

**MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH SENTENCING COUNCIL
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**

Monday 20 May 2021

Minutes

Members present: Summary Sheriff Paul Brown
Hannah Graham
Krista Johnston
Lesley Weber
Sheriff Andrew McIntyre (Advisor)

Secretariat: Ondine Tennant (Secretary)
Stuart Ritchie (Communications Officer)
David Dickson (Principal Legal Officer)

1) PROCEEDINGS

1. Summary Sheriff Paul Brown and Lesley Weber were welcomed to the committee. Lesley Weber was unfortunately unable to participate in the full meeting due to technical issues Sheriff Andrew McIntyre joined the meeting at 16:40

Item 1.1: Appointment of Chair

2. In line with paragraph 2.4 of the Council's standing order, the committee were asked to appoint a chair for the Committee. Following a discussion Summary Sheriff Paul Brown was appointed as Chair.

Item 1.2: Draft minutes of last meeting

3. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 February 2021 were approved.

Item 1.3: Progress of actions

4. An update on actions from previous meeting was provided to members.

Item 1.4: Private papers

5. The committee agreed that Papers: 1.1; 1.3; 2.1; 2.1A; 3.1; 3.2; 4.1; 4.2; 4.2A should be taken in private.

Item 2.1: 2021 – 2024 Draft Communications Strategy

6. The committee considered a draft communications strategy for the 2021-2024 business plan period, which had been revised following comments at the last committee meeting. The committee was broadly content with the strategy, the plans for publication and for annual review. It was agreed that a communications strategy should be developed for each business planning cycle.
7. The committee was of the view that communications should seek to make more of the broad range of independent research which the Council has now gathered, in particular to promote the Council's research and resources to students.
8. The committee, agree to the draft strategy being presented to the Council's at its June meeting.

Item 3.1: Communications strategy - Finalisation of guidelines

9. The committee was presented with a revised timeline, and an update on the communications strategy, for the finalisation and launch of the sentencing process and sentencing young people guidelines, which were proceeding on staggered timetables.
10. The communications strategy has been developed to promote the guidelines during the four main stages of the approval process:
 - 1) finalisation
 - 2) submission to High Court for approval
 - 3) approval
 - 4) entry in to force.

11. The committee agreed to the general approach of the communications strategy and the key messages for each guideline. There was discussion around the need to promote the guideline to the judiciary and practitioners timeously.

AP1: Secretariat to add judicial communications in to the timeline

12. Members noted the secretariat's intention to circulate various documents for awareness and/or comment in advance of communications activity on the guidelines.

13. Committee members raised whether it might be helpful to issue any hard copy information on the Council's work. It was thought that there might already be some information produced in this way and that Sheriff Morrison's book on sentencing practice might already cover the matter to a degree.

AP2: Secretariat to contact Sheriff Morrison as to plans for the next edition of Sentencing Practice

14. The committee also discussed using external events to promote the guidelines and members were happy to be involved in these.

Item 3.2: Communications plan

15. Members of the committee noted the 2021 communications plan and that the publication of two reports had been delayed until after the election had taken place as it not proved possible to issue them prior to the pre-election period.

Item 3.3: Q1 communications report

16. The committee heard that in the year to end of May there had been just over 32,000 visitors to the public website.

17. The number of visitors to our website has now returned to the post pandemic level of between 6 and 7000 each month. The most popular pages remain:

1. Prison sentences
2. Sentences and appeals
3. Jargon Buster.

18. The videos on you tube have been viewed over 2000 times this year.
19. The Council's twitter account had 100 new followers during 2021 with just under 2000 followers in total while tweets have collectively been viewed over 85,000 times. The Council has been mentioned in 48 tweets this year.

Item 3.4: Further information about sentencing on the website

20. The Committee discussed a proposal for the provision of information about sentencing statements and appeal determinations on the Council's website.
21. There was broad support for this idea with several suggestions on how this would look in practice. There was a discussion on how we could add a search function to this to allow to people to search for and within specific cases. The Secretariat agreed to have discussions on this with the website company and with SCTS library service.

AP3: Secretariat to hold meeting with SCTS library service to discuss similar work they are undertaking

Item 4.1: Proposal for engagement with the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee

22. The committee were asked to consider proposals for engagement with the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee.
23. The committee were informed that members of the Secretariat met with clerks to the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee and SPICe recently to discuss the future work of the committee and the Scottish Sentencing Council.
24. A session with the previous Justice Committee had been planned but had to be cancelled in the wake of the pandemic. The possibility of an informal engagement session was therefore broached again.

AP4: Secretariat to seek to make arrangements for engagement with the new Justice Committee and agreed a meeting soon after the Committee had been set up would be beneficial.

Item 4.2: National youth justice conference 2021

25. The Secretariat provided the Committee with an update on the Council's workshop at the National Youth Justice Conference. The theme of this year's NYJC is 'Children's rights in justice: UNCRC and beyond'

26. The committee agreed to the approach taken for the workshop and the themes which will be addressed by the panel members. It was seen as a good opportunity ahead of the launch of the sentencing young people guideline later in the year.

AP5: Secretariat to send the briefing for this workshop to the committee. A link to the workshop will be sent to Council members so anyone who wishes to attend can do so.

Item 5.1: Date of next meeting

The date of next meeting of the Communications Committee will be discussed by correspondence.

Scottish Sentencing Council Secretariat

June 2021