



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna
Courts Service



Courts Service Corporate Governance Framework

Table of Contents

Foreword by Chief Executive.....	3
Courts Service Overview.....	4
Overview of Governance Framework.....	5
About the Courts Service.....	5
Courts Service Organisational Structure.....	10
Organisation Chart.....	12
Strategic Planning, Decision Making & Performance Management.....	13
Review of the effectiveness of the Governance Framework.....	16
Board and Chief Executive - Governance Structure and Accountability.....	17
Courts Service Board.....	18
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer.....	22
Heads of Directorates.....	25
Accountability.....	26
Relationship with the Department of Justice.....	28
Leadership & Organisation Capacity/Capability.....	30
Senior Management Team and other Governance Structures.....	31
Audit, Assurance and Compliance Arrangements.....	40
Appendices.....	46
APPENDIX 1 – Protected Disclosures.....	46
APPENDIX 2 - Organisational Structure.....	55
APPENDIX 3 - The Courts Service Board Framework Document.....	61
APPENDIX 4 - Membership of the Courts Service Board – February 2023.....	73
APPENDIX 5 - TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE BOARD AND COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD.....	74
APPENDIX 6 - Code of Conduct for Board Members.....	94
APPENDIX 7 - Courts Service Internal Audit Charter.....	100

Foreword by Chief Executive

The Courts Service was established under the Courts Service Act, 1998 as an independent State agency and has a legislative mandate to manage and administer the courts and provide support services to the judiciary. However, wider governance responsibilities arising from other primary and secondary legislation as well as Government codes such as the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* also apply. The purpose of this document is to set out for staff, managers, citizens and stakeholders in one reference point, the elements of our governance framework.

This Governance Framework document has been prepared in line with the principles and requirements set out in legislation and codes, taking into account the particular requirements of the Courts Service. The Framework enables us to monitor the achievement of our strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate cost effective services which take account of the needs of court users, members of the judiciary and the wider public. Our governance arrangements are reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to reflect current best practice in corporate governance and support us in delivering on our vision, to the highest standards of ethics and integrity, while meeting expectations of probity, accountability, and transparency. The Courts Service is committed to the principles and practice of good governance which are fundamental to the effective operation of our organisation.

Angela Denning
Chief Executive Officer
February 2023

Courts Service Overview

This document sets out the arrangements and structures for the governance and management of the Courts Service. Good governance is essential in providing direction and clarity and supports effective decision making. Governance relates to how we manage our organisation and achieve our organisational goals and objectives. It can be described as the set of responsibilities and practices, policies and procedures used to provide strategic direction, ensure objectives are achieved, risks are managed, and resources used responsibly and with accountability.

The Courts Service has strong governance arrangements in place at organisational and Board level providing a framework of rules and practices to ensure accountability, fairness, and transparency across organisational activities. It is intended that the Framework will assist our staff to apply the principles of good governance in the management and delivery of services. It will also guide our customers and stakeholders in better understanding our organisation, our business and how we conduct our business.

The Governance Framework reflects and is developed in the context of the Courts Service legislative framework under the Courts Service Act, 1998, in addition to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, developments in the Civil Service Renewal Plan and the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.

The Governance Framework is not fixed and evolves, in accordance with best practice, as the needs of the organisation and the needs of stakeholders develop. It is therefore updated on an ongoing basis by the Office of the CEO.

Governance Principles

The governance of the Courts Service is based on the following principles:

- Supports a culture and ethos which ensure behaviour with integrity, a strong commitment to ethical values and respect for the rule of law
- Helps to define priorities and outcomes and to determine policies and Interventions necessary to optimise their achievement
- Delivers effective accountability through good practices in transparency, reporting communications, audit, and scrutiny
- Develops our capacity including the capability of the leadership team, management, and staff
- Manages risk and performance through robust internal control systems and effective performance management practices
- Encourages/ support openness, effective public consultation processes and comprehensive engagement with stakeholders

Overview of Governance Framework

The Courts Service Act, 1998 (as amended) is the legislative basis for the establishment of the organisation. A Board framework document approved by the Board defines the governance framework for the Service and sets out the functions of the Board, the Chief Executive, and the Committees of the Board. It also outlines the appropriate levels of authority and delegation arrangements. It defines the communication strategy between the Chief Executive and the Chief Justice and Presidents of the Courts, between the Courts Service and the Minister for Justice and between the Courts Service, the public and the media.

The Courts Service Act, 1998 provides that the Chief Executive Officer is the Accounting Officer for the Service and clearly defines the accountability framework in which the Service operates. This is supported by the governance framework and corporate governance arrangements within the Service.

The Courts Service is accountable to the Minister for Justice, and through the Minister, to the Government. The Service must submit an Annual Report to the Minister and such other information as the Minister may require. The Courts Service must also submit to the Minister an annual return in relation to its compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. An annual Agency Framework Agreement is also in place with the Department of Justice in relation to the roles and responsibilities of both bodies and setting out performance targets for the Courts Service for the year in accordance with the organisation's annual Corporate Business Plan.

The Courts Service is also accountable through the Chief Executive Officer, as both Accounting Officer and as Accountable Officer, to the Oireachtas including to the Committee of Public Accounts of Dáil Éireann, and other Oireachtas Committees.

About the Courts Service

The Courts Service is an independent State agency, established by the Courts Service Act, 1998 to support the third branch of Government, the courts and judiciary.

The Courts Service is responsible for the administration and management of the courts in Ireland. Its primary functions are to manage the courts, provide support services to the judges, provide information on the courts system to the public, and provide court buildings and facilities for court users.

The Courts Service, through its offices in the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, High Court, Circuit Court and District Court, together with the support directorates established as part of the management structure for the Service, has responsibility for the management of all aspects of court support activities with the exception of judicial functions which are a matter exclusively for the judiciary.

In this way the Courts Service is a key part of public service delivery working to ensure access to justice for all court users and others who rely on its services.

Our Mission, Values and Vision

The Courts Service has clearly articulated its Mission, Values and Vision to promote clarity in relation to our function and provide a shared sense of purpose and direction underpinned by the values of the organisation.

Vision

The Courts Service Strategy Statement sets out our vision for the Courts Service. The Vision statement acts as our road map, indicating what we want to become and guiding our transformational change and reform initiatives. The Vision Statement is aspirational and is designed to communicate, particularly to our staff, the primary goal of the Courts Service and long term strategic objective towards which we work.

This Vision is aligned to and reflects the Civil Service Vision in the Civil Service Renewal Plan

Our Vision is to develop a world class organisation that has as its primary objective, meeting the needs of court users

Mission

Good governance is fundamental to achieving the mission of the Courts Service. Our Mission Statement clearly sets out, for management, staff and users, the core purpose and focus of the organisation. In doing so, it guides the development of the strategy of the organisation in the delivery and development of services and communicates the intended direction for the organisation internally and externally.

To support the judiciary and provide excellent services to all users of the courts thereby facilitating access to justice.

Values

The core values of the Courts Service are also set out in our Strategic Plan. They support and act as the principles that guide our internal conduct and our relationship with our users and stakeholders. They support the vision of the organisation, shape our culture, inform the delivery of service, and guide our decision making process

Service:	Customer Focussed, Timely, Friendly, Professional, Collaborative, Delivered to a high standard
Integrity:	Honest, Objective, Fair, Impartial, Ethical, Accountable
Respect:	Courteous, Considered

These values are aligned with those of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviours, the Code of Ethics, and the Civil Service Renewal Plan. They are designed

to promote ethical behaviour and effective governance and the highest standards of professionalism in the way we do our work.

Behaviours and Culture

To ensure successful delivery of our mission and our annual and strategic objectives, it is critical that we continue to pro-actively foster and maintain a culture that is informed by our shared values and those set out in the Civil Service Codes and other relevant legislative and regulatory frameworks.

All levels of the organisation have a role to play in promoting good corporate governance.

In this regard we ensure staff are aware of the values of the organisation and the behaviours required to realise these values. The management and staff of the organisation are expected to support the stated values and comply with the regulatory framework in accordance with Courts Service policies and those of the wider Civil Service. Staff are made fully aware of the requirements and are circulated with the corporate and civil service policies, procedures, and circulars in relation to behaviour and governance. These include the following:

1. Code of Standards and Behaviour for Civil Servants – A copy of the code is given to every appointee who must certify in writing that they have read it and the requirements of the code are brought to the attention of all staff on a regular basis
2. Ethics in Public Office Acts and the Standards in Public Office Act 2001– An annual notification to staff is issued in relation to the submission of statements of interests and an up-to-date register is maintained in the Office of the Chief Executive
3. Official Secrets Act which sets out confidentiality requirements
4. A Protected Disclosures Policy and procedures are in place, in line with the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022. This act replaces the Protected Disclosure Act 2014, adding EU Directive 2019/1, Whistleblowing Directive into Irish law. The document sets out the Courts Service's policy and procedures on protected disclosures required under the 2022 Act on
 - how to make a protected disclosure; and
 - how to manage such disclosures.
5. The [Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015](#) which is designed to make the lobbying process more transparent.
6. Prompt Payments legislation which requires the Courts Service to pay vendors in a timely manner.

The organisation also complies with the obligations and legal requirements of the Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation. Staff are made aware, trained, and supported in the application of this legislation to Courts Service records and court records by a centralised Freedom of Information and Data Protection compliance function provided by the Office of the Chief Executive.

The staff and organisation also comply with obligations under an Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú) 2021/Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, the National Archives Act, 1986 and Employment Equality legislation.

Internal Communications

There are over 1,200 people working in the Courts Service in a variety of different roles across Circuit, District and the Superior Courts, as well as a number of support offices such as HR, Learning and Development, IT, Corporate Services and the Communications and Media Unit. How we communicate and support one another is vital to smooth running of the operations of the organisation. Internal communications happen everyday between colleagues across the various offices.

Collaborative, consistent, relevant and easy to understand internal communications using up to date channels is central to the effective operation and development of the organisation. Internal communications are therefore not the preserve of one office or team. In order to establish a consistent approach an anonymous internal communications survey was conducted in 2021 and from that the internal communications approach for the organisation was developed – as set out in the Communications and stakeholder engagement strategy. This survey was run again in 2022.

As detailed in the strategy we take a user centric approach to internal communications by:

- Coordinating internal communications and use of alternative channels to reduce email.
- Establishing a Communications Officer Network to share information.
- Introducing modern communications tools.
- Embedding a Courts Service Style Guide, with plain language guidelines plus templates and icons, consistently across the organisation.

We ensure our communications are efficient and effective by:

- Using multiple channels for communicating with colleagues, such as the Courts Service fortnightly bulletin – The Brief, and also through a variety of channels such as staff meetings in person and online, conferences, e-mail, the Courts Service News, posters and videos.
- Upgrading our communications tools for those creating internal information, to produce more visually appealing and dynamic content, and to measure the effectiveness to track engagement.
- Upgrading the intranet and supporting regular updating of content.

Functions of the Courts Service

The functions of the Service under the Courts Service Act, 1998 are to;

- Manage the Courts
- Provide support services for Judges
- Provide information on the Courts system to the public
- Provide, manage, and maintain court buildings
- Provide facilities for users of the Courts
- Perform such other functions as are conferred on it by any other enactment.

Ancillary powers given to the Courts Service under the Act include the power to:

Acquire, hold, and dispose of land

- Enter into contracts
- Make proposals to the minister in relation to – reform and development, the distribution of jurisdiction and business among the courts and matters of procedure and recommend appropriate scales of court fees
- Designate court venues

The Courts Service has no role in relation to the administration of justice which is a matter for the courts and the judiciary. The judges are, under the Constitution, independent in the exercise of their judicial functions. The Courts Service is precluded by the Courts Service Act, 1998 from impugning in any way the independence of the judiciary or interfering in any way in a judicial function

Courts Service Organisational Structure

In accordance with section 22 of the Courts Service Act, 1998, the Courts Service has a unified organisation and structure.

The Courts Service Board

The organisation is governed by a Board chaired by the Chief Justice and comprising of 17 other members including representatives of the judiciary, the Chief Executive, Courts Service staff, the Minister for Justice, legal representative bodies, court users, business, and trade unions. The Board is responsible for the determination of policy and for oversight of the implementation of policy.

Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the management and control of staff together with the day to day operation of the Service. The Chief Executive is also the Accounting Officer and is responsible to the Oireachtas for the proper expenditure of money provided by the Exchequer for the management and administration of the Service. The Courts Service Act provides that the functions of the Chief Executive are to;

- manage and control generally the staff, administration, and business of the Service
- report regularly to the Board on the implementation of policy
- perform such functions of the Service as the Board determines are to be performed by the Chief Executive
- perform such functions as may be conferred on him or her by the 1998 Act or by the Board.

Senior Management Team

The Chief Executive is supported by the Senior Management Team consisting of the following heads of directorates:

- Assistant Secretary, Superior Courts Operations
- Assistant Secretary, Circuit and District Courts Operations
- Assistant Secretary, Strategy and Reform,
- Assistant Secretary, Corporate Services and
- Assistant Secretary, ICT.

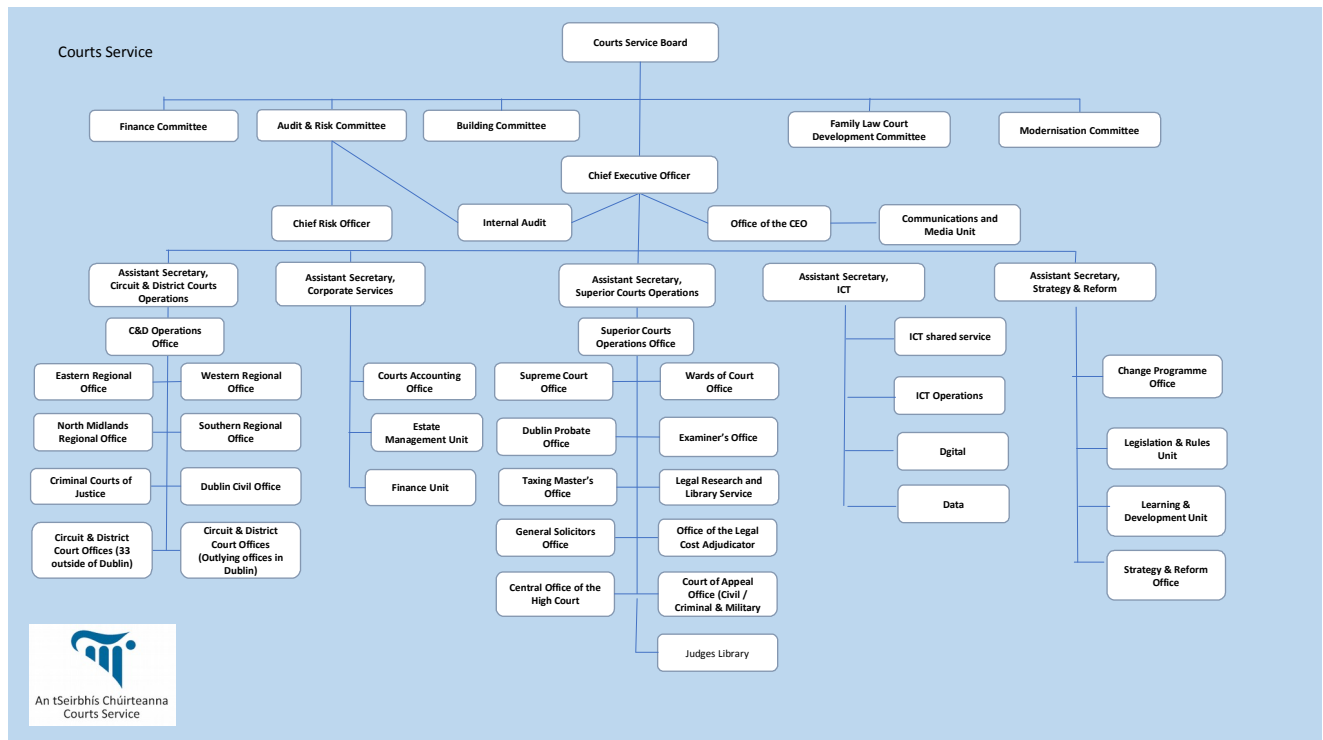
The functions of each Directorate are set out in the Organisational Chart below and at Appendix 2. The Head of HR, the Head of Communications and Office of the CEO, a representative of the Principal Officer team and members of the Office of the CEO are also part of the SMT.

The Courts Service has a staff of 1,230 (FTE) at 1 January 2023 and a network 33 court offices outside Dublin and offices in Dublin (Four Courts, Phoenix House, Criminal Courts of Justice, Dolphin House and outlying offices in Swords, Dún Laoghaire, Blanchardstown, and Cloverhill) providing services to court users and supporting the Supreme, Court of Appeal, High, Circuit and District Courts.

Staff of the Service

Staff of the Courts Service are Civil Servants in the Civil Service of the State appointed by open competition and subject to public sector pay policy and regulation. All staff have a duty to support the efficient and effective operation of the courts and the Courts Service and contribute to the achievement of its aims and objectives. Staff performance is managed by the Performance Management Development System through the line management structure. Staff are subject to the direction of the judiciary when supporting the judiciary in the conduct of the business of the court in matters such as listing of cases and case management.

Organisation Chart



Strategic Planning, Decision Making & Performance Management

The Courts Service Board provides the strategic direction for the organisation. The Courts Service must prepare a strategic plan for each 3 year period and submit it to the Minister for Justice for approval. The Plan is approved by the Board for submission to the Minister and the Minister must lay the Plan with or without amendments (section 7 of the Courts Service Act, 1998) before each House of Oireachtas. The Plan for the period 2021 – 2023 was approved by the Board, submitted to the Minister for approval and subsequently laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas on 15th February 2021.

The Strategic Plan sets out the strategic direction for the Service and places emphasis on the implementation of the transformation programme and ensuring value for money, in addition to the day to day management, administration and business of the Service. The strategic planning process has regard to Government Policy and the Programme for Government and is reflected as appropriate within our plan.

The Strategic Plan 2021-2023 outlines six overarching strategic goals for the Courts Service for the next three years. It is the first major part of our ten-year Modernisation Programme which aims to bring new technology and modern ways of working to the administration of justice, making access to justice easier and quicker to navigate, better responding to the needs of Court users.

Business Planning

An annual Corporate Business Plan is prepared by the Chief Executive Officer and Senior Management Team each year and approved by the Board to ensure a focussed approach to the implementation of the Strategic Plan and the achievement of the objectives contained therein. The implementation of the Strategic Plan through the Annual Corporate Business Plan is monitored by the Board and by the Senior Management Team through regular progress reports and formal twice yearly reviews of performance against the targets set.

A consistent and integrated approach to Business Planning is adopted throughout the Service and annual business plans are compiled at both Directorate and Business Unit level. Risk Management is integrated into the business planning process. Directorate and Business Unit Plans are kept under regular review and quarterly reports on performance by each Directorate are brought to the Senior Management Team. The business planning process is designed to be flexible and can be adapted to meet changing needs and circumstances as they arise.

Performance Management Development System

Business Planning cascades to the individual through the Performance Management Development System. Under this system role profiles are agreed for each member of staff on an annual basis. The role profile outlines the functions and responsibilities of the individual staff member and their individual contribution to the achievement of business objectives of the unit and the wider organisation. Each individual sets annual goals and performance in relation to the achievement of these goals is reviewed on a six monthly basis. A Performance Management system has also been introduced for the Chief Executive and arrangements are in place for Heads of Directorates in accordance with the system of performance management being introduced on a Civil Service wide basis for Secretaries General and Assistant Secretaries. The Senior Management Team is responsible for the effective operation of performance management across the Service and receives regular reports on the matter.

