

SCTS ESTATES, HEALTH & SAFETY, FIRE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE
MEETING: Monday 4 August 2025 – Hybrid

Members Present:

Sheriff Frank Gill, SCTS Board (chair)
David Caddick, SCTS Board
Alan Cormack, Non-Executive Member
Steven Dickson, SCTS Board
Joe Lynch, Non-Executive Member

Attended:

Steven D'Arcy, Corporate Secretary, SCTS
Malcolm Graham, Chief Executive Officer, SCTS
Del Kaiser, Head of Health, Safety and Security, SCTS
Kate Leer, Director Property & Services (PSU), SCTS
Yvonne Taylor, Principal Clerk of Session and Judiciary, SCTS
Alice Wallace, Chief Finance Officer, SCTS
Kyle Williamson, Head of Service Development, SCTS
Sarah Imery, Executive Support Officer, SCTS (Minutes)

Apologies:

Luke Broadbent, Non-Executive Member
Craig Robertson, Head of PSU Finance and Governance, SCTS
Daragh Stewart, Head of Service Delivery PSU, SCTS

1. Declaration of Interests

1.1 There were no declarations of interest from Members.

2. Minutes of the Meeting

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 12 May were approved.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 There were no outstanding action points from the previous meeting.

3.2 The Chair provided an overview of the discussions at the June SCTS Board meeting which had a bearing on matters relating to the Estates Committee.

4. Estates Finance Report 2024-25

4.1 The Executive provided an overview of the property and services budget position for the first quarter of the 2025-26 financial year. The allocated budget for the year was £42.2m.

4.2 Due to the continued pressure throughout the Estate, and reactive court maintenance demand within courts, the triage system to monitor maintenance requests would remain in place, to allow the team to manage requests in order of priority, with the aim to reduce job volumes and costs. The long-term impact of the wind and watertight approach on buildings remained under regular review, with any jobs relating to health and safety continued to be actioned as a priority.

4.3 The Scottish Government (SG) had not announced any further funding Scottish Central Government Energy Efficient Grant Scheme 2025-26. Despite this SCTS had directly secured £1.5m of funding for sustainability related projects for 2025-26 from the SG. This would include the continued upgrading the LED lighting; these improvements were estimated to provide a yearly saving of 100k a year and would help to make SCTS more sustainable.

4.4 The Committee thanked the Executive for the comprehensive update. They expressed concern at the lack of funding available for backlog maintenance and sustainability related projects. Members acknowledged the ongoing financial challenges being faced and the steps taken by the PSU Team to ensure the most efficient and effective utilisation of the budget.

5. Capital Projects

5.1 The Committee received an update on the Capital projects currently underway, with a breakdown on the progress since the last meeting. The SCTS had an ambitious Capital Programme for 2025-26, with £10.86m currently approved by the Executive for PSU use.

Evidence by Commissioner Suites– Phase 2

5.2 As part of the 2024-25 budget settlement, the Scottish Government (SG) allocated capital funding of £2m for the provision of Evidence by Commissioner (EBC) suites, principally to cover the Sheriffdoms of South Strathclyde Dumfries and Galloway (SSD&G) and North Strathclyde (NS).

Birnie House in Hamilton had been identified as a suitable location for the SSD&G EBC Suite. The facility was scheduled to be operational by the end of August 2025. The search for a suitable location in North Strathclyde continued to progress with potential premises identified in Kilmarnock and Paisley. Building warrant drawings had been submitted and plans were in place for works to commence in October 2025. It was anticipated that the Kilmarnock EBC suite would be fully operational by the end of the financial year.

Glasgow Tribunals Centre

5.3 The Scottish Government had previously agreed that a portion of the EBC funding allocated in the 2024-25 budget could be used to improve the EBC Facilities within the Glasgow Tribunals Centre (GTC). The funding would increase the number of hearing suites from one to three, dedicating the whole 6th floor to EBC hearing suites and associated facilities. SCTS had exchanged floors with HMCTS within the building due to the increased demand for Tribunals space. Work across both floors had recently been completed. Snagging works were underway, with audio and visual installation and testing scheduled to be completed shortly. Both areas would be fully operational in September.

Aberdeen Sheriff Court

5.4 Aberdeen City Council (ACC) had continued to engage with the SCTS Executive regarding the potential impact of the Council regeneration of the Queen Street area in Aberdeen. ACC had continued to progress plans for a full demolition of the former police HQ building; this had been scheduled for spring 2026 with a completion target of late 2027. Senior SCTS officials met with the Aberdeen SCTS operational team onsite to discuss the proposals. ACC had not yet confirmed the full details of the demolition works, despite this SCTS had felt more sighted than previous about the plans. Members would be kept updated as this project progressed.

Edinburgh, Parliament House

5.5 The Scottish Land Courts moved from George Street, Edinburgh to their accommodation within level -1, in Parliament House (PH) at the start of the year. Works on the accommodation at PH level -4, Cowgate to accommodate the Health and Education and Mental Health Tribunal Chambers were due to be completed by the end of August 2025. audio-visual installation and testing would be carried out following completion.

