



THE SCOTTISH LEGAL AID BOARD

APPROVED MINUTE OF A MEETING OF THE LEGAL ASSISTANCE POLICY COMMITTEE HELD AT 10:30am ON MONDAY 9 AUGUST 2021 by Video Conference

Present: Raymond McMenamin (Chair)
Ray MacFarlane
Sarah O'Neill
Marieke Dwarshuis
Stephen Humphreys
Colin Lancaster
Gerry Bann

In attendance: Anne Dickson, Director of Strategic Development
Marie-Louise Fox, Director of Operations
Graeme Hill, Director of Corporate Services
Ian Dickson, Director of Legal Services
Stuart Drummond, Corporate Governance and Policy Officer

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Draft minute of the Legal Assistance Policy Committee meeting held on 01 June 2021

The draft minute was **approved** by the Committee, subject to a correction that Ray MacFarlane did not tender apologies, rather she was asked not to attend due to a conflict of interest in relation to the case under review.

4. GALA Update

The committee considered the paper by Kieran Forbes that provided an update on the latest developments in relation to the GALA project.

The committee noted the difficulties encountered in stakeholder engagement with some practitioners reticent to express their views. There followed a discussion about how the engagement strategy might be rethought to take account of the difficulties that had been encountered.

It was reported that focus group participants had been identified and that thought would be given to the parameters in which the focus group would operate such as agreeing on the use of Chatham House Rules.

In relation to the means assessment work the committee sought clarity on whether the main drivers for change were to tighten up on the money or be more generous. It was explained that the main driver was simplifying the system and there would be a further paper for the committee at the September meeting that would explain the implications of simplification. The Committee were informed that the objective of simplification was drawn from recommendations from the Legal Aid Review which was to maintain scope but simplify the system. The implications of what “simpler” means will be assessed and monitored as required.

The report was noted.

5. Legal Aid Review - Bill discussion

The Committee considered the paper by Anne Dickson that reported on a meeting with SG Access to Justice Team on policy instructions for a new legal aid bill in this Parliament and presented some issues for discussion prior to sharing with SG.

It was noted that SLAB were participating in a short term working group with Scottish Government to help develop options to inform ministerial decisions. The Committee were of the view that there was an opportunity to re-shape legal aid with this Bill and consideration should be given to how SLAB might assist the Scottish Government in developing its vision for the Bill. It was noted that the paper set out the main elements that would need to be discussed with SG in assisting them in formulating a strategy and should therefore be used as the basis of discussions.

It was agreed that the progress of discussions and development of the Bill work would be regularly considered at forthcoming LAPC meetings.

6. AOB

None.

The Convener confirmed that the next meeting was due to be held on 6 September.

The Convener closed the meeting.