Engagement process with stakeholders

Our Communications and stakeholder engagement strategy sets out how we plan to engage with all our wide range of external stakeholders such as:

- Public court and court office users, and members of the public
- Legal practitioners
- Government
- Justice partners
- Influencers and legal sector experts
- Suppliers
- Media

Our communications approach is to ensure that our stakeholders have the right information at the right time.

The actions set out in the strategy are drawn from surveys and feedback from a wide range of our stakeholders with over 568 responses to the external communications survey. Communication and engagement with stakeholders is carried out during the day-to-day operations of the Court Services and in a more structured way in relation to particular initiatives and projects including:

Website: Courts.ie is our most engaged with platform. It hosts a wide range of information drawing in the legal diary, court Notices, Judicial Practice Directions and Orders as well as information and news updates about the Courts and online services. There are approximately 3.17 million visitors every year.

Social Media: As of the end of 2022, we engage with over 24,000 followers through our accounts on Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube channels.

Courts Service News: We issue a magazine periodically throughout the year, with over 3,800 subscribers. CS News reports on courts-related developments and including informal news for serving and retired staff, Judiciary and colleagues in the legal and support communities. To be added to the subscription list please email courtsservicenews@courts.ie

Quality Customer Service: The Courts Service developed a project, a number of years ago, introducing a Charter to all offices. Keeping Courts open and safe during the pandemic changed the approach in the Charter temporarily. Under our Modernisation Programme we're relooking at our customer service model.

Customer Service Groups: Engagement with stakeholders and building relations is essential to the effectiveness of the delivery of our service. In this regard the Service has various Customer Service Groups across the country. These provide a forum for court users to raise and express concerns.

Committees: The Courts Service Board has established a number of committees including Finance, Audit & Risk, Building, Family Law Court Development, and the Modernisation Committee, special purpose committees are formed as required from time to time. The composition of these committees includes external representation as appropriate.

Complaints Process

The Courts Service is open, transparent, responsive, and accountable in the way we do our business. We are open to and treat seriously complaints about the Service both internal and external. Internal complaints are investigated fully in accordance with HR, Finance, and other appropriate policies.

The Courts Service has also put in place a Policy outlining the procedures required under with the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022 for the making of protected disclosures and for dealing with such disclosures. Please see Appendix 1 for the policy.

External complaints are dealt with in accordance with our [Customer Complaints Procedure](#). The Courts Service has committed to investigating all complaints promptly, in a fair and impartial manner by an official who was not involved in the matter giving rise to the complaint. Information on the Customer Complaints process is available on the Courts Service Website.

Other legislative frameworks which guide the culture and behaviours of the organisation include the Regulation of Lobbying Act, 2015 which is designed to make the lobbying process more transparent

A list of [Courts Service officials designated as public officials](#) under the Act is published on the Courts Service website.

Review of the effectiveness of the Governance Framework

Governance effectiveness is reviewed in the context of:

- Annual report to the Minister outlining compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. This is set out in more detail under Accounting Officer Assurance Arrangements
- Audit and Risk Committee Oversight - this is supported by our Internal Audit Section which reviews, amongst other things, the effectiveness of the internal control environment.
- Statement of Internal Financial Controls signed by the Accounting Officer as part of the Annual Appropriation Account
- Audit of the Appropriation Account by the C & AG
- Annual external audit of the Financial Statements of the Office of the Accountant for the Courts of Justice for the management of court funds
- A periodic review of the overall governance framework will be carried out to ensure its effectiveness and that the Governance Framework is maintained and kept up to date.

Board and Chief Executive - Governance Structure and Accountability

Board Framework Document

The legislative framework for the Board and the Courts Service i.e., the Courts Service Act, 1998, is supported by the Board Framework Document. Under the Courts Service Act, 1998 it is a matter for the Board to determine which of the functions of the Service specified in the Act are to be performed by it and which are to be performed by the Chief Executive Officer and which of the powers of the Service specified in the Act are to be exercised by it and which are to be exercised by the Chief Executive. The Board may also authorise a Committee of the Board or the Chief Executive Officer to perform any of its functions or powers other than the power to determine whether it or the Chief Executive will perform functions of the Service as set out above.

The Board Framework Document sets out

- the statutory functions of the Chief Executive, the functions of the Service determined by the Board to be carried out by the Chief Executive and functions of the Board which the Board has delegated to the Chief Executive.
- the statutory functions of the Board and functions of the Service which the Board has determined are to be carried out by the Board
- the functions of the Board which the Board has delegated to the Finance Committee
- the relationship between the Chief Executive and the Board, the Chief Executive and the Presidents of the Courts, the Chief Executive and Department of Justice and communication between the Minister for Justice and the Board and the Presidents of the Courts.

A copy of the Board Framework Document is at APPENDIX 3.

Courts Service Board

The Courts Service is governed by a Board consisting of a chairperson and 17 other members.

Membership

The Courts Service Act, section 11 (as amended by the Court of Appeal Act, 2014), provides that the chairperson of the Board will be the Chief Justice (or a judge of the Supreme Court nominated by the Chief Justice) and that the Board should contain the Presidents of the other court jurisdictions or nominees of the Presidents, judicial representatives from each court elected by the ordinary judges of each court, the Chief Executive of the Courts Service, a staff representative, an officer of the Minister for Justice nominated by the Minister and representatives from the legal professions, trade unions and business world.

Function

The business or functions of the Board as specified in the Courts Service Act, section 12 are as follows:

- The Board considers and determines policy in relation to the Service and
- oversees the implementation of that policy by the Chief Executive Officer.

The Act, 1998 provides that the Board in the performance of its functions must have regard to:

- the need to secure the most beneficial, effective, and efficient use of the resources of the Service and
- any policy or objective of the Government or a Minister of the Government insofar as it may affect or relate to the functions of the Service.
- The Board provides leadership and broad direction to the Courts Service and holds the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team to account for the performance of the organisation. Members of the Board work together to fulfil the functions of the Board in supporting the administration of justice.

A list of the members of the Courts Service Board is at APPENDIX 4

The functions of the Board as set out in the Board Framework Document include

- the approval of the Courts Service Strategic Plan which is then submitted to the Minister for Justice for approval. The Board also reviews and monitors the implementation of the Plan and approves and monitors the implementation of the annual Corporate Business Plan
- the approval of the Annual Report which is submitted to the Minister for Justice and laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas
- the engagement of Legal Advisors, Investment Advisors, Fund Managers, and banking providers
- recommendation of scales of court fees and making proposals to the Minister in relation to the distribution of jurisdiction and business among the court

- designation of court venues
- approval of proposals for contracts including the acquisition or disposal of any interest in land or property with a value in excess of €5m. The Board has delegated approval of contracts with a value between €1m and €5m to the Finance Committee of the Board.

Procedures

The Courts Service Act, 1998 provides that subject to the Act the Board shall regulate by standing orders or otherwise the procedure and business of the Board. The Act itself regulates certain aspects of Board business including meetings of the Board and the establishment of committees.

The Board has adopted Standing Orders setting out procedures for;

- Conduct of meetings
- Committees of the Board
- Confidentiality
- Reports to the Board
- Seal of the Service

The Board has also put in place terms of reference which set out the purpose scope and authority of the Board and include the operating procedures of the Board.

A copy of the Terms of Reference are at APPENDIX 5.

Decisions of the Board are maintained in the approved minutes of the Board meetings and communicated by the Secretary as appropriate, including to each Head of Directorate, following each Board meeting. A summary of the minutes is published on the Website and on Courts Service Intranet.

BOARD COMMITTEES

The Courts Service Act provides that the Board may establish committees to advise it in relation to the performance of its functions and may appoint committee members who are not members of the Board but have a specialist knowledge and experience related to the purposes of the committee.

Each Committee has terms of reference approved by the Board and reports regularly to the Board on its operation. The Terms of Reference and membership of committees are kept under review by the Board. The standing Committees of the Board are as follows:

- Finance Committee
- Audit and Risk Committee
- Family Law Court Development Committee
- Building Committee
- Modernisation Committee

The terms of reference of the Committees are included in APPENDIX 5.

CODE OF BUSINESS CONDUCT FOR BOARD MEMBERS

The Code of Business Conduct for Board members sets out the standards of business conduct to which the members of the Board of the Courts Service have agreed to adhere in the performance of their duties.

The Code applies to all members of the Courts Service Board and outlines the ethics regime under which the Board operates. In accordance with the Code Board members will strive to perform their duties in accordance with the highest ethical standards of honesty, integrity, fairness, confidentiality, and independence and will actively seek to prevent the development of unethical practices.

Procedures in relation to Disclosure and Conflict of Interests; Gifts and Entertainment and the provision of independent professional advice for Board members are at APPENDIX 6.

General Policy and Objectives of the Code

The objectives of the code are to establish an agreed set of ethical principles, prevent the development or acceptance of unethical practices and to promote and maintain confidence and trust in the Board and the Courts Service

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest

The Board procedures in relation to disclosure of and conflicts of interest provide as follows:

- prior to consideration of reports on procurement or relevant matters, all Board and Committee members are requested formally to declare if there is any conflict of interest and to absent themselves from consideration of the item if a conflict exists. The minutes of the meetings note any such abstentions and
- Board members also make annual disclosure of interests as appropriate, and a confidential register is maintained.

Relationship with the Board.

A key governance process for the Courts Service is the relationship and communication with the Board and Committees of the Board. The successful delivery of our business priorities is dependent on these relationships working effectively.

The Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team assist the Board in the development and implementation of policy and overall strategic development of the organisation, achievement of relevant objectives set out in the Statement of Strategy and Annual Corporate Business Plans.

To ensure clarity of understanding and effective communication, formal and informal management and communication processes have been put in place between the Board and the organisation.

The Chief Executive is a member of the Board, and this provides a key link in the development, setting and implementation of policy and strategy. She attends and reports to the Board at all its meetings on all relevant issues. She also has regular meetings with the Chairperson to deal with general and priority issues. Members of the Senior Management Team and other senior managers also attend Board meetings in relation to specific issues within their area of responsibility and meet with the Chairperson and other Board members as necessary.

Members of the Senior Management Team also report to the Board on key issues, progress and risks thereby strengthening the accountability line between the Board and management.

Members of the Senior Management Team and other senior managers are also members of and advise Committees on specific issues.

Through these processes effective working relationships have been established to ensure priorities are agreed and addressed and there is appropriate oversight and

management of progress, performance, and issues as part of the decision making and monitoring role of the Board.

Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

The Courts Service governance arrangements comply with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and an annual compliance report is submitted by the Chief Executive on behalf of the Board to the Minister for Justice. This report confirms compliance across a range of headings including affirmation that appropriate procedures for financial reporting, internal audit, travel, procurement and asset disposals

- inclusion of a statement on the system of internal financial control
- adherence to Code of Business Conduct for Directors and Employees
- compliance with Government guidelines on the payment of Directors' fees
- provision of a draft strategic plan to the Minister prior to the plan being finalised and adopted by the Board.

Other Board governance documents include a Formal Schedule of Matters reserved to the Board for Decision.

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

In accordance with Section 17 of the Courts Service Act, 1998 the Chief Executive is appointed by the Board and holds office under a written contract of service (which contract may be renewed) for such period as is specified in the contract and subject to such terms and conditions as may be determined by the Board and approved by the Minister with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Functions of the Chief Executive

The functions of the Chief Executive are set out in the Courts Service Act and are to:

- Manage and control generally the staff, administration, and business of the Service
- Report regularly to the Board on the implementation of policy
- Perform such functions of the Service as the Board determines are to be performed by the Chief Executive Officer
- Perform such functions of the Board which the Board has delegated to the Chief Executive Officer
- Perform such functions as may be conferred on him or her by the 1998 Act or by the Board.
- Represent the Courts Service externally and act as spokesperson

In accordance with the Board Framework Document the functions of the Chief Executive include:

- the provision of support services to the judiciary,
- the provision of information on the courts system,
- the management and maintenance of court buildings and the provision of facilities for court users
- the preparation of the Strategic Plan and Annual Report.
- approval of contracts and arrangements, including leases and the acquisition or disposal of any interest in land and or property, with a value which does not exceed €1m.
- In the management of the organisation the Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring:
 - the efficient and cost effective day to day management of the functions of the Courts Service
 - robust systems of management and control are in place to support the achievement of Courts Service targets, policies, aims and objective while at the same time ensuring the identification and management of risks to inform decisions on financial and operation planning
 - the direction, priorities and views of the Courts Service are conveyed to the appropriate Government Departments to allow it to be considered in the development of Government policy
 - the performance of Courts Service staff is effective and supports the objectives of the organisation.

The Chief Executive is responsible to the Board for the performance of her functions and provides the Board with high quality information in relation, in particular, to the management of the organisation budget and risk, implementation of business plans and the efficient and effective delivery of Courts Service business. The Chief Executive is also responsible for providing the Board with impartial, transparent, and honest advice on all areas of the Courts Service responsibilities and ensuring that financial considerations are made clear at all stages in reaching and executing decisions. The Chief Executive has direct access to the Chairperson of the Board.

The Chief Executive must also provide effective leadership to the staff of the Courts Service and ensure effective human resource policies are in place to support the staff and the objectives of the organisation.

As provided for in the Courts Service Act 1998, the Chief Executive has formally delegated responsibility for certain of her functions to senior officers and Heads of Directorates in the Courts Service. These delegations have regard to the priorities of the organisation; the organisational framework of the Service; the responsibilities of the Directorates and general management functions within the overall management framework of the Service to ensure that they are aligned with the goals and objectives set out in the Strategic and Business plans.

A record of all delegations is formally maintained. The delegation of functions is kept under review.

Accounting Officer

Section 19 of the Courts Service Act provides that the Chief Executive is the Accounting Officer for the Appropriation Accounts of the Courts Service for the purposes of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Acts, 1866 and 1921 and the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993. The Chief Executive performs her role as set out in the Comptroller and Auditor General Acts 1866 to 1998 and the Public Financial Procedures.

As Accounting Officer, the Chief Executive is personally responsible for the safeguarding of public funds and property under her control; for the regularity and propriety of all the transactions in the Appropriation Account which she signs and for the efficiency and economy of administration in the Courts Service. As Chief Executive, she is in a position to discharge responsibility for the monies entrusted to the Service, for the use made of its resources and for control of the assets in its keeping such as land, buildings, stores, equipment, or other property. As Accounting Officer, she signs and submits the Annual Appropriation Account together with a Statement of Internal Financial controls providing assurance on the internal financial control environment operating within the Service.

Heads of Directorates

The specific area of responsibility of each Head of Directorates is set out in the Organisational chart at page 11 of this document and at Appendix 2

Each Head of Directorate reports to the Chief Executive Officer. Their key responsibilities are to

- deliver on the specific operational area of responsibility,
- actively participate in the SMT and other fora,
- support the effective management of the organisation,

- assist the Board and the Chief Executive Officer in the development and implementation of policy and overall strategic development of the organisation, achievement of relevant objectives set out in the Statement of Strategy and Annual Corporate Business Plans,
- ensure effective governance, assurance and risk management structures are in place and implemented,
- oversee the effective strategic management of resources and development of the capability and capacity to meet current and future business needs.

Principal Officers

Principal Officers are responsible for the management of business areas within the overall management framework of the organisation. Principal Officers are responsible for:

- the delivery of programmes and services
- achievement of strategic and operational objectives for the areas under their remit and cross organisational issues
- contribute to the development of policy and legislation
- achievement of objectives under the Strategic and annual Corporate Business Plans for the Units under their remit and cross-unit/directorate organisational priorities

Staff

Courts Service staff play a key role in assuring good governance and adherence to the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviours in the performance of their duties, as well as to Civil Service wide and corporate policies and procedures. Staff have a duty, in the context of their particular roles and responsibilities, to support the Courts Service in fulfilling its mandates and to do so in accordance with the cultures and values of the organisation.

Accountability

As a public body the Courts Service is accountable for the manner in which it fulfils its functions and the propriety and value for money achieved in the expenditure of public funds.

Strategic Plan

Section 7 of the Court Service Act provides that the Service “*shall as soon as practicable after its establishment and within six months before each third*

anniversary of the establishment of the Service shall prepare and submit to the Minister for approval by the Minister with or without amendment, a strategic plan for the ensuing three year period" the Plan shall be in a form and manner in accordance with any directions issued from time to time by the Minister and the Strategic Plan is laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas by the Minister.

Annual Report

Section 8 of the Courts Service Act (as amended by the Court and Court Officers Act, 2002) provides that "*the Service shall as soon as practicable, but not later than 6 months after the end of each year make a report in writing to the Minister of its activities during that year.*" The report shall include information on the performance of the functions of the Service during the year and such other information, in such form as the Service thinks fit or the Minister may direct.

Provision of Information

Section 8 of the Act also provides that "*the Service shall, if so requested, furnish to the Minister such information as the Minister may request relating to any matter concerning the policy and activities of the service generally, any specific matter or account prepared by it or any report.*"

Appearance before Committees of the Oireachtas

The Courts Service is accountable to the Oireachtas for the efficient use of public resources and effective management of the courts. The Chief Executive must attend before Oireachtas Committees at the request to the Committee to give account for the general administration of the Service including the Strategic Plans of the Service which are laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. In her capacity as Accounting Officer, she is required to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to give account of her stewardship of the public funds entrusted to her on foot of the independent audit of the Account by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Chief Executive is not required to give account before the Committee for any matter relating to the exercise by a judge of his or her judicial functions of the exercise by a person other than a judge of limited jurisdiction of a judicial nature including a matter which, has been or may at a future time be the subject of proceedings before a court.

Parliamentary Questions

In accordance with the statutory independence of the Courts Service, the Minister for Justice is not accountable through Parliamentary Questions (PQs) for the operation of the Courts Service. However, the Courts Service provides the Minister with information for use in responding to PQs relating to matters for which

he/she has a general responsibility. The Courts Service provides accurate, comprehensive information in a timely manner.

The Courts Service also responds in a timely manner to requests for information from members of the Oireachtas on matters which come within the remit of the Courts Service.

The Courts Service complies with the Protocol for the Provision of information to members of the Oireachtas by State Bodies under the aegis of Government Departments/Offices.

Freedom of Information

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act the Courts Service provides access to Courts Service records as requested by members of the public, researchers, and the media.

Determination of Policy

Section 13 of the Act states that “the Board in performance of its functions shall have regard to any policy or objective of the Government or a Minister of the Government insofar as it may affect or relate to the functions of the Service ... The Minister may inform the board of any policy or objective of the Government or a Minister of the Government”

Appointment of the Chief Executive.

Section 17 of the Act provides that the terms and conditions of the contract of service of the Chief Executive Officer must be “approved by the Minister with the consent of the Minister for Finance”.

Membership of the Board

The Minister nominates 3 members of the Board of the Courts Service and may at any time for stated reasons remove those nominees from the Board. The Minister may also remove for stated reasons, in consultation with the nominating body/person, members of the Board representing the Bar Council, the Law Society and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

Relationship with the Department of Justice

As indicated above there is formal accountability between the Courts Service and the Minister. In addition, the Courts Service, while an independent statutory agency, works with the Department and other Justice agencies in the delivery of services and supporting the administration of justice, it receives its funding as part of the Justice Group of Votes and is represented by the Minister at Cabinet.

To support the work of the Department and the Courts Service, it is necessary to have in place formal structures and channels of communication which will satisfy all relevant information requirements for the management and administration of the courts and the wider justice sector. This was recognised as fundamental to the effective management of the Service by the Board and was included in the Board Framework Document which defines the channels of communication *i.e.*, communication between the Minister and the Service is normally between the Minister and Chairperson of the Board while day to day communication is between the Secretary General and officials and the Chief Executive and officials.

An open, co-operative and mutually supportive relationship has been developed at all levels of the organisation, with the Office of the Chief Executive and the governance function of the Department acting as a communications link and liaison as appropriate. Where particular issues relevant to individual Directorates arise, there is direct communication between the relevant officials *e.g.*, legislative change or the implementation of government initiatives.

