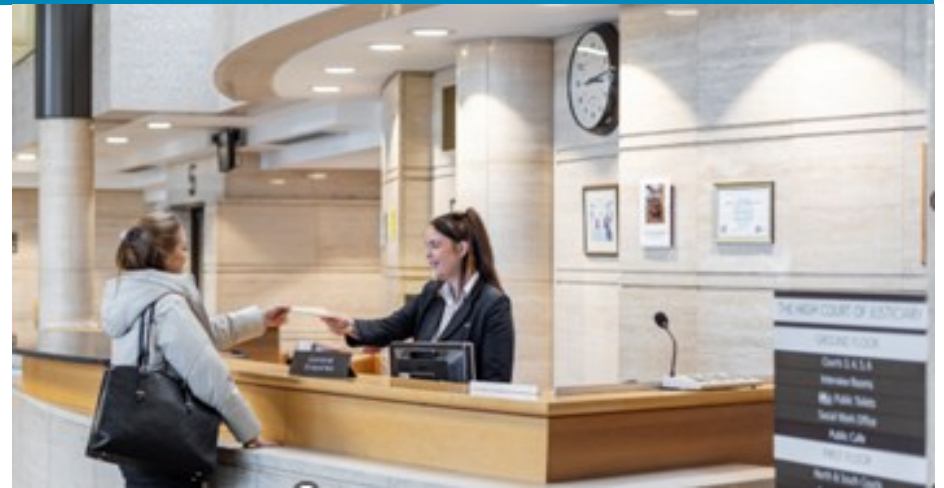


BUSINESS PLAN



2026-27



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Foreword

Malcolm Graham

Chief Executive

It is my privilege to introduce the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) Business Plan for 2026–27. This plan sets out the context in which we will operate over the coming year, the choices we must make and the outcomes we are committed to delivering across Scotland's courts, devolved tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG). Our purpose remains clear - supporting justice. We achieve it by supporting Scotland's independent judiciary - providing the people, buildings and services that support an open, fair and efficient justice system, guided by our values of respect, service and excellence.



The justice system continues to face a number of significant challenges and demands. Growing volumes of serious criminal business, coupled with expectations to improve service, alongside financial constraints, mean we must look hard at the way we do our work and the systems that support us to do it. Over the course of this year, working in collaboration with the Criminal Justice Board, our aim is to develop a revised digital plan for criminal justice in Scotland - creating a shared vision for reform, underpinned by investment in systems to deliver both service improvements and longer term efficiencies. In taking this work forward, we can build on the strong foundations of recent reforms and harness the partnership working already in place. In addition, we will continue work on the new digital jury service, improving the experience for the hundreds of thousands of people asked to carry out this important public duty each year. Work to maximise the efficiency of the High Court in the face of continued increases in solemn business will remain essential, to ensure that significant cases can be effectively managed, within proportionate timescales.

In civil justice our priority is to complete the transition to an end-to-end digital service for all case types across the Court of Session and sheriff court, including assisted digital options to ensure access for all. We will also review the way in which we manage commissary business to improve the service we provide. In the devolved tribunals we will develop our multi-jurisdictional operating model, pooling resources in key areas such as scheduling to ensure we make best use of capacity, as volumes continue to grow. Within OPG our focus will be on reducing backlogs and waiting times for those seeking to put in place a Power of Attorney - growing volumes of such applications mean that efforts to address these backlogs need to be redoubled. We will also commence the next phase of our new case management system, migrating Guardianship and Accountant of Court functions - a precursor to the development of a more accessible online Public Register and a more efficient, accessible service.

Open justice is fundamental to public confidence. Over the past two years we have demonstrated how improved transparency helps the public understand how justice is done. Our livestreaming initiatives have engaged substantial audiences. We will build on this work, broadening access and improving the clarity and consistency of our information so users can navigate the system more easily.

In the face of financial constraint we will prioritise core services, phase innovations for maximum impact, and invest to create future capacity and efficiencies. This year we will deliver the first stage of a service wide strategic improvement programme: map and standardise core administrative processes, digitise and simplify workflows, and remove duplication to cut costs and protect frontline capacity. We will also equip our people for new ways of working - investing in digital skills development so we can lead change with confidence.

None of this progress happens without the collaboration of many people. I am grateful to the judiciary for their leadership, to colleagues across SCTS for their professionalism and commitment, and to other justice organisations and the third sector for their support. By working together, focusing on our service users, and addressing legacy systems we can continue to build the modern, accessible, trauma-informed justice system that Scotland expects and deserves.

Who we are

The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) is a non-ministerial office established by the Judiciary and Courts (Scotland) Act 2008. Its statutory function is to provide administrative support to Scotland's courts, devolved tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG).

SCTS has a presence in many of Scotland's communities where court and tribunal business is conducted daily. In total the estate comprises 70 buildings made up of courts, tribunals, vulnerable witness suites, and offices. We operate from 51 distinct locations across Scotland's six sheriffdoms. Tribunals also make use of additional venues across Scotland for hearings.

In addition to administering Scotland's courts and tribunals SCTS supports the OPG and Accountant of Court (AOC). The OPG provides guidance and undertakes investigations to protect vulnerable people under the terms of the Adults with Incapacity Act 2000. The Public Guardian is also the Accountant of Court. SCTS also provides the staff and administrative support to the:

- Scottish Civil Justice Council - which drafts rules of procedure for the civil courts, and advises the Lord President on the development of the civil justice system; and the
- Scottish Sentencing Council - which is responsible for preparing sentencing guidelines, and for publishing guideline judgments and information about sentences imposed by the courts in Scotland.

Our purpose and values

The purpose of SCTS is **supporting justice**. We fulfil that purpose by providing the people, buildings and services needed to support the judiciary, the courts, devolved tribunals and OPG. Our work focuses on improving access to justice, promoting open justice, reducing delay and cost within the justice system, and reforming our services through technology to improve efficiency and user experience.

Our values

To help us achieve our purpose, we observe three **key values: respect, service and excellence**. These guide our behaviour, decisions and actions.

The objectives set out in this plan are underpinned by our purpose and values. This ensures that everything we do is in pursuit of an open, fair and efficient justice system, providing the best possible service to those who interact with us - and rely on us - on a daily basis.

