

MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH SENTENCING COUNCIL

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

02 JUNE 2026, VIA TEAMS

MINUTES

Members present: Dr Jay Gormley (chair)
Summary Sheriff Jo McDonald

Advisors present: Sheriff Iain Fleming

Secretariat: Nicole Vidal (principal research officer)
Maggie Hardiman (research officer)
Valerie MacGregor (principal policy officer)

Apologies: Sheriff Louise Arrol KC

1. PROCEEDINGS

Welcome and introductions [Oral]

- 1) The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that Sheriff Louise Arrol KC had tendered apologies.
- 2) The Committee agreed that papers should be treated as private.

Item 1.1: Committee membership [paper 1.1]

- 3) The Committee noted the update on the tenures of members and advisors.
- 4) The Committee noted that This is Summary Sheriff McDonald's first meeting as a member of the Research Committee, and Sheriff Fleming's first meeting as an advisor (following end of Council tenure).

- 5) The Committee agreed that Sheriff Fleming remain as an advisor for as long as practicable in order to support this transition and overlap period.

Item 1.2: Minutes of previous meeting [paper 1.2]

- 6) The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2026 were noted as approved.

Item 1.3: Progress of actions since last meeting [paper 1.3]

- 7) An update on actions from previous meeting was provided. The Committee noted the update.

2. RESEARCH PROJECTS UPDATE

Item 2.1: Research projects update [Paper 2.1]

- 8) The Chair introduced **paper 2.1** and invited Nicole Vidal to speak to this item, which provided an update of current and forthcoming research projects and priorities.
- 9) At the 29 January meeting, the Committee discussed the idea of developing a research plan/strategy within the Council. The secretariat will revert to the Committee on this matter of promoting engagement with the Council's research among Sheriffs and the judiciary.
- 10) The secretariat is canvassing dates so that a member of SCTS MIAT team can attend a committee meeting to discuss the capabilities of SCTS systems and processes in the context of the Council's data and information needs.
- 11) In addition to impact assessments which include data on sentencing patterns across Scotland as relevant to each guideline in development, the following work has commenced and is ongoing: Sentencing young people guideline 3-year review; Death by driving guideline 1-year review (discussed at **Item 2.3**); and routine monitoring of sentencing and appeals data for guidelines in force.
- 12) Qualitative research for the sentencing young people 3-year review is underway. Judicial interviews are in progress and research is initiating with stakeholder groups. There is

some overlap with the public perceptions focus group work in regards to the methodology and scenarios used. As part of this, the secretariat has been in discussions with stakeholder groups to identify appropriate networks of contacts.

- 13) The secretariat will be carrying out a structured workshop arranged through the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) on 6 June with members of the SYP taking part as participants. This workshop provides opportunity to pilot the above methodological approach, following which the secretariat will be arranging further focus group sessions.
- 14) Analysis of sentencing data and judicial engagement for the Scottish Government research project is in process.
- 15) The Committee discussed initial planning for the Council's third Research Symposium.
- 16) The Committee considered the updates provided in the paper and agreed the current and forecasted research as noted.

ACTION POINT(S)

AP1: Secretariat to prepare a draft strategy for Committee consideration and further development.

AP2: Secretariat to canvass dates with SCTS Management Analysis and Information team with intent to invite to a subsequent Committee meeting.

AP3: Secretariat to begin initial planning for the Council's third Research Symposium and will revert to the Committee at the next meeting to discuss potential topics and themes.

Item 2.2: Lived experience participant groups [Papers 2.2]

- 17) The Chair invited Nicole Vidal to speak to **paper 2.2**. This paper seeks views on proposals for carrying out research with different groups of people with lived experience.
- 18) The Committee considered the proposals and provided feedback on potential advantages and disadvantages of the proposed approaches. The Committee agreed in

principle to carry forward with arrangements, however will revert to relevant guideline committees and Council for further consideration.

ACTION POINT(S)

AP4: Secretariat to revert to relevant guideline committees by correspondence and will prepare a paper for the next Council meeting to consider the issues further.

Item 2.3: Guideline development and review [papers 2.3 and 2.3A]

19) The Chair invited Nicole Vidal to speak to **papers 2.3 and 2.3A** which provide an update on the 1-year review of the guideline on 'Statutory offences for causing death by driving' and the revised impact assessment for the revised guidelines on sentencing rape offences. The Committee noted the update.

3. FUTURE MEETING DATES

Item 3.1: Future meeting dates [Oral]

20) The Committee agreed to confirm next meeting date by correspondence.

ACTION POINT(S)

AP5: Secretariat to liaise with committee regarding next meeting date by correspondence.

4. AOCB

Item 4.1: AOCB [oral]

21) No further business discussed.