The Chief Executive attends Heads of Justice agency meetings and also meets with the Secretary General regularly. The Courts Service is represented on cross justice sector committees and project boards and in addition regular meetings are held between the Senior Management of the Courts Service and the Secretary General, Assistant Secretary, and senior management in the Department.

To enhance and further support the close working relationship between the Courts Service and the Department, an Oversight Agreement is put in place which while fully respecting the independent status of the Courts Service,

- defines the role of the Courts Service in the Justice and Equality sector
- provides an overview of the Courts Service corporate governance arrangements
- defines the Department of Justice's expectations of the Courts Service
- defines the Court Service expectations of the Department
- defines the inputs, outputs and expected outcome of the activities of the Courts Service

The objective of the Agreement is to support the Courts Service in carrying out its functions as set out in the Courts Service Act, 1998 and to assess performance of those functions through monitoring of agreed targets, output, and outcome indicators.

Leadership & Organisation Capacity/Capability

Leadership is provided to the organisation by the Board, the Chief Executive, and the Senior Management Team, who are responsible for the development and implementation of strategy and policies of the Courts Service. This is the context in which the Corporate and Directorate business plans are compiled.

Organisational capacity is determined by the resources available, and monies voted to the Service by the Oireachtas. The Board, the Accounting Officer, and the Senior Management Teamwork within the budgetary framework in order to maximise organisational capacity and capability through the optimisation of resources, the development of appropriate policies and procedures, technological solutions, and realisation of the potential of the staff and management of the organisation.

To assist in developing the capacity and capability of the organisation the following strategies have been put in place:

- Courts Service Strategic Plan 2021 - 2023
- Estates Strategy 2022-2025
- People and Organisation Strategy 2022-2024
- Communications and Stakeholder strategy 2021 -2025
- Innovation Strategy 2020-2023
- ICT Strategy
- Data Strategy 2021-2024
- Environmental and Sustainability Strategy 2021-2024
- Learning & Development Strategy 2020-2023

Senior Management Team and other Governance Structures

This chapter sets out the role, purpose and functions of the Senior Management Team which are underpinned by and built on the values and culture of the organisation and those of the Civil Service.

Senior Management Team Terms of Reference

The Senior Management Team is critical to establishing and supporting the culture, behaviour, values required to achieving the goals and vision of the organisation. It has responsibility for cross-organisational issues as well as participation in relation to issues with a cross sectoral dimension and brings its shared experience and wisdom to the management and development of the courts and Courts Service.

Court Service policy is considered and determined by the Board and implemented by the Chief Executive. The Senior Management Team initiates and develops policy for consideration by the Board to support and achieve the strategic and operational aims of the organisation. In doing so it actively seeks opportunities for and supports an innovative approach to the development and management of the organisation. The Senior Management Team supports and interacts with the Board through the Chief Executive, attendance at Board meetings, meetings with the chairperson and other Board members on specific issues and as members of and advisors to Board committees.

The Senior Management Team promotes and is integral to effective communication within the organisation. Project Boards and senior managers report to the Senior Management Team on developments in or affecting the organisation, new projects, or relevant cross sectoral initiatives. Information from the Senior Management Team is forwarded to Business Units through Heads of Directorates and the distribution of minutes of Senior Management Team to Principal Officers.

1. The Courts Service

The Courts Service is responsible for the administration and management of the courts in Ireland. Its primary functions are to manage the courts, provide support services to the judges, provide information on the courts system to the public, and provide court buildings and facilities for court users.

The vision is to modernise our courts system so that it operates to the highest standard for everyone, from vulnerable court users, witnesses, and litigants to judges and legal professionals. To realise this vision, the Courts Service in collaboration with its justice partners and the judiciary, seeks to provide a modern,

transparent, and accessible courts system that is quicker, easier to access and more efficient.

The effective management of the Courts Service is based on the following principles.

- Creates and maintains a culture and ethos which ensures behaviour with integrity, a strong commitment to ethical values and respect for the rule of law
- Determines priorities and develops policies and Interventions to ensure achieve optimal outcomes to effect
- Delivers effective accountability through good practices in transparency, reporting, open communications, audit, and scrutiny
- Is committed to continuous development including the capability of the leadership team, management, and staff.
- Manages risk and performance through robust internal control systems and effective performance management practices
- Supports and facilitates openness, effective public consultation processes and comprehensive engagement with stakeholders.

2. Role of the Senior Management Team

The Senior Management Team is critical to upholding and living the principles detailed above. The Senior Management Team is an executive whose role is to develop strategies to ensure the Courts Service delivers its statutory mandate and its Vision for 2030.

2.1 Responsibilities

- Deliver on our statutory mandate, to manage the courts, support the judges, provide information on the courts system to the public, and provide court buildings and facilities for court users.
- Lead, co-ordinate and manage activities of the Courts Service;
- Optimise allocation of resources to achieve the highest standards of efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services
- Meet with the Courts Service Board and its Committees in matters arising from individual roles as Senior Management Team members and on cross organisational matters as appropriate.

2.2 Strategic development

- Development of strategy for approval by the Courts Service Board
- Deliver on strategy implementation through our corporate plans, policies and carrying out our statutory duties
- Monitor the achievement of business targets and review and respond to progress as required
- Use performance data and evidence-based analysis to inform our decision-making process.

- Take a user centric and digital first approach

2.3 Financial Control and Risk Management

- Effective management of our Budget and deployment of resources in the achievement of our objectives, while ensuring VFM.
- Management of financial performance and control environment
- Adhere to good corporate governance practice, including development and implementation of risk management framework to ensure key risks are identified and addressed in a timely and effective manner

2.4 Collaboration with stakeholders and other agencies

- Actively work to promote open and effective communications and collaboration throughout the organisation and across our justice sector partners, government, and society to achieve common goals and aspirations.
- Engage regularly with all stakeholders with regard to the Modernisation Programme and Courts Service Strategic Vision 2030

2.5 People

- Foster a culture of excellence and promote development of our people to their full potential
- Provide a healthy and sustainable place to work for our people

3. Membership of the Senior Management Team

- Chief Executive
- Assistant Secretary, Superior Courts Operations Directorate
- Assistant Secretary, Circuit and District Court Operations Directorate
- Assistant Secretary, Strategy and Reform Directorate
- Assistant Secretary, Corporate Services Directorate
- Assistant Secretary, Chief Information Officer
- Head of Communications and Media Unit
- Head of Office of the CEO
- Head of Human Resources
- Principal Officer nominated from the PO cohort

As appropriate other senior managers are invited to attend meetings where appropriate

4. Role of Members

The role of members of the SMT is to act in the best interests of the organisation by taking collective responsibility for decisions by:

- Attendance and active participation at meetings, including chairing of the meeting
- Critically examine and challenge matters for consideration by the SMT
- Bring to the attention of the SMT any matters that may adversely impact on areas such as the organisations delivery of its mandate, strategic objectives, reputation or well-being and health of the organisation
- Actively promote open communication and sharing of information between the SMT and the organisation
- Declare any potential conflicts of interest and in this context, if appropriate, absent themselves from decision making.

5. Matters considered and dealt with by the Senior Management Team

- Strategies to implement Board policy
- Opportunities for innovation and reform using user centric design and enabling technology as appropriate to transform the delivery of services
- Review of progress on the implementation of Statements of Strategy and annual corporate Business Plans and organisational performance issues
- Progress and status of major projects against expected timeframes and budget
- Major policy issues and wider external issues of significance
- Corporate Risk Register and mitigating actions arising
- Modernisation and Transformation Agenda including across Justice Agency Modernisation Agenda programmes
- Effective communication through the organisation and with external stakeholders.
- Quarterly reports on
 1. Monitoring of expenditure against profile
 2. Financial Planning and risk profiling
 3. Directorate Activity Reports
 4. Risk Management
 5. Progress Reports on the management of the PPPs
 6. Human Resources

6. Role of Secretariat

Schedule of meetings is agreed at the start of the year to include standing agenda items.

Plan regular meetings of the SMT that aligns with the terms of reference including:

- Agenda items incorporates relevant matters.
- Meetings are held in accordance with best corporate governance practice

- Decisions are noted and acted upon
- Schedule SMT annual effectiveness review and annual review of these terms of reference.

7. Meetings and Documentation

- The Senior Management Team meets weekly.
- The Office of the Chief Executive is the Secretariat
- The meetings are chaired on a rotating basis by a member of the SMT.
- The agenda for the meeting is prepared in consultation with members of the Senior Management Team with reports issued by close of business the previous Friday.
- Reports are relevant concise and adequate to enable members to understand the background and context of the issues under discussion and where required included the decision recommended to the SMT.
- The meetings are attended by members of the SMT with other senior managers attending for particular agenda items e.g. Financial Report, Risk Management, Management of the CCJ, Human Resources etc.
- Decisions are generally made by consensus. Where a consensus cannot be reached the Chief Executive will, in consultation with other members decide an appropriate course of action.
- Minutes of the meeting are drafted by the Secretary in consultation with the members documenting:
 - o items considered
 - o decisions reached
 - o Actions required and member responsible
 - o Timetable for action
- Draft minutes are approved at the following meeting and then posted to Courts Connect
- An Action Plan detailing outstanding actions required, the member responsible and the timetable for action is reviewed and updated at each meeting.
- Agenda items may be deferred where appropriate

Terms of Reference were approved by the Courts Service Senior Management Team on 30th May 2023 and are effective from that date.

Accountability

The Senior Management Team is accountable to the Board for the operational management of the Courts Service and the delivery of strategic objectives. Performance and Evaluation.

The Senior Management Team carries out an annual review to measure delivery, performance, and effectiveness against its terms of reference.

Governance across organisational boundaries

The Courts Service works with the Department of Justice, other Government Departments, and government agencies to support the administration of justice in an integrated, holistic, and cohesive manner. In this way the Courts Service supports the implementation of cross cutting Government priorities and the delivery of whole of Government projects.

The Chief Executive attends Heads of Justice agency meetings and also meets with the Secretary General on a regular basis. The Courts Service is represented on cross justice sector committees and project boards and in addition regular meetings are held between the Senior Management of the Courts Service and the Secretary General, Assistant Secretary, and senior management in the Civil Governance Unit.

The Courts Service works closely with the Department, An Garda Síochána, the Prisons Service, Probation Service, and other such groups in the development of justice initiatives and the implementation of Government and EU legislative and regulatory Frameworks e.g., the Criminal Justice Strategic Committee, the Circuit and District Court Efficiencies Group.

Modernisation Programme Board

The Modernisation Programme Board provides governance and quality assurance across the Courts Service modernisation programme. The Board supports the organisation in understanding and communicating the purpose, vision, scope, and strategic reform agenda of the Courts Service and to assess and approve potential significant business project requests and initiatives. The Board has responsibility for the governance and oversight of all change projects and takes key decisions regarding individual project approval, resourcing, and monitoring of benefits realisation across projects. One of its key responsibilities is to engage with the Courts Service Board in progressing the reform agenda and to report on the status of the portfolio.

Responsibilities of the Modernisation Programme Board

- Accountable for the successful delivery of the overall change portfolio and associated projects.
- Accountable for budget allocation and expenditure to deliver on the Corporate Modernisation Agenda.
- Ensure compliance with the organisational project and change management processes including sign-off at the appropriate level as detailed in this governance framework.
- Propose options for addressing critical risks and issues across the portfolio of projects.
- Report periodically to the Courts Service Board and to the Modernisation Committee of the Board.

- Ongoing stakeholder engagement and management as required including clearing “roadblocks” across the portfolio of projects.
- Review, on a quarterly basis the portfolio of change projects and all associated documentation (particularly includes the collective dashboards of all the individual projects).
- Oversee and approve any issues that have cross project implications.
- Evaluate all business cases and benefits management plans in relation to new significant business change initiatives, based on agreed evaluation criteria.
- Approve and prioritise such business cases as necessary.
- Review whether projects in the portfolio should be discontinued or put on ‘hold’ depending on priorities and available resources.
- Review, challenge and assess the portfolio & project status reports.
- Review/approve actions for key issues and risks highlighted across the portfolio by the project managers and the project teams.
- Request independent project reviews, when necessary.

Audit, Assurance and Compliance Arrangements

ACCOUNTING OFFICER ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the implementation of policies approved by the Board, and the day-to-day management of the staff, administration, and business of the Service. She prepares an annual budget for approval by both the Finance Committee and the Board with support from the Senior Management Team. She provides regular updates to the Board, the Finance Committee, and other Committees of the Board in regard to the management of the Service, implementation of policy, progress on the strategic plan and the modernisation agenda of the Service.

In her capacity as a Board member and Accounting Officer, the Chief Executive provides an Annual Report in relation to the organisation's system of internal financial controls to the Minister for Justice confirming compliance across a range of headings. The Service thereby complies with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and in particular affirms compliance with:

- appropriate procedures for financial reporting, internal audit, travel, procurement, and asset disposals
- inclusion of a statement on the system of internal financial control
- adherence to Codes of Business Conduct for Directors and Employees
- compliance with Government guidelines on the payment of Directors' fees
- ensure alignment with relevant Justice Sector strategies prior to the plan being finalised and adopted by the Board.

As Accounting Officer, the Chief Executive Officer is also responsible for the signing of the Annual Appropriation Account together with a Statement of Internal Financial Controls providing assurance on the internal financial control environment operating within the Service.

The Statement of Internal Financial Control has particular regard to the financial control environment, the framework of administration, management reporting and internal control. It includes a statement of compliance with procurement guidelines and with circulars relating to the mandatory use of framework agreements and contracts.

Breaches of controls, in particular instances of fraud or irregularity, must be brought to the attention of the Comptroller and Auditor General in accordance with public financial procedures.

The updated Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) provides clear guidance on the responsibility and accountability of the Board and management. To enable assurances to be provided to the Board, CEO and Audit and Risk Committee, particularly in the highly decentralised environment in which the Courts Service operates, significant reliance is placed on assurances provided by Heads of Directorate and managers regarding the implementation of financial and other controls. Two approaches

are used to establish compliance with regulations, policies, and internal financial controls namely:

- (i) A Compliance Statement which is required to be signed by the Head of each Directorate and
- (ii) an Internal Control Questionnaire which is required to be completed and signed by Regional and Office Managers. These self-assessment processes provide reasonable assurance as to the level of compliance with policies and financial controls when taken in conjunction with other methods such as the work of the Internal Audit Unit.

Assurance arrangements between the Accounting Officer and Accounting Officers of the National Shared Services Office (NSSO)

As the Courts Service is currently a client of the Financial Shared Service Centre (FSSC) in Killarney an annual compliance statement is completed and signed by the Head of the FSSC. A Service Management Agreement is in place with the NSSO and a similar arrangement is in place with the FSSC.

Audit and Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee is fundamental to ensuring that the Service operates according to good governance, accounting, and auditing standards, and adopts appropriate risk management arrangements

The Committee focuses primarily on overseeing and assisting the Board and the Chief Executive Officer fulfil their duties by providing an independent and objective review of:

- financial and operational risks, including overall risk management;
- the effectiveness of internal controls (including information technology security and control) and risk management,
- the effectiveness of internal and external audit functions,
- the adequacy of governance procedures and
- value for money issues.

The Audit and Risk Committee is a Committee of the Courts Service Board. The lifetime of the Committee is 3 years or to the date of establishment of a new Courts Service Board whichever is the earlier.

The terms of reference of the Committee are a matter for the Courts Service Board. The Audit and Risk Committee has robust terms of reference which are reviewed regularly by both the Audit and Risk Committee and the Board to ensure they are in line with and incorporate best governance practice and Audit and Risk Committee guidance.

The Committee includes persons with significant business expertise and experience within the public, semi-state and private sectors. The Committee is chaired by a member of the Board. The Committee meets annually with external auditors and the Chief Executive. Members of the Senior Management Team and other officials also attend meetings of the Committee where matters which come under their remit are being considered.

In accordance with its Terms of Reference the Committee reports annually to the Board and the Chief Executive. The Annual Report sets out an overview of the work of the

Committee; a summary of the Audit reports received; items considered by the Committee and Internal Audit activity during the year. The report also highlights the key issues of concern for the Committee and sets out the priorities for the coming year. The Chair of the Committee provides a report to the Board following Committee meetings.

A copy of the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference are at APPENDIX 5.

Internal and external audit environment

Given the range of different financial transactions processed and services provided by the various offices of the Courts Service, it is essential that the Courts Service has independent verification and audit arrangements in place.

Internal Audit

The Audit and Risk Committee is supported by the Internal Audit Unit. Internal Audit has an independent appraisal function charged with reviewing operations across all areas of the Service, to assist and provide assurance to the Board, the Audit and Risk Committee and all levels of Management. The Internal Audit Unit operates in accordance with Government Internal Audit standards under an Audit Charter and an Annual Audit Plan approved by the Audit and Risk Committee. The Internal Audit Unit works to an annual work plan informed by the Courts Service management and governance priorities and the Corporate Risk Register. The annual work plan is considered and approved by the Audit and Risk Committee. The Internal Audit Unit expertise and independent approach is used to identify issues, assess and evaluate management approach to risk and internal controls and regulatory compliance in areas under audit.

Audit Reports are submitted to the Chief Executive, the Senior Management Team and the Audit and Risk Committee who also receive regular reports showing progress against the Audit Plan.

A copy of the Internal Audit Charter is at APPENDIX 7

Role of Finance Unit

The Finance Unit is responsible for the management of the Courts Service Vote as approved by the Oireachtas for both expenditure and income. It is responsible for the preparation of the annual budget based on approved funding. As part of our governance arrangement the annual budget is recommended for approval by the Finance Committee to the Board.

Day-to-day responsibility for managing expenditure within budget limits is assigned to Heads of Directorate through our devolved budgetary process. In certain instances, budgets are devolved to Regional Managers and certain Principal Officers. Budgets are monitored closely with monthly reports furnished to the Senior Management Team. Quarterly financial reports are submitted to the Finance Committee and the Board. The Finance Unit is responsible for the preparation of the Annual Appropriation Account for signing by the Accounting Officer.

The Courts Service uses the shared service facility – FSSC - operated by the Finance Division of the Department of Justice to carry out a number of functions including the provision of financial accounting and other related ancillary services such as payment of invoices. The NSSO provides services in relation to payment of salaries and travel & subsistence.

Other responsibilities of the Finance Unit include Fee income analysis, Value for Money Reviews, Procurement, Risk Management, Banking and an effective control environment.

Risk Management

The Courts Service has in place a risk management framework. This provides for a planned and systematic approach to identifying and managing a range of risk categories; Financial, Service Delivery, Infrastructure (Buildings & ICT), People, Compliance & Governance, and Projects. Under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, a Chief Risk Officer has been appointed. The Chief Risk Officer is a member of the Senior Management Team and reports to the Audit and Risk Committee and the Board.

The risk management framework, which is externally reviewed periodically, continues to be applied on the basis of clearly defined roles and responsibilities at Board, Audit and Risk Committee, and at all levels of management.

A Risk Management Policy and Corporate Risk Register are in place and are reviewed regularly by the Senior Management Team, the Audit and Risk Committee and the Board. This Corporate Risk Register is compiled and reviewed in consultation with Heads of Directorate and with the Head of Internal Audit. Risk Registers are linked to the annual business planning process and set out the major risks facing the Courts Service together with the existing controls, planned actions to mitigate the risks identified, with owners and target dates for completion.