RESPECT	SERVICE	EXCELLENCE
• Be courteous • Be open and fair • Work as one team	• Deliver a professional service • Learn in all we do • Set an example	• Innovate • Collaborate • Be accountable

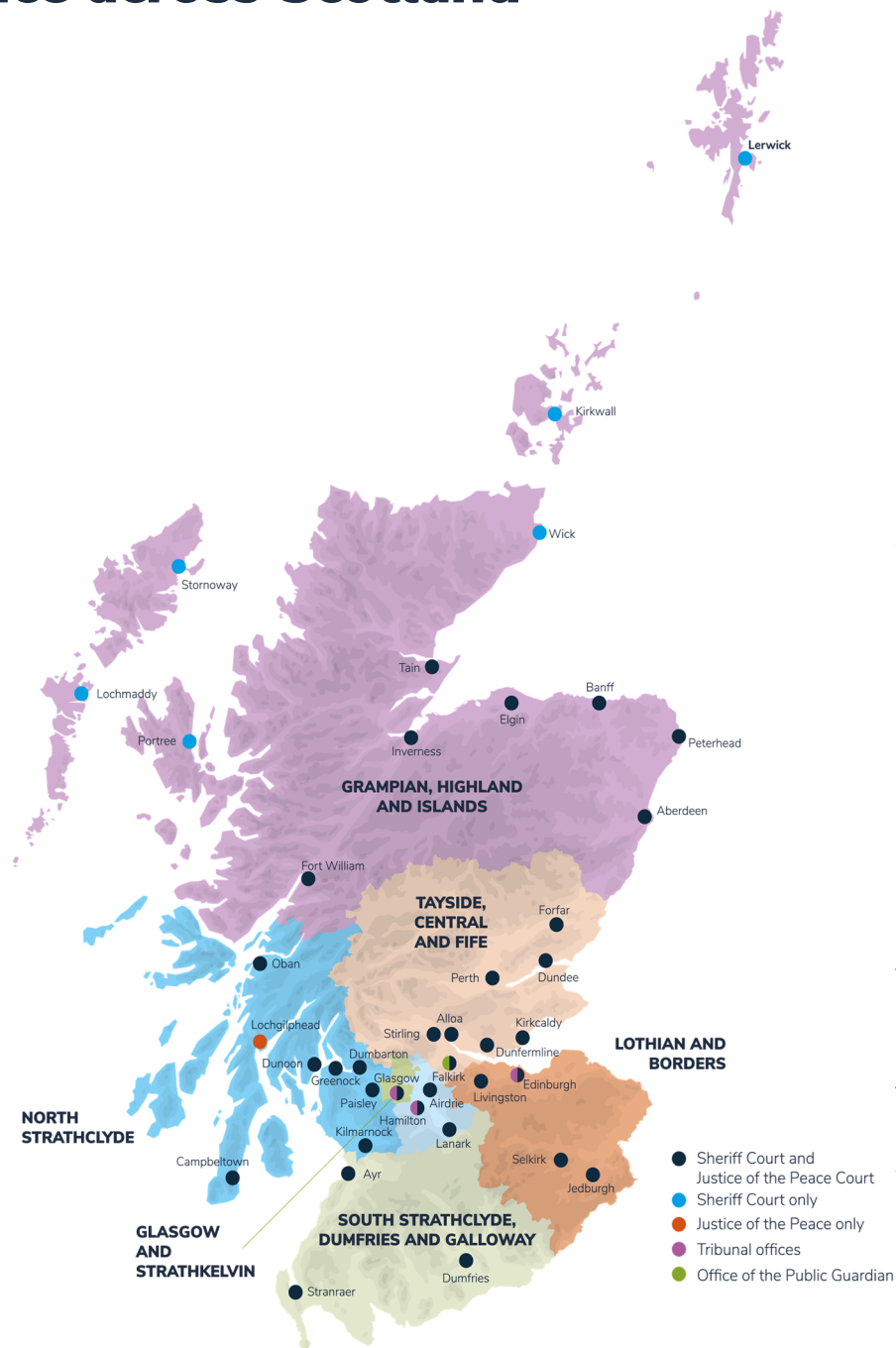
How we support justice across Scotland

The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) does much more than you might expect. Every day, we support thousands of people across Scotland in different ways. This could mean:

- Attending court or a tribunal
- Serving as a juror
- Paying a fee or fine
- Getting help to manage the affairs of someone who can't do so themselves
- Handling the estate of a loved one who has passed away

Each year, we deal with over 250,000 cases and applications. Behind every one is a person who needs support - whether to protect their rights, resolve a problem, or get help during a difficult time. It is this work – which takes place every day across Scotland – that consumes most of the time, energy and skill of our staff. We take pride in working as one team and providing high levels of service to all those who use the courts, tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian. Whilst independent, we work collaboratively with the Scottish Government, the Justice Board for Scotland, and a broad range of justice and third sector agencies - taking a system wide perspective to our work.

Whilst delivering core services is our priority, we are always looking for new and better ways to serve the public - through innovation, development and the promotion of accessibility and open justice.



c.1,350

High Court solemn case registered - up 44% in two years

c.95,000

Civil cases registered annually

c.2,000

Appeals registered annually

c.100,000

Powers of attorney received annually - up 38% in four years

c.29,000

Commissary procedures registered - a 22% increase over the past 5 years

c.22,000

Tribunal cases registered - a 130% increase over the past 5 years

£237.9m

To fund activities once income and depreciation are taken into account - over 85% invested in front line services and digital infrastructure

2,000 staff

Award winning carers and diversity policies

£2.1m

Invested in energy efficient initiatives - with gas and electricity usage down by 18% and overall emissions reduced by 10% over the past 2 years

c.700,000

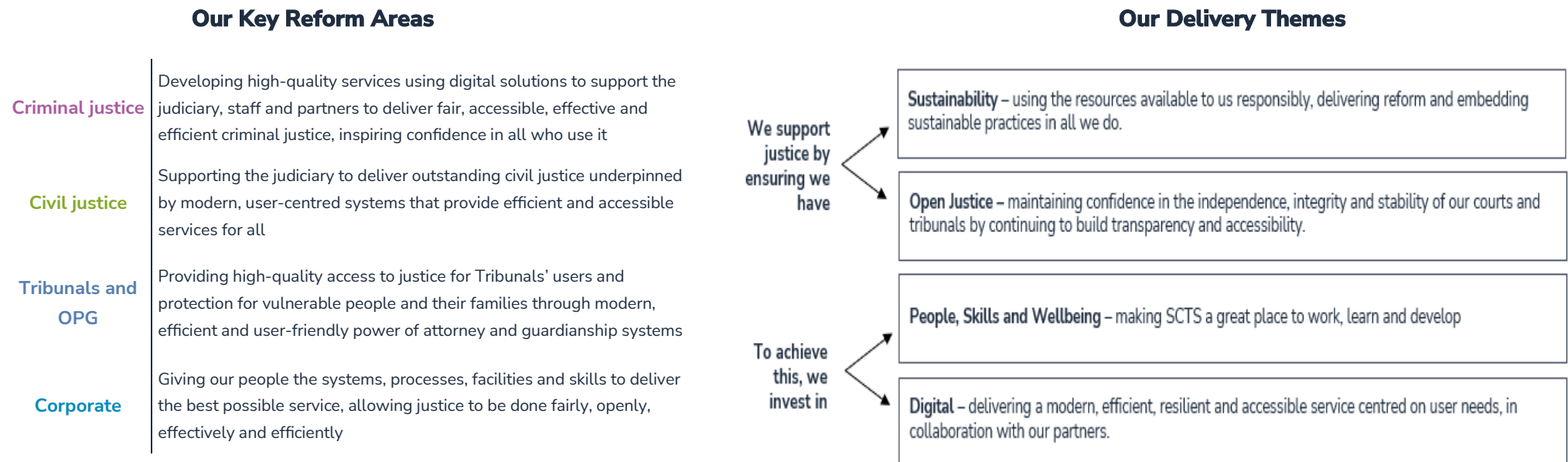
Users viewed cases being livestreamed between June 2023 and December 2025 (approx. 100 days of livestreamed hearings)

