

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

10th Meeting, 2021 (Session 6), Tuesday 30 November 2021

Civil Justice Roundtable

Note by the clerk

Introduction

1. The Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee agreed to hold a number of roundtable meetings about subjects within its remit.
2. It held the first roundtable meeting at its Business Planning Meeting in August when it heard from Equalities and Human Rights groups.
3. The second roundtable will take place on 30 November 2021.
4. The subject is the use of remote hearings within the civil justice sector as a result of Covid-19 and the sector's experience and future plans for digital justice as we recover from the pandemic.
5. The session will focus primarily on the benefits and disadvantages of digital justice and explore what aspects may be retained in the longer term. The session will also explore whether remote hearings have created barriers in accessing justice for marginalised groups and what impact, if any, remote hearings have had on resourcing and budgets.

Participants

6. The following people will be taking part in the roundtable—
 - **Kay McCorquodale**, Executive Director, Judicial Office for Scotland, Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service;
 - **Ruth Crawford QC**, Treasurer, The Faculty of Advocates;
 - **Iain Nicol**, Convener of the Civil Justice Committee, The Law Society of Scotland;
 - **Karen Wylie**, Vice Chair, Family Law Association of Scotland; and

- **Professor Richard Susskind OBE**, Technology Adviser to the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales.

Format

7. The meeting will be held in hybrid format with some Members of the Committee and witnesses attending in person and others joining virtually.

Topics

8. The roundtable evidence session on remote hearings and the civil justice sector will be a chance to discuss topics such as:-
 - **The current issues and future challenges facing the main bodies in the civil justice system as a result of the Covid pandemic;**
 - **The advantages, disadvantages and challenges faced by the court service as a result of the move to digital hearings;**
 - **The impact of a permanent move to a much greater use of digital justice, opportunities and threats of such a move;**
 - **The experience of court users and whether remote hearings create barriers or opportunities for access to justice, for example in relation to vulnerable witnesses or digital exclusion;**
 - **What types of procedure and cases are suitable for a more permanent move to remote justice;**
 - **What impact the move to digital justice has had on resources and what will be required in terms of resource in the future; and**
 - **What further innovations are being considered or are required to ensure future success of a remote hearings system.**

**Clerks to the Committee
November 2021**