Procurement

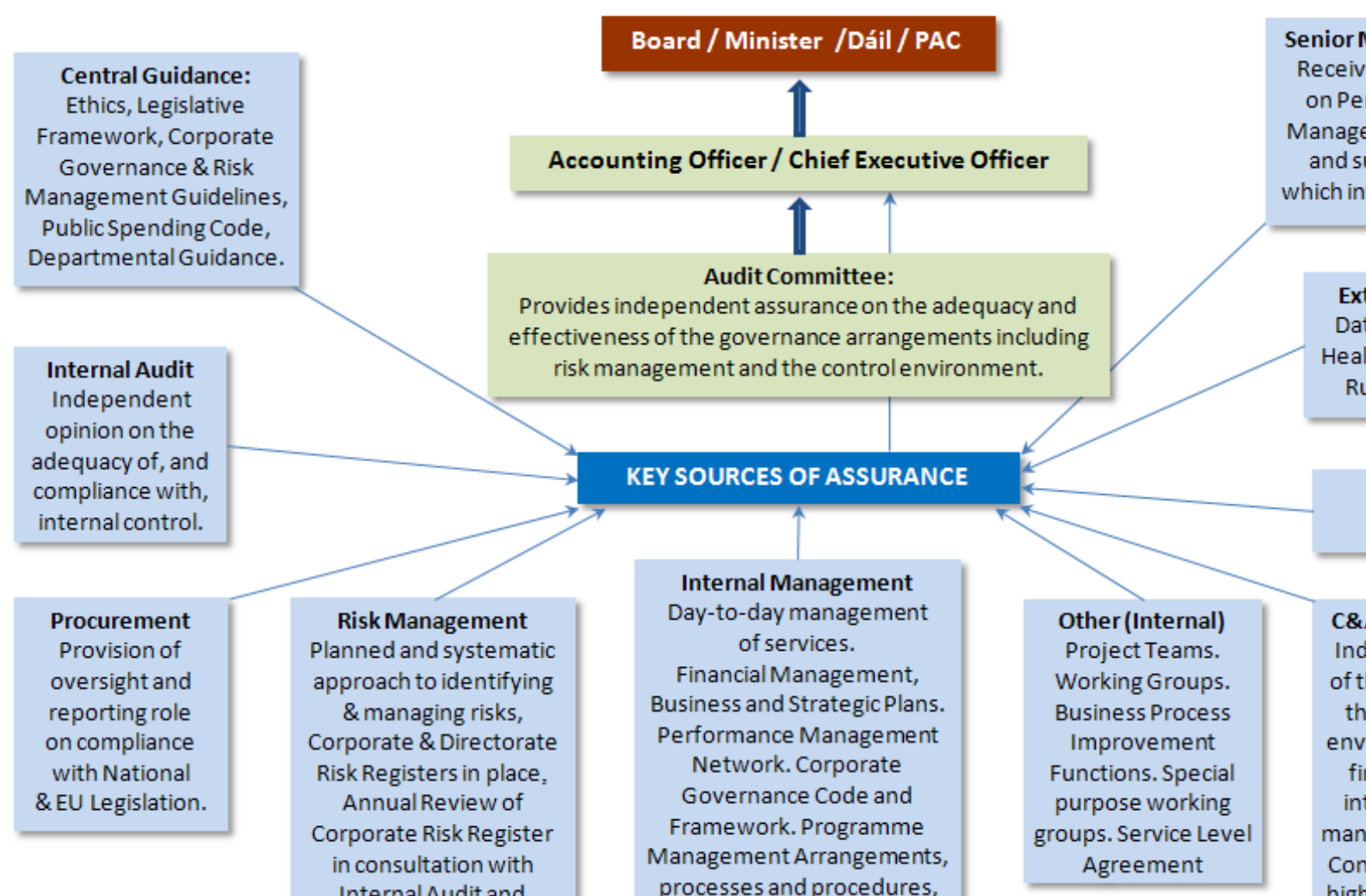
The Courts Service acknowledges its obligations to comply with National and EU policies together with the delivery of value for money. The Courts Service operates under the Public Procurement Guidelines - Competitive Process which provide the direction for all procurement activity and ensures the objectives and key principles of competition, equality of treatment and transparency which underpin national and EU rules, are met. Ensuring full compliance with procurement regulations is an ongoing exercise and procurement training is provided on an annual basis.

Responsibility for procurement is devolved to each Head of Directorate, with the Finance Unit taking a lead role in promoting awareness of our obligations both at national and EU level. The Finance Unit provides advice to staff, maintains the contract register and monitors expenditure which is subject to the procurement process. The Learning and development Unit arranges regular training courses for staff in procurement. The combined effect of these measures seeks to ensure full compliance in this area.

Goods and services procured by the Courts Service include IT Managed Services, Stenography and Interpreting Services. The Courts Service avails of centralised managed contracts that have been put in place by the Office of Government Procurement. The Service continues to engage with the Office of Government Procurement for advice on procurement and to advise them of our current and future procurement requirements. Non-compliance with procurement regulations is reported to the Comptroller and Auditor General in accordance with Circular 40/02: Public Procurement Guidelines. Reference is also made in our Annual Appropriation Account in our Statement of Internal Financial Controls.

Compliance with Courts Service Policies

In carrying out its functions the Courts Service operates in accordance with Courts Service policies and wider Civil Service policies in the areas of Human Resources, ICT procurement and development and Capital Building. Compliance is monitored on an ongoing basis and both compliance and the policies in place are subject Internal Audit review.



Appendices

APPENDIX 1 – Protected Disclosures

Courts Service

1. Policy Introduction

The Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022 (“the Act”), was signed into Law on the 21st of July 2022 and may be viewed at

<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2022/act/27/enacted/en/print.html>

This act replaces the Protected Disclosure Act 2014, adding EU Directive 2019/1, Whistleblowing Directive into Irish law.

This document sets out the Courts Service’s policy and procedures on protected disclosures required under the 2022 Act (“the procedures”) on

- how to make a protected disclosure; and

- how to manage such disclosures.

This **policy provides an overview of protected disclosures processes only and is not legal advice**. Before making a disclosure, individuals may wish to obtain independent advice or guidance.

2. Policy Statement

The Courts Service is strongly committed to maintaining an open, transparent and ethical workplace culture. This includes facilitating a work environment, where workers are encouraged and supported to raise disclosures regarding wrongdoing or potential wrongdoing in the workplace and any matter that may impact adversely on the ability to carry out our functions.

We are committed to protecting any person who makes a disclosure from penalisation, or other adverse treatment, when making a disclosure in good faith, based on a reasonable belief wrongdoing has occurred, even if the disclosure is found to be misguided or mistaken.

Incidents of adverse treatment toward a person making a disclosure regarding potential wrongdoing in the workplace will be investigated and may be subject to sanction under the Civil Service Disciplinary Code.

As part of our commitment to an ethical and transparent workplace, the Courts Service is a member of the 'Integrity at Work' programme, a Transparency International (TI Ireland) initiative. Workers are directed to TI Ireland's independent and confidential advice service, available via their 'Speak Up' helpline at 1800 844866, Monday to Friday, 10am to 6pm, or by emailing helpline@transparency.ie, or visiting speakup.ie, where callers may be able to access free legal advice from the [Transparency Legal Advice Centre](#).

Support is also available from the [Civil Service Employee Assistance Service](#).

3. Definitions

The Protected Disclosures Act 2014 as amended by the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022 protects workers in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors from retaliation if they speak up about wrongdoing in the workplace.

A Protected disclosure is a written or oral disclosure of wrongdoing or potential wrongdoing within the workplace.

A confidential disclosure is one in which the reporting person has revealed their identity in the disclosure and is afforded the protection of confidentiality by the recipient of the statement.

An anonymous disclosure is one in which the reporting person has not revealed their identity in the disclosure and does not wish to be named. The Courts Service allows for this type of disclosure; however, it should be recognised this may restrict the assessment and investigation of the allegations.

Office of the Protected Disclosures Commissioner supports the operation of the Protected Disclosure Legislation. The Commissioner is responsible for directing disclosures to the appropriate body and transmitting all protected disclosures received by the Ministers to the most appropriate authority for assessment and investigation if required.

A worker includes current or former employees, contractors, consultants, trainees, agency staff and interns, volunteers, unpaid trainees, board members, shareholders, members of administrative, management or supervisory bodies and job applicants.

A reporting person (whistle-blower) is a worker, or former worker, who reveals information about activity within an organisation which could be considered wrongdoing.

Penalisation of reporting person refers to potential punishment, including dismissal and any act or omission causing detriment to a reporting person. Penalisation can be caused not only by the reporting person's employer but also the reporting person's co-workers or otherwise in a work-related context.

Persons concerned refers to named persons in the disclosure who may be involved or connected with the alleged wrongdoing.

Facilitators are persons who assist the reporting person in making a disclosure.

Protected Disclosures Officer (PDO) is responsible for receiving and acknowledging disclosures, appointment of designated persons to conduct investigations, administration of the process, maintaining up to date records, and secure storage of case files.

Designated person is responsible for conducting the investigation under the terms of the policy and act.

Prescribed persons are external designated persons whom the reporting person may lodge their disclosure when they are uncertain as to whom to lodge the disclosure. They are appointed by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Suitable persons are third parties whom the commissioner considers to be the most appropriate person to follow up on the reporting person's disclosure.

Reasonable belief in this context is where the available information provides reasonable grounds to support the belief that a wrongdoing has occurred, is occurring, or will occur. It does not have to be proven to be true, and no penalisation will occur where no evidence of wrongdoing is uncovered if reasonable grounds are established.

Work-related context refers to current or past work activities where the reporting person acquires information to support the suspicion of wrongdoing.

4. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to implement the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022 and establish the process to facilitate the making of such disclosures. Continue to promote an ethical and transparent culture, where workers are empowered to report wrongdoing without fear of penalisation or adverse treatment.

5. Key Principles

This policy includes a number of key principles that will continue to be our focus:

- Promoting a culture of openness, transparency and commitment to ethical conduct.
- Establishing an environment where staff are encouraged to report wrongdoing, knowing they are fully protected from penalisation as provided for in the 2022 Protected Disclosures Act.
- Assessing reports of wrongdoing and taking appropriate action where required.

- Concentrating on the allegation of wrongdoing, not the reporting person making the disclosure.
- Protecting the identity of the reporting person and other considered individuals where possible.
- Not penalising the reporting person where a disclosure is made in good faith and with a reasonable belief, even if the reasonable belief is later discovered to be unfounded.

6. Scope

6.1 Disclosures covered by the policy

The policy and procedures apply to disclosures where the reporting person reasonably believes wrongdoing has occurred, is occurring or may occur, and which came to the attention of the reporting person during his or her employment, or in a work-related context. Wrongdoing can include, but is not limited to the following

- Committing a criminal offence.
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation (except one arising under the worker's contract of employment or a contract obligating the worker to do or personally perform any work or services)
- A miscarriage of justice
- The endangering of an individual's health or safety
- Damage to the environment
- Unlawful or improper use of funds or resources of a public body, or of other public money
- That an act or omission by or on behalf of a public body is oppressive, discriminatory or grossly negligent or constitutes gross mismanagement
- Concealment or destruction of information tending to indicate any of the wrongdoings above mentioned.
- Breaches of specified EU law and legislation.
- Disclosures regarding the destruction or concealment of information or attempts to destroy or conceal information relating to a breach are protected under this policy.

6.2 Individuals protected

This policy provides protection from being unfairly penalised following a disclosure by workers in the Courts Service, including, but not limited to,

- Current or former employees
- Contractors
- Consultants
- Trainees
- Agency staff and interns
- Volunteers
- Unpaid trainees
- Board members
- Shareholders
- Members of administrative, management or supervisory bodies.
- Job applicants

7. Other Courts Service Policies

The policy and procedures should be read in conjunction with any other Courts Service policies (e.g., the Courts Service Fraud Policy, Acceptable Usage Policy, etc.) which may be relevant to the disclosure concerned.

8. Omissions

The policy and procedures do not apply to the following:

8.1 Personal complaints or personal grievances which exclusively affect the reporting person. These should be addressed under policies such as Dignity at Work Policy or the Grievance Circular . Where a disclosure is found to be of an interpersonal nature, it should be referred to the reporting person, with details of the relevant policies through which their complaint can be addressed.

8.2 Disclosures where the worker knowingly conveys false, misleading, frivolous or vexatious information. If it transpires that a worker makes a disclosure, which they know to be false or do not believe to be true the Courts Service may take disciplinary or other appropriate action.

8.3 Legal advisors who are in receipt of information whilst providing legal advice are excluded from the protections of the act.

8.4 Workers with a statutory function to investigate wrongdoing, will not be covered by the Act, where the wrongdoing under investigation is not related to an act or omission of their employer, i.e., Garda Síochána are not protected when reporting wrongdoing related to events outside of An Garda Síochána.

9. Accountability and Responsibility

The Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform's Interim Guidance for Public Bodies and Prescribed Persons confers levels of governance and responsibility as outlined below



9.1 Courts Service Board

Oversight of Procedures will rest with the Board of the Courts Service to

- Ensure the policy is established and compliant with legislation
- Ensure the process implemented is in accordance with policy
- Established processes are adequate to meet requirements

9.2 Chief Executive Officer

Overall responsibility for the protected disclosures procedures and policy rest with the Chief Executive Officer to

- Ensure values of ethics, transparency and accountability are to the forefront.
- Create an internal reporting system and procedure to receive and manage disclosures which ensures the confidentiality of the identity of the reporting person.
- Identify and fill prescribed roles to ensure the policy and procedure can function successfully.
- Delegate duties to prescribed roles.
- Update the Board regarding policy and procedure and reporting of data.

9.3 The Senior Management Team (SMT)

SMT will be responsible for awareness of policy and promotion of culture of ethics and transparency throughout their directorates and teams. This will involve:

- Reviewing regular reports on statistics regarding protected disclosure claims.
- Ensuring office managers and staff in their directorates are aware of their responsibilities regarding protected disclosures and this policy.

9.4 Head of the Office of the CEO

Promote the protected disclosures process in a manner that creates a culture whereby workers feel safe to report alleged wrongdoing. This includes the following:

- Periodic reports to the SMT.
- Promote this policy through the SMT and PO network.
- Champion the protected disclosures process.
- Oversee campaigns to increase awareness.
- Appoint a Protected Disclosures Officer, to manage the operation and processing of the Protected Disclosure procedures and provide support and guidance to the Designated Persons.
- Authorise relevant and appropriate action following receipt of final investigation report where wrongdoing has been proven.

9.5 Protected Disclosures Officer (PDO)

Day-to-day responsibility for management of the policy and procedures:

- Manage the process and policy on a day-to-day basis
- Review and improve approach where required

- Acknowledge protected disclosures in writing or as appropriate within 7 days of receipt
- Receive, review and administer disclosures
- Appointing trained Designated Persons to conduct initial investigations on receipt of disclosures
- Ensure investigations are conducted in compliance with the policy and process
- Providing workers with clear and easily accessible information on the procedures for making a report either internally or to a prescribed external party
- Providing feedback within 3 months of receipt of the original disclosure, and to provide regular feedback every 3 months thereafter, until such time as the case is resolved
- Manage the case record system, recording all cases received, their progress and outcomes
- Providing reports to the Head of the Office of the CEO.
- Management of secure storage of all electronic and physical case records.

9.6 Designated Person

Impartial person (or persons) designated to investigate reports received who undertake(s) the following:

- Conducts a thorough investigation to establish evidence of wrongdoing
- Investigates disclosures in a fair and impartial manner
- Maintains the confidentiality of the person making the disclosure unless it is necessary for the effective investigation of the relevant wrongdoing

- Informs the reporting person where the confidentiality of the person making the disclosure may be required to be disclosed
- Maintains contact with the reporting person throughout the investigation
- Provides a written report to the Protected Disclosures Officer where a relevant wrongdoing has not been proven, advising of the outcome and the reasons for it
- Provides a written report to the Protected Disclosures Officer where wrongdoing has been proven, advising of the outcome and reasons for it, recommending the appropriate action needed to address the relevant wrongdoing, having regard to the nature and seriousness of the wrongdoing concerned.

9.7 Reporting Person

The reporting person is responsible for the following:

- To submit a protected disclosure where they have a reasonable belief wrongdoing has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.
- To provide as much available factual information and evidence in the initial disclosure to allow for a comprehensive and thorough assessment and investigation to be conducted.
- To carry out their job as normal following the submission of the disclosure.

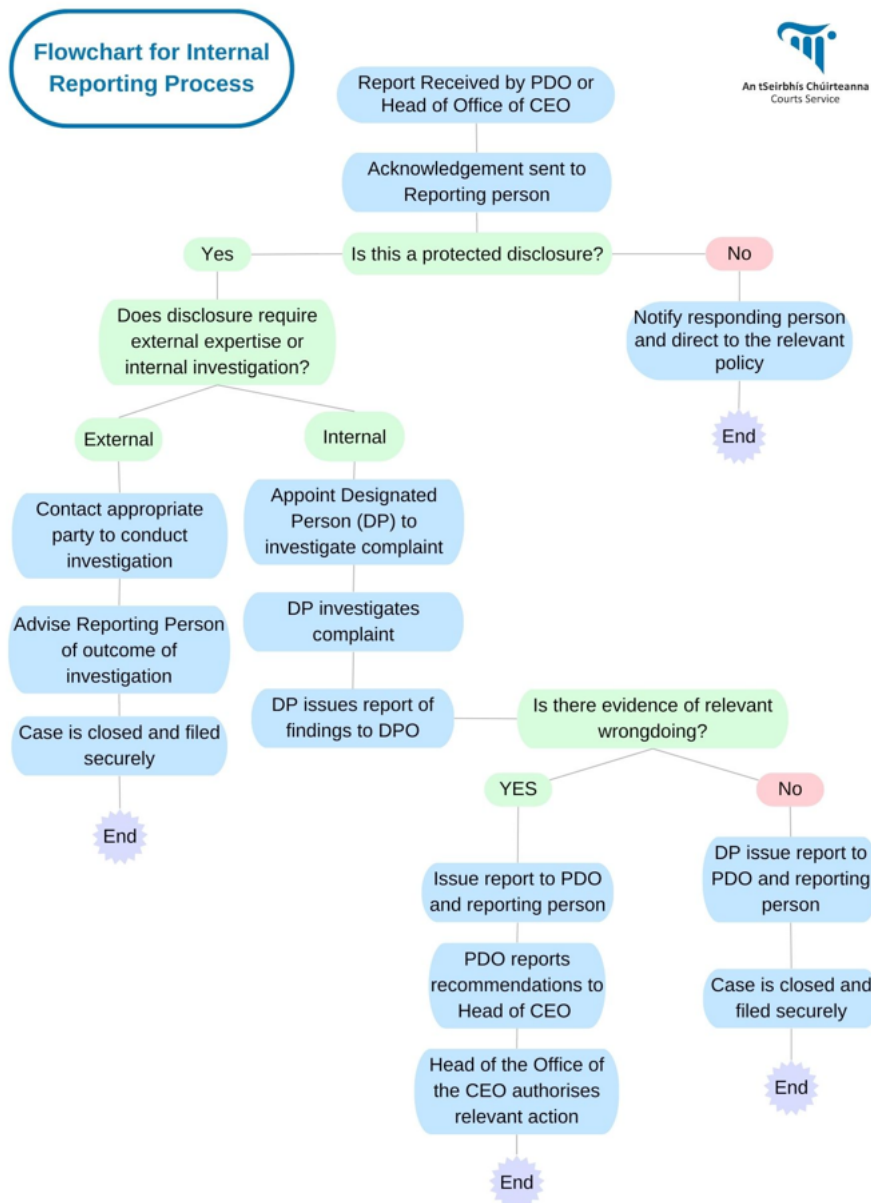
Reporting persons are not required and should not conduct investigations to establish evidence of their suspicion of wrongdoing. Their responsibility is to provide the information which they obtained during their normal working context.

10. Procedures.

This policy and procedures are not intended to act as a substitute for normal day to day operational reporting. It is expected concerns in relation to day-to-day operational matters will be brought to the attention of the relevant line manager and dealt with accordingly.