Our strategy

Over the coming three years, as set out in our [2026-29 Corporate Plan](#), Scotland's public sector faces a rapidly evolving landscape shaped by fiscal constraint, digital transformation, and changes in the way we work. The ability to make use of new technology - including artificial intelligence, cloud and data-driven tools - will grow. Supporting people to adapt in this environment will be crucial. The combination of both opportunity and risk is clear. Rising global risks ranging from climate impacts to cybersecurity and the ethical use of data will need to be carefully managed, with efficiencies delivered in parallel.

In view of these challenges we need to be clear on both the areas we will focus and the things we want to achieve. This plan breaks our work into:

- **Four key reform areas** - the main areas of our business that we must sustain and improve.
- **Four key delivery themes** - things we want to focus on and develop as we take forward the objectives proposed in this plan.



The next section of this business plan, pages 7-13 describe the operating context in which we will work over the coming year - including the legislative changes we will need to take account of, the key reforms we will seek to deliver and the financial environment with which we will need to operate. Pages 14-18 set out the outcomes on which we will focus over the course of 2026-27.

Key Reform Areas

Scotland's courts and tribunals provide an essential service for both individuals and society as a whole. They are the places where people can assert and defend their rights. They play a crucial role in maintaining public safety and confidence. They provide the forum where open justice can be seen to be done. The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS), working with other justice organisations and the third sector, has delivered significant reforms over the past few years. The justice system must continually adapt to meet the needs of the society it serves and to manage other challenges - including fiscal pressures, demographic shifts and the risks posed by climate change.

This section (p7-11) provides an overview of the work we will progress over the coming year, under our four key reform areas. Specific outcomes for each of these areas are set out at pages 15-18. In line with our [2026-29 Corporate Plan](#), we will focus on innovation and efficiency, investing in projects that generate future savings and improve the experience of court and tribunal users - while managing rising case volumes within a constrained budget. We will take account of the Scottish Government's legislative programme, working collaboratively to agree plans and resources so that new duties and powers are implemented on time and to the required standard. We will also take account of the Scottish Government's Public Service Reform strategy, which challenges all public bodies to focus on innovation and collaboration to ensure public services are sustainable in the longer term.

Criminal Justice Reform

Criminal Justice - Legislative agenda 2026-27

The Scottish Parliament Election in May 2026 will result in a new programme for government, which may require us to change or refocus some priorities during the year. The key legislative changes already known that will impact on our criminal justice work are:

[The Criminal Justice Modernisation and Abuse Domestic Behaviour Reviews \(Scotland\) Act 2025](#) made permanent some of the temporary provisions put in place during the covid-19 pandemic for criminal proceedings - such as those enabling electronic signature, transmission of documents and those supporting the use of remote and virtual court hearings. The Act enables SCTS to continue to take innovative approaches to conducting business - which is essential as we explore how cases can be most effectively managed, whilst continuing to improve the experience of victims and witnesses.

[The Victims, Witness, and Justice Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2025](#) takes forward a number of proposals in relation to the management of sexual offence cases following the cross justice review group led by the then Lord Justice Clerk (Lady Dorrian). The provisions in the Act enable the creation of a national jurisdiction specialist sexual offences court. The Act also introduces statutory anonymity for a number of vulnerable complainers and the right to independent legal representation in relation to section 275 applications (a written motion asking the court to permit evidence or questioning about a complainer's sexual history,

character or related behaviour in a sexual offence case). Further changes include the right for complainers in cases involving sexual offences to gain access to court transcripts; expansion of the provision for victim impact statements to all solemn cases; the creation of a Victims Commissioner and a requirement for the SCTS, alongside other justice organisations, to update their standards of service to reflect trauma informed practice. Work is under way in respect of these reforms

Efficient User Centred Justice

Scotland's justice system must deliver more trusted, productive and adaptable services. To date progress has been constrained by fragmented, paper heavy processes and legacy, disconnected technology. Without decisive, joint digital reform, costs will rise, and the needs of victims, witnesses and the people of Scotland will not be fully met.

Over the course of this year, working in collaboration with the Criminal Justice Board, our aim is to develop a revised digital plan for criminal justice in Scotland. This means developing a clear leadership ambition to reform services together, identifying the significant benefits that investment in digital reform can deliver. In doing so, we can build on the strong foundations of past reforms and harness the landscape of national and local criminal justice partners across Scotland.

Reforming the criminal justice system

A key goal in the year ahead is for the commencement of a structured discovery and engagement programme to build the case for a future criminal court model, which would be supported by a common digital platform. Working with the judiciary and other justice organisations, we will gather evidence on current experience and drivers of delay, shape shared design principles, and explore where digital adds most value. The aim will be to agree the case for change, develop a set of viable options, and a phased path for delivery and investment.

A core element of our work will be the development of a case to understand the requirements of a new criminal case management platform. While it has been effective for many years, our criminal case management system is now based on legacy technology and there is real scope to deliver significant improvements in service, efficiency and analytics. We will seek to agree the case for investment, set out how the service should work day to day, and publish a clear technical and delivery plan. Future investment in this area will be crucial to maintain a resilient service and to provide the level of service that the judiciary and court users deserve.

Strengthening the capacity and adaptability of courts

The success of the roll-out of [summary case management](#) has led to significant improvements in the summary courts, reducing unnecessary witness citations and freeing up time for all parties to focus on other pressures. Those pressures are particularly acute in the High Court, where case registrations are increasing - and are in excess of the current capacity available to process them. The SCTS received, on average, 112 High Court indictments each month in 2025-26 compared to 92 per month the prior financial year - an increase of 22%. Future forecasts of solemn business levels, provided by the Crown Office, indicate a further upward trend, driven by the impact of time bar extensions granted under the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Act 2022 coming to a close; growing volumes of serious sexual offence cases and the impact of the 2023 Court of Appeal judgement on the law of corroboration (see the SCTS [criminal case modelling](#) for further detail on projected case volumes and waiting periods).

