

**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**Monday 15 April 2024**  
**9:15 am to 15:30 pm**  
**Thistle House**

**Present:**

Dr Lindsay Montgomery CBE, Chairing Member  
Mrs Liz Burnley CBE  
Mrs Wilma Canning  
Sheriff Principal Kate Dowdalls, KC  
President May Dunsmuir  
Mr Paul Gray  
The Hon. Lady Shona Haldane, KC  
Ms Emma Marriott (joined the meeting at agenda item 7.4)  
Dr Fiona McLean  
Mr Gareth Morgan, QPM  
Mr Peter Murray  
The Hon. Lord Robert Weir, KC  
Sheriff David Young, KC

**Attendees:**

Ms Paula Stevenson, Chief Executive  
Mr Stuart Scott, Digital and Continuous Improvement Manager (DCIM)  
Mrs Julie Tarbet, Appointments Manager  
Mrs Gillian Mawdsley, Legal Appointment Adviser (for agenda item 7.2 only)  
Ms Deirdre Fulton, Lay Appointment Adviser (for agenda item 10 only)

**Apologies:**

Mr Jonathan Barne, KC  
Mr Paul Cackette, CBE  
Billy Love, Head of Operations

**1. Welcome**

- 1.1 The Chairing Member welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 There were no declarations of interest raised by Board members.

**2. Business from previous meeting**

**2.1 Minutes of the 19 February 2024 meeting**

- 2.1.1 The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

**2.2 Action Tracker**

2.2.1 The Chief Executive updated the Board on the progress on completing the actions in the Tracker. The Board were content.

### **3. Chairing Member Update**

3.1 The Chairing Member updated the Board on a range of matters, including attendance at the Sheriff and Summary Sheriff Association conference, a meeting with the Deputy Director of Justice and an informative visit to the Judicial Appointments Commission.

### **4. Chief Executive Update**

4.1 The Board noted the contents of the Chief Executive's report, including the update about staffing and Board member induction. Members of the Board commented on the high quality of the recent Unconscious Bias Training Session.

### **5. Assurance of Governance**

#### **5.1 Assurance of Governance**

5.1.1 The Chief Executive spoke to the paper which is a standard quarterly governance update. The structure of the report will be reviewed when the new Framework Agreement with the Scottish Government has been agreed. The Board noted the contents of the report and were content to approve it.

5.1.2 The Board discussed the use of Huddle and requested that the DCIM investigate group chat options. It was confirmed that Huddle remains the secure information sharing platform for Board members.

**Action point 1: The DCIM to check if Huddle offers a group chat facility or identify other appropriate options and report back at the next meeting.**

**Action point 2: The DCIM will contact all members to discuss whether they would like further training on Huddle.**

**Action Point 3: DCIM to liaise with Scottish Government to determine if members can be provided with a secure JABS email address which can be accessed from non-SCOTS devices.**

#### **5.2 End of year budget update/ Budget profile - 2024/5**

5.2.1 The Chief Executive talked to the papers setting out the end of year position on the budget for 2023/24, and the budget profile for 2024/25. The Board were content.

## **5.3 Risk Register**

5.3.1 The Chief Executive provided the background to the approach JABS had taken to develop the Risk Register and it was agreed that significant progress had been made on both corporate and operational matters. It was agreed that the Risk Register format should be reviewed in due course. The Board discussed and agreed the proposed changes to the Risk Register scores.

**Action point 4: The Chief Executive to review the format of the Risk Register in 2025.**

## **6 Corporate**

### **6.1 Six month review of Corporate Plan**

6.1.1 The Chief Executive explained that it was good practice to review the Plan on a regular basis and that, at the six month stage, she was pleased with the progress to date. The Board were content with the report.

### **6.2 Business Plan 2024/25**

6.2.1 The Chief Executive stated that substantial progress had been made against the 2023/4 business plan. The Board were asked to approve the draft plan for 2024/5. This combines outstanding priorities from the previous year with a number of priorities which have been brought forward from year two of the 2023-26 Corporate Plan. The Board discussed the Business Plan and provided some suggestions but were otherwise content to approve.

**Action point 5: The Chief Executive to update the Business Plan 2024/25.**

### **6.3 Legal Advice on status and obligations of the Board – update re health and safety**

6.3.1 The Chairing Member explained that, as previously agreed, legal advice had been sought on Health and Safety obligations and the status and obligations of the Board which has now been received.

6.3.2 The Chief Executive summarised the legal advice which the Board discussed. The Chief Executive confirmed that she will write to the Scottish Government to explain the issues and ask for a meeting to discuss the same.