This policy does not require the Courts Service to follow up on anonymous reports, although it may choose to do so. Should the identity of an individual who has made an anonymous report subsequently have their identity revealed and suffer penalisation, they will be covered under the full protections of the Amendment Act.

10.1 Process Flow Chart



10.2 Internal Disclosures

Any worker (as defined above) who has a reasonable belief that one or more of the wrongdoings set out at paragraph 4 above is occurring or may occur, should disclose the relevant information as follows:

- Send an email to Protecteddisclosures@Courts.ie; or
- Write to the Protected Disclosures Officer, Human Resources, Courts Service, Phoenix House, 15/24 Phoenix House, Dublin 7.
- Telephone the Protected Disclosures Officer (PDO) on 01 888 6038 and make the disclosure on the call or arrange a face-to-face meeting.
 1. Where a disclosure is made in person or over the phone, a written statement will be taken by the PDO. The reporting person will be given an

opportunity to review and once approved by them, this will become the reporting person's disclosure.

2. Where the individual making the disclosure feels it is not appropriate to make the disclosure to the Protected Disclosures Officer, they may make the disclosure to the Head of the Office of the CEO.
3. The reporting person should specify the nature of the potential wrongdoing at the time the disclosure is made. Having made a disclosure, the reporting person should not carry out further investigation in order to establish proof of wrongdoing.
4. While a disclosure may be made anonymously, please note it may restrict the extent to which this policy can be applied and implemented.
5. The Protected Disclosures Officer will contact the reporting person within 7 days of receiving the disclosure to acknowledge its receipt.
6. The Protected Disclosures Officer will conduct an initial review of the disclosure to establish if the alleged wrongdoing falls under the disclosures policy or if it should be managed through a different policy, such as grievance policy.
7. The Protected Disclosures Officer will contact the reporting person and advise if the disclosure falls under this policy. Where it does not, the PDO will contact the reporting person and direct them to the appropriate policy.
8. Where the disclosure falls under this protected disclosure policy and is deemed to be of a very serious nature, the Protected Disclosures Officer will assess if external expertise is required. If so the PDO will contact the appropriate authority.
9. If disclosure does not require external experts, the PDO will appoint a trained Designated Person to conduct the initial investigation.
10. The Designated Person will investigate the disclosure to determine if evidence of the wrongdoing exists.
11. Where satisfied no evidence exists of wrongdoing the Designated Person will complete a report and issue it to the Protected Disclosures Officer and the worker

(where appropriate) making the disclosure. The report should outline reasons for their decision not to proceed.

12. If the Designated Person concludes there is evidence wrongdoing may have occurred, they will complete a report and issue it to the Protected Disclosures Officer and the worker (where appropriate) making the disclosure. The report should identify the wrongdoing which has occurred with a recommendation of appropriate action to be taken, having regard to the nature and seriousness of the matter concerned.
13. The Protected Disclosures Officer will present the report and recommendation to the Head of the Office of the CEO.
14. The Head of the Office of the CEO will authorise the relevant action.

11. External Disclosures

Workers are encouraged to make disclosures internally. However, where circumstances exist where this is not possible, they may make a protected disclosure to persons other than their employer as set out at (a) to (f) below.

(a) Other responsible person

Where the worker reasonably believes that the wrongdoing relates to the conduct of a person other than the worker's employer, or to something for which that other person has legal responsibility, then the worker can disclose to that other person, IE a contractor may report to the contracting body as opposed to their direct employer.

(b) A "prescribed person"

Certain persons are prescribed by [Statutory Instrument 339 of 2014](#) to receive protected disclosures ("prescribed persons"). This includes the heads or senior officials of a range of statutory bodies.

A worker may make a protected disclosure to a prescribed person if the worker reasonably believes that the relevant wrongdoing falls within the description of the role of the prescribed person and relevant circumstances as detailed under [SI 339 of 2014](#). However, in this case the worker must believe that the information disclosed, and any allegation contained in it, are substantially true.

(c) A Minister of the Government

If a worker is or was employed in a public body, the worker may make a protected disclosure to the Minister on whom any function related to the public body is conferred or imposed by or under any enactment. In the case of the Courts Service the Minister for Justice and Equality exercises primary statutory functions (under the Courts Service Act 1998) in relation to that body. One or more of the following conditions should be met before such a disclosure is made:

- I. The worker has already made a similar disclosure to their employer or a prescribed person and has not received feedback or where the worker feels the response indicates the complaint is not being investigated thoroughly.
- II. The worker reasonably believes the head of the public body concerned is engaged in the relevant wrongdoing reported
- III. The worker reasonably believes the disclosure contains information which may constitute an immediate, serious danger to the public interest.

(d) A legal adviser

A protected disclosure may be made by a worker in the course of obtaining legal advice from a barrister, solicitor, trade union official or official of an excepted body (an excepted body is a body which negotiates pay and conditions with an employer but is not a trade union as defined in section 6 of the Trade Union Act 1941).

(e) Disclosure to the Protected Disclosures Commissioner

The Commissioner can receive reports of wrongdoing:

- directly from a worker
- from a Minister, who is obliged to send it to the Commissioner within ten days of receipt or
- from a 'prescribed person' in certain circumstances.

To make a protected disclosure to the Commissioner you must also reasonably believe that the information you disclose and any allegation you make is **substantially** true.

(f) Alternative external disclosures (in very limited circumstances)

Section 10 of the Act provides that a protected disclosure may be made to recipients other than those mentioned above if the worker reasonably believes that

- the information disclosed, and any allegation contained in it, are substantially true,
- the disclosure is not made for personal gain,
- any one or more of the detailed conditions set out in section 10(2) of the Act are met and
- in all the circumstances of the case, it is reasonable for the worker to make the disclosure.

In determining whether it is reasonable for the worker to have made the disclosure, regard is to be had to the factors set out in Section 10(3) of the Act.

For general information, contact info@opdc.ie

External reporting channels and procedures can be found in [Section 11 of the 2022 Act](#).

12. Withdrawal of a Protected Disclosure

Workers are reminded, once a protected disclosure has been made in accordance it is not possible to withdraw the disclosure. Reporting persons are required to co-operate with the relevant persons during the investigation of the complaint.

13. Penalisation

13.1 The Courts Service affirms no person who makes a disclosure based on a reasonable belief in the occurrence of a wrongdoing in the Courts Service will be penalised for the making of that disclosure, even if no investigation subsequently takes place, or where an investigation does take place and the investigation finds that no wrongdoing occurred. This undertaking extends to any other person who is required to provide information in relation to matters raised as a consequence of the disclosure.

13.2 If a staff member believes that he/she/they has been penalised for the making of a disclosure of wrongdoing in accordance with this policy they should contact protecteddisclosures@courts.ie, or their Principal Officer, Head of Directorate, the Head of Internal Audit or the Chief Executive Officer, as appropriate.

13.3 Penalisation of a worker for having made a protected disclosure will not be tolerated, and any attempts will be investigated under the Civil Service Disciplinary Code.

14. Review

14.1 Responsibility for the review of the operation of this policy lies with the Chief Executive Officer of the Courts Service.

14.2 The Head of Internal Audit should report to the Chief Executive Officer and the Audit Committee of the Courts Service Board, on an annual basis on the operation of the policy, or more frequently if he or she considers it appropriate.

Appendix A

Procedure to be followed by Protected Disclosures Officer on receipt of disclosure

All reported disclosures about perceived wrongdoing in the workplace must be treated seriously. Obligations include

1. Ensure that (s)he is thoroughly familiar with the Courts Service's policy and procedures on the making of disclosures (see above).
2. Record the disclosure and the steps taken to deal with it.
3. Assess whether the disclosure should be treated as a protected disclosure and, where satisfied that it is not a protected disclosure, encourage the discloser to utilise other processes (e.g., a grievance procedure, where appropriate) so that the disclosure can be dealt with in an appropriate manner. If it is unclear whether the disclosure qualifies as a protected disclosure, the recipient should treat the disclosure as a protected disclosure (and protect the identity of the discloser in accordance with the Procedures) until satisfied that the information is not a protected disclosure.
4. Acknowledge receipt of the disclosure with seven days of receipt.
5. Where necessary, seek clarification from the worker on any aspect of the disclosure which is unclear.
6. Appoint a Designated Person to conduct an investigation
7. Ensure the Designated Person has received training and is familiar with the policy and procedures and the investigation complies with policy and procedure.
8. Provide feedback within 3 months of receipt of the original disclosure, and to provide regular feedback every three months thereafter, until such time as the case is resolved.
9. Provide a report of the outcome of the case to the reporting person.
10. Where the disclosure indicates that a criminal or other external investigation is warranted, ensure that the matter is reported to An Garda Síochána or, as the

case may be, such other body as may have the statutory power and function of investigation of the matter.

11. Take immediate action if the alleged wrongdoing involves a serious loss or danger to others.
12. Take appropriate action if the disclosure is proven to be grounded, or, where appropriate, refer the matter to the appropriate official within the Courts Service for action.
13. If the disclosure is considered deliberately false, consult the Personnel Officer as to the appropriate steps to be taken.
14. Report the outcome (see form specified in Appendix C) and forward all records to the Principal Officer in charge of the Office of the Chief Executive Officer.

Appendix B

Procedure to be followed by Designated Person

1. Investigate whether the disclosure report is based on a reasonable belief but ungrounded, based on a reasonable belief and grounded or a deliberately false report.
2. Establish what evidence is available to support the concern.
3. Obtain evidence from any relevant witnesses.

4. Carry out relevant enquiries promptly, sensitively and discretely, taking all reasonable steps to protect the identity of the maker of the disclosure.
5. Secure any necessary authorisations to the making of inquiries which may be required (e.g., under the Acceptable Usage Policy)
6. Where it may be necessary to reveal the worker's identity to undertake an effective inquiry, consult with the worker beforehand and seek consent.
7. Consider all evidence before making a recommendation.
8. Provide the Protected Disclosures Officer with a report following the conclusion of the investigation, outlining the decision, the reasons for it, and any recommendations.

Appendix C

Report of Information Disclosed

To: The Principal Officer in charge of the Office of the Chief Executive Officer

I received and dealt with a disclosure of information, as detailed below:

Name of recipient:

Name of discloser (if available):

Details of the disclosure (attach relevant correspondence):

Date of receipt of disclosure:

Summary of steps taken on foot of disclosure (attach correspondence and documentation):

Decision and reasons transmitted to the discloser (attach relevant correspondence):

I confirm I have dealt with this disclosure in accordance with the Courts Service's policy and procedures on the making of disclosures and any other Courts Service policy relevant to this disclosure.

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX 2 - Organisational Structure

Office of the Chief Executive

Head of Office: Maura Howe

This Office

- Provides executive Support for the Courts Service Board and Committees
- Provides executive support for the Chief Executive assisting them to fulfil their role and ensure that the work of the Service that requires her attention is processed efficiently and that they are appropriately informed when making decisions, attending meetings etc.
- Supports and co-ordinates the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection Acts
- Provides a central response function in relation to Parliamentary Questions, Government Policy documents and memoranda, reports, representations from the public and public representatives and general queries.
- Provides oversight of the Customer complaints function in the organisation.
- Supports the Judicial Appointments Advisory Board
- Provides general support for the judiciary e.g., judicial travel, attire, visits of foreign judges and dignitaries, protocol at State functions etc.

The Role of the Communications and Media Unit is to:

- Provide information on the court system to the public pursuant to section 5(c) of the Courts Service Act, 1998
- Maintain and develop the Courts Service website
- Co-ordinate, prepare and publish material in relation to the work of the courts
- Develop programmes to enable schools and other community groups obtain easily assimilated information about the court system
- Address interest groups on matters relating to the work of the courts
- Collate statistics on the work of the courts for the Annual Report.
- Provide an Annual Report in writing to the Minister for Justice and Equality on the activities of the Courts Service pursuant to section 8 of the Courts Service Act, 1998.

Human Resource Management Unit

Head of HR Denise Cole

This unit is responsible for the

- development and delivery of the HR strategy
- provision of a wide range of HR services including Resourcing, Workforce Planning, Performance Management, Partnership, Industrial Relations and management of obligations in relation under the Ethics in Public Office Acts and the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015.

Internal Audit

Head of Internal Audit: Aisling McKeon,

The Internal Audit Unit, augmented by outsourced auditors conducts audits across the full range of activities of the Service including financial, operational, ICT, capital building and governance.

Operational Directorates

Superior Courts Operations

Head of Directorate: Tom Ward

The Directorate provides administrative support and resources for the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal and the High Court as follows:

- manages the offices attached to these Courts
- provides management support to the Probate Office, the Examiner's Office, the Office of
- the Taxing Masters, the Office of Wards of Court and the Office of the General Solicitor for
- Minors and the Office of Wards of Court
- manages the allocation of staff resources
- manages judicial secretarial and research support
- prepares proposals for court fees for all jurisdictions

Circuit and District Court Operations

Head of Directorate: Audrey Leonard

The Directorate provides administrative support and resources for the Circuit and District Courts as follows:

- provides management support for court offices supporting the Circuit and District Courts and the criminal courts of all jurisdictions
- manages the Criminal Courts of Justice
- provides a support service to court offices through the Business Support Unit on procedural matters
- prepares delegation orders in respect of court areas, districts *etc.*
- arranges accommodation requirements
- manages the allocation of staff resources
- The directorate is supported by 4 Regional Offices for the Eastern, North Midlands, Southern and Western regions.

Support Directorates

Corporate Services

Head of Directorate: John Cleere

Finance Unit

This Unit is responsible for

- Financial Management - Budgetary control and financial management of funds voted to the Courts Service by the Oireachtas to manage the courts and support the judiciary. This includes the preparation of the annual budget and Appropriation Account.
- Funds Accounting - As part of the Courts Service remit to support the judiciary, the Courts Service provides support services for judges in the management of court funds which are held in trust by the courts. These funds are invested in line with the provision of the Trustee (Authorised Investments) Act 1958 and subsequent orders. There are more than 18,000 beneficiaries and these include various litigants, persons who are Wards of Court,
- Courts Accounting - Through a shared service centre established for the processing of financial transactions in court offices, including fines, family law maintenance and bail
- Procurement - Provide support and training to all offices undertaking procurement of goods and services to ensure compliance with EU and national procurement regulations and achieve value for money
- Risk Management - A risk management framework has been successfully implemented over recent years and formal risk management is now well embedded across the organisation. This Unit ensure that planned actions to address identified risk are followed up and reported to the Senior Management Team and Audit and Risk Committee.

Estate Management Unit

This unit is responsible for

- plans for existing and futures accommodation needs for all areas within the Service
- plans and develops capital building projects, refurbishment work and leasing of accommodation
- preparing and costing capital building and maintenance programmes
- transfers of ownership of courthouses from local authorities and the Office of Public Works to the Service
- fitting and maintaining court facilities to modern standards to include access for the disabled
- ensuring best possible safety, health and welfare standards in all buildings and offices

- monitoring implementing and reviewing the Health and Safety Programme within the Service
- Advising the Service on safety, health and welfare in the workplace
- implementing of the Courts Service Public Private Partnership Programme and delivery of the projects including the 7 courthouse Bundle and Hammond Lane.
- Planning and developing projects and services to be delivered by PPP

ICT

Head of Directorate: Owen Harrison

Information and Communications Technology Unit

This unit is responsible for implementing the ICT Strategy, through collaboration with partners and stakeholders will deliver technology supporting the Courts Service modernisation journey over the next 10 years.

ICT also provides daily ongoing support and maintenance for the current ICT infrastructure, and portfolio of applications on the Courts Service estate.

Strategy and Reform Directorate

Head of Directorate: Emer Darcy

Change Programme Office

This Office is responsible for

- Supporting Heads of Directorates in ensuring the effective implementation of major change initiatives.

Learning and Development Unit

This Unit is responsible for the Development and Implementation of the Learning and Development Strategy.

Legislation and Rules Unit

This Unit is responsible for

- legislative affairs
- preparation of proposals for modernising legislation on court administration
- preparation of proposals on modernisation and simplification of court rules and terminology
- Support for Court Rules Committee
- identifying opportunities for improvement of procedures and practice in court offices and developing initiatives
- examination in consultation with Directorates, of proposals for new legislation affecting courts administration.

APPENDIX 3 - The Courts Service Board Framework Document

Introduction

The Courts Service was established as an independent corporate body on the 9th November 1999 with the following functions -

to manage the courts

to provide support services for judges

to provide information on the court system to the public

to provide, manage and maintain court buildings

to provide facilities for users of the courts

The Constitution

The Constitution of Ireland delineates the powers of the legislative, executive and judicial arms of Government. The Constitution provides that judges shall be independent in their judicial function and subject only to the Constitution and the law.

The legislation establishing the Courts Service had full regard to this constitutional imperative. The functions of the Service do not include the administration of justice nor is the Service accountable for judicial decisions.

Accountability

Section 19 of the Courts Service Act, 1998 provides that the Chief Executive Officer is the Accounting Officer for the Service. The Chief Executive Officer shall, at the request in writing of an Oireachtas Committee, attend before it to give account for the general administration of the Service but in so attending shall not be required to give account before any Committee for any matter relating to -

(a) the exercise by a judge of his/her judicial functions;
or

(b) the exercise by a person other than a judge of limited jurisdiction of a judicial nature

including a matter which is, has been or may at a future time be the subject of proceedings before a court in the State.

Where the Chief Executive is of the opinion that a matter in respect of which the Chief Executive is requested to give account before the Committee is a matter to which the previous paragraph applies he/she shall inform the Committee of that opinion and the reason for the opinion and unless the information is conveyed to the Committee at a time when the Chief Executive Officer is before it the information shall be conveyed in writing. When the Chief Executive has informed the Committee of his/her opinion and the Committee does not withdraw the request the Chief Executive may, not later than 21 days after being informed by the Committee of its decision not to do so, apply to the High Court in a summary manner for determination of the question or the Chairperson of the Committee may make such an application and the High Court may determine the matter.

Functions of the Board - Section 13 - 1998 Act

Section 13 of the 1998 Act as amended by the Courts and Court Officers Act, 2002 provides that the functions of the Board are:-
to consider and determine policy in relation to the Service;

and

oversee the implementation of that policy by the Chief Executive Officer determine which of the functions of the Service specified sections 5 and 29(1) of the Act are to be performed by it and which are to be performed by the Chief Executive Officer and which of the powers of the Service specified in section 6 of the Act are to be exercised by it and which are to be exercised by the Chief Executive

perform those functions it determines are to be performed by it

Section 13 A of the 1998 Act (as inserted by the Courts and Court Officers Act, 2002) provides that

“the Board may authorise a Committee of the Board or the Chief Executive Officer to perform any of its functions or powers other than the power to determine whether it or the Chief Executive will perform functions of the Service as set out above.”

The Board must consent to the delegation by the Chief Executive Office to a member of staff of the Service any functions of the Board which the Board has delegated to the Chief Executive Officer under this section.

Functions of the Chief Executive Officer

Section 19 of the 1998 Courts Service Act provides that the Chief Executive shall be the Accounting Officer for the Appropriation Accounts of the Service for the purposes of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Acts 1866 and 1921 and the Comptroller and Auditor General (amendment) Act 1993.

Section 20 of the 1998 Act provides that the functions of the Chief Executive Officer are

- To manage and control generally the staff, administration and business of the Service
- To report regularly to the Board on the implementation of policy
- To perform such functions of the Service as the Board determines are to be performed by the Chief Executive Officer
- To perform such functions as may be conferred on him or her by the 1998 Act or by the Board

The Chief Executive may authorise a member of staff of the Service to perform her statutory functions and functions of the Service determined by the Board to be carried out by the Chief Executive Officer.