While the High Court will need further capacity to alleviate pressure and ensure waiting periods remain within acceptable bounds, work will continue over the course of this year and beyond to maximise efficiency and utilisation of valuable court resources across all levels.

Streamlining the jury process

Jurors are the largest group of customers SCTS serves, with over 700,000 members of the public receiving a jury citation each year. Without juror attendance, solemn criminal business cannot proceed. For most people, being a juror is their only interaction with the justice system.

The current jury process is largely manual and administratively intensive. We commenced a project in 2025 to reform the process. Our aim is, over the course of this financial year, to implement changes that will transform the system. At the heart of this will be the implementation of an automated digital jury portal. The portal will support the end-to-end journey of a juror, from initial registration to payment of expenses. It will significantly reduce time spent by operational staff on repetitive tasks, improve the frequency and quality of communications with jurors, and free up time by automating excusal requests for those who are disqualified or ineligible.

Open Justice

Public confidence relies on people being able to access and understand how justice is dispensed. In addition to being able to visit our courts and view proceedings, we have launched several initiatives to enhance public understanding of our criminal courts:

- introducing Scotland's first regular criminal court livestream – covering appeals against conviction and Crown sentence appeals;
- improving media access – publishing a Reporters' Guide, enhancing the media portal (including access to indictments) and creating a central register of contempt of court orders to support accurate, timely reporting; and
- publishing monthly criminal data workbooks and modelling reports – explaining performance, demand and waiting times in a consistent, accessible format.

In collaboration with the judiciary, over the course of this business year, we will build on these successes by seeking to increase the filming of high profile sentencing statements, exploring how we can enable greater access to remote hearings while protecting the rights of parties, and upgrading our media portal to support fair and accurate reporting.

Civil Justice Reform

Civil Justice - Legislative agenda in 2026-27

[The Domestic Abuse \(Protection\) \(Scotland\) Act 2021](#) - introduces new domestic abuse protection notices and orders. It also creates a new ground on which a social landlord can apply for recovery of a house from a perpetrator of domestic abuse. This is with a view to transferring it to the victim or, where the perpetrator and victim are joint tenants, to end the perpetrator's interest in the tenancy enabling the victim to remain in the home.

[The Victims, Witness and Justice Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2025](#) expands the use of special measures in civil cases to parties who are deemed vulnerable. We also anticipate the provisions relating to the views of the child in the [Children \(Scotland\) Act 2020](#) to be implemented this year. We will work with the judiciary, SCJC and Scottish Government policy officials to effectively implement these provisions in the courts.

Civil Justice - Key Reforms

Scottish Civil Justice Council (SCJC)

A number of changes in court rules are under consideration by the SCJC. Work has commenced on Simple Procedure Special Claims Rules and the extension of Simplified Divorce/Dissolution (to include actions where there are children under the age of 16 in the family and suitable arrangements for their welfare have been agreed).

In addition to its work in relation to court rules, one of the core functions of the SCJC is keeping the Scottish civil justice system under review. This includes consideration of how to ensure the system is an attractive and competitive civil jurisdiction in which to conduct business and that the needs of service users and wider stakeholders are appropriately supported through the design of that system. The SCTS will support the SCJC in these efforts through ensuring appropriate support and resource is provided to the Council to achieve its strategic aims.

Digitising civil processes

Over the past three years we have taken great strides to digitise civil business in our Sheriff Courts and the Court of Session - 90% of case types can now be lodged and tracked online. Our goal, in the year ahead, is to complete the work to enable online submission for all case types. We will also enhance our assisted digital options and, where technology cannot yet meet individual needs, staff support will be available.

Commissary business

Our longer term ambition is to fully digitise commissary business, moving confirmation applications and related processes online - reducing labour intensive processes. A fully digital system will also improve accessibility, allowing executors and solicitors to manage cases remotely.

In the year ahead, we will complete an evidence-led design phase, focused on simplifying, standardising and improving current processes. Working closely with the judiciary, practitioners and users, we will define requirements for a modern digital case system that would enhance usability, improve efficiency and ensure a consistent, high-quality service.

Open Justice

There is a great deal of work already underway to improve understanding of the civil justice system in Scotland. A key feature is the [Court of Session Livestream](#), which has streamed Inner House civil appeals since June 2023. It provides scheduled livestreams of substantive appeals, with case summaries, timings and (where available) opinions/judgments. Since its launch, there have been over 100 cases streamed live, attracting over 700,000 people to the site.

Over the course of this year, we will expand access to information, develop clearer explanations of civil processes and decisions and test new formats that reach wider audiences. We will also continue to publish our new [civil statistics](#) bulletin that summarises the trends and business levels in Scotland's civil courts with a useful thematic including 'Family', 'Debt' and 'Personal Injury' in addition to data relating to deceased estates (Commissary) and civil appeals.

Tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) Reform

Tribunals and OPG - Legislative agenda 2026-27

The First-tier Tribunal for Scotland comprises a number of Chambers: the Housing and Property Chamber (HPC); Health and Education Chamber (HEC); Tax Chamber (TC); Social Security Chamber (SSC); Local Taxation Chamber (LTC); and General Regulatory Chamber (GRC).

During 2026-27, within the SSC, we anticipate continued increases in appeal volumes. The HPC, where business volumes have grown by approximately 10% in the past year, is expected to see a further increase in application volumes when the provisions of the Housing Reform (Scotland) Bill are fully implemented. Within the LTC, we anticipate a growth in caseloads with the introduction of the Visitor Levy in selected areas, with Edinburgh City Council set to implement in the summer of 2026.

The work of OPG is likely to be influenced by planned reform of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 (AWI Act) - an amendment Bill is expected in the next parliamentary term. The Judicial Factors (Scotland) Act 2025 received Royal Assent in January 2025, implementing the Scottish Law Commission's recommendations to reform and modernise the law around the appointment and supervision of judicial factors. The Office of the Accountant of Court is working closely with the Scottish Government to ensure successful implementation and to manage the impact of these changes on AoC and the services it provides.

Tribunals and OPG - Key Reforms

Target Operating Model

Ongoing legislative change and growing case volumes will require us to keep improving the way we support the judiciary to manage tribunal business. We will consolidate our Target Operating Model, improving access to the specialist jurisdictions of the Scottish tribunals. Our hearings strategy, centred on user needs, makes best use of digital case management and a combination of both in-person and virtual proceedings. We will continue to secure appropriate and accessible venues for service users across Scotland. Our priority is to support user preference and provide the right hearing modality, with

sufficient flexibility to support open, accessible, and effective outcomes.