Edinburgh, Sheriff Court, Level 6 Tribunals

5.6 The Level 6 Tribunals project consisted of the reconfiguration of the existing open plan office space located on the 6th Floor of Edinburgh Sheriff Court (ESC) to provide a suite of 4 new hearing rooms with associated consultation space. In addition, new waiting areas, Chambers, reception areas and open plan office accommodation for staff would be created. Work on Level 6 would commence in September 2025, with the estimated completion date of March 2026.

Edinburgh, Sheriff Court, Level 6 Remote Jury Room

5.7 This project would run parallel to the Level 6 Tribunals reconfiguration project. Part of the Level 6 floor would be developed into a remote jury facility replacing the current rented space at the Odeon Cinema on Lothian Road. This project was scheduled to be completed January 2026.

5.8 The Committee thanked the Executive for their informative update and noted the current progress of the projects.

6. Radon Update

6.1 The Executive provided an update on the elevated levels of Radon gas identified within the Inverness Justice Centre (IJC).

6.2 Following the detection of Radon gas, ongoing monitoring of the levels present had continually taken place, the results of the three-month monitoring at IJC had been received and had been shared with members. Staff members within IJC had been kept informed of the findings and contingency arrangements to ensure all staff were operating in a safe working environment. Other SCTS locations had since been identified as having elevated levels of radon present, with appropriate mitigations in place immediately. These locations would continue to be monitored closely in the coming months.

6.3 Members had previously requested that clear medical advice should be given to staff regarding the impact of Radon, especially those with health conditions and those who were pregnant. The Executive confirmed that if any member of staff had any concerns, they could contact the Health and Safety team and / or seek medical advice from their GP.

6.4 Members welcomed the in-depth update. They commended the rapid implementation of control measures following the detection of the radon gas. The data reports and continual monitoring had provided assurance that the matter was being closely monitored. The Committee would continue to be kept informed of any further developments.

7. Airdrie Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Update

7.1 Following the detection of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) within Airdrie Sheriff Court, the first floor area where the staff offices, canteen and ancillary accommodation were located had been closed. Members had been kept up to date on progress and building works throughout. The Executive provided members with a visual presentation of the work conducted stages since the initial detection.

7.2 Staff remained comfortable in the modular accommodation and had been fully informed of progress throughout the building works. The estimated completion date for the full RAAC remediation work was autumn 2025.

7.3 Members welcomed the photographic presentation which had allowed members to view the scale of the works. Members commended the management of the project.

8. Sustainability Strategy

8.1 The SCTS Sustainability Strategy was published in October 2024 and, since then a Sustainability Action Plan, to monitor progress on several projects underway, had been developed. The Executive remained committed to embedding and changing staff behaviours to achieve targets.

8.2 The Sustainability team had recently conducted surveys on how staff travel to and from their place of work. The responses and comments would be analysed to further inform sustainability options as well as possible staff incentives. A revised recycling scheme throughout the organisation would be trialled shortly.

8.3 The SCTS Board Sustainability Champion commended the continued work involving staff, alongside the sustainability action plan. Members highlighted the importance of keeping staff engaged on the sustainability journey with the organisation.

9. Draft annual report to the board

9.1 Members reviewed the outline of their draft annual report to the SCTS Board. Members agreed that the content accurately reflected the work of the committee during 2024-25. A final draft would be shared for formal approval at the next meeting following completion of the members appraisal exercise. The final report would be submitted to SCTS Board in November.

10. FM Contract Statutory Compliance/Obligations

10.1 The Executive provided an update report on the SCTS Facilities Management (FM) Contract with OCS which had commenced on 1 July 2024. A suite of KPIs had been agreed which were specific metric's that would be used to measure and govern the performance of the contract. The KPI had been monitored since April 2025.

10.2 Members commended the team for the tight control mechanisms that were in place and the level of analysis available which provided oversight for members

11. Any Other Business (AOB)

11.2 None.

12. Papers for Scrutiny/Exception Reporting Only

12.1 The following paper had been circulated for scrutiny:

- **Review of Risk – Project RAG Report**
- **Health, Safety and Security Report**

12.2 No matters were raised by exception.

13. Date of Next Meeting

13.1 The next meeting would take place on the 27 October 2025.

14. Estates Strategy

14.1 The current 2016-26 Estates Strategy was coming to an end. The existing strategy had provided the strategic governance and practical framework for SCTS activities and services over the last 10 years for all Estates matters.

14.2 The new strategy would align to the SCTS Corporate plan for 2023-26, the Financial Strategy 2024-28 and the Sustainability Strategy 2024-27.

14.3 At the last meeting members agreed the new strategy should be a shorter, and on a rolling 5-year basis, initially from 2026-2031. Members had highlighted the importance of developing the strategy with sustainability and reducing carbon footprint in mind, whilst being mindful of the upcoming development of AI and digital technology. The Executive had engaged operational colleagues at the recent Directors workshop to gather further insights as well as the operational needs of the organisation.

14.4 The Executive would continue to welcome feedback from the members as the strategy developed. Members would continue to be involved in the ongoing development of the strategy. A draft strategy would be presented to members at the next meeting. The Executive thanked the Committee for their support and comments so far.

SCTS Secretariat
August 2025