The Courts Service Act 1998 and Courts and Court Officers Act 2002

This Framework Document sets out the functions which are to be performed by the Board and which of its functions are to be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer and which of the functions of the Service specified in sections 5 and 29(1) of the 1998 Act and which of the powers specified in section 6 of the 1998 Act are to be exercised by the Board itself and which of these functions are to be carried out by the Chief Executive Officer.

Section 5 Courts Service Act, 1998

Functions of the Service which the Board determines are to be performed by the Chief Executive Officer

- Manage the Courts
- Appoint a manager to a combined court office in accordance with section 19 of the Courts and Court Officers Act, 2009
- Determine such and so many staff of the Courts Service to be employed in a combined court office in accordance with section 21 of the Courts and Court Officer Act, 2009.
- Provide support services for judges
- Provide information on the courts system to the public
- Provide, manage and maintain court buildings and
- Provide facilities for court users
- the determination of the manner and method of payment, and recording of payment of court fees, in accordance with Section 65 (5) (a) and (b) of the Courts of Justice Act 1936 as amended by Section 9 of the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2008

Section 6 Courts Service Act, 1998

1.1 Functions of the Service which the Board determines are to be performed by the Board

At the request of the Minister or on its own initiative recommend to the Minister appropriate scales of Court fees and charges.

Make proposals to the Minister in relation to the distribution of jurisdiction and business among the Courts and matters of procedure.

Designate Court venues.

The engagement of Legal Advisors, Investment Advisors, Fund Managers and banking providers.

Approve proposals for contracts and arrangements including the acquisition or disposal of any interest in land on/or property with a value in excess of €5m. and approve proposals for leases for periods in excess of 4 years and 9 months irrespective of value.

Approve proposals for contracts for consultancy which are in excess of €500,000.

1.2 Functions of the Board which are to be performed by the Finance Committee
Approve proposals for contracts and arrangements, including leases and the acquisition or disposal of any interest in land and /or property, with a value between €1m and €5m (the Chief Executive Officer shall circulate details of all proposals for contracts and arrangements to all members of the Board at the same time as such proposals are circulated to the Finance Committee).

Approve proposals for contracts for consultancy between €100,000 and €500,000 (the Chief Executive Officer shall circulate details of all proposals for consultancy to all members of the Board at the same time as such proposals are circulated to the Finance Committee).

2. Functions of the Service which the Board determines are to be performed by the Chief Executive Officer

Enter into contracts and arrangements, including leases and any acquisition or disposal of any interest in land and/or property, in line with policies approved by the Board, where the value of the contracts does not exceed €1m.

Engage consultants and advisors in connection with the performance of the functions of the Service In line with policies approved by the Board (Chief Executive empowered under the administrative budget arrangement to engage consultants and advisors) where the value of the contract does not exceed €100,000.

All contracts entered into by the Service should be notified to the Board.

The approved limits contained in this Framework Document will also apply in relation to the implementation of the Service procurement policy.

Arrange staff training and education.

Establish arrangements for consultation with users of the Courts.

Provide services to other bodies subject to such conditions including the payment of fees as it thinks fit.

Operate public bank accounts within the meaning of section 18 of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act 1866.

Establish a combined court office under section 14 of the Courts and Court Officers Act, 2009 and section 6(2)(k) of the Courts Service Act, 1998 following consultation with the Chief Justice, the President of the Court of Appeal, the President of the High Court, the President of the Circuit Court and the President of the District Court as appropriate in accordance with section 16 of the Courts and Court Officers Act, 2009

Vary the functions of or dissolve a combined court office under section 15 of the Courts and Court Officers Act, 2009 and section 6(2) (k) of the Court Service Act, 1998.

Section 7 - Courts Service Act 1998

1. Function of the Service which the Board determines are to be performed by the Board
Approve 3 Year Strategic Plan.
2. Function of the Service which the Board determines are to be performed by the Chief Executive Officer
Prepare Strategic Plan for consideration by the Board

Section 8 - Courts Service Act 1998

1. Functions of the Service which the Board determines are to be performed by the Chief Executive Officer
 1. Prepare the Annual Report for the Service.
2. Functions of the Service which the Board determines are to be performed by the Board
 2. Approve and sign off on the Annual Report.

Section 10 and 10 A - Courts Service Act 1998

1. Functions of the Board Reserved to the Board
Authorisation of Board members to authenticate the seal of the Service and designation of Officers of the Service for that purpose.

Authorisation of the Chief Executive Officer to authenticate any order or instrument (other than an order or instrument under seal) made in relation to functions transferred to the Service by section 29 (1) of the Act which are to be performed by the Board or a Committee of the Board

2. Functions of the Chief Executive Officer
Authorisation of a staff member to authenticate any order/instrument which the Chief Executive is authorised to authenticate under section 10A (1) (a).

Authorisation of a staff member to authenticate any order/instrument made in relation to functions transferred to the Service by section 29(1) of the 1998 Act which are to be performed by the Chief Executive Officer.

Sections 14(7) and 15 - Courts Service Act 1998

Functions of the Board Reserved to the Board
The regulation by standing orders or otherwise the procedure and business of the Board.
The establishment of Committees of the Board and the appointment to such Committees of persons who are not members of the Board but have a special knowledge and experience related to the purposes of Committees.
The dissolution at any time of a Committee.

Section 17 - Courts Service Act 1998

Function of the Board Reserved to the Board
The appointment of a person to be the Chief Executive Officer of the Service.

Section 19 - Courts Service Act 1998

Functions of the Chief Executive Officer

To act as Accounting Officer for the Appropriation Accounts of the Service for the purposes of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Acts 1866 and 1921 and the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993.

The Chief Executive Officer shall arrange that both the Annual Statement of Account by the Accountant of the Courts of Justice and the Annual Financial Statements/Appropriation Accounts for the Service for each year shall be presented for discussion and approval by the Audit and Risk Committee and that the approval of the Audit and Risk Committee shall be reported to the Board for noting.

Section 20 - Courts Service Act 1998

Functions of the Board reserved to the Board

Designation of a member of staff of the Service to perform the functions of the Chief Executive Officer when the position is vacant.

Section 23 - Courts Service Act 1998 and Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2005

Functions of the Board delegated to the Chief Executive Officer by the Board

The appointment of such number of persons to be members of staff of the Service at Principal Officer grade and above (following consultation with the Chief Justice and President of the High Court in certain cases as prescribed by legislation) as may be approved by the Minister for Justice with the consent of the Minister for Finance.

The determination of grades of staff of the Service and the number of staff in each grade as may be approved by the Minister with the consent of the Minister for Finance.

(Significant delegation provided to the Chief Executive Officer by the Ministers for Justice and the Minister for Finance under Administrative Budget Agreement).

Functions of the Board as the Appropriate Authority for staff at Principal Officer grade and above, in accordance the Civil Service Regulations (Amendment) Act, 2005, in relation to the management of performance on a day to day basis and the taking of disciplinary action including termination of probation but excluding the function of suspension of staff at Principal Officer grade and above.

Functions of the Board reserved to the Board

Functions of the Board as the Appropriate Authority for staff at Principal Officer grade and above, in accordance with the Civil Service Regulations (Amendment) Act, 2005 in relation to the suspension and dismissal of staff at Principal Officer grade and above.

Section 29 - Courts Service Act 1998

1. Functions of the Service which the Board determines are to be performed by the Board

Approve proposals from the Chief Executive relating to the following;

Appointment of the places in the DMD for the transaction of the business of the District Court and alteration of such places - s.40

Alteration or variation of number of High Court circuits and redistribution of or variation in the distribution of counties - Courts of Justice Act, 1936 s.33 (2).

Variation of the Dublin Metropolitan District - Courts of Justice Act, 1936 s.64 (3).

Variation, creation and abolition of District Court areas or districts - Courts of Justice Act, 1953 s.26(1)(a)(b)(c)(d)

Revoke or amend an order made under s.26(1)(a)(b)(c)(d) of the Courts of Justice Act, 1953 - s.26(1)(i)

Section 26(2), Courts of Justice Act, 1953

Determination of the number of sitting days in each week for judges assigned to the DMD - Courts (Supplemental Provisions) Act, 1961 s.41.

2. Functions of the Service which the Board determines are to be carried out by the Chief Executive Officer

The following functions of the Minister under each of the provisions mentioned in column 3 of the Schedule 2 of the Acts mentioned in column 2 which transferred to the Service including,

- Enforcement of Court Orders Act, 1926
Appointment of Court Messengers (section 4) (1) (2) (3)
- Court Officers Act, 1926
 - Appointment of Principal Officers of the High Court - s. 3(3)
 - Registrar of Supreme Court to be subject to the direction of the Service in administrative matters - s.18 (1).
 - Appointment of Deputy Master or Deputy Taxing Master of the High Court S.27 (1).
Appointment of Deputy for Principal Officers of the High Court -s.28 (1).
 - Appointment of temporary Deputy County Registrars - s.34 (2) (3).
 - Appointment of temporary Deputy County Registrars - s.40 (1).
 - Prescription of places at which and post offices, banks, etc. in which money paid into the Circuit Court may be deposited - s.41(1)
 - Determination of general staff of Circuit Court offices - s.42.
 - Determination of staff attached to Circuit Court offices - s.43 (1).
 - Assignment of staff attached to a particular circuit to perform duties to be prescribed by the Service - s.43 (2).
 - Assignment of servant to a judge of the Circuit Court to perform duties to be prescribed by the Service - s.43 (3).
 - Determination of such and so many District Court Clerks - s.46 (1).
 - Appointment of District Court Clerks - s.46 (2).
 - Assignment of District Court Clerks to District Court areas - s.48.
 - Nomination of Court Stockbrokers; Court Receivers - s.59 (1) (2) (3).
 - Prescription of posts for which payment of security and the amounts of such security - s.61 (2).
- Courts of Justice Act, 1936

- Direction of Court Registrars to travel on circuit from Central and Supreme Court Offices and travel and subsistence expenses to be paid - s.42(2)(3)(5)
- Appointment of servants to judges of the High Court on circuit and determination of their remuneration with the sanction of the Minister for Finance - s.43.
- Court Officers Act, 1945
 - Appointment of Probate Officer and Examiner of the High Court following consultation with the President of the High Court - s.6 (1).
 - Authorisation of a Court Officer to perform the duties of another including County Registrar - s.9(1) (as amended by the Courts and Court Officers Act, 2001)
 - Authorisation of a Supreme or High Court Officer to perform the duties of another following consultation with the Chief Justice or the President of the High Court - s.9(2)

- Court Officers Act, 1951

Appointment, with the concurrence of the Minister for Finance, of a deputy to execute the office of District Court Clerk in cases of temporary absence or incapacity - s.4 (1)
- Courts of Justice Act, 1953
 - Variation of the class of business to be dealt with following consultation with the President of the District Court - s.26(1)(e)
 - Variation of the days, places or hours appointed following consultation with the President of the District Court - s.26(1)(f)
 - Appointment of one or more convenient places in every District Court area created or varied under this section or within one mile of boundary of such area in which and such and so many convenient days and hours at which the District Court can be held, following consultation with the President - s.26(1)(g)
 - Assignment of name to or change of name of any District Court district following consultation with the President of the District Court. - s.26(1)(h)
 - Revoke or amend an order made under section 26(1)(e)(f)(g)(h) - s.26(1)(i)
- Courts Supplemental Provisions Act, 1961
 - Nomination of a District Court Clerk to be an ex-officio member of the District Court Rules Committee - s.44.
 - Nomination of principal officer to manage the Central Office of the High Court following consultation with the President - 8th Schedule, par.5.
 - Nomination of such and so many Registrars of the High Court - 8th Schedule, par. 6.

- Exercise of general direction over the officer managing the Central Office in all matters of general administration (in relation to all matters relating to the conduct of business of the High Court which is for the time being required by law to be transacted by or before a judge the officer is subject to the direction of the President of the High Court)
- Exercise of general direction over the Registrar of Wards of Court in regard to all matters of general administration in relation to all matters relating to the jurisdiction vested in the High Court the Registrar of Wards of Court is subject to the direction of the judge in the High Court exercising that jurisdiction.
- Deployment of officers in the High and Supreme Court offices with the sanction of the Minister for Finance and after consultation with the President of the High Court or Chief Justice as required
- Succession Act 1965
Authorisation of a specified officer serving in a District Probate Registry or associated Circuit Court office to execute during the temporary absence or temporary incapacity through illness of the acting District Probate Registrar, the office of District Probate Registrar for that District.

The Board and the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive will report to the board on all relevant matters at scheduled meetings of the Board and in exceptional circumstances, will report in writing or orally to each of the members of the Board.

The Chief Justice and the Chief Executive

In addition to his relationship to the Chief Executive as Chairman of the Courts Service the Chief Justice as leader of the judiciary and President of the Supreme Court will have a special relationship with the Chief Executive. He will have access to the Chief Executive at all times and shall be entitled to be informed of all matters.

Nothing in the new system impinges on the judicial duties and responsibilities of the Chief Justice or on his management of the Supreme Court.

Presidents of the Court of Appeal, High, Circuit and District Courts and the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive shall liaise directly with the Presidents of the Court of Appeal, High, Circuit and District Courts on the business of those courts.

The management of business in the courts is a matter for the Presidents of those courts and nothing in this system impinges on the judicial duties and responsibilities of the Presidents or on their management of the courts.

The Minister for Justice and the Chief Executive

Under the legislation the Department of Justice has ceased to be responsible for the day to day management of the courts system. However, because of the Minister for Justice's continuing accountability to the Oireachtas it is necessary to have in place, in consultation

between the Courts Service and the Department of Justice a reporting relationship which will satisfy all relevant information requirements for the management of the administration of the courts which has been transferred to the Courts Service. The transfer of such information will be by the Chief Executive under the general authority of the Board.

Communication between the Minister for Justice and the Service

Communication between the Minister for Justice and the Service will normally be carried out between the Minister and the Chairperson of the Board. Such communication will normally relate to policy issues and will include the conveying of Government policy decisions to the Service insofar as such policy decisions relate to the Service.

Day to day communication between the Department of Justice and the Service will be between the Secretary General (and/or his/her staff) and the Chief Executive Officer (and/or his/her staff).

Communication between the Service and the public and the Courts Service and the Media

Arrangements for the communication with the public generally and the media of policy or other developments in the Service including where such developments or policy have been formulated by the Board will be a matter for the Chief Executive Officer (and/or his/her staff).

Additional Powers or Functions

In relation to any additional powers and functions which might be conferred on the Service, e.g., by future legislation, the Board will determine, unless the legislation specifies that the power is to be exercised or function discharged by the Chief Executive, whether the new function will be performed by it or delegated to the Chief Executive.

Amendment of the terms of the Governance Document

The Board reserves the right, consistent with the 1998 Act, to amend, revoke or alter in whole or in part the functions reserved to itself and the functions delegated to the Chief Executive Officer at any time.

Statutory Functions of the Chief Executive Officer

1998 Courts Service Act

The functions of the Chief Executive are set out in the Courts Service Act, 1998 sections 19, 20 and 21 as follows:-

The Chief Executive shall be the Accounting Officer for the appropriation accounts of the Service for the purposes of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act 1866 and 1921 and the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993 - (section 19).

Notwithstanding any other enactment, the Chief Executive shall manage and control generally the staff, administration and business of the Service, including the functions of the County Registrars insofar as such functions relating to a function of the Service; perform such functions of the Service as the Board determines are to be performed by him or her and perform such other functions as may be conferred on him or her by or under the Act or by the Board - (section 20(1)).

The Chief Executive shall be responsible to the Board for the performance of his or her functions and the implementation of the Board's policies - (section 20(2)).

The Chief Executive shall provide to the Board such information (including financial information) in relation to the performance of his or her functions as the Board may from time to time require - (section 20(3)).

Such of the functions of the Chief Executive as may from time to time be specified by him or her may be performed by such member of the staff of the Service as may be authorised by the Chief Executive - (section 20(4)).

Functions of the Board which have been delegated to the Chief Executive may be performed by a member of staff of the Service authorised by the Chief Executive with the consent of the Board.

The functions of the Chief Executive may be performed during his or her absence or when the position of Chief Executive is vacant by such member of the staff of the Service as may from time to time be designated for that purpose by the Board - (section 20(5)).

Subject to subsections (2) and (3) the Chief Executive shall at the request in writing of Oireachtas Committee attend before it to give account for the general administration of the Service, including the 3 year strategic plans laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas under section 7 as may be required by the Committee - (section 21(1)).

The Chief Executive shall not be required to give account before the Committee for any matter relating to

- (a) the exercise by a judge of his or her judicial functions, or
- (b) the exercise by a person other than a judge of limited jurisdiction of a judicial nature, including a matter which is, has been or may at a future time be the subject of proceedings before a court in the State - (section 21(2)).

Where the Chief Executive has informed the Committee of his or her opinion in accordance with subsection (3) and the Committee does not withdraw the request referred to in subsection (1) -

- (a) the Chief Executive may, not later than 21 days after being informed by the Committee of its decision not to do so, apply to the High Court in a summary manner for determination of the question whether the matter is one contemplated under subsection (2) or
- (b) the Chairperson of the Committee may, on behalf of the Committee, make such an application and the High Court may determine the matter - (section 21(4)).

Pending the determination of an application under subsection (4) the Chief Executive shall not attend before the Committee to give account for the matter the subject of the application - (section 21(5)).

If the High Court determines that the matter is one to which subsection (2) applies, the Committee shall withdraw the request referred to in subsection (1), but if the High Court determines that subsection (2) does not apply, the Chief Executive shall attend before the Committee to give account for the matter - (section 21(6)).

In this section the "Oireachtas Committee" means a Committee appointed by either House of the Oireachtas or jointly by both Houses of the Oireachtas (other than the Committee on Members' interests of Dáil Éireann or the Committee on Members' interests of Seanad Éireann) or a subcommittee of such a Committee - (section 21(7)).

2002 Court and Court Officers Act

Section 10 A of the 1998 Act (as inserted by the Courts and Court Officers Act, 2002) provides that the Board may authorise generally or specially the Chief Executive to authenticate any order or other instrument under than an order under seal made under any provision mentioned in column 3 of Schedule 2 of the Acts mentioned in column 2 opposite the mention of that provision in relation to any function of the Service under that

provision that is performed by the Board or by a committee of the Board, or by the Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive may authorise generally or specially a member of the staff of the Service to authenticate any order or other instrument or both which the Chief Executive is authorised to authenticate.

Section 46 of the Courts and Court Officers Act, 2002 provides that the Chief Executive will be responsible for establishing and maintaining the register of reserved judgments when this section is commenced by the Minister for Justice.

APPENDIX 4 - Membership of the Courts Service Board – February 2023

The Hon. Mr Justice Donal O Donnell Chief Justice and Chairperson of the Board
The Hon. Mr Justice George Birmingham, President of the Court of Appeal
The Hon Mr. Justice David Barniville, President of the High Court
The Hon. Mrs Justice Elizabeth Dunne, elected by the ordinary judges of the Supreme Court
The Hon. Mr Justice Patrick McCarthy, elected by the ordinary judges of the Court of Appeal
The Hon. Mr. Justice Tony O'Connor, elected by the ordinary Judges of the High Court
The Hon. Ms. Justice Patricia Ryan, President of the Circuit Court
Her Honour Judge Alice Doyle, elected representative of the ordinary judges of the Circuit Court
His Honour Judge Paul Kelly, President of the District Court.
Judge Alan Mitchell, elected by the ordinary judges of the District Court
Ms. Angela Denning, Chief Executive of the Courts Service
Ms. Sara Phelan, Nominee of the Bar Council
Ms Michele O'Boyle nominee of the President of the Law Society.
Ms Hilary McSweeney, elected by the staff of the Courts Service
Ms. Rachel Woods official of the Department of Justice nominated by the Minister
Ms. Karen Kiernan, nominated by the Minister to represent consumers of the services provided by the Courts
Ms Patricia King, General Secretary, nominated by Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Ms. Deirdre Kiely, nominated by the Minister because of relevant knowledge and experience in commerce, finance or administration.