A key aim over the coming year is to establish a scalable, multi-jurisdictional operating model for Tribunals administration. Scheduling will be pooled across Chambers and supported by shared services to deliver economies of scale. Standard operating procedures will promote consistent practice while allowing local flexibility where this improves outcomes. These changes will enhance user experience and make the best use of capacity.

For service users, longer term, our ambition is to create an online service that enables those wishing to access the tribunals to be able to submit case documents electronically and track the progress of their case. This year we will develop proposals in this area, seeking views on how best to provide the service and comparing options, costs and benefits. Whilst the extent to which we will be able to deliver change in this area will be dependent of funding and support from the Scottish Government the core features of any design will be accessibility, privacy and security. We will reuse proven tools where possible - reducing costs and utilising current skill sets. We will also continue to make the case to the Scottish Government for adequate resourcing to meet the level of judicial and administrative support required as case volumes continue to grow.

OPG Case Management System

The OPG commenced a major transformation project in 2023, which aims to deliver a new secure, system for all OPG processes and data, supporting faster case processing that will allow us to meet key performance Indicators and reduce the backlog of applications that has built up since the pandemic. OPG launched the first phase of the new system in January 2025, modernising the processing of Power of Attorney (POA) applications.

While the core registration process is relatively efficient, the process for updating existing records requires significant improvement to reduce processing times. Work to make further improvements commenced in late 2025 as a priority. Phases 2 and 3 of the transformation project - bringing Guardianship, Intervention and Access to Funds applications online will be progressed later in the business year. This will support the future development of the Public Register Online - a secure, accessible, Public Register giving members of the public and stakeholders the ability to access information on orders made under Adults with Incapacity legislation in real time.

Corporate Reform

Public Sector Reform - Addressing the Government Strategy

Our overall strategy is to embed sustainable practice, strengthen open justice through transparency and accessibility, invest in our people and deliver modern, user-centred digital services in collaboration with other justice organisations. These ambitions are very much in line with the Scottish Government's public service reform strategy published in 2025. They will require time and effort to deliver, but have the potential to improve service and realise efficiencies in the longer term.

Delivering this approach will be challenging in view of the financial settlement received from the Scottish Government - which falls short of the level of funding required. In order to get as much as possible out of the resources we have we will undertake a comprehensive review of existing approaches to ensure we are delivering our services in the most effective way. Over the coming year, we will launch and complete the first stage of a service wide strategic improvement and reinvestment review programme - reviewing our core administrative processes, agreeing common standards where required and investing to digitise, simplify and remove duplication.

Our People

Our people are our greatest asset. They are dedicated to supporting the judiciary and providing a first class service to the public. In order to keep supporting them we will continue our work to attract and retain a diverse workforce and build a supportive, trauma-informed culture. To achieve this we will widen how and where we recruit so more people see this as a place for them. We will offer flexible ways of working, where practicable, clear paths to progress and a fair, welcoming workplace.

As we continually evolve the way in which we run our services, we will equip our workforce for the future by making learning part of everyday work. People will have access to short, practical training materials and time to apply new skills. Leaders will set the tone and work to manage change effectively. We will invest in building digital confidence for everyone - in order to ensure we can realise the benefits from developing new systems. We will also support our managers and leaders, as we enter a period when managing change and delivering efficiency will become even more important than before.

Our future approach to Digital

Managing a complex range of digital systems - some of which are in need of upgrading - presents both a continuing challenge and opportunity. Over the next year we will review how our systems are hosted and supported, so we can adopt cloud technology where it clearly improves accessibility, security and efficiency. We will catalogue all systems, assess risk, cost and performance, and agree design principles. Using the data gathered, we will develop a phased plan to migrate suitable systems to the cloud, or retain them on-premise, recognising our duties both to maintain these systems and secure best value. We will conduct this work in partnership with other public bodies, the private sector and the Scottish Government to ensure we share experience and best practice.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

We will continue to develop our use of AI, under a clear ethical framework that puts fairness, transparency, accountability and human oversight first. We will explore where we can best utilise AI to automate routine tasks, so staff can focus on improving services.

We will build on our AI pilot that transcribes Evidence by Commissioner hearings and seek to utilise the technology for other case types in our courts and tribunals. Realising the full benefits of this technology will require legislative changes - we will explore the potential for these with the Scottish Government, in line with their public service reform ambitions.

Digital payments

Building on our digital expenses platform, our aim is to expand the use of automated and digital payments across high volume transactions. By standardising processes and integrating payment services with case management and finance systems, we will reduce manual handling, improve consistency and speed, and strengthen controls.

Future ways of working

Over the coming year we will take the findings from a review of our hybrid working policy and - in line with the goals of our estates strategy - develop plans to support future ways of working. Within available resources, we will target investments to make best use of available accommodation, designing spaces that encourage and support collaboration, whilst aiming to reduce our accommodation needs and improve energy efficiency,

Our Financial Environment

Budgets and Investments

The total budget we have available to deliver our services in 2026-27 is projected to be £255.9m. Our total net expenditure for the year is budgeted at £235m. Detailed budget figures are provided at annex B (p20-21).

