

Report No: **SLAB/2021/47**

Agenda item: **12**

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| **Report to:** | The Board |
| **Meeting Date:** | Monday 6th December 2021 |
| **Report Title** | Meetings with Outside Bodies |
| **Report Category** | For Information |
| **Issue status:** | Business as usual |

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| **Written by:** | Emma O'Hara |
| **Director responsible:** | Colin Lancaster |
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| **Publication of the Paper** |
| This paper does not contain information of a sensitive nature and can be published. |

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| **Report** |

**SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT**

**JUSTICE COMMITTEE** - On 7October, Colin Lancaster appeared in person before the Justice Committee to answer questions on the budget for legal aid. Colin answered the Committee’s questions in relation to SLAB’s administrative budget, which has remained almost static for the past 10 years. Colin also addressed a range of issues on the legal aid fund with convener, Audrey Nicoll, asking about trends in legal aid and what these meant for the legal aid budget and registered firms. There was also questions about SLAB-employed solicitors providing specialist services, such as for domestic offences, and the implications of the fee structure on solicitors’ work-life balance.

**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT - JUSTICE**

**JUSTICE BOARD *–*** on 21 October, Colin Lancaster attended the Justice Board on Teams, with the agenda including; COP26, a paper on violence against women and girls together with an update on UNCRC implementation and an update from the Race Equality working groups. On 18 November**,** Colin Lancaster attended the Justice Board on Teams, with the agenda including; Justice Strategy: Progress Update, Covid – 19 inquiry, budget, age of criminal responsibility and young person’s guarantee.

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD** *–* Colin Lancaster attends fortnightly meetings with other justice stakeholder bodies. These sessions are particularly focussed on the Recover, Renew, Transform programme which is reviewing how the system operates to ensure a resilient, effective justice system now and for the future.

**MEETING WITH DIRECTOR OF JUSTICE / HEAD OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE***:* on 9 and 19 November, Colin Lancaster met with Scottish Government’s Director of Justice Neil Rennick and Head of Access to Justice Unit, Denise Swanson on Teams, to discuss matters of mutual interest and current issues around criminal legal aid.

**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT, JUSTICE DIRECTORATE** *–* on 20 October and 18 November Colin Lancaster attended a monthly catch up with Denise Swanson, Head of Access to Justice Unit, to discuss matters of mutual interest.

**SCOTTISH CIVIL JUSTICE COUNCIL:**On 11 October Marie-Louise Fox attended the Scottish Civil Justice Council’s Personal Injury Committee meeting on Webex.

On 18th October, Colin Lancaster attended the Scottish Civil Justice Council. The agenda included an update on the mode of attendance at court hearings, the civil online process and EqIA, and various updates to legislation and Court rules. On 29November, Colin Lancaster attended an extraordinary meeting of the Scottish Civil Justice Council where commencement of the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 was discussed.

**SCOTTISH CIVIL JUSTICE COUNCIL’S ACCESS TO JUSTICE***:* On 27 October, Colin Lancaster attended the Access to Justice Committee meeting on VC, to discuss the Scottish Civil Justice Council’s recent consultation on ‘Mode of Attendance at Court Hearings’.

**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT’S STRATEGIC LEADS GROUP*:*** on 20 October, 17 November Marie Louise Fox attended a meeting on Teams, which had its inaugural meeting on Monday 4 October. The Group will continue to discuss the draft aims and outcomes to be included in the draft Justice Strategy.

**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT’S OPERATIONS AND ANALYSIS GROUP** *–* 27 October, Kingsley Thomas, Matt Taylor and Brian Sinclair attended this meeting on Teams, which looked at the data and trends across the wider justice system at present.

**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT’S COP26 JUSTICE BOARD SUB GROUP WORKING** *–* Kingsley Thomas attended weekly meetings throughout October and early November which looked at the proposed policing and custody court arrangements for the international COP26 Climate Change Conference in Glasgow.

**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT – GENERAL**

**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CHILDREN’S HEARING IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**: on 24 November, Wendy Dalgleish attended the meeting in place of Marie Louise Fox, which covered post-COVID recovery, updates on the “Our Hearing Our Voice” recommendations and updates on developments in the sector.

