

## MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH SENTENCING COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Wednesday 20 November 2019, held at Edinburgh Sheriff Court

### Minutes

**Members present:** Sheriff Norman McFadyen (Chair)  
Krista Johnston  
Sue Moody

**Secretariat:** Ondine Tennant (Secretary)  
Stuart Ritchie (Communications Officer)  
Jessica Flynn (Business manager)

### 1) PROCEEDINGS

*Item 1.1: Draft minutes of last meeting*

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

*Item 1.2: Progress of actions*

2. An update was provided on the action points from the previous meeting, as follows:

**AP1: Secretariat to circulate Q1 2019 Communications Report to members of the Communications Committee during April.**

A six month update was circulated to members by correspondence.

**AP2: Secretariat to circulate a proposal for a round table discussion on sentencing people with mental welfare issues, liaising with the Research Committee in relation to the main topics to be discussed**

This was circulated to members by correspondence. A successful round table discussion took place on Friday 14 June and a report is being prepared by the Secretariat.

**AP3: Secretariat to examine the feasibility of possible public events, liaising with relevant working group committees as necessary.**

Secretariat continues to identify public events where the Council can be represented.

**AP4: Secretariat to circulate communications plan relating to work on sexual offences for comment**

The Communications plan was circulated to members and discussed at May Council meeting.

**AP5: Secretariat to explore the possibility of holding further meetings with MSPs to discuss the work of the Council**

This was discussed at Item 3.1 on agenda.

**AP6: Secretariat to circulate item on website for discussion**

This was circulated to members shortly following the meeting.

## **2) COMMUNICATIONS**

### *Item 2.1: Communications Strategy – Young people public consultation*

3. A communications strategy for the public consultation on the draft sentencing of young people guideline was presented to and discussed by the committee.
4. Members discussed the paper and agreed victims' organisations and children and young people's organisations should be encouraged to respond to the consultation to encompass a well-rounded response. A possible stakeholder event for such organisations was also discussed.
5. It was agreed the Council should explore with the Scottish Government whether there would be any possibility to carry out engagement through existing structures, such as the Victims Taskforce.

#### **Action point:**

**AP1: Secretariat to contact the Scottish Government Victims and Witnesses Team in the first instance regarding methods of engagement around the draft guideline.**

### *Item 2.2: 2019 Communications Report update*

6. The Council's communications activity this year to date was discussed, focusing primarily on:
- Media – the Council has responded to 26 media enquiries and featured in 131 articles.
  - Twitter – the Scottish Sentencing Council's Twitter account has 170 new followers while tweets have collectively been viewed over 170,000 times.
  - Website – the highest number of visitors to the Council's website in a single month was in October this year with 7537 views. The total number of visitors to the site to date is just over 63000, which is 9000 more than the whole of 2018.
  - Google searches – the Scottish Sentencing Council's website has appeared in over 1 million Google searches during 2019. The average position the website appears in Google search list is 19 which is up from 23 last year.
  - YouTube – since the Council's YouTube channel launch in August the videos have been viewed just under 600 times so far.

*Item 2.3: Guideline Judgments*

7. The Committee approved summaries of two recent guideline judgements, pronounced by the Sheriff Appeal Court, for publication on the Council's website.

**3) Engagement and Public Awareness**

*Item 3.1: Recent and forthcoming engagement*

8. Justice Committee Clerks – The Secretariat recently met with Clerks from the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee. During the meeting the potential for an informal event was discussed. The Communications Committee was in favour in principle and would recommend the proposal to the Council.
9. Education Resources and public information – members were asked to re-visit the Council's website and advise of areas for further development of educational resources or public information in light of the young person guideline and process guideline. Members were also asked to feedback on any other areas of the website that would benefit from improvement.
10. Public awareness – it was agreed that work that could be carried out in the coming year include:

- Working with partner organisations
- Blog posts from members and external contributors
- Increasing knowledge and awareness of / debunking myths around community sentences
- Increasing use of jargon and myth busters
- Speaking and participating in external events
- Provide more case studies on website

**Action point:**

**AP2: Members to consider areas for further educational resources or public information and any other improvements to the website.**

**AP3: Secretariat to take forward discussions around any possible meeting with Justice Committee members.**

**Item 4.1: Next meeting**

11. It was agreed that the next meeting should be scheduled prior to the launch of the consultation on the draft guideline on sentencing young people.

**Item 5.2: AOCB**

12. The Committee was advised that there may be potential for some engagement arising from the work on the Independent review of learning disability and autism in the Mental Health Act and that the Secretariat would advise of this in due course.