15.12.16

Minutes of the Board Meeting
Monday 15 December 2025
9:15am to 3:30pm
Thistle House
Edinburgh

Present:
Mr Lindsay Montgomery CBE, Chairing Member (CM)
Mr Jonathan Barne, KC
Mrs Liz Burnley, CBE
Mr Paul Cackette, CBE
Mrs Wilma Canning
Sheriff Principal Kate Dowdalls, KC by VC
President May Dunsmuir
Sheriff Jane Farquharson, KC
Mr Paul Gray
The Hon. Lady Shona Haldane, KC
Ms Emma Marriott
Dr Fiona McLean by VC
Mr Peter Murray
The Hon. Lord Robert Weir, KC

Attendees:
Mrs Laura McGeary, Chief Executive (CE)
Mr Billy Love, Head of Operations (HoO)
Mr Stuart Scott, Digital and Continuous Improvement Manager (DCIM) (agenda item 12 only)
Mr François Marfaing, Finance Officer (agenda item 11 only)
Mrs Julie Tarbet, Appointments Manager

Apologies:
Mr Gareth Morgan, QPM

Guest Attendees:
The Right Hon. Lord Pentland, Lord President
Riley Power, Executive Director, Judicial Office
The Right Hon. Lady Wise, President of Scottish Tribunals
Deirdre Fulton (agenda item 10 only)

1. Welcome and Apologies / Declarations of interest

1.1 The CM welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2 There were no declarations of interest raised by Board members.

JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS BOARD FOR SCOTLAND

2. Business from previous meeting

2.1 Minutes of the 20 October 2025 meeting

2.1.1 The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting, subject to minor amendments.

2.2 Action Tracker

2.2.1 The Chief Executive (CE) updated the Board on progress in supplementing the Action Tracker with a dashboard to support clarity and accessibility for Board members. The CE noted that all the actions were being reviewed and refinement of the actions within the tracker was ongoing. A further update will be provided at the next Board meeting.

The Board noted the progress made in developing the dashboard.

3. The Right Hon. Lord Pentland, Lord President

3.1 The Chair welcomed The Right Hon. Lord Pentland, Lord President and Riley Power, Executive Director, Judicial Office to the meeting.

3.2 The Lord President thanked the Board for the invitation and the opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with judicial appointments. He expressed his appreciation for the Board's work, noting its vital contribution to the effective administration of justice in Scotland.

3.3 The Lord President spoke about the context in which the judiciary are operating, including the potential impact of recent legislative changes. He also spoke about the upcoming Senator competition and the key aspects of this senior judicial role. He also highlighted the importance of attracting the most able candidates to apply for judicial office, the wider challenges currently facing the justice sector, and the value of continued collaborative working.

3.4 The Board agreed that collaboration on outreach events has improved, with positive feedback received from outreach attendees. While planning and prioritising a programme of judicial recruitment is progressing, the Board noted that further collaboration to enhance this process is required, including the provision of more public information on future judicial competitions. Additional joint work on engagement with potential applicants - especially around explaining the roles, expectations, and the benefit of judicial office - should also be considered.

The Board thanked the Lord President for his views and constructive discussion and expressed its commitment to ongoing collaboration on judicial recruitment.

JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS BOARD FOR SCOTLAND

4. Chamber President Decision

4.1 The CM welcomed The Right Hon. Lady Wise, President of Scottish Tribunals, to the meeting. He explained that - as Lady Wise was a member of the Chamber President 2025 selection Panel- she would participate as a Board member for the purposes of the Chamber President 2025 Board Decision.

4.2 The CM presented the Chamber President 2025 Board Decision paper to the Board. The Board discussed the paper and approved the recommendations of the selection Panel for the Office of Chamber President.

5. Chairing Member Oral Update

5.1 The CM referred to his written update on 12 December 2025. He also updated the Board that he, the CE and Deirde Fulton (DF) had a constructive meeting with the Dean of the Faculty of Advocates last week.

Action point 1: CM and CE to consider recording of interviews.

6. Chief Executive Update

6.2 Assurance of Governance

6.2.1 The CE spoke to the paper for Q3 - (October - December 2025).

The Board noted the update and approved the Assurance of Governance Report.