**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY MEETING** – on 23 November, Graeme Hill attended an accountability meeting with the Scottish Government to discuss the latest SLAB Financial position with regard to the Admin and Fund budgets and spend and will also the Autumn Budget Review, Pensions and Property position.

**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT - ACCOUNTABLE OFFICER DEVELOPMENT EVENT**: On 1st December – Colin Lancaster attended this event for new and experienced Accountable Officers which provided opportunity for individuals from a wide range of public bodies to better understand their responsibilities in their role as a Chief Executive with Accountable Officer responsibilities, encourage discussion about experiences and practical issues involved and help raise awareness of governance and accountability.

**LAWYERS AND REPRESENTATIVE BODIES**

**GLASGOW SHERIFF COURT USERS** *–* On 13 and 27 October Kingsley Thomas attended a local meeting of the Glasgow Sheriff Court Users Group to discuss the local custody arrangements needed for Glasgow’s COP26 Conference in November.

**ABERDEEN SHERIFF COURT USERS *–*** On 14, 21 and 28 October Kingsley Thomas attended a local meeting of the Aberdeen Sheriff Court Users Group to discuss the local custody arrangements needed for Glasgow’s COP26 Conference in November.

**EDINBURGH SHERIFF COURT USERS** *–* On 14 October Kingsley Thomas attended a local meeting of the Edinburgh Sheriff Court Users Group to discuss the local custody arrangements needed for Glasgow’s COP26 Conference in November.

**PAISLEY SHERIFF COURT USERS** *–* On 27 October Kingsley Thomas attended a local meeting of the Paisley Sheriff Court Users Group to discuss the local custody arrangements needed for Glasgow’s COP26 Conference in November.

**LAW SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND*:***On26 October, Colin Lancaster and Board Chair Ray Macfarlane attended the quarterly meeting between SLAB and the office bearers of the Law society of Scotland on Teams, where matters of mutual interest were discussed to include the profession and COP26.

**LAW SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND*:***On 2 December, Graeme Hill attended the monthly Civil QAC meeting hosted by the Law Society of Scotland where peer review and matters of Civil Quality Assurance were discussed.

**JUSTICE SECTOR BODIES**

**POLICE SCOTLAND COP 26 DAILY BRIEFING** From 25 October - 15 November, Kingsley Thomas / Marie Louise Fox or Alistair Mathieson attended twice daily catch up meetings with Police Scotland and Criminal Justice partners on Teams with regard to COP26.

**SCOTTISH COURT AND TRIBUNAL SERVICE: COP26*:***On 14 October 2021 Marie-Louise Fox attended the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service’s COP26 Planning Group meeting on Webex, to look at the proposed policing and custody court arrangements for November’s COP26 Climate Change Conference in Glasgow

**PUBLIC BODIES**

**POLICE SCOTLAND’S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES DIVISION SUB GROUP***:* On 15 October 2021 Marie Louise Fox attended a meeting on Teams, which provided an update on their COP26 planning report and progress on action log tasks.

**SRO GROUP MEETING FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE ORGANISED BY POLICE SCOTLAND***:* on 21 October, Marie Louise Fox attended the SRO Group meeting for Criminal Justice organised by Police Scotland, which took place in person at Scottish Police College, Tulliallan Castle after a morning SRO Workshop organised by Scottish Government.

**NDPB FORUM –** on 24 November 2021 Colin Lancaster and Graeme Hill attended the NDPB Finance Forum where Kate Forbes, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy addressed the forum.

**OTHER MEETINGS**

**LAW CENTRES ANNUAL CONFERENCE***:* From Wednesday 10 to Friday 12 November, Colin Lancaster attended and contributed to the Law Centres Annual Conference. Colin’s session was entitled ‘Justice in the Balance: Legal aid responding to changes’, where he addressed attendees on the future of legal aid and the Covid-19 response.

**JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE:**On 15 & 22 November, Graeme Hill attended the SLAB / JCC (Joint Consultative Committee) meeting with the GMB Union to discuss matters related to working in partnership with them.

**AUDIT SCOTLAND:**On Wednesday 17 November Graeme Hill met with Audit Scotland to discuss 2020/2021 accounts.