attendance management and wellbeing data, highlighting the need for accurate benchmarking going forward. Members had also reviewed a draft of their annual report to the Board which would be submitted at the November meeting.

Estates Committee

9.2 An update was provided from the Chair of the Estates Committee on the discussions at their last meeting. Progress on the delivery of significant capital projects had been reviewed with acknowledgement of the significant work undertaken by the Property and Services Team to ensure that they utilised the available budget effectively. An update on the monitoring and management of Radon Gas was provided. The Committee would visit Perth Sheriff Court as part of their next meeting.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 None

11. Papers for Scrutiny/Exception Reporting Only

11.1 The following papers had been circulated for scrutiny:

- the SCTS Decision Tracker

12. Date of the Next Meeting

12.1 The next meeting would be on Monday 24 November 2025.

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October 2025