

MINUTES

SCOTTISH COURTS AND TRIBUNALS SERVICE BOARD MEETING: Monday 24 November 2025, Parliament House, Edinburgh

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
Sheriff Olga Pasportnikov
Anne Scott
Lynsey Walker
Lady Wise

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

Apologies: None

1. Minutes of the SCTS Board Meeting on 6 October 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.

3. Finance Report

3.1 The Board considered a report on financial performance to the end of September 2025. The total 2025-26 budget was £217.9m. This included the anticipated in-year funding transfers from the Scottish Government. Full year expenditure was currently forecast to be £0.8m under budget, which reflected higher than anticipated fee income.

3.2 Members welcomed the 2-year pay settlement for staff that had been agreed and supported by the PCS Union, whilst noting the pressure this would place on future funding.

3.3 The Board stressed the importance of effective budget management to make the best use of resources in view of potential pressures on future year budgets. Members discussed alternative ways of utilising budgets and creating efficiencies in court procedures that could be considered in the future.

4. Quarterly Performance Review and SCTS Board Scorecard Update

4.1 The Board carried out its quarterly performance review. The current position on the delivery of outcomes in the 2025-26 Business Plan was scrutinised.

4.2 The Board reviewed the business plan delivery report outcomes and scorecard measures that were reporting as amber/red. A rewording of outcome under the Tribunal Reform area to further refine the operating model of Scottish Tribunals was approved by the Board and would be used in future reports.

4.3 The Executive reported on the continued increase in the number of Power of Attorney applications. The new case management system was operating effectively, but continued growth in Power of Attorney case volumes meant that further system refinements may need to be prioritised in this area over previously scheduled work in relation to guardianships and the accountant of Court. Proposals outlining a recalibration of the project to ensure the maximum benefit from the new system and reduce backlogs at the earliest possible time would be presented at the next meeting.

5. SCTS Board Operation

5.1 The Board reviewed the structure of its existing four Committees: People, Estates, Audit & Risk and Remuneration. The Committees had supported the Board in discharging its role to good effect over the past year. It was agreed that the structure would be maintained for 2026.

5.2 A schedule of workshop sessions, visits and development activities, which would coincide with each Board meeting in 2026, was considered. The Board approved the shortlist of topics for the sessions and proposed visits

6. Corporate Plan Development 2026-29

6.1 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.

6.2 Paul McKinlay, Executive Director Court Operations (Designate), provided an overview of the outcomes proposed to develop the criminal court system over the coming 3 years. These included ongoing work to ensure a successful introduction of the national sexual offences court; plans to explore and develop a reformed criminal case management system in collaboration with other justice organisations; a focus on efficiency, utilisation and flexibility to provide the best possible service within the resources available and work to increase public confidence in the system – promoting open justice through access to hearings, data and information.

6.3 Riley Power, Executive Director Judicial Office for Scotland, set out plans to make further progress on civil court reform – building on the work of the past 3 years which had introduced online case submission, tracking and remote hearings. These had led to more efficient and effective arrangements for both service users and staff. Continuing and completing access to these services for all case types would remain a priority over the coming period, alongside reform of the commissary system, supporting the Scottish Civil Justice Council and the Government as policies evolved. Work to enhance open justice including further activities to increase public knowledge and understanding of – and access to - the civil court process would be a key priority.

6.4 The Board supported the proposals set out, which would be incorporated into a draft of the Corporate Plan for review at the next Board meeting. Board members noted that successful delivery of these outcomes would require adequate funding from the Scottish Government over the coming years.

7. SCTS Committees

Audit and Risk Committee

7.1 The Chair of the Committee updated the Board on discussions at the November meeting. The Committee had discussed the progress of the Oracle Fusion Shared Services Programme. Members also considered and approved their Core work plan for 2025-26. The Committee participated in a deep dive session regarding the recent audit by the Information Commissioner's Office. They welcomed the thorough approach and action plan developed to respond to the recommendations.

Estates Committee

7.2 Sheriff Gill presented the Committee's Annual Report. The report outlined the matters which had been discussed by the Committee during the last year and the priorities for the coming year. The Committee commended the work of the Property and Services Team in managing capital projects and the reactive maintenance required, given the pressures on their budget.

People Committee

7.3 The Committee Chair presented the Committee's Annual Report. A new external member had been appointed and attended their first meeting in February. The report highlighted the key themes covered during the year. The Committee had considered key issues relating to People Data and Reports as well as a range of People Initiatives. They had also participated in deep dive sessions to assess matters in more detail.

7.4 The Chair thanked all Committee Members and staff of the SCTS who had supported their work over the last 12 months.

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

10. Date of the Next Meeting

10.1 The next meeting would be on Monday 2 February 2026.

11. Deep Dive – Financial Sustainability

11.1 Malcolm Graham, Chief Executive, gave a presentation to Board members, outlining the approach taken by the organisation to the 2026-27 to 2028-29 spending review process that was currently under way. The process would set budgets for public sector organisations across Scotland for the year ahead, and outline anticipated Scottish Government expenditure for the coming 3 years.

11.2 SCTS had clearly articulated its Revenue and Capital Budget needs to the Scottish Government and Parliament. SCTS needed sufficient resource to maintain core services

whilst supporting digital reform – particularly in the criminal justice area. The potential combination of (i) Increasing demands (ii) resource pressures and budgetary constraint (iii) Past under investment in digital systems and estate; and (iv) declining trust in institutions, posed a threat to successful operation and public confidence in the justice system over the coming years.

11.3 The crucial role played by the courts, tribunals and OPG was set out in more detail in the [evidence](#) SCTS provided to the Scottish Parliament's Criminal Justice Committee. SCTS had demonstrated the ability to make positive change with limited investment. Further investment in criminal justice systems, particularly in digital reform, was necessary in the coming years – both to improve services and to deliver the longer-term efficiencies sought by the government (through reduced management costs, improved data sharing, analytics and online access to information and services). The submission to the Parliamentary Committee, and to Scottish Government had also made clear the negative consequences of a funding settlement less than that sought, and particularly a 'flat cash' scenario which Scottish Government had asked for information on.

11.4 Board members endorsed the approach being taken to make the case for future resourcing, observing that it was essential for the organisation to continue its own work to improve services without increasing costs, to lead collaborative work and to identify any further efficiencies that could be made.

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
November 2025