

MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH SENTENCING COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Wednesday 12 February 2020, held at Edinburgh Sheriff Court

Minutes

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

Secretariat: Ondine Tennant (Secretary)
Stuart Ritchie (Communications Officer)
David Ross (Senior Policy Officer)

1) PROCEEDINGS

The Chair welcomed Hannah Graham to her first meeting of the Communications Committee.

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 contact the Scottish Government Victims and Witnesses Team in the first instance regarding methods of engagement around the draft guideline.

This was discussed at Item 2.1 on the agenda.

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

This was discussed by correspondence circulated on 21 January and was further discussed at item 3.1 on the agenda.

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

This was discussed at Item 3.1 on the agenda.

2) COMMUNICATIONS

Item 2.1: Communications Strategy – Young people public consultation

1. It was noted that the committee had agreed a communications plan for the public consultation on sentencing young people draft guideline at its previous meeting.
2. A discussion took place on the key messages the Council should be highlighting as part of the public consultation.
3. The committee were keen to encourage as wide a range of responses to the consultation as possible. This included engaging with organisations through face to face meetings and using all forms of media to engage with the public. It was suggested that a free CPD discussion to engage with legal professionals be explored.
4. At its last meeting on 20 November 2019, the Committee agreed that victims' organisations and children and young people's organisations should be encouraged to respond to the forthcoming public consultation on the sentencing young people draft guideline ("the public consultation") to encompass a well-rounded response. The Committee also discussed the possibility of holding a stakeholder event for such organisations.
5. Members were informed that Victim Support Scotland had suggested Council representatives attend a VOCFS meeting during the consultation period in order to discuss the guideline.
6. The Committee were then invited to consider options for an engagement event with victims' organisations during the public consultation.

Action point:

AP1: Secretariat to look in to possibility of holding a CPD discussion event during consultation

AP2: Secretariat to brief and hold discussions with key stakeholders prior to and following the launch of the consultation.

AP3: Secretariat to attend meeting of VOCFS to discuss the public consultation .

AP4: Secretariat to explore options for a engagement with victims' organisations.

Item 2.2: 2020 Communications plan

7. A Communications plan for publishing reports and research over the coming months was presented to the committee. The committee agreed it was helpful to see the plan and asked for it to be a regular item on the agenda. It was suggested that important events and external publications be added to the plan.

AP5: Secretariat to add external events and publications to the plan.

AP6: Communications plan to be added to agenda for future meetings.

Item 2.3: 2019 Communications report

8. The Council's communications activity for 2019 was discussed, focusing primarily on:
 - Media – the Council has responded to 26 media enquiries and featured in 139 articles.
 - Twitter – the Scottish Sentencing Council's twitter account has 200 new followers while tweets have collectively been viewed over 190,000 times.
 - Website – The number of visitors to the Scottish Sentencing Council website has doubled in the last two years to 76000. The highest number of visitors to our website in a single month was in October this year with 7537 people accessing the site.
 - Google searches – the Scottish Sentencing Council's website has appeared in over 1.3 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 over 1100 times so far.
9. It was suggested that we should link up with other sentencing councils. Blogs from sentencing councils in different jurisdictions was one suggestion. It was noted that England and Wales Sentencing Council were having their tenth anniversary later in 2020 and members of the Scottish Sentencing Council had been invited to attend.

3. Engagement and Public Awareness

Item 3.1: Recent and forthcoming engagement

10. The committee discussed plans to meet with members of the Justice Committee of the Scottish Parliament and a question from an MSP on the development of sentencing guidelines for sexual offences, which was asked in the Scottish Parliament on 16 January,
11. Engagement with colleges and universities – The secretariat received correspondence from a College praising the resources on the website. They asked if the Council would hold educational talks for students. The general feeling view of the committee was that this is very much part of our public awareness and educational remit and should consider requests on an individual basis but given the limited resources we would have to be careful not to raise expectations.

Item 4.1: Next meeting

11. The next meeting of the Communications Committee will be held on Wednesday 3 June at 4:30pm.

Scottish Sentencing Council Secretariat

May 2020