NB: There was a change to the meeting running order, and agenda items 13 and 14 were taken at this point.

13. Late Application Policy

13.1 The Digital and Continuous Improvement Manager (DCIM) introduced the paper and outlined the development of the Late Application Policy. The Board discussed and agreed the reviewed policy.

Action Point 4: ***BMU to update the Competition Guide Note to include information about the Late Application Policy and add a link to the Policy.***

14. Lay Appointment Advisors (LAAs) Reappointment

14.1 The CM introduced the paper which recommended the reappointment of the Lay Appointment Advisors. It was also recommended that there was a need for a short reappointment to the end of March 2026 for the Lay Appointment Advisor who was leading on the Programme for Change workstream.

JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS BOARD FOR SCOTLAND

7. Competition Update and Planning

The HoO gave a brief overview of the paper and details on current and potential upcoming rounds. The Board noted the paper.

8. Strategy Day

8.1 The CE introduced the paper and outlined the proposed agenda for the Strategy Day, noting that it may also include a session on Risk. The Board provided suggestions on the proposed agenda and agreed the proposed agenda looked constructive.
There was discussion around the meeting date, with the February Board Meeting, Programme for Change meeting and the Strategy Day all being held in fairly short compass. It was agreed that the date and timings would be reviewed.

Action point 5: CE and CM to review the Strategy Day agenda and consider dates.

9. Strategic Risks – Review and Scoring

9.1 The CE presented the paper and provided an update on the recent review and reformat of the Strategic Risk Register. The short-life review group, comprising Peter Murray, Fiona Maclean, the CE and CM, examined the existing risks, assessed whether they continue to reflect the organisation’s strategic context, identified any new or emerging risks requiring Board oversight. The CM thanked the members of the group for taking this work forward.

9.2 The Board discussed the Strategic Risk Register and suggested that the different categories of risk should be defined, that the action plan requires more detail and that a discussion on risk appetite would be beneficial.

The Board noted the update and that work on developing the Strategic Risk Register is moving forward in a very constructive way.

NB: There was a change to the meeting running order, and agenda items 15, 11 and 12 were taken at this point.

15. Communications and Engagement

15.1 The CE spoke to the paper and provided an update on the good progress made in delivering the Communications and Engagement Plan approved in April 2024. The CE discussed the intention to enhance the information provided to potential applicants regarding what is and is not involved in judicial roles, and to broaden non-competition outreach activities.

The Board noted the progress with the Communications and Engagement Plan.

11. Finance

11.1 The Finance Manager (FM) spoke to the paper and provided an update on JABS' financial position as at the end of November 2025, including expenditure across the financial year, with particular focus on competition delivery, which continues to be closely monitored. He advised that work to further develop the reporting template was ongoing and that attention was now turning to developing the 2026–2027 budget forecast.

The Board noted that the paper was clear and concise and confirmed that they were content with the financial assurance provided.

12. Website Update

12.1 The DCIM provided an oral update on progress with the development of the new website, advising that he will be contacting Board members to create video content for the new site. BMU will receive training on managing website content in January 2026, and The Gate will upload some initial content before BMU continues this work. The DCIM anticipates that the new website will launch in March 2026.

12.2 The CM confirmed that recent applicant survey results will be added to the current website. These were originally intended for inclusion on the new site, however as the launch is not expected until March, it was considered better to share then on the current website in the interim period.

The Board noted the progress and were content.

10. Programme for Change

10.1 DF provided a verbal update on progress with the Programme for Change (PfC) project. She noted that incremental changes had been made during the year and that progress had been affected by resource availability and the volume of competitions. She then provided a summary of the PfC work areas.

10.2 DF confirmed the new steps planned for 2026 and advised that the PfC project plan and key milestones will be updated accordingly. The CM confirmed that DF is preparing a full PfC Report for the Board to be discussed at a future meeting.

Action point 6: DF to share a PfC Report with the Board.

The Board noted the update and thanked DF for her work on this project.

16. AOCB

16.1 The date of the next Board meeting is 16 February 2026.