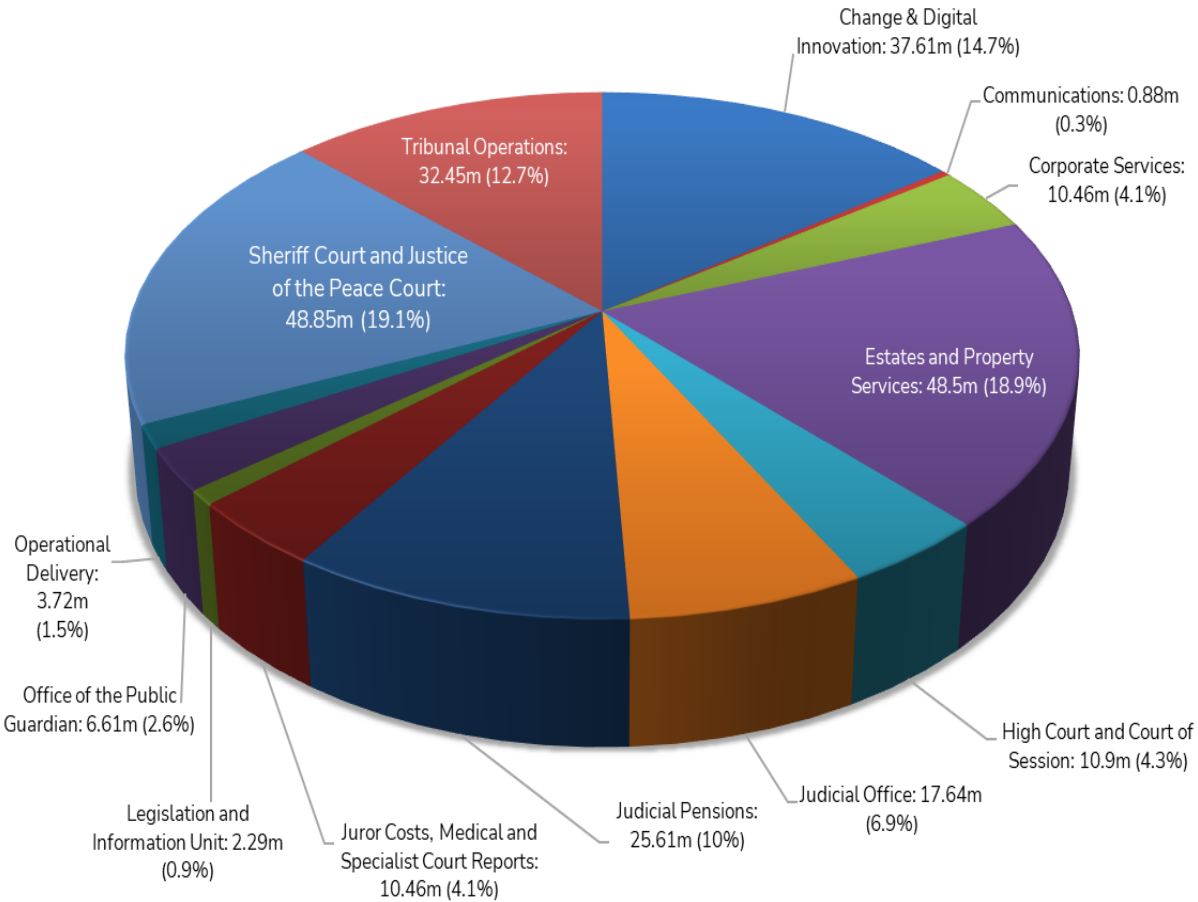
In 2026-27, the baselining of Recover, Renew, Transform funding gives SCTS greater financial stability and certainty. The funding was first provided to expand trial court capacity and address pandemic related criminal backlogs and is now required to manage sustained growth in business volumes. This funding position allows us to maintain a level of frontline capacity, while continuing to strengthen operational resilience. Although this represents significant progress, a shortfall remains compared with the level of revenue funding requested from the Scottish Government. SCTS remains committed to delivering high quality services and promoting reform to ensure that Scotland's courts, tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian continue to meet the expectations of the public within the challenging financial environment and resources available.

Where do we invest our resources?

Figure 1 shows how SCTS allocates resources by business area. Over 81% of gross expenditure (excluding depreciation) goes directly to support frontline operations, chiefly our people.

In line with our strategy, we are also investing £37.6m in Change & Digital Innovation (CDI) (made up of £29.3m revenue and £8.3m capital) to strengthen digital infrastructure and improve core services. Our dispersed historical estate receives £48.5m (made up of £38.1m revenue and £10.4m capital) to fund estate enhancements, sustainability measures and additional Evidence by Commissioner suites.

Figure 1 - 2026-27: Total Spend by Area £255.9m



Our Financial Environment Cont.

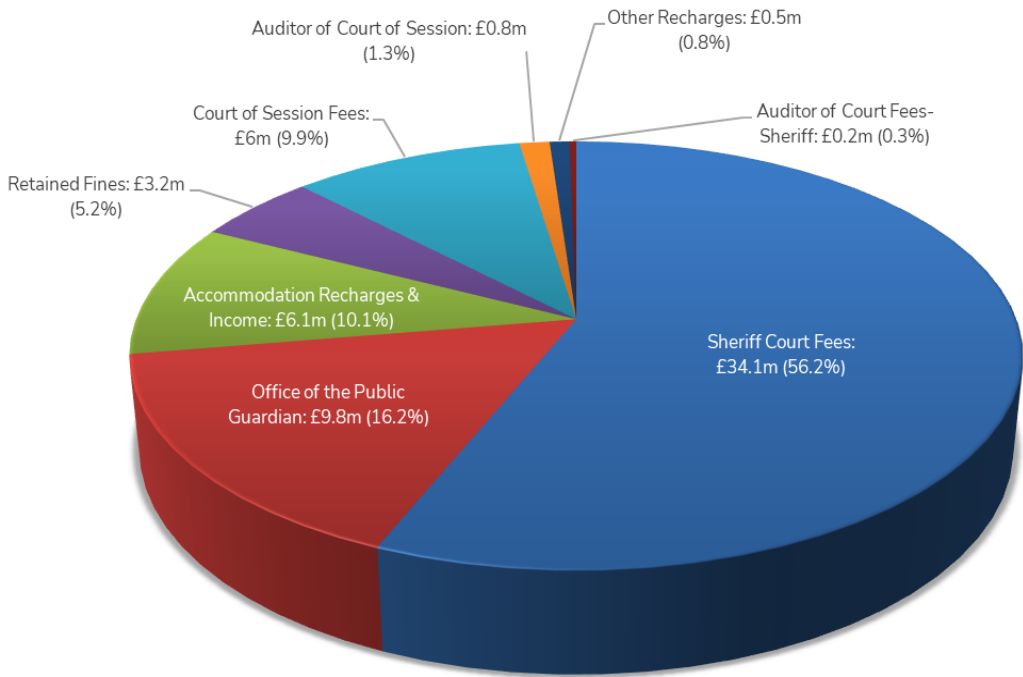
Fees and Income

Total income for 2026-27 is projected to be £60.7m, of which 84% relates to civil fees. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of this income by category.

SCTS income is dominated by fees from the Court of Session, Sheriff Courts and the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG), with the balance coming from estates recharges and a small number of specialist functions. The sections below set out each source in turn:

- **Sheriff Court fees – £34.1m (56.2%):** This is the single largest source, reflecting the scale of sheriff court civil business. As a demand-driven line, it will vary with case volumes, case mix and fee regulations. Overall income is sensitive to changes in throughput and external factors, such as legislative changes.
- **Court of Session fees – £6.0m (9.9%):** The Court of Session, Scotland’s supreme civil court, also charges fees for its services. Together with Sheriff Court fees, civil fee income forms the backbone of SCTS’s generated revenue.
- **Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) – £9.8m (16.2%):** OPG income, principally from applications and registrations, has grown in recent years in line with sustained public demand.
- **Accommodation recharges & income – £6.1m (10.1%):** These are estate-related recoveries and recharges, reflecting the shared use of the court estate by other organisations and associated services.
- **Retained fines – £3.2m (5.2%):** A smaller contribution that can fluctuate with enforcement activity and legislative changes.
- **Auditor of Court (Court of Session) – £0.8m (1.3%) and Auditor of Court (Sheriff Courts) – £0.2m (0.3%):** These specialist assessment services generate income reflecting the volume and complexity of taxation of accounts.
- **Other recharges – £0.5m (0.8%):** A residual category of minor recoveries and income.

