

**RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 MARCH 2020  
HELD VIA TELECONFERENCE**

**Present:**

**Members**

John Logue	Deputy Crown Agent (Operational Support)(Chair)
Graham Kerr	Head of Business Management (Local Court)/Director Support Services
Bill Comrie	Head of Business Management (Serious Casework)
John Cooper	Non-Executive Director
Mark Howells	Director of Finance and Procurement
Douglas Taylor	Head of Management Accounting and Planning
Marlene Anderson	Head of Finance
Doreen Crawford	Head of Workforce Planning & Reward

**In attendance**

Kathy Brown	Secretariat
Colette Weir	Secretariat

**Apologies**

Ian Walford	Deputy Chief Executive
Catriona Dalrymple	Procurator Fiscal (Local Court North and East Scotland)
Sarah Carter	HR Director

**Welcome**

1. The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting which, due to the current Coronavirus outbreak, was conducted via tele-conference. He welcomed Graham Kerr in his new role as Head of Business Management Local Court and thanked Catriona Dalrymple for her contribution to the Resources Committee over the last few years.

**Minutes from meeting held on 28 February 2020**

2. Director Finance and Procurement (DFP) and Head of Workforce Planning and Reward (HWPR) suggested an amendment to paragraph 6 and the relevant action point in relation to Excess Fares. The Committee asked that the minutes be updated with the proposal and be circulated for approval.

**Action: Minutes to be updated with proposed changes in relation to Excess Fares and circulated to the Committee.**

## Action Log

3. The Committee agreed the following amendments to the Action Log:

**Actions 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 15 are closed and should be removed from the action log.**

**Actions 1 and 4 due 30 April 2020. This will be reassessed prior to the meeting and will be dependent on additional workloads experienced during the Coronavirus crisis.**

**Action 10 any potential hotspots due to leavers in the Classic Pension Scheme will be reported to the Committee under the HR Workforce Plan.**

The Committee noted progress with the remaining actions.

## HR MI Update

4. Due to the current Coronavirus crisis HR presented a reduced report showing staffing data as at 29 February 2020. HWPR advised that approximately 30 new members of staff were scheduled to join COPFS in April 2020. The Deputy Crown Agent advised the committee that the Corporate Resilience Group had agreed that these recruitments should go ahead as planned.

5. The report showed that January sickness absences had reduced. In order to ensure future absences statistics were comparable the Committee agreed that any COVID-19 sickness absences should be reported separately.

6. HR presented a revised Excess Fares Allowance (EFA) paper.

7. It was agreed COPFS would pay Tax and National Insurance (NI) for excess fares, for all relevant moves, from 1 April 2020. From that date all staff currently in receipt of excess fares will move to the new arrangement. However retrospective Tax and NI grossing up payments will only be made to staff that moved due to a compulsory or managed move. These should be backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 or the date of their move if this was more recent.

8. It was noted that this adjustment will also support the Career Movement and Development Policy.

## Finance Update

### 2019/20 Budget Position

9. The DFP gave the Committee an update on the latest budget forecast for 2019-2020. The figures in the latest Corporate Finance Report (CFR) had indicated a corporate running cost overspend of between £808,000 and £908,000, whilst recognising that the situation remained fluid for a variety of reasons. The range was due to the continued uncertainty over the closing

position for the Employee Benefits calculation (changes to the balances of annual and flexi time leave between 1.4.19 and 31.3.20).

10. The discussion about ongoing legal action forms a confidential annex to the minutes.

11. The discussion about bringing the forecast within budget forms a confidential annex to the minutes.

12. The discussion about ongoing legal action forms a confidential annex to the minutes.

13. The Committee discussed concerns regarding the overspend and how future monitoring of expenditure could be improved. It was noted that some costs, particularly around Post Mortems, could not have been foreseen. Steps have been taken to put in place better processes aimed at improving the currency of staff data by using the spreadsheets that are maintained and updated by the functions as the single source and utilising that information at the WPG. On non-staff costs, we are in a better position to set more realistic allocations for 2020/21. However there needs to be significant increase in the use of the P2P system, removal of Off Contract Expenditure and more proactive Contract Management if we are to remain within the budget and secure best value for money.

14. The Committee instructed DFP to ask SG to provide a letter authorisation for a predicted overspend of £1,750K. The discussion about ongoing legal action forms a confidential annex to the minutes.

15. The latest Capital forecast is for an underspend of circa £74k. The discussion about ongoing toxicology forms a confidential annex to the minutes.

**Action: DFP to ask SG to provide a letter of authorisation for predicted overspend of £1,750k.**

## **2020/21 Budget**

16. DFP provided the Committee with an update on the progress made to date with regards to budget planning for 2020-21 and the decisions made by the Executive Board on 18<sup>th</sup> March.

17. The Chair noted the amount of work done in this area, however, due to the huge impact of the Coronavirus Crisis and the uncertainties ahead; he suggested the Committee note the proposed budget plan but carried this item forward to the meeting on 30 April 2020. The Committee agreed that this was a sensible approach.

18. Head of Business Management (Serious Casework) appreciated it was a minor point but asked that the £1.1m figure in paragraph 11 be corrected.

19. The Chair suggested, in light of the the Coronavirus Crisis that he should meet in 2 weeks with the Deputy Chief Executive and DFP to review the draft budget plan for the year ahead.

**Action: Proposed budget plan to be carried forward for discussion on 30 April 2020.**

**Action: Budget and Workforce Planning 2020-21 (RC022-20) £1.1m figure in paragraph 11 be corrected.**

**Action: Chair, Deputy Chief Executive and DFP to meet in 2 weeks to review the draft budget plan for the year ahead.**

### **Finance Strategy Update**

20. DFP presented the draft COPFS Finance Strategy and confirmed it would link to the COPFS Strategic Plan, which is being reviewed following external consultation. It was recognised that the COVID-19 outbreak would have a significant impact on all planning including financial planning. However, as the impact would not be known for up to a year, and there had not been an updated Financial Strategy in place for some time it was agreed that the Committee would consider the current draft strategy in terms of it being an interim document and the impact of the Coronavirus and provide DFP with feedback prior to the next meeting.

**Action: DFP to revise COPFS Finance Strategy incorporating Committee feedback and the impact of Coronavirus.**

### **Estates Updates (MI)**

21. The Director of Support Services (DSS) updated the Committee on the current position in relation to Estates.

22. He advised that the new move-in date to the Inverness Justice Centre had been delayed and the lease at Great Glen House had been extended for a further 3 months. SCTS are still moving as planned.

23. In respect of the Edinburgh Sheriff Court, COPFS was still awaiting a copy of the feasibility study being carried out by SCTS.

24. The revised Shared Services agreement was due to commence on 1 April 2020 and is expected to reduce costs from £150k to £75k.

25. DSS confirmed that they had recently recruited a Chartered Surveyor. The Committee noted the update.

### **AOB**

26. No other business was raised.

**Date of next meeting: 30 April 2020**