APPENDIX 5 - TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE BOARD AND COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD

COURTS SERVICE BOARD

The Courts Service Board was established under the Courts Service Act with effect from 9th November, 1999. The Courts Service Act, 1998 states that subject to the Act the Board of the Service shall regulate, by standing orders or otherwise the procedure and business of the Board. The Act itself regulates certain aspects of Board business including meetings of the Board and the establishment of committees and these provisions are included in the terms of reference.

The purpose of this document is to set out the terms of reference of the Board of Courts Service.

1. Function of the Board

The business or functions of the Board as specified in section 13 of the Act are as follows;

- a) To consider and determine policy in relation to the Service and
- b) To oversee the implementation of that policy by the Chief Executive.

It further provides that in the performance of its functions the Board shall have regard to

- a) The resources of the Service for the purposes of such performance and the need to secure the most beneficial, effective and efficient use of such resources, and
- b) Any policy or objective of the Government or a Minister of the Government insofar as it may affect or relate to the functions of the Service.

2. Membership

The Board of the Courts Service shall consist of 18 members in accordance with section 11(1) of the Courts Service Act, 1998.

The term of office of Board members shall be in accordance with section 12 of the Courts Service Act, 1998.

The Chief Justice shall be the Chairperson of the Board or, if the Chief Justice is not a member, the judge of the Supreme Court nominated by the Chief Justice, shall be the Chairperson.

The Board may act notwithstanding one or more vacancies in its membership.

3. Meetings

The Board shall hold such and so many meetings as may be necessary for the performance of its functions but in any case shall meet not less frequently than one in every period of three months.

The Chairperson of the Board shall preside at all meetings of the Board at which he or she is present and in the absence of the Chairperson the members present shall elect one of their number to preside at the meeting.

The Chairperson may call a meeting of the Board at any time and meetings will be summoned by the Secretary.

The Secretary of the Board will ensure that the Board receives information and papers in a timely manner to enable full and proper consideration to be given to the issues. Where possible, Board documentation including notice of each meeting confirming the venue, time and date together with an agenda of items to be discussed and reports, shall be forwarded to each member of the Board and any other person required to attend, no later than four working days before the date of the meeting.

The confidentiality of Board reports and documents issued to members must be maintained as appropriate and in particular, reports must be treated as confidential, unless otherwise stated, until such time as the Board has had an opportunity to discuss their contents and make decisions on any proposals contained therein.

Members who wish to put forward proposals for consideration by the Board should submit same to the Secretary prior to the meeting. Urgent matters may be raised by any member with the permission of the Chairperson under Any Other Business.

Each member present at a meeting of the Board shall have a vote.

The quorum for a meeting of the board shall be seven or such greater number of members as the Board may from time to time determine. A duly convened meeting of the Board at which a quorum is present shall be competent to exercise all or any of the authorities, powers and discretions vested in or exercisable by the Board.

Decisions of the Board shall be determined by a majority of the votes of the members present and voting and, in the case of an equal division of votes the Chairperson or other member presiding at the meeting shall have a second or casting vote.

Where a Board member or a connected person has a material interest in a matter for deliberation or decision by the Board, which could represent a conflict of interest, the

Board member should disclose such an interest and absent himself/herself when the Board is deliberating or deciding on the matter. Any such disclosure and abstention will be recorded in the minutes of the proceedings of the Board. The Chairperson shall determine the matter where a question arises as to whether or not a conflict of interest exists.

The Board shall meet twice yearly or as required without Executive members of management present to address any relevant issues.

Only members of the Board have the right to attend Board meetings. The Board may invite other individuals to attend for all or part of any meeting, as and when appropriate or necessary.

4. Minutes of Meetings

The Secretary of the Board shall minute the proceedings and resolutions of all meetings of the Board, including recording the names of those present and in attendance.

The minutes shall record where there are concerns of Board members that cannot be resolved.

Minutes of Board meetings shall be circulated to all members of the Board.

Minutes of the proceedings of a meeting of the Board shall be drawn up and signed by the Chairperson at the next meeting at which the minutes are presented.

5. Duties

- The Board is authorised to seek the information it requires from the State body in order to perform its duties and shall monitor performance through regular reports from the Chief Executive and committees of the Board.
- The Chief Executive shall provide the Board with such information in relation to the performance of his or her functions as the Board may from time to time require.
- The Board shall advise and support the Chairperson, Chief Executive Officer and management.
- The Board shall satisfy themselves that financial controls and systems of risk management are robust.
- The Board shall keep itself up to date and fully informed about strategic issues and changes affecting the State body and the environment in which it operates.
- The Board shall ensure that on appointment to the Board, non-executive Board members receive a formal letter of appointment setting out clearly what is expected of them in terms of time commitment, committee service and involvement outside Board meetings.

- The Board shall review the results of the Board performance evaluation process that relate to the composition of the Board and corporate governance generally.
- The Board shall keep under review corporate governance developments (including ethics-related matters) that might affect the State body, with the aim of ensuring that the State body's corporate governance policies and practices continue to be in line with best practice.
- The Board shall ensure that the principles and provisions set out in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (and any other corporate governance codes that apply to the State body) are adhered to.

6. Confidentiality

Serving and former Board members must respect the confidentiality of sensitive information received while acting as members of the Board. This includes commercially sensitive information, personal information, and information received in confidence by the Service.

Board members should not retain documentation obtained during their terms as member and should return such documentation to the Secretary or otherwise indicate to the Secretary that all such documentation in their possession has been disposed of in an appropriate manner. In the event that former members require access to Board papers from the time of their term on the Board, this can be facilitated by the Board Secretary

7. Evaluation

The Board shall, at least once a year, review its own performance, constitution and terms of reference to ensure it is operating at maximum effectiveness and implement any changes it considers necessary.

8. Committees

- The Board may from time to time establish such committees of the Board to advise it in relation to the performance of its functions as it thinks fit.
- The Board may appoint to a committee, persons who are not members of the Board but have a special knowledge and experience related to the business of the committee.
- The appointment of a person to a committee shall be subject to such terms and conditions as the Board may determine.
- Whenever a vacancy occurs in the membership of a committee of the Board by reason of death, disqualification or resignation of a member of the committee the Board may if it so wishes fill the vacancy as soon as possible.
- The Board may at any time dissolve a committee.

- The acts of a committee shall be subject to confirmation by the board unless the board dispenses with the necessity for such confirmation.
- Minutes of committee meetings shall be circulated to all Board members.
- The Board may regulate the procedure of a committee but subject to any such general regulation, a committee may regulate its own procedure.
- The Chief Executive shall notify the Minister of the establishment of a committee, the purpose of the committee and names of the committee members.

9. Training

The Secretary of the Board shall arrange induction training for new Board members and ongoing training as required.

10. Authority

The Board is authorised to obtain, at the body's expense, outside legal or other professional advice where they judge it necessary to discharge their responsibilities.

11. Miscellaneous

The Chairperson shall have the power to deal with any matter of Board procedure and his ruling on any question or his interpretation of Board procedure shall be final.

These terms of reference shall continue in force unless altered, amended or repealed by a decision of the Board.

Finance Committee

Purpose

The Finance Committee is a sub-committee of the Board of the Courts Service. Its role is to provide oversight and scrutiny on financial matters of the Courts Service on behalf of the Courts Service Board.

Membership

- Members and chairperson shall be appointed by the Board.

- The Committee will have a minimum of 5 members to include external persons and at least 2 Board members. The Chairperson of the Committee shall be appointed by the Board.
- The Chairperson of the Board may be a member of the Committee but as a matter of good governance the Chairperson of the Board, should not also be Chairperson of the Finance Committee.
- The CEO may be a member of the Committee.
- At least one member of the Committee shall have recent relevant financial expertise.
- In making appointments, the Board shall have regard to the gender and diversity balance requirements.
- Members will be appointed for a 3-year period or for such shorter periods that coincides with the appointment of a new Board. On the appointment of a new Board the existing Committee will remain in place pending the appointment of a new Committee by the Board.
- A member of the Committee may be re-appointed by the Board.

On appointment and annually thereafter members will disclose any interests he/she may hold, or interests held by a spouse, civil partner, child, or child of his/her spouse or civil partner, of which he/she is aware which could involve a conflict of interest or could materially influence the member in relation to the performance of his/her official functions. Details of interests disclosed by members will be kept by the Secretary in a special confidential register. Access to the register will be restricted to the Chairperson and Secretary on a strictly need to know basis.

Meetings

Meetings of the Committee shall be held as follows:

- Meetings of the Committee will be held not less than four times per year at appropriate times within the reporting cycle. Additional meetings shall be held as the work of the Committee demands.
- A joint meeting with the Audit & Risk Committee should be arranged each year for the purposes of considering the Annual Appropriation Account.
- In the absence of the chairperson, the remaining members present shall elect one member to chair the meeting.
- The quorum for a meeting shall be three members. A duly convened meeting at which a quorum is present shall be competent to exercise all authorities, powers or discretions vested in or exercisable by the Committee.
- The Head of Corporate Services will attend meetings of the Committee.
- Other Heads of Directorate or staff members of the Courts Service may attend meetings and or provide information to the Committee.
- Notification and documentation for meetings will issue where possible at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting.
- The secretary shall minute the proceedings and resolutions of all meetings of the Committee, including recording the names of those present and in attendance.
- Minutes will issue promptly after each meeting to all members.
- Where a conflict of interest arises in the course of the work of the Committee, the member will bring this to the attention of the Chairperson and, where necessary, leave the meeting for the durations of the discussion and not take part in any decisions relating to the discussion. A note to this effect will be included in the minutes of the meeting.

4. Resources

The Committee will be supported and resourced in its work by the Courts Service through the

- Provision of the secretarial and administrative support necessary to undertake its duties.

- Support from the Finance Unit in relation to the provision and explanation of financial information relating to the business of the Courts Service.
- Obtain outside legal or other independent professional advice and invite outsiders with relevant experience to attend meetings.

5. Training

Committee members will be provided with appropriate and timely training as required.

6. Authority

The Finance Committee is authorised by the Board to investigate any activity within its terms of reference. It is authorised to seek information from any member of staff and all staff are directed to co-operate with any request from the Finance Committee.

7. Remit and Responsibility

The Committee shall carry out the duties below on behalf of the Board and Accounting Officer, as appropriate.

7.1 Financial Forecasting and Budgetary Control

The Committee should consider and challenge where necessary

- the annual estimates submission and to make recommendations regarding same to the Board.
- proposals for the annual Expenditure / Income Budget and make recommendations regarding same to the Board.
- regular financial reports from the Chief Executive Officer on the implementation of the approved annual Expenditure Budget.
- expenditure and make recommendations to the Board regarding same.
- Achievement of value for money and realization of business benefits and efficiencies arising from project and programmed expenditure, in this regard:
 - review and consider specific Value for Money reports/spending reviews reports carried out by or on behalf of the Courts Service.

- commission specific Value for Money reports on any area of operations or expenditure where they considered it is necessary to receive assurance that VFM was achieved, and business benefits and efficiencies Realised.

7.2 Annual Financial Statements

Review and challenge where necessary, the actions and judgements of management, in relation to the Courts Service's financial statements (Appropriation Account) paying particular attention to:

- Critical accounting policies and practices and any changes to them.
- Financial reporting decisions requiring a significant element of judgement.
- The extent to which the financial statements are affected by any unusual transactions in the year and how they are disclosed.
- The clarity of disclosures.
- Significant adjustments resulting from the audit.
- Compliance with any accounting standards specified by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.
- Compliance with other legal requirements.

7.3 Procurements and Contracts

In accordance with the Courts Service Governance Frameworks, the Committee should consider and approve:

- proposals for contracts and arrangements, including leases and the acquisition or disposal of any interest in land and /or property, with a value between €1m and €5m (the Chief Executive Officer shall circulate details of all proposals for contracts and arrangements to all members of the Board at the same time as such proposals are circulated to the Finance Committee).
- proposals for contracts for consultancy between €100,000 and €500,000 (the Chief Executive Officer shall circulate details of all proposals for consultancy to all members of the Board at the same time as such proposals are circulated to the Finance Committee).

The Committee shall also consider and make recommendations to the Courts Service Board for:

- contracts and arrangements including the acquisition or disposal of any interest in land on/or property with a value more than €5m.
- contracts for consultancy more than €0.500m.

The Committee will also review and consider the Courts Service's

- Procurement policy,
- Annual Procurement Plan,
- Contract register,
- Published list of suppliers in receipt of payments more than €20k and
- prompt payment interest report

7.4 Financial Risk Management

The Committee will consider and review the Courts Service's Financial Risks in order to satisfy itself that appropriate arrangements exist to identify both existing and possible future significant financial risks and that necessary action has been taken to mitigate such risks. In this regard the CEO should notify the Committee of any matters that threaten the regularity, propriety, or value for-money with which the Courts Service carries out its business.

7.5 Accountants of the Courts of Justice.

The Committee shall review and consider:

- Reports from the Investment Committee in relation to the management and investment of court funds and their performance, invested by the ACJ on behalf of wards of courts and minors.

8 Review and Reporting Procedures

The Committee shall:

- Circulate the agreed minutes of Committee meetings to the Board
- Advise the Board of concerns raised by the Committee at its meetings

- At the end of each year prepare a report on its role and responsibilities and the actions it has taken to discharge those responsibilities.
- Report annually to the Board on its performance during the year. The Committee will follow up on any recommendations from the Board arising from consideration of this report or during other interactions.
- Conduct an annual review of its performance
- Review the Terms of Reference regularly (at least annually) and make recommendations to the Board as appropriate.

Audit and Risk Committee

1. Role of the Audit Committee

In accordance with Public Financial Procedures and the Code of Practice Conduct for State Sponsored Bodies, the Courts Service Board (the Board) has established an Audit Committee (the Committee) to oversee and advise the Board and the Chief Executive Officer as Accounting Officer on matters relating to:

- a) financial and operational risks, including overall risk management;
- b) the effectiveness of internal controls (including information technology security and control) and risk management,
- c) the effectiveness of internal and external audit functions,
- d) the adequacy of governance procedures and

e) value for money issues.

2. Membership

The membership of the Committee shall be as follows:

- Members and chairperson shall be appointed by the Board and shall be independent of any management functions.
- The Chairperson of the Board shall not be a member of the Committee.
- The Committee will have a minimum of 5 members to include external persons and at least 2 Board members. The Chairman of the Committee shall be appointed by the Board.
- At least one member of the Committee shall have recent relevant financial expertise
- Members will be appointed for a 3 year period or for such shorter period that coincides with the appointment of a new Board. On the appointment of a new Board the existing Committee will remain in place pending the appointment of a new Committee by the Board.
- A member of the Committee may be re-appointed by the Board
- On appointment and annually thereafter that members will disclose any interests he/she may hold or interests held by a civil partner, child, or child of his/her spouse or civil partner, of which he/she is aware, which could involve a conflict of interest or could materially influence the member in relation to the performance of his/her official functions. Details of interests disclosed by members will be kept by the Secretary in a special confidential register. Access to the register will be restricted to the Chairperson and Secretary on a strictly need to know basis.

3. Meetings

Meetings of the Committee shall be held as follows:

- Meetings of the Committee will be held not less than five times per year at appropriate times within the audit and reporting cycle. Additional meetings shall be held as the work of the Committee demands.
- A joint meeting with the Finance Committee should be arranged each year

- The Board or the Accounting Officer may request the Committee to convene further meetings to discuss particular issues on which they require advice.
- In the absence of the chairperson, the remaining members present shall elect one member to chair the meeting.
- The quorum for a meeting shall be three members. A duly convened meeting at which a quorum is present shall be competent to exercise all authorities, powers or discretions vested in or exercisable by the Committee.
- The Head of Corporate Services and the Internal Auditor will normally attend meetings of the Committee.
- The external auditors will meet with the Committee as required.
- The Committee may invite the Chief Executive Officer, any Head of Directorate or staff member of the Courts Service to attend meeting and or provide information to the Committee.
- Notification and documentation for meetings will issue where possible at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting.
- The secretary shall minute the proceedings and resolutions of all meetings of the Committee, including recording the names of those present and in attendance.
- Minutes of meetings shall be circulated promptly to all members of the Committee.
- Where a conflict of interest arises in the course of the work of the Committee, the member will bring this to the attention of the Chairperson and, where necessary, leave the meeting for the durations of the discussion and not take part in any decisions relating to the discussion. A note to this effect will be included in the minutes of the meeting.

4. Resources

The Committee will be supported and resourced in its work by the Courts Service through the

- Provision of the secretarial and administrative support necessary to undertake its duties.

- Support from the Internal Audit Unit which has an independent internal appraisal function and which reports to the Audit and Risk Committee on professional matters.
- Obtain outside legal or other independent professional advice and invite outsiders with relevant experience to attend meetings.

5. Training

Committee members will be provided with appropriate and timely training as required.

6. Authority

The Audit and Risk Committee is authorised by the Board to investigate any activity within its terms of reference. It is authorised to seek information from any member of staff and all staff are directed to co-operate with any request from the Audit and Risk Committee.

7. Remit and Responsibility

The Committee shall carry out the duties below on behalf of the Board and Accounting Officer, as appropriate.

7.1. Financial reporting and Budgeting

The Committee should:

- Review and challenge where necessary, the actions and judgements of management, in relation to the Courts Service's financial statements (Appropriation Accounts and Financial Statements of the Accountant of the Courts of Justice)
- Pay particular attention to:
 - Critical accounting policies and practices and any changes to them;
 - Financial reporting decisions requiring a significant element of judgement;

- The extent to which the financial statements are affected by any unusual transactions in the year and how they are disclosed;
- The clarity of disclosures
- Significant adjustments resulting from the audit;
- Compliance with any accounting standards specified by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform;
- Compliance with other legal requirements.

7.2. Internal Control and Risk Management

The Committee should review the adequacy and effectiveness of the Courts Service systems of internal financial control (i.e. the systems established to identify, assess, manage and monitor financial risks) internal controls and risk management by:

- Reviewing at least annually reports from the Head of Corporate Services on compliance with internal financial controls
- Reviewing the Courts Service's procedures for detecting fraud and irregularities
- Reviewing the Statement on Internal Financial Controls prepared in conjunction with the annual Appropriation Accounts.
- Receiving reports from management on a regular basis on the effectiveness of the risk management systems established and taking such reports into account in developing the priorities of the Internal Audit Unit work programme.
- Report to the Board annually on the effectiveness of the operations of the risk management framework.

7.3. Internal Audit

The Committee shall:

- Review and approve the remit of Internal Audit having regard to the complementary roles of the internal and external audit functions.
- Review and monitor the adequacy of the annual Internal Audit Plan; the resources available to the Internal Audit Unit to enable it to carry out its functions and its standing within the organisation

- Receive progress reports on the implementation of the Audit Plan
- Ensure that the Head of Internal Audit has direct access to the Board Chairperson and Committee
- Raise concerns (if any) with the Chairperson of the Board and Chief Executive regarding the independence of the Internal Audit Unit.
- Monitor and assess the role and effectiveness of the internal audit function
- Meet separately with the Head of Internal Audit where necessary to discuss any matters that the Audit and Risk Committee or Internal Audit Unit believes should be discussed privately.
- Receive and consider report on the results of the internal auditor's work on a periodic basis
- Review and monitor management's responsiveness to internal audit findings and recommendations
- Receive other reports (internal or external) on any topic(s) that the Audit Committee considers relevant to its work.

