

**Releasable under Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
after the next meeting
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING**

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 26 AUGUST 2014

CROWN OFFICE, EDINBURGH

Present: (Chair)	Catherine Dyer John Logue David Harvie Liam Murphy Esther Roberton	Crown Agent/Chief Executive Director of Serious Casework PF West of Scotland PF North of Scotland Non Executive Director
In attendance:	Robin Doyle Stephen Woodhouse Kevin McArthur	Business Manager, Serious Casework Group Head of Corporate Office Minute Secretary
Apologies:	John Dunn	PF East of Scotland

Welcome

1. The Crown Agent welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies from John Dunn were recorded.

Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2014 were noted and approved.

Provision of Pathology/Mortuary Services

3. The members welcomed Robin Doyle to the meeting. Robin introduced paper EB(1415)11 which provided options available for a review of the Post Mortem Services currently in place.

4. COPFS has 15 different contracts with Councils, National Health Services and Universities, under which Post Mortem Services are carried out. The overall cost to COPFS on pathology is approximately £8.8 million (8.5% of COPFS running costs). The services are provided under Minutes of Agreement with the professional services supplied to COPFS conforming to a code of practice agreed between COPFS, Scottish Government and The Royal College of Pathologists.

5. It was noted delivery of service within the current approach is inconsistent and, with increasing pressure on budgets consideration, may not demonstrate best value.

6. The Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit have made significant steps, working with General Practitioners and the National Health Service, to reduce the number of post mortems instructed.

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7. The Board agreed that this is properly a matter which is not the preserve of COPFS as it involves interests of Health and Justice Directorates as well. The Board tasked Serious Casework Group to work with Scottish Government procurement to consider the feasibility of a long term nationally managed solution and to meantime revise the current contractual structure and implement Regional Service Centres by autumn 2015.

Strategic Board Outcomes

8. The Board discussed the outcomes of the Strategic Board meeting held on 20 August 2014 and noted the following:

- a) The Strategic Planning Group has held several internal workshops with a wide variety of staff to assist in developing a draft purpose, vision statement and objectives. Consideration has been given to the Strategic Plans of criminal justice partners and the Justice Board Strategy to ensure alignment where appropriate. Consultation with Justice Board organisations is planned. The Lord Advocate indicated a wider public and external stakeholders consultation should be considered;
- b) The Solicitor General highlighted COPFS' success over the period of the 2012 to 2015 Plan in delivery of improved quality and outcomes as a result of the priorities adopted, the restructure into Federations and further specialisation which had been introduced, including core functional working, and indicated that this should be reflected throughout the Strategic Plan;
- c) The Law Officers noted the current budget projections for 2015-16 and beyond. While the additional savings from planned internal reallocation of resources and benefit realisation from the Continuous Improvement programme demonstrate that COPFS is maximising use of available resource, close monitoring of the position was essential and it was acknowledged that further interaction with Scottish Government regarding future funding may be required;
- d) The Law Officers agreed there was a need to follow a prioritisation matrix for Cold Case investigations and that the consideration of risk of further offending was an important consideration when prioritising cold case work along with cases which are evidentially viable and in which investigation by the Police is near completion and in connection with cases of high public concern;
- e) The Strategic Board agreed to commission further work on all the options which have been identified by Executive Board which will provide savings or reallocation benefits but will not diminish the quality of service COPFS provides.
- f) The Board noted that the performance targets were set some years ago by COPFS and were predicated on timescales for preparation that could be achieved against much lower volumes of certain offending and less complex caseloads particularly in respect of sexual and domestic abuse offending. The Board agreed that, while efforts should continue to ensure that as

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many cases as possible are indicted within current targets, in order to remain meaningful the published indicting targets require revision in year so that current and future performance can be appropriately benchmarked

9. The Scottish Court Service's long term plans includes a move to sixteen Sheriff and Jury Centres. The locations of the Centres are known and the meeting considered that there may be benefits of moving to this model sooner rather than later which should be explored by Executive Board.

Operational and Business Services Delivery Reports

10. The meeting noted paper EB(1415)12 which provided an update from each of the Operational Boards and the Business Services Delivery Group on their respective achievements, challenges, risks and key issues.

11. The meeting noted a draft report for the review of Initial Case Processing has been compiled by Ruth McQuaid. The Board acknowledged the excellent work which has already been done on this. A final paper is expected for discussion at the Executive Board in September.

12. The meeting noted revised court programmes have been agreed as part of the Summary Courts Recovery Project.

13. The meeting noted the positive engagement of the staff within the Sheriff and Jury Forum and commended the impact they are having on improving the efficiency of processes within Sheriff and Jury as a whole.

14. The Board acknowledged the challenge facing the High Court function. In line with the views of the Strategic Board which considered the question of performance targets, COPFS external targets may be changed in year to reflect performance against the statutory time-bar. Should that be the case, internal measurement of performance will be retained in serving indictments similar to the current target. In the meantime, efforts are to continue to be made to achieve as high a level of performance as possible. Noting the current performance of 62%, the Executive Board expects the year end performance to be between 75% and 80%

AOB

Incurring Expenditure

15. All expenses incurred over £200,000 in Scottish Government must get approval by DG Finance. Although COPFS is independent from Scottish Government the Board agreed that all expenses incurred over £200,000 should be considered by the COPFS Finance Management Group.

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Improvement Programme

16. The meeting noted Graham Kerr is working closely with the Heads of Business Management on priorities and a methodology. It was agreed the Board would like to see an update paper on the progress of the Improvement programme at the September meeting.

ACTION: Liam Murphy to commission paper via Business Service Delivery Group

ACTION: David Harvie to invite John Tannahill to September meeting to provide update on progress made by Police Reform Team

Risk Management

17. Liam Murphy provided an update on the current risk management position. Risk 4.1 "*We remain within budget allocations, achieve value for money and have financial systems and governance in place*" has increased to a risk score of 20. An update paper will be tabled at the September meeting.

Justice Digital Strategy

18. The meeting noted the SG Justice Board have agreed a Digital Strategy. It was agreed Elspeth Macdonald be invited to the Executive Board to discuss the impact and opportunities for COPFS and the wider criminal justice system.

ACTION: Corporate Office to invite Elspeth Macdonald to Executive Board

Kevin McArthur
Corporate Office
26 August 2014