Figure 2 — Projected SCTS gross income 2026-27: £60.7m



Further details on the 2026-27 financial plan is provided at Annex B (p20-21)

Plan on a Page

Business Outcomes 2026-27

Timescale Apr 26 - May - Jun - Jul - Aug - Sept - Oct - Nov - Dec - Jan - Feb - Mar 27

 Criminal Reform	Co-designed future court model: digital-first, quicker cases, better user outcomes.
	Develop a criminal digital strategy and an investment case (with TOM/architecture) for a new criminal Case Management
	Improve the efficiency and utilisation of Scotland's solemn courts - while safeguarding the integrity of proceedings and the rights of all parties
	Expand open justice: furthering livestreaming, media and documentary coverage of criminal courts, pilot public access for eligible remote hearings
	Deliver an end-to-end digital jury service and support function - making processes faster, simpler and more reliable
	Improve criminal practice using provisions made permanent by the Criminal Justice Modernisation Act
 Civil Reform	Complete end-to-end digital civil service across Sheriff Courts and the Court of Session with assisted digital support.
	Develop an evidence led design for commissary reform and set requirements for a modern digital case system
	Strengthen civil open justice by publishing plain language resources and anonymised data/insights
	Implement SCJC/Scottish Government legislative reforms by updating systems, processes and guidance
 Tribunals and OPG Reform	Expand our multi-jurisdictional tribunals model with responsive scheduling and a flexible, user based hearings strategy.
	Develop digital services for online submission/tracking and a secure workspace for tribunal members
	Reduce OPG Power of Attorney backlogs and waiting times
	Commence OPG transformation (phases 2-3) by migrating Guardianship and Accountant of Court to the new CMS/operating model
 Corporate	Equip our people for new ways of working, rolling out a focused digital-skills programme and building leadership capacity to manage change and reform
	Increase our use of automated and digital payments to reduce handling, improve consistency and minimise error or fraud risk
	Review the hosting arrangements for our digital systems – adopting cloud technology where it improves accessibility, security and efficiency
	Develop ethical AI use, freeing up staff to focus on improving services and extend our transcription pilot
	Modernising our estate to support flexible, collaborative work while continuing to address carbon emissions within available resources
	Launch and complete phase 1 of a service wide strategic improvement and reinvestment review programme

Criminal Justice Reform

Business Outcomes 2026-27



Developing high-quality services using digital solutions to support the judiciary, staff and partners to deliver fair, accessible, effective and efficient criminal justice, inspiring confidence in all who use it

Delivery Themes

- D1: Sustainability
- D2: Open Justice
- D3: People, Skills and Wellbeing
- D4: Digital

Business Plan outcomes 2026-27		Aligned Delivery Theme
1	We will commence development of a future criminal court model, supported by a common digital platform and co-designed with the judiciary and other justice organisations - to shorten end-to-end case timelines, enhance user experience, and strengthen the consistency and resilience of criminal court operations	D1 D2 D3 D4
2	We will work with the judiciary and other justice organisations to develop a refreshed criminal digital strategy and target operating model. This will include the development of the technical architecture for a new criminal case management platform - setting out the outcomes it will deliver for users and how it will securely integrate with other justice systems	D1 D2 D4
3	We will improve the efficiency and utilisation of Scotland's solemn courts (High Court and Sheriff & Jury) by reducing avoidable churn and delays, so that more trials proceed as scheduled - while safeguarding the integrity of proceedings and the rights of all parties.	D1 D2
4	We will increase the transparency and efficiency of Scotland's criminal courts by expanding livestreaming, increasing news media and documentary maker access to our criminal courts, piloting public access options for eligible remote hearings, and upgrading our media portal to support prompt, accurate and fair reporting	D1 D2 D4
5	We will deliver a modern, end-to-end digital jury service - combining an automated jury portal with a jury support function, making processes faster, simpler and more reliable for both jurors and operational staff	D1 D3 D4
6	We will assess the potential to improve criminal court practice, utilising the procedural provisions made permanent in the Criminal Justice Modernisation Act	D1 D2

Civil Justice Reform

Business Outcomes 2026-27



Supporting the judiciary to deliver outstanding civil justice underpinned by modern, user-centred systems that provide efficient and accessible services for all

Delivery Themes

D1: Sustainability

D2: Open Justice

D3: People, Skills and Wellbeing

D4: Digital

Business Plan outcomes 2026-27		Aligned Delivery Theme
1	We will complete our journey to deliver a fully digital service for civil business, so users can lodge, track and manage all civil case types online across both Sheriff Courts and the Court of Session - ensuring our services support inclusive use with assisted digital options	D1 D3 D4
2	We will complete an evidence-led design phase for reforming commissary business, standardising and improving current processes, evaluating the case for centralised administration, and agreeing requirements for a digital case system to improve user experience	D1 D4
3	We will strengthen open justice in the civil courts by publishing accessible, plain language resources (including visual guides) and releasing high-quality anonymised civil case data and performance insights - improving public understanding and confidence	D2
4	We will support reforms introduced by the Scottish Civil Justice Council and Scottish Government by updating our systems, processes and guidance to improve access to justice, uphold fairness and deliver inclusive, accessible services for all court users - within available resources and phasing delivery as funding allows	D1 D2

Tribunals and Office of the Public Guardian Reform

Business Outcomes 2026-27



Providing high-quality access to justice for Tribunals' users and protection for vulnerable people and their families through modern, efficient and user-friendly power of attorney and guardianship systems

Delivery Themes

D1: Sustainability

D2: Open Justice

D3: People, Skills and Wellbeing

D4: Digital

Business Plan outcomes 2026-27		Aligned Delivery Theme
1	We will expand our multi-jurisdictional Tribunals operating model - developing a balanced, responsive scheduling approach aligned with a flexible, user-based hearings strategy	D1 D4
2	We will continue to improve the service provided by the devolved Scottish Tribunals administration - working to develop digital services to enable online submission, viewing and tracking of cases and a secure area for tribunal members to view case documentation and collaborate online. In taking forward this work we will continue to make the case to the Scottish Government for adequate resourcing to meet the level of judicial and administrative support required as case volumes continue to grow.	D1 D2 D3 D4
3	We will reduce the pandemic/legacy backlog of Power of Attorney applications and bring down waiting times by maximising the efficiency of the new Office of the Public Guardian case management system - simplifying processes, and deploying additional short-term staff where needed	D1 D3 D4
4	We will commence phases 2 and 3 of the Office of the Public Guardian transformation, migrating Guardianship and Accountant of Court functions to the new case management system, putting in place a modern operating model that delivers a more efficient, effective and accessible service.	D1 D2 D4

Corporate Reform

Business Outcomes 2026-27



Giving our people the systems, processes, facilities and skills to deliver the best possible service, allowing justice to be done fairly, openly, effectively and efficiently.

