



SCOTTISH COURTS AND TRIBUNALS SERVICE BOARD
MEETING: Monday 25 March 2024, Parliament House, Edinburgh

Present: Lord Carloway, Lord President (Chair)
Sheriff Principal Anwar
Dr David Caddick MBE
Maggie Craig
Steven Dickson
Lady Dorrian, Lord Justice Clerk
Dr Sophie Flemig
Ruth Innes, KC
Sheriff Jillian Martin-Brown
Eric McQueen
Sheriff Olga Paspornikov
Anne Scott
Lady Wise

Attended: Noel Rehfisch, Deputy Chief Executive, SCTS
Karen Lawrie, Head of Secretariat, SCTS

Apologies: Lynsey Walker

1. Minutes of the SCTS Board Meeting on 5 February 2024

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 February 2024. The total 2023-24 budget was £194.5m.

3.2 Fee income from personal injury cases and power of attorney registrations had continued to exceed projections. Monitoring in these areas would continue, to understand fully the trends and the potential impact on future budget levels. The additional income had been directed towards funding shortfalls and accelerated investment in both the estate and digital infrastructure. Monitoring of expenditure would continue until the end of the financial year to ensure that all available funding was used effectively.

3.3 A campaign to highlight the benefits of a Power of Attorney for staff and their families was discussed.

3.4 The Board acknowledged the comprehensive management of the budget during the year. This had allowed good progress to be made across a wide range of priorities.

4. Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Update

4.1 The Executive updated the Board on the work which was underway to manage the presence of RAAC in Airdrie Sheriff Court. Contingency arrangements remained in place to manage business in the short term. Works to reopen parts of the building had been instructed and were underway. It was anticipated that these works would allow all business, which was normally scheduled in Airdrie, to return to the Court by September. Modular accommodation for staff offices would be in place in May.

4.2 The Board commended the continuing flexibility and resilience of the staff, judiciary and partner agencies working in Airdrie. They agreed that works should progress as quickly as possible. The Board agreed that work should continue to develop longer term options, including the potential for a full reconstruction of the current facility or the development of an enhanced facility that could support new business types and new ways of working.

5. Audio Recording Data

5.1 In early March the Scottish Government had launched a pilot which provided complainers in rape trials in the High Court with transcriptions of the whole trial proceedings, notably the testimony given.

5.2 The Board were informed that 25 requests for transcripts had been received under the scheme to date. Twenty of these were being produced, with another 4 applications ineligible. In respect of one application the audio recording data was only available for a proportion of the trial. An account of the trial was compiled from alternative sources to support the application so far as possible. Work was ongoing to assess the root cause of the unavailable data and to consider any wider implications. The Board would be kept informed of the ongoing assessment.

6. Quarterly Performance Review and SCTS Board Scorecard

6.1 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. A number of outcomes had been completed.

6.2 The Executive advised that SCTS has won two prestigious awards in recent months. A member of the Change and Digital Innovation Team was awarded the Cisco Global Advocate Award 'Hybrid Working Hero' at a ceremony in Amsterdam. SCTS were awarded the People Development Programme of the Year at The Learning Awards ceremony in London for the Direct Entrant EO Programme.

6.3 The Board commended the winners on achieving the awards which recognised the hard work of business units across the organisation.

6.4 The Board discussed the information which had been provided in the Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services monthly report. It was acknowledged that current data was not always available. The Executive confirmed that this matter had been raised with the Government. Assurance was provided that data produced by the SCTS would be published at the earliest opportunity.

7. SCTS Business Plan 2024-25

7.1 The draft SCTS Business Plan for 2024-25, setting out the key outcomes which the SCTS planned to deliver over the coming year and the operating budget, was considered. The Board approved the budget and the business plan, which would be published in April.

7.2 The Board complimented the Executive on the clarity and style of the plan.

8. People Survey 2023 – Update from the People Committee

8.1 The People Committee had scrutinised the analysis from the People Survey 2023. The Committee had been updated on the discussions that had taken place at the SCTS Directors' Group meeting in relation to the survey results. The improvement in both participation levels and the engagement index score was welcomed. There was broad agreement on the key areas that would be explored further during the course of the year. These included the themes of leadership and Managing Change and the SCTS Values and Behaviours.

8.2 Members agreed that work should continue in line with the two-year Corporate People Survey Action Plan. A People Survey Working Group, involving managers from across SCTS and PCS union representatives, would identify and agree improvement actions. This work would continue throughout the year, with oversight from the People Committee.

9. SCTS Committees

People Committee

9.1 The Chair of the Committee updated the Board on the discussions at their last meeting. The Committee had received an overview of the plans to support the move to a 35 hour working week. This had formed part of the two-year pay agreement. The contractual change would be implemented on 1 October 2024. The challenges associated with implementation were discussed. Assurance was provided that SCTS was engaged with other justice organisations to ensure there was no disruption to court and tribunal business following the change.

Estates Committee

9.2 An update was provided from the Chair of the Estates Committee on the discussions at their last meeting. The Committee had discussed the progress of the Dundee Justice hub and were updated on other major Capital Projects.

9.3 The current re-tendering and procurement process for the Facilities Management Contract was reviewed. Updates on the retendering would be provided at future meetings.

9.4 The Committee had considered and approved the draft sustainability strategy. They viewed it as a living document that would evolve as the SCTS moved forward.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 The Board were advised that recruitment of the new SCTS Chief Executive was under way with interviews scheduled in April.

11. Papers for Scrutiny/Exception Reporting Only

11.1 The following papers had been circulated for scrutiny:

- the SCTS Decision Tracker

No matters were raised by exception.

12. Date of the Next Meeting

12.1 The next meeting would be on Monday 10 June 2024. The Board would visit Banff, Peterhead and Aberdeen Sheriff Courts ahead of the formal meeting in Aberdeen.

13. Deep Dive Session – Community Justice Scotland

13.1 The Board heard a presentation from Karyn McCluskey (Chief Executive) and Catherine Dyer (Board Chair) of Community Justice Scotland. CJS is the national leadership body for community justice in Scotland.

13.2 The work of CJS aimed to improve the quality and availability of community justice interventions as appropriate disposals in a range of criminal cases, often as an alternative to custody. By improving the knowledge, availability and quality of these services, they can help to break the cycle of reoffending; allowing people to make a positive contribution to society.

13.3 Karyn outlined a number of current priorities for CJS, including the development of a high-quality directory of the services and support available across the country. These could be used in reaching sentencing decisions. She also referred to the potential to make more effective use of bail and the importance of current and accurate data in making decisions that would benefit both individuals and the justice system as a whole.

13.4 The Board thanked Karyn and Catherine for their insight. They agreed that SCTS and CJS should continue to work closely on shared initiatives through the Criminal Justice Board.

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
March 2024