



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Eric McQueen  
Chief Executive  
Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service

**Public Audit Committee**  
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9 February 2024

Dear Mr McQueen,

**The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service**

At its meeting on [1 February 2024](#), the Public Audit Committee took evidence from the Auditor General for Scotland (AGS) on the above [section 22 report](#).

The Committee agreed to write to you, in your role as Chief Executive of the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service (SCTS), to seek a written response to the issues raised during the evidence session and more widely in the section 22 report. This includes the SCTS's role in the Justice Multi Agency Liaison Group (MALG) and the operation and management of the Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract.

The Committee would welcome a response to the following questions.

Q1: The Committee understands that the SCCPES contract is managed by the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) on behalf of the MALG. The Committee is keen to understand—

- The level of input the SCTS had to the terms of the SCCPES contract prior to it being awarded to GEOAmev by Scottish Ministers in March 2018.

- The extent to which any concerns the SCTS may have about the contract are addressed at quarterly MALG meetings, and whether meeting quarterly is sufficient.
- The role the SCTS will have in the retendering process for the contract, which is expected to begin in 2024.

Q2: One of the key messages in the section 22 report is that—

“The ongoing poor performance of the contract is resulting in delays and inefficiencies across the justice sector, impacting on policing, prison services and the courts.”

The Committee wishes to understand the extent to which the SCTS is impacted by the poor performance of the contract. In particular, we would welcome specific examples of the impact on the SCTS, including the associated costs to your organisation.

The Committee also asks if data is available on the number and types of court case that have been impacted by failures in the SCCPES contract, including those where proceedings have been delayed or charges have been dropped as a result of contract failures.

Q3: The section 22 report concludes that—

“It will be important for SPS and their partners, Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS), Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) and Police Scotland to work together with support from the Scottish Government, to consider all options available to ensure the safe and effective delivery of prisoner escorting services both now and, in the future”.

The Committee is interested to hear your views on the steps you consider will be required to take this joint working forward.

You may wish to note that the Committee has also written to Police Scotland and the COPFS to seek their views on these matters.

The Committee would be grateful for a response by **7 March 2024**.

Yours sincerely

**Richard Leonard MSP, Convener**