Delivery Themes

D1: Sustainability

D2: Open Justice

D3: People, Skills and Wellbeing

D4: Digital

Business Plan outcomes 2026-27		Aligned Delivery Theme
1	We will equip our people for new ways of working, rolling out a focused digital-skills programme and building leadership capacity to manage change and reform	D3 D4
2	We will increase our use of automated and digital payments in high volume transaction types, building on our digital expenses payment system to reduce handling, improve consistency and minimise error or fraud risk	D1 D3
3	We will review the hosting and support arrangements for our digital systems – developing a phased plan to adopt the use of cloud technology where it improves accessibility, security and efficiency - in support of wider reforms and our commitment to best value	D1
4	We will develop our use of Artificial Intelligence – governed by an ethical framework - freeing up staff to focus on improving services and developing the transcription pilot, while seeking changes to legislation to support its effective deployment	D1 D3 D4
5	We will review our hybrid working policy and estates strategy to focus on future ways of working - modernising our estate to support flexible, collaborative work while continuing to address carbon emissions within available resources	D1 D3
6	We will launch and complete the first stage of a service wide strategic improvement and reinvestment review programme - analysing our core administrative processes, agreeing common standards where required and investing to digitise, simplify and remove duplication – reducing future costs to support frontline operations	D1 D3 D4

Annex A - Monitoring progress, performance and open justice

Overall responsibility for the delivery of this plan rests with the SCTS Board, which meets at least six times per year. Support is provided by formal Board Committees, including the People Committee, Audit and Risk Committee and the Estates, Health and Safety, Fire and Security Committee.

Performance management

The SCTS [Corporate Plan 2026-29](#), sets out our overall objectives for the coming three years.

Delivery of specific actions in this business plan and detailed monitoring of performance are the responsibility of the Chief Executive, supported by the Executive Team. Collaborative justice wide initiatives will be managed, and progress will be monitored, through the Scottish Government's Justice Board.

A full report on the performance and expenditure of the organisation for each financial year is published in the form of our Annual Report and Accounts. In addition the Board also publishes a performance scorecard and business plan delivery report annually – providing an overview of key aspects of operational performance and the delivery of the outcomes set out in this annual business plan respectively.

These documents complement this plan, providing more information on activities and performance on an annual basis. They can be found (alongside other key corporate information) on the [publications section of the SCTS website](#).

Risk management

SCTS maintains a formal Risk Management Framework. High level corporate risks are documented and managed in the Corporate Risk Register. These are subject to regular review by the Executive Team, the Audit and Risk Committee and the Board. The responsibility for management of individual risks is delegated to specific risk owners.

Business Unit risk registers are maintained by each business unit to consider and control local and tactical risks within their area. This is an integral part of the business management process.

Open Justice

Justice being dispensed in public is one of the most fundamental principles of a strong democracy. It reinforces the independence, integrity and stability of our courts and tribunals, recognising that courts and tribunals play a crucial role in supporting an effective society.

SCTS now livestream cases from the Inner House of the Court of Session and the Criminal Appeal Court - further information on this can be located [here](#).

Key statistical publications on the processing of Criminal, Civil, Tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian business can be located [here](#).

Judgments published regarding court and tribunal decisions can be located [here](#).

Annex B - Summary financial plan

2026-27 - Financial summary by cost category

Revenue Expenditure			2026-27
Cost Category (£000's)	2026-27 Budget	In Year Funding	Total Budget
Pay	100,606	6,548	107,154
Other Staff Costs	408	-	408
Rent & Rates	10,107	-	10,107
Accommodation	15,794	78	15,872
Building Maintenance	9,283	-	9,283
Judicial Costs	5,930	4,202	10,133
Judicial Pensions	25,610	-	25,610
Tribunal Members fees	12,169	6,383	18,552
Office & Other	14,182	852	15,035
Supplies & Services	8,784	4,709	13,493
Training	390	22	412
Travel	762	13	775
Business Costs	204,026	22,808	226,834
Total Operational Costs	10,114	344	10,458

Total Revenue Expenditure	214,140	23,152	237,292
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Fees for Civil Cases	(50,906)	-	(50,906)
Rents Receivable	(6,118)	-	(6,118)
Recharges	(511)	-	(511)
Retained Fines	(3,150)	-	(3,150)
Total Receipts	(60,685)	-	(60,685)

Net Revenue Expenditure	153,455	23,152	176,607
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Capital Expenditure			2026-27
Cost Category (£000's)	2026-27 Budget	In Year Funding	Total Budget
Buildings	10,348	-	10,348
Digital Infrastructure	8,352	-	8,352
Total Capital Expenditure	18,700	-	18,700
Non-Cash Ring Fenced DEL Depreciation	39,700	-	39,700
Total Net Expenditure	211,855	23,152	235,007

Annex B - Summary financial plan

2026-27 - Financial summary by service area

Service Area (£000's)	Total Budget FY 2026-27		
	Revenue	Capital	Total
Change & Digital Innovation	29,257	8,352	37,609
Communications	885	-	885
Corporate Services	10,460	-	10,460
Estates and Property Services	38,153	10,348	48,501
High Court and Court of Session	10,901	-	10,901
Judicial Office	17,636	-	17,636
Judicial Pensions	25,610	-	25,610
Juror Costs, Medical and Specialist Court Reports	10,458	-	10,458
Legislation and Information Unit	2,295	-	2,295
Office of the Public Guardian	6,609	-	6,609
Operational Delivery	3,722	-	3,722
Recover, Renew and Transform	-	-	-
Sheriff Court and Justice of the Peace Court	48,854	-	48,854
Tribunal Operations	32,452	-	32,452
Total Direct & Operational Costs	237,291	18,700	255,991
Receipts	(60,685)	-	(60,685)
Total Net Expenditure before depreciation	176,607	18,700	195,307
Non-Cash Ring Fenced DEL Depreciation	39,700	-	39,700
Total Net Expenditure	193,155	23,152	235,007

Further Information

SCTS website

www.scotcourts.gov.uk

SCTS statistics, plans, reports and data

www.scotcourts.gov.uk/about-the-scottish-court-service/reports-data

SCTS Board

www.scotcourts.gov.uk/about-the-scottish-court-service/the-scottish-court-service-board

Office of the Public Guardian

www.publicguardian-scotland.gov.uk

Scottish Tribunals

<http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/the-courts/the-tribunals/about-scottish-tribunals>

Judicial Office for Scotland

www.judiciary.scot

Scottish Civil Justice Council

www.scottishciviljusticecouncil.gov.uk

Scottish Sentencing Council

<https://www.scottishsentencingcouncil.org.uk>

**Scottish Courts
and Tribunals Service**



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Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3XD
Tel: 0131 444 3300