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Laura Paton, HM Chief Inspector of Prosecution in Scotland; Dr Brian Plastow, Scottish Biometrics Commissioner; Craig Naylor, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary – Scotland; Wendy Sinclair-Gieben, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons- Scotland and Michelle Macleod, Police Investigations and Review Commissioner

By email

Your ref: LP/CS

17 February 2023

Dear All

Criminal Justice Board

Please accept my sincere apologies for the extensive delay in replying to your joint letter dated 1 September 2022. This letter responds to the points made and I would like to offer a meeting so we can discuss in further detail and provide clarification on any points which you might find helpful.

1. Current status of the Criminal Justice Board and RRT Group, including role, remit, membership and priorities

In explaining the current status of these groups, I hope it will be helpful to explain in brief how the groups were initially set up and to describe the evolution to the current position.

The Criminal Justice Board was established in April 2020 as a sub-board of the Justice Board to manage the Criminal Justice system's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and to provide oversight of the subsequent 'Recover, Renew and Transform' ('RRT') programme. The Board met fortnightly and continues to do so. One of its key focuses at the start of the pandemic was establishing the collaborative RRT Programme. The RRT Programme comprised of 5 projects workstreams, each led by the relevant operational lead:

- (i) High Court Trials – led by SCTS
- (ii) Virtual Summary Trials – judicially led and sponsored by SCTS
- (iii) Summary Procedures – initially led by COPFS, later judicially led
- (iv) Virtual Custody Courts- led by Police Scotland
- (v) Community Justice and Prisons- led by Community Justice Scotland and the Scottish Prison Service.

Each project had a corresponding governance structure and project board. Delivery Plans for each workstream were developed and shared with the RRT sub group, a group comprising the Senior Responsible Owners (SROs) for each workstream.

To support the governance an Advisory Group was established to play an important role in bringing a person-centred perspective to the Criminal Justice Board's work, aimed at ensuring that the views, requirements and rights of the people experiencing the system were built into the planning and implementation of the programme.

At the end of 2021, the RRT Programme transitioned to an interim delivery plan, still overseen by the RRT sub group (the 'SRO Group') under the oversight of the Criminal Justice Board, while partners considered how to reshape delivery building on the progress made by RRT but in a way that aligned with the long term outcomes articulated in the 2022 Vision for Justice.

While we have moved beyond the concept of RRT as a programme, many elements of it are now being incorporated into a longer term portfolio of justice Transformational Change Programmes (TCP), aimed at delivering the Justice Vision outcomes. These programmes will bring together projects aimed at making the criminal justice system work better for its users, delivering person-centred and trauma-informed justice and shifting the balance on community justice. This approach will look to transform the system by piloting initiatives and improving approaches iteratively, the programmes aim to use evaluation to understand the impact of change, as well as to inform decision making.

As the sponsoring group of the TCPs, the Criminal Justice Board will play a vital role in providing strategic oversight, ensuring the work aligns with their strategic vision for the future of the criminal justice system.

At the same time, the Criminal Justice Board will continue to exercise its highly dynamic and strategic function in supporting an effective collective response to new and emerging issues across the criminal system, which was such a critical enabling factor in the justice system's ability to respond effectively to the impact of the pandemic.

Current membership of the Board is:

Criminal Justice Board Member	Organisation
Neil Rennick	Director of Justice. Scottish Government
ACC Steve Johnson	Police Scotland
Eric McQueen	Chief Executive, Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
John Logue	Interim Chief Executive, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
Teresa Medhurst	Chief Executive, Scottish Prison Service
Colin Lancaster	Chief Executive, Scottish Legal Aid Board
Karyn McCluskey	Chief Executive, Community Justice Scotland
Anna Donald	Deputy Director, Criminal Justice, Scottish Government
Amy Wilson	Head of Justice Analytical Services, Scottish Government



2. Audit

Audit Scotland is currently conducting a review of the scale of delays in the criminal court system as a result of the backlog caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the action taken to address these. Although their report has yet to be finalised, it is expected that they will make recommendations relating to the way that the justice system continues to manage collectively the ongoing impacts of the pandemic as well as deliver the long term vision for the justice system of the future. We will of course be committed to working closely with our partner organisations in taking forward any recommendations.

I have asked my office to contact you to arrange a meeting at a time suitable to you all and again my apologies for the delay.

I am copying this reply to Don McGillivray, Director of Safer Communities.

Yours sincerely



Neil Rennick
Director of Justice