

MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH SENTENCING COUNCIL RESEARCH COMMITTEE

25 MARCH 2019, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, EDINBURGH

MINUTES

Members present: Professor Neil Hutton (chair)
Lord Turnbull

Apologies: Stephen O'Rourke
Susan Fallone, JP
Sheriff Frank Crowe (committee advisor)

Secretariat: Andrew Bell (Principal Research Officer)

1. PROCEEDINGS

Item 1.1: Introduction and welcome

- 1) Apologies were received from Stephen O'Rourke, Susan Fallone, and Sheriff Crowe.
- 2) As the meeting was not quorate, the Committee agreed to consider the items before it and provide recommendations for consideration by correspondence, in line with paragraphs 9.6 and 9.6a of the Council's standing orders.

Item 1.2: Minutes of previous meeting

- 3) The Committee recommended that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed without amendment.

Item 1.3: Private papers

- 4) The Committee recommended that papers RC2.3, RC2.3A, RC2.5, RC3.1A-C and RC4.1 should be marked as private.

2. EXTERNAL RESEARCH

Item 2.1: Public perceptions – focus groups update [Oral]

- 5) Andrew updated the Committee on the progress of the focus group projects exploring public perceptions of death by driving and sexual offences. Andrew noted the progress of recruitment and some issues that had arisen around recruiting victims or families of

victims to participate in part of the research. The project is on time, however, and is expected to be in draft report stage by end May 2019.

Item 2.1: Public perceptions – national survey update [Oral]

- 6) Andrew updated the Committee on the progress of the national survey project which is exploring general public perceptions on sentencing. Andrew noted the survey was now in the field. The project is expected to be in draft report stage by end April.

Item 2.3: 2019-20 project specifications [papers RC2.3 and RC2.3A]

- 7) The Committee noted the Council's request at the March meeting for the secretariat to consider whether work on sexual offences could be brought forward without causing undue delay to other guidelines. The Committee discussed the possibility of re-prioritisation of research priorities and work with regards to any possible change in the Council's priorities.
- 8) Subject to agreement by correspondence, the Committee felt that, should the Council decide to re-prioritise its work programme to expedite the development of guidelines on sexual offences, the Committee should recommend that the research programme for 2019/20 be revised as detailed in paper RC2.3..
- 9) The Committee considered the project specification at paper RC2.3A and provided comments. The Committee agreed to recommend that the Council's permission be sought to share a draft guideline with bidders to support the tender process.

Item 2.4: Sheriffdom business conferences 2019-20 [Oral]

- 10) The Committee noted that the Council has been invited to present at the Tayside, Central and Fife sheriffdom business conference in late 2019 and that this will be taken forward by the secretariat.

Item 2.5: 2018-19 research budget spend [Oral, with reference to RC2.5A]

- 11) Andrew updated the Committee on the current research budget spend.
- 12) The Committee noted the difficulties in planning the research programme around the constraints imposed by the annual budgeting process, and recommended that, subject to agreement by correspondence, it would consider what work could be expedited should there be a spending shortfall as a result of planned projects being delayed beyond the

end of the financial year, difficulties in procuring work, or projects coming in substantially under budget, to ensure the most effective use of the Council's resources.

3: RESEARCH REPORTS

Item 3.1: SGSSS PhD interns – final papers for information [Oral, with reference to RC3.1A-C]

- 13) The Committee noted the final reports from the two SGSSS internships and recommended that these should go to the relevant working group committees.

4: PROMOTING AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Item 4.1: 2019-20 research plans press release [Paper RC4.1]

- 14) The Committee considered a draft press release to raise awareness of the Council's current and forthcoming research projects. The Committee felt this would help with both current understanding of the Council's work and future procurement exercises. The Committee recommended the proposed press release be agreed by correspondence without amendments, subject to the opinion of the Communications Committee.

- 15) The Committee recommended that the British Sociological Association, the British Society of Criminology, and the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research be included on any distribution list for the press release.

Item 4.2: 2018-19 annual report [Oral]

- 16) The Committee noted that a draft annual report for 2018/19 is currently being drafted, and that an excerpt relating to the work of the Committee would be circulated for comment shortly. The Committee felt that the current focus on engaging with victims' experiences of the sentencing process would be of particular value for inclusion in the report.

5: FUTURE MEETING DATES

- 17) The Committee agreed to canvass for dates in the week commencing 27 May 2019.

6: AOCB

- 18) The Committee noted Sheriff Crowe's forthcoming retirement and agreed to consider other possible shrieval representation.

- 19) The Committee noted the forthcoming review of standing committees, as required by the Council's standing orders, and agreed that this would provide a logical point to consider committee membership in the round.
- 20) The Committee agreed to consider the draft Impact Assessment by correspondence in due course.

Scottish Sentencing Council Secretariat

March 2019