**Action point 6: The Chief Executive to write to the Scottish Government, and Judicial Office in relation to judicial members, and the status and obligations of Board Members.**

## **6.4 Website – Business case**

6.4.1 The DCIM provided a brief overview of the business case for funding for a new website. The Board discussed the business case and requested some amendments. The Board were content for the amended business case to be submitted to the Scottish Government.

**Action point 7: The DCIM to update the Business Case following the Board’s comments for submission to the Scottish Government for approval.**

## **7 Policies**

### **7.1 Policy Update**

7.1.1 The Chief Executive gave a brief overview of the paper and advised the Board that as good progress had been made on reviewing corporate policies, the focus of the policy development was now more on operational recruitment policies. As a result, additional policy areas have been included in the policy tracker. The Board noted the report and were content.

### **7.2 Merit – review of legislation**

7.2.1 The Chairing Member introduced the paper which was provided to assist the Board in an initial discussion on their approach to assessing ‘merit’.

7.2.2 The Chairing Member welcomed Gillian Mawdsley to the meeting to present her review of legislation about ‘merit’ as it applies to JABS recruitment processes. The research and Board’s feedback will help in the development of a policy paper on ‘merit’ for the June meeting. The Board thanked Gillian Mawdsley for her presentation.

**Action point 8: A policy paper on ‘merit’ to be produced for the next Board meeting.**

### **7.3 Legal advice on eligibility**

7.3.1 The Board had requested further clarification on certain aspects of legal advice provided relating to the eligibility criteria for the roles which fall within JABS remit.

7.3.2 The Board discussed the additional legal advice and agreed that further clarification was required.

**Action point 9: The Chief Executive to seek further clarification on aspects of the legal advice which had been received.**

## **7.4 Communication and Engagement Strategy**

7.4.1 The Chief Executive gave a brief overview of the Communication and Engagement strategy, which included the priorities for the current year 2024-25. The intention going forward is for the Strategy to be considered in the final quarter of each year with a view to agreeing the priorities for the forthcoming year. The Board noted the contents of the Strategy and were content.

## **7.5 Social Media Strategy - update**

7.5.1 The Chief Executive confirmed that due to capacity issues, this will be an agenda item for the June Board meeting.

## **8. Current and Future Competitions**

### **8.1 Current and upcoming rounds**

8.1.1 The DCIM gave a brief overview of the paper and details on upcoming rounds. The Board discussed a query around the operation of the Reserves Policy and noted the contents of the paper. The Board agreed that some aspects of the Reserves policy should be reviewed in early course

**Action point 10: The Head of Operations to provide a paper on the Reserves Policy for the June meeting.**

### **8.2 Standing Orders for Panels**

8.2.1 The Chairing Member explained that the Board have been provided with a draft set of Standing Orders for Panels as part of the work to better document the policies and processes for undertaking competitions. It will be a living document and updated as necessary. Members welcomed the draft Standing Orders for panels and agreed they provide more clarity. The DCIM will update the draft with the Board's comments.

**Action point 11: The DCIM to update the draft Standing Orders and bring back to a future meeting for the Board's agreement.**

## **9. Diversity Action Plan**

9.1 The Chief Executive provided an oral update to the Board. She noted there will be a Diversity Think Tank meeting at Strathclyde University Law School on 23 April 2024 which will be attended by key stakeholders and will look at a range of diversity issues. She will give a presentation on diversity issues, in relation to judicial appointments, at the event.

9.2 The Chief Executive highlighted that progress is being made to develop the Diversity Report which should be published in May/June 2024. The first meeting of the Judicial Appointments Diversity Reference Group is on 7 May. The Judicial Office is

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undertaking a Judicial Attitudes Survey later in the year which may provide more information on diversity in the judiciary. President Dunsmuir indicated that work was being undertaken in relation to diversity in the Scottish Tribunals.

**Action point 12: The Chief Executive and President Dunsmuir to speak about diversity information in relation to the Scottish Tribunals.**

## **10. Programme for Change**

10.1 Deirdre Fulton joined the meeting and gave an oral update on progress with the Programme for Change (PfC) workstream which had looked at benchmarking and the potential for development person specifications. She also gave an update from the recent visit to JAC, comparing the JAC and JABS recruitment processes and shared areas of good practice identified from the visit.

## **11. Any Other Competent Business**

11.1 There were no items raised by Board members.

## **12. Date of Next Meeting**

12.1 The next meeting is on 17 June 2024.