

ITEM 3.2: ANNUAL PROGRAMME

Purpose

1. To highlight to ATJ Committee members the publishing of the SCJC Annual Programme for 2013/14 at the beginning of November 2013.
2. The SCJC Annual Programme can be accessed [here](#), via the SCJC website.

Discussion

3. Under section 5 of the Scottish Civil Justice Council and Criminal Legal Assistance Act 2013 (“the Act”) the Council is required to prepare an annual programme setting out its objectives and priorities for each yearly period beginning on 1 April before the start of that period. As the Council was established in May 2013 there is no statutory requirement on the Council to prepare a programme for 2013/14, although an annual programme for 2014/15 will require to be prepared before 1 April 2014. However, at its meeting on 10 June 2013 the Council agreed to the creation of a forward work programme by the Secretariat for consideration at its September meeting.
4. The programme provides information on: the SCJC and its statutory framework; SCJC members; the various committees and working groups which have been (or are to be) established; the resources and staff available to the SCJC; the SCJC priorities, and a detailed business plan, for 2013/14.
5. The programme states that the SCJC will give particular focus on the following areas during 2013/14:
 - preparation for the implementation of major justice system reform projects (civil courts reform, consideration of the recommendations of Sheriff Principal Taylor’s review and the Tribunals (Sc) Bill);

- consideration, and preparation for implementation, of new legislation;
 - ongoing preparation of rules revisions necessary to implement primary and subordinate legislation and developments in case law (this is the 'care and maintenance' aspect of the rules);
 - consideration of potential improvements to procedures, particularly in respect of those aspects of civil courts reform which can be taken forward without primary legislation.
6. It also sets out the various committees and working groups which have been established under the SCJC and provides details as to their remits and membership.
7. The Business Plan, at pp 21-29 details the various activities in hand under the auspices of the SCJC and the anticipated timescales for completion (where they can be identified). Members will wish to note that the greatest proportion of the work (in relation to civil courts reform) that will require to be carried out in 2014/15 and 2015/16 will depend in large part on the output of the Rules Rewrite Working Group. The work of that group will inform the development of an annual 'rules rewrite programme' which will enable the SCJC to delegate specific tranches of the Rules Rewrite project to relevant committees. The RRWG will produce an interim report prior to 31 March 2014 in order to inform the Council's program 2014/15.
8. Members will also wish to be aware of the planned corporate activity at pp 28-29 of the programme. This includes:
- **Orientation days** - involving a series of court visits between now and spring 2014 for SCJC members and lay committee members to see civil business in action. The Secretariat are taking forward arrangements in this regard and further information will be provided in due course.

- **Annual review** – as part of this it is intended to conduct a review of the SCJC's structure to submit an annual report to the Scottish Parliament after 31 March 2014. As part of this, it is suggested that a review of the SCJC's structure and operations is carried out, including of its own membership (with a view to considering whether any additional representation is required) and of its committees.

Recommendation

9. **Members are invited to note the publication of the SCJC's annual programme for 2013/14 and in particular to:**
 - a) **note that an annual programme will be prepared for 2014/15, which will include details of the timescales and phases for the rules rewrite project, following the consideration of these matters by the Rules Rewrite Working Group;**
 - b) **note that further work is underway in relation to the implications of the Scottish Government's 2013/14 legislative programme on the work of the SCJC and that further advice as to individual items of legislation referred to in the programme will be provided in due course;**
 - c) **note the plans for arranging court visits for SCJC members and lay committee members and that the Secretariat will provide further information on the proposed arrangements in due course; and**
 - d) **note the proposal to carry out a review of the SCJC's operations and structure, including its membership and the arrangements relating to committees, as part of the preparation of its annual report for 2013/14.**

Scottish Civil Justice Council – Secretariat

December 2013