

# Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

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Dear Convenor

## **CORPORATE STRATEGIES FOR THE CROWN OFFICE AND PROCURATOR FISCAL SERVICE**

During your Inquiry into the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) you took evidence from various parties, notably Audit Scotland, regarding our strategic planning. We have recently published four corporate strategies which underpin our existing Strategic Plan. You can find them at <http://www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/business-and-strategy-plans>.

The four strategies, published on 31st January 2017, relate to finance, workforce planning, digital and estates. They are designed to help us continue to deliver an improving service to the public, mitigate the impact of budget constraints on our staffing numbers, continue to develop digital solutions to improve justice system efficiency, enhance engagement, and make best use of our estate.

The strategies set out the guidance and principles which we will apply to decisions we may have to take over the next few years. I must emphasise that decisions have not yet been taken. It would be wrong to characterise the strategies as action plans and, contrary to some media reports, there is no agreed plan to reduce our workforce by 200 staff. Rather, as encouraged by Audit Scotland, we have identified possible scenarios our response to which will depend, to a large extent, on the level of our funding going forward, the extent of justice system reform and the nature of the casework which we require to undertake.

It might be helpful if I highlight some key points from each of the strategies.

### **Estates Strategy**

Our largest non-staff cost is our estate. We are identifying options to reduce our estates running costs by up to 20% to reinvest in the prosecution of casework. This is likely to include not replacing some sites when leases come to an end and making better use of the space available in other locations. Our strategy involves embracing more flexible ways of working, revised space standards, and further digitisation.

## Digital Strategy

We will embed digital working across our organisation, using technology to deliver sustainable, flexible solutions to improve the way we work and to transform our services. We plan to roll out modern devices and applications to enable our prosecutors to access and present cases in court digitally. There will be a greater emphasis on the electronic exchange of data between the police, COPFS, defence agents, the courts and, where possible, witnesses. We will also improve our case management and business systems, bringing ever greater efficiency to our processing of cases and enhancing our delivery of services. We will focus on reducing non-staff running costs, automate repetitive tasks to allow our staff to focus on other work such as engaging with victims and witnesses, save on storage space and reduce printing, paper and postage, instead reinvesting in jobs and service improvement.

## Finance Strategy

As we discussed during your Inquiry, our budget for 2017/18 is the same as the current year in cash terms, which means we require to absorb inflation and other increases. We are carrying out contingency planning based on various scenarios including no cash increase for four further years. Our top priority is to reduce non-staff running costs as far as possible, to improve efficiency and thereby minimise impact on our greatest resource, our staff.

## Workforce Planning Strategy

We recognise that delivering a high quality public prosecution service relies on a skilled, engaged and capable workforce. Our staffing strategy will take account of work priorities, resources and business objectives, develop the skills and talents of our people, build engagement and promote wellbeing. We will significantly reduce our reliance on short-term contracts and temporary promotions. However, whilst honouring the Scottish Government commitment to no compulsory redundancies, we anticipate we will not be able to deliver all the savings likely to be required in future years through non-staff costs if our budget remains at or around its current level in cash terms. We expect overall staff numbers to reduce and that we will not replace all staff who leave voluntarily through natural turnover.

My colleagues have adjusted to major changes over the last few years: their dedication, commitment and professionalism in delivering a crucial service to the people of Scotland is to be commended.

Yours sincerely,



**DAVID HARVIE**  
**Crown Agent & Chief Executive**