**MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH SENTENCING COUNCIL**

**COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**

**Monday 1 February 2021**

**Minutes**

**Members present:** Hannah Graham

Krista Johnston

Sheriff Andrew McIntyre (Advisor)

**Secretariat:** Ondine Tennant (Secretary)

Stuart Ritchie (Communications Officer)  
David Dickson (Principal Legal Officer)

1. **PROCEEDINGS**

Sheriff Andrew McIntyre has been appointed to the Communications Committee as an advisor for 2 years and was welcomed to his first meeting.

***Item 1.1: Draft minutes of last meeting***

1. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 February 2020 were approved. It was noted that due to the pandemic the meeting scheduled for 3 June 2020 was cancelled

***Item 1.2: Progress of actions***

1. An update on actions from previous meeting was provided to members through correspondence in July 2020.

***Item 2.1: Communications Strategy – Sentencing Process guideline***

1. The Committee discussed a communications plan for the sentencing process guideline. It broadly followed the arrangements for the launch of the principles and purposes of sentencing guideline, while at the same time building in lessons learned.
2. The need to communicate effectively with the judiciary, for example via the judicial Hub, was highlighted. It was agreed that the communications plan should be updated to ensure the judiciary are made aware of the intention to submit the guideline to the High Court for approval and when a date for the hearing is known.
3. It was agreed that the Council should seek to engage directly with practitioners, through the Law Society for Scotland, the Faculty of Advocates and bar associations, as well as directly with the Sheriffs Principal. As well as ensuring broad awareness of the guideline, this may open up new channels of communication to support other activity.
4. It was suggested that the Council’s educational resources should be updated and extended to colleges and universities, as these, along with the videos on the website have proved popular with students.
5. More use of video, especially for social media, using the guideline as a vehicle for explaining how sentencing works, posters in courts with a QR code directing people to resources on our website and using infographics were also discussed.

***AP1: Secretariat to incorporate targeted communications with the judiciary to the communications plan, in particular using the judicial Hub to keep them informed.***

***AP2: Secretariat to update educational resources in line with process guideline and include their promotion in communications planning to maximise awareness and use.***

***Item 2.2: Communications Plan***

1. A plan to publish research which had been delayed due to the pandemic was submitted to members. Members were advised of the recent publication of the following research reports: had

* Sentence discounting literature review
* Environmental and wildlife crime literature review
* Perceptions of sentencing for causing death by driving

1. The committee agreed to the timetable for publishing the remaining reports:

* Sexual offences involving rape literature review
* Sexual offences involving sexual assault literature review
* Attitudes of young people to the draft guideline on sentencing young people
* Perceptions of sentencing of sexual offences

***Item 2.3: 2020 Communications Report***

1. The committee received a report of communications activity during 2020. Due to the Council being less visibly active as a result of the pandemic disruption there was a reduction in actual and anticipated media coverage over the course of the year.
2. The Council featured in 57 articles during 2020 compared with 139 articles in 2019.
3. The twitter account had 373 new followers in 2020 while tweets have collectively been viewed over 200,000 times.
4. The number of visitors to the Scottish Sentencing Council website dropped slightly last year to 63,000 from 76,000 the previous year. The highest number of visitors to our website in a single month was in February 2020 with almost 9000 people accessing the site following the launch of the sentencing young people guideline consultation.
5. Videos on the YouTube channel were viewed just over 5000 times

**Item 3.1 – 2021-2024 Communications Strategy**

1. Members of the committee agreed that a draft communications strategy should be developed to cover the 2021-2024 business plan period and subject to annual review.

1. Some suggestions were made around increasing engagement with practitioners, in particular young lawyers, perhaps offering CPD sessions to publicise new guidelines and other areas of the Council’s work.

***AP3: Secretariat to provide a further draft of the communications strategy at the next meeting.***

**Item 4.1: Next meeting**

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

**Scottish Sentencing Council Secretariat May 2021**