7.4. External Audit

External audit is carried out by both the C&AG and external audit firms. The C&AG audits the Courts Service Annual Appropriation Account. An external audit firm audits the Court Funds managed by the Accountants' Office

The Committee should

- Review on an annual basis the planned scope of audit work to be carried out by the C&AG's Office, the external auditors and internal audit with a view to maximising the efficiency and effectiveness of the audit process. This does not in any way restrict the statutory right of the C&AG to pursue any matter as he /she sees fit.
- Meet annually with representatives of the C&AG and other external auditors.

7.4.1 External Audit – C&AG

The Committee should:

- Oversee the Courts Service's relationship with the C&AG
- Review the terms of engagement in respect of audit services provided
 - Discuss with the C&AG the nature and scope of the audit, including the nature of any value for money auditing
 - Review with the C&AG, the findings of their work, including any major issues that arose during the course of the audit which have subsequently been resolved and those issues that have been left unresolved; key accounting and audit assumptions underlying the audit; levels of errors identified during the audit, obtaining explanations from management and, where necessary other external auditors, as to why certain errors remain unadjusted
 - Review audit representation letters giving particular consideration to matters that relate to non-standard issues.
 - Assess, at the end of the audit cycle, the level of assurance provided to the Accounting Officer and the Board by the audit process
 - Review and monitor the content of the C&AG's management letter, in order to assess whether it is based on a good understanding of the Courts Service's role and establish whether recommendations have been acted upon.

- Evaluate the cooperation received by the C&AG, including access to records, data and information
- Obtain feedback about the conduct of the audit from key personnel involved.

7.4.2 External Audit – External Audit Firms

The Committee should

- Oversee the Courts Service’s relationship with the external audit firm;
- Make recommendations on the appointment, reappointment and removal of the external auditor
- Review the terms of engagement and remuneration in respect of audit services provided
- Assess the qualification, expertise, resources, effectiveness and independence of the external auditors
- Ensure that the procurement of external audit services is subject to competitive tendering on a regular basis, and at least every three years with an option to extend for a further 2 years provided an assessment has been carried out.
- Discuss with the external auditor, before the audit commences, the nature and scope of the audit, including the nature of any value for money auditing expected by the Audit Committee
- Review with the external auditor, the findings of their work, including any major issues that arose during the course of the audit which have subsequently been resolved and those issues that have been left unresolved; key accounting and audit assumptions underlying the audit; levels of errors identified during the audit, obtaining explanations from management and, where necessary other external auditors, as to why certain errors remain unadjusted
- Review audit representation letters before consideration by the Accountant of Courts of Justice, giving particular consideration to matters that relate to non-standard issues
- Assess, at the end of the audit cycle, the level of assurance provided to the Courts Service Board by the audit process

- Review and monitor the content of the external auditor's management letter, in order to assess whether it is based on a good understanding of the Courts Service's role and establish whether recommendations have been acted upon
- Evaluate the cooperation received by the external auditor, including access to records, data and information
- Obtain feedback about the conduct of the audit from key personnel involved.
- Ensure the external audit firm has addressed conflicts of interest

7.5 Governance

The Committee should consider and review:

- compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

7.6 Value for Money

The Committee as part of its normal procedures,

- consider value for money issues in all reports and presentations made to them and where necessary challenge management assertions in relation to procedures and processes in place to ensure value for money is achieved.
- ensure that 'failure to achieve value for money' for tax payers money provided to fund the Service, is recorded as a possible risk on the Service's risk register and seek assurances that adequate and effective mitigating actions are in place to mitigate this risk at all levels within the organization.
- ensure that in planning executing and reporting on its work, the internal audit function gives adequate attention to value for money criteria, issues and assurance.
- review and consider specific Value for Money reports/spending reviews reports carried out by the Courts Service or on behalf of the Courts Service

- commission specific value for money reports on any area of operations or expenditure where they considered it is necessary in order to provide required assurance to the Committee .

8 Review and Reporting Procedures

The Committee shall

- At the end of each year prepare a report on its role and responsibilities and the actions it has taken to discharge those responsibilities.
- Report annually to the Board and the Accounting Officer on its performance during the year including an assessment of the work of the Internal Audit Unit. The Committee will follow up on any recommendations from the Board arising from consideration of this report or in the course of other interactions.
- Circulate the agreed minutes of audit committee meetings to the Board
- Advise the Chief Executive of concerns raised by the committee at its meetings
- Conduct an annual review of its performance
- Review the Terms of Reference regularly and make recommendations to the Board as appropriate.

8. Protected Disclosures

The Audit Committee will review implementation of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 and any organisational policy put in place.

In the event that the Audit Committee receives a protected disclosure the Audit Committee will refer the protected disclosure made to it to the relevant area in line with organisational policy.

Modernisation Committee

The Modernisation Committee of the Courts Service Board will provide assurance to the Board that the Modernisation programme is delivering the defined benefits, is progressing as per the programme plan, aligns with broader justice change and transformation programmes, and is providing value for money.

The Committee will monitor key Modernisation Key Performance Indicators and benefits realisation and ensure alignment with the strategic vision of the Courts Service.

Role and Scope:

- To consider the annual Modernisation programme plan, and make recommendations regarding same to the Board
- To consider regular reports on the implementation of the Modernisation Programme
- To oversee the development of the Modernisation Programme Strategic Business Case
- Oversee the Modernisation Programme Board (executive committee)
- Serve as the ultimate point of escalation for critical programme decisions
- To advise the Board regularly and comprehensively on all aspects of the Modernisation programme

Family Law Development Committee

The purpose of the Committee is to advise the Executive and the Board in the steps necessary to enhance the operation of the family law courts. It is clear that the Family Courts Bill, once enacted, will set the direction for the provision of Family Law Courts Services in Ireland for the foreseeable future. Its brief will include to make recommendations on the:

- provision of services to enable people, families and children reach resolutions to their disputes.
- layout of court accommodation and facilities for the hearing of family law cases.
- provision of information on family law services to the public.
- Use of modern technology to facilitate access to justice and earlier resolution of disputes.

Building Committee

- To create, maintain and regularly update a register identifying, describing and categorising all buildings and properties (hereafter called “the Court Buildings”) in which the Courts Service has a proprietary or other interest.
- To prepare and develop a capital building programme intended to accommodate the entire of the present and future requirements of the Courts Service.
- To prepare and develop a comprehensive maintenance programme intended to be imposed in respect of all of the Court Buildings with a view to:
 - achieving, maintaining, monitoring and verifying the application of satisfactory and acceptable standards of safety, health, welfare and hygiene in the interests of all Court users, and
 - reducing the level of building depreciation and asset wastage
- To advise the Board and CEO on the implementation of a security programme in respect of all Court Buildings and, where appropriate, to seek from the Board authority to take such steps as may be necessary to achieve authorised implementation of security projects (or parts thereof).
- To prepare a standardised design brief to meet the accommodation requirements of all court users with a view to providing the best available facilities to ensure the efficient running of the courts.
- To advise the Board and the CEO on the implementation of the capital building programme and, where appropriate, to seek from the Board authority to take such steps as the Board may deem necessary to achieve authorised implementation in respect of specific projects (or parts thereof).
- To advise the Board and the CEO on the implementation of the buildings maintenance programme and, where appropriate, to seek from the Board authority to take such steps as the Committee may deem necessary to achieve authorised implementation of the programme (or specific parts thereof).
- To establish priorities in relation to the implementation of the capital building programme and of the buildings maintenance programme.
- To consult and, where possible, liaise with appropriate State agencies (including and in particular the IT section of the Courts Service), voluntary bodies, security services and other court users in respect of all new projects.

- To consider reports from the CEO and otherwise in respect of the capital buildings programme, the buildings programme, or any other matter relevant to the Courts Buildings.
- To advise the Board regularly and comprehensively on all aspects of the capital building programme, the buildings maintenance programme and the overall provision of facilities in the Courts Buildings.

APPENDIX 6 - Code of Conduct for Board Members

Introduction

The Code of Business Conduct for Board members sets out the standards of business conduct to which the members of the Board of the Courts Service have agreed to adhere in the performance of their duties.

The Code applies to all members of the Courts Service Board and outlines the ethics regime under which the Board operates. In accordance with the Code Board members will strive to perform their duties in accordance with the highest ethical standards of honesty, integrity, fairness, confidentiality and independence and will actively seek to prevent the development of unethical practices.

Procedures in relation to Disclosure and Conflict of Interests; Gifts and Entertainment and the provision of independent professional advice for Board members are set out at page 107 below.

General Policy and Objectives

The objectives of the code are to

- Establish an agreed set of ethical principles
- Prevent the development or acceptance of unethical practices
- Promote and maintain confidence and trust in the Board and the Courts Service

General Principles

Board members are expected to adhere to and support the following fundamental principles.

Integrity

- Take decisions solely in terms of the public interest
- Exercise their skills and abilities in the execution of their duties and give adequate consideration to Board matters.
- Participate in Board activities vigorously but also ethically and honestly at all times
- Ensure the Service conducts its business fairly
- Ensure that Court Service resources are used for the benefit of the organisation and not for personal gain or benefit of persons or organisations unconnected with the Courts Service or its activities.
- Ensure that the purchasing activities of goods/services are carried out in accordance with best business practice Information

- Support the principle of access to general information (as set out in Freedom of Information Acts and the Data Protection Act) relating to Board activities, in a way that encourages a spirit of accountability to the public.
- Maintain, both during and after term of office, the confidentiality of information obtained in the course of the business of the Service and respect the confidentiality of sensitive information held by the Service including commercially sensitive information on future plans or details of major organisational changes, personal information, information received in confidence.

Loyalty and Obligations

- Acknowledge responsibility to be loyal to the Courts Service and to be fully committed to its activities and decisions.
- Acknowledge duty to conform to the highest standards of business ethics
- Make all reasonable efforts to attend all meetings
- Regulatory and statutory obligations imposed on the Service are fulfilled and procedures and controls in relation to procurement, prevention of fraud and conflict of interest are complied with.
- The necessary systems are in place to ensure economy, efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness of expenditure by the Service
- The accounts and reports of the Service are true and accurately reflect performance.

Fairness

- Employment equality and equal status legislation is complied with
- Commitment to fairness in all business dealings
- Customers are valued and all customers are treated equally.
-

Work/External Environment

- Systems, equipment, and procedures are implemented to promote and preserve the health and safety of employees.
- Community concerns are fully considered when taking decisions
- Minimise in so far as is possible any detrimental impact of the operations of the Service on the environment.

Responsibility

A copy of this Code of Business Conduct will be circulated to all Board members, who must acknowledge receipt and understanding of same.

The Code of Business Conduct will be reviewed annually or more frequently should circumstances so require.

PROCEDURES FOR BOARD MEMBERS IN RELATION TO DECLARATION OF INTERESTS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Ethics and Standards in Public Office legislation does not apply to the Board of the Courts Service. The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) requires that procedures be put in place for Board members for addressing conflict of interests. The following procedures have been put in place:

1. Periodic Disclosure of Interests

- 1.1 On appointment and annually thereafter, each Board member should furnish to the Secretary of the Board or other nominated person a statement in writing of:

- (a) the interests of the Board member;
- (b) the interests, of which the Board member has actual knowledge, of his or her spouse or civil partner, child, or child of his/her spouse or civil partner;

which could involve a conflict of interest or could materially influence the Board member in relation to the performance of his/her official functions, where such performance could so affect those interests as to confer on, or withhold from, the Board member, or connected person, a substantial benefit.

- 1.2 A statement of interests is not required where the interests could not materially influence the person in, or in relation to, the performance of his or her official functions.
- 1.3 Where there is a change in the interests of a Board member, or in the interests of the person's spouse or civil partner or child or a child of the spouse or civil partner, the Board member may, at any time, furnish a statement of the change, in writing, to the Secretary.
- 1.4 For the purposes of this disclosure, "interests" has the same meaning as that contained in the Ethics in Public Office Act 1995 as set out in the Disclosure of Interest Form.

2. Disclosure of interest relevant to a matter which arises

In addition to the periodic statements of interest required under (1) above, Board members are required to declare a material interest at the time where an official function falls to be performed by the Board member and he/she has actual knowledge that he/she, or a connected person has a material interest in a matter to which the function relates.

- 2.1 Doubt** - If a Board member has a doubt as to whether an interest should be disclosed he/she should consult with the Chairperson of the Board.

3. Confidential Register

- 3.1** Details of interests disclosed by Board members will be kept by the Secretary of the Board or other nominated person in a special confidential register. Access to the register will be restricted to the Chairperson and Secretary of the Board on a strictly need to know basis.

4. Chairperson's Interests

- 4.1** Where a matter relating to the interests of the Chairperson arises, the other members attending the meeting shall choose one of the members present at the meeting to chair the meeting. The Chairperson should absent himself/herself when the Board is deliberating or deciding on a matter in which the Chairperson or his/her connected person has a material interest.

5. Documents

- 5.1** Board or Courts Service documents on any deliberations regarding any matter in which a member of the Board has disclosed a material interest will not be made available to the Board member concerned.
- 5.2** Early return of documents: Where a Board member receives documents relating to his/her interests or of those connected with him/her, he or she should return the documents to the Secretary of the Board at the earliest opportunity.

6. Meetings

- 6.1 At each meeting of the Board or Committee of the Board, where a procurement proposal is being considered, the Chairperson will request as a matter of good governance that any member of the Board who considers that he or she or connected person may have an interest which may represent a conflict in the consideration of a proposal, should absent themselves from discussion on the item.
- 6.2 A member will absent himself/herself from any meeting, or part of a meeting, at which the Board is deliberating or deciding on matters in which he/she (other than in his/ her capacity as a member of the Board) or a person or body connected with him/her has an interest.
- 6.3 The minutes of the meeting will record any such abstentions and consideration will be given to whether a separate record (to which the member will not have access) should be maintained.
- 6.4 If a member has a doubt as to whether an interest of his/her own or of a connected person represents a conflict that member should consult the Chairperson.
- 7. Where a question arises as to whether or not an interest declared a Board member is a material interest, the matter will be determined by the Chairperson.

PROCEDURES FOR BOARD MEMBERS IN RELATION TO GIFTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

A Board member must not obtain personal advantage from any person dealing with the Courts Service.

Board members must undertake not to give or receive corporate gifts, hospitality or preferential treatment or other benefits that might affect or appear to affect the ability of the donor or the recipient to make independent judgements on any business matter.

In particular, a Board member must not accept or solicit any gifts or inducements where the value of such could make it appear that the giving of the gift is an attempt to influence the Board member to gain advantage.

Business gifts may be accepted by Board members as courtesies where such are designed to build understanding and goodwill, are modest in value and the refusal of the gift might cause offence.

Where the matter of the giving of a gift to persons or organisations doing business with the Service arises, the approval of the Chairperson must be obtained and the gifts should be appropriate and modest in value.

PROCEDURES TO ENABLE BOARD MEMBERS TAKE INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

In the event that any Board members wishes to seek independent professional advice in the furtherance of their duties, members should first consider whether such advice can be supplied by Courts Service personnel or advisors already retained by the Service.

It is only in relation to significant issues, and in circumstances where advice cannot be obtained from Courts Service personnel or advisors already retained by the Service or such advice is considered to be unreliable or lacking in objectivity that independent professional advice should be sought.

In such cases members should consult with the Chairman regarding the basis on which such advice is required. The Chairperson will determine whether such advice is warranted.

Where it is deemed to be necessary, the Secretary will arrange for independent professional advice to be provided to the member at reasonable expense to the Courts Service.

APPENDIX 7 - Courts Service Internal Audit Charter

1. BOARD POLICY

It is the policy of the Courts Service to have and support the development of an Internal Audit Unit.

2. MISSION STATEMENT

‘To enhance and protect organizational value by providing risk-based and objective assurance, advice and insight.’

The Internal Audit Unit will be an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity, which operates as a service to the Board and senior management, and is committed to adding value and improving the Service’s operations. We will endeavour to assist the Service achieve its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluating and improving the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

3.1 Authority

Internal Audit operates with the direct authority of the Board who are responsible for approving the Internal Audit Charter and empowering a broad comprehensive programme of internal auditing. There are no operational areas or levels within the organisation precluded from internal audit review.

The authority of Internal Audit allows full, free and unrestricted access to all of the Service’s functions, records, reports, systems, assets and personnel necessary for the proper discharge of its responsibilities.

All Courts Service staff, and where applicable the staff of any company engaged by the Courts Service, are required to assist the internal audit activity in fulfilling its roles and responsibilities.

3.2 Organisation

The Head of Internal Audit reports to and is accountable to the Chief Executive Officer and the Audit & Risk Committee. He/she has unrestricted access to the Chairperson of the Audit & Risk Committee.

The Audit and Risk Committee shall

- Approve the annual risk based internal audit plan.

- Receive communications from the head of internal audit on the internal audit activity's performance relative to its plan and other matters.
- Make appropriate inquiries of management and the head of internal audit to determine whether there is inappropriate scope or resource limitations.
- Receive and review all external quality assessments reports carried out in the Internal Audit Function.

3.3 Independence

In order to ensure its objectivity and independence, Internal Audit will have no operating responsibility for, and will remain independent of the activities they audit. Accordingly, Internal Auditors will not participate in the development and installation of new procedures or engage in any other activity that would normally be subject to audit review. They may, if requested by management, and deemed appropriate by the Head of Internal Audit, and/or the Audit Committee, review and advise on the controls which they deem necessary to be incorporated into new or revised systems, without compromising its right to subsequently audit those systems.

3.4 Consultancy Services

Internal Audit may also provide consulting and advisory services related to governance, risk management and control processes as appropriate for the organisation.

3.5 Objectivity

Internal Auditors will exhibit the highest level of professional objectivity in gathering, evaluating, and communicating information about the activity or process being examined. Auditors will endeavour to bring an impartial, unbiased attitude and not be unduly influenced by their own interests or by others in forming judgements. The Head of Internal Audit will confirm to the Board, at least annually, the organisational independence of the internal audit activity.

3.6 Scope

Internal Audit is an independent appraisal function charged with reviewing operations across all areas within the Service, as a service to the Board, the Audit Committee and to all levels of management. The scope of internal audit work encompasses evaluating the effectiveness of risk management, governance and control processes in the Courts Service. It examines and reports on the adequacy of internal control, and on the achievement of efficient and effective use of resources of the Service, taking adequate cognisance of value for money considerations.

Internal Audit may, if deemed necessary by the Head of Internal Audit, the Chief Executive Officer, and/or the Audit Committee, procure specialised services on a contract basis. Any external service providers seeking to provide internal audit services, will be required to confirm that they do not have any conflict that could impact their audit independence.

3.6 Role and Responsibilities

The role of Internal Audit is to review and evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, governance and control processes implemented by management to support the delivery of, and to mitigate the risks associated with, the organisation's strategies and objectives. Internal Audit, therefore has unrestricted access to all activities undertaken in the organisation, in order to review, appraise and report on:

- the adequacy and reliability of systems of financial, operational and management control and their operation in practice in relation to the mitigation of business risks and delivering on the organization's strategic objectives.
- the extent of compliance with, relevance of, and financial effect of, policies, standards, plans, procedures established by the Board and the extent of compliance with external laws and regulations, including reporting requirements of external bodies
- the extent to which assets and interests are acquired economically, used efficiently, accounted for and safeguarded from losses of all kinds arising from waste, extravagance, inefficient administration, poor value for money, fraud or other cause and that adequate business continuity plans exist
- the suitability, accuracy, reliability and integrity of financial and other management information and the means used to identify, measure, classify and report such information
- the integrity of processes and systems, including those under development, to ensure that controls offer adequate protection against error, fraud and loss of all kinds; and that the process aligns with the organisation's strategic goals
- the suitability of business and/or organizational structures for carrying out business functions and ensuring that services are provided in a customer focused, economical, efficient and effective manner
 - the effectiveness of