JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS BOARD FOR SCOTLAND

17.08.02

Minutes of the Board Meeting
Monday 22 June 2026
9:15 am to 2:30 pm
Thistle House, Edinburgh

Present:
Mr Lindsay Montgomery CBE, Chairing Member (CM)
Mrs Liz Burnley, CBE
Mr Paul Cackette, CBE
Mrs Wilma Canning
Sheriff Principal Kate Dowdalls, KC (by VC) (agenda item 3 only)
Sheriff Jane Farquharson, KC
Mr Paul Gray (by VC)
The Hon. Lady Shona Haldane
Ms Emma Marriott (by VC)
Dr Fiona McLean
Mr Gareth Morgan, QPM
Mr Peter Murray (by VC)
The Hon. Lord Robert Weir

Attendees:
Mrs Laura McGeary, Chief Executive (CE)
Mr Stuart Scott, Digital & Continuous Improvement Manager (DCIM)
Mr François Marfaing, Finance Officer (agenda item 7 only)
Mrs Julie Tarbet, Appointments Manager

Apologies:
Mr Jonathan Barne, KC
President May Dunsmuir
Ms Denise Loney
Mr Billy Love, Head of Operations

1. Welcome and Apologies / Declarations of interest

1.1 The CM welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2 Declarations of interest were invited; none were made.

2. Business from previous meeting

2.1 Minutes of the 20 Apri 2026 meeting

2.1.1 The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

2.2 Action Points and Matters Arising

2.2.1 The Chief Executive (CE) provided an update on the Action Tracker, advising that several actions remain in progress. New actions relating to the policy review schedule and the process for sharing learning from post competition wash up sessions are now underway.

The Board noted the update.

3. Sheriff 2026 – Recommendation

3.1 Liz Burnley, Panel Chair, introduced the paper outlining the outcome of the Sheriff 2026 recruitment process. Following discussion, the Board approved the recommendations for appointment to the office of Sheriff.

4. Chairing Member Oral Update

4.1 The Chairing Member (CM) provided an update on current priorities and strategic activity, highlighting that competition planning remains a key focus, with work underway with the Judicial Office (JO) and the Scottish Government (SG) to agree priorities.

4.2 The CM outlined developments in BMU and Board leadership and composition, including the forthcoming end of the Chief Executive's temporary contract and ongoing engagement with the SG on recruitment arrangements. The CM also confirmed new and extended Board appointments to support Board continuity and capacity. He also reminded members that Liz Burnley completed her term as a Board member in August. He thanked her for her significant contribution to JABS over her period on the Board. She would continue for a period after August to conclude competition work as allowed for in the legislation.

4.3 The CM reported on governance matters, including progress of the Character and Conduct Committee and planned engagement with Ministers. The Board also considered the approach to seeking independent legal advice and agreed to retain current arrangements. The CM and CE planned early engagement with Brodies to discuss future arrangements and contact points.

4.4 The CM provided an overview of recent stakeholder engagement, noting positive discussions with Sheriff and Part-time Sheriff Associations and their willingness to support outreach activity.

4.5 The CM highlighted wider external engagement, including Board member involvement in UK senior judicial recruitment processes.

4.6 The CM outlined upcoming activity, including Board development sessions, aimed at supporting continuous improvement and capability.

5. Chief Executive Update

5.1 The CE provided an update covering staffing, corporate matters, and diversity, engagement. The BMU is now at full complement following a recent appointment, with further recruitment underway to permanently fill roles currently filled on a temporary basis

The Board noted the update.

6. Corporate Policy

6.1 Operating Model

6.1.1 The CE introduced the paper, setting out proposed changes to the operating model to improve efficiency, consistency and resilience. The Board discussed each item in turn.

6.1.2 The Board agreed to move from a bi-monthly to a quarterly meeting cycle (March, June, September and December), with the August meeting likely to proceed before transition.

Action 1: CE to confirm revised Board meeting dates as soon as possible.

Action 2: DCIM to research and bring forward detailed proposals on digital recording options.

6.1.4 The Board agreed to implement the use of AI tools to support meeting notetaking, in line with the SG guidance, noting that this will complement rather than replace existing notetaking responsibilities.

Action 3: BMU to implement AI supported notetaking in meetings, ensuring appropriate governance, transparency and compliance arrangements.

Action 4: CM to take forward with Sheriffs Principal to ensure appropriate judicial office holder participation.

6.1.6 The Board discussed the balance, composition and role of the LAAs in competitions. It was agreed that the Legal Appointment Advisor role profile will be reviewed in advance of any future LAA recruitment.

6.1.7 The Board agreed to pursue a more standardised and consistent approach to notetaking for candidate report summaries and to candidate feedback, while maintaining meaningful, individualised feedback.

Action 5: CM/CE to arrange a session with Panel Chairs and LAAs to design and implement an enhanced notetaking and candidate feedback approach.

6.1.8 The Board agreed with the proposal to seek SG agreement to introduce a Deputy Chair role to strengthen leadership resilience, governance and continuity.

Action 6: CE/CM to engage with the SG to consider this proposal and report back to the Board.

7. Finance

7.1 The Finance Manager provided an update on the 2026–27 budget position, noting that expenditure is on track and within the agreed allocation, with ongoing monitoring for current and future competitions costs.

The Board took assurance from the update.

8. Competition Update

8.1 The DCIM provided an overview of current and forthcoming recruitment activity, noting that the Senator competition has concluded, and Sheriff recommendations were agreed for submission to the SG.

The DCIM provided also provided an update on the light touch recruitment, and the competition for the HEC that are ongoing.

8.2 The DCIM presented the competition plan and timeline, highlighting the increasing scale of JABS work. The Board requested the introduction of a live system to better capture and update Board member availability.

Action 7: DCIM to identify a suitable collaborative and online scheduling tool and present a recommendation at the next Board meeting.

9. Website

9.1 The DCIM provided an update on the development of the new website, demonstrating progress and outlining ongoing content development, including supporting videos for each role (two per role). The Board requested that diversity and disability are appropriately reflected in visual content.

The Board welcomed the progress and considered the website a significant improvement.

10. AOCB

10.1 No additional items were raised. The next meeting will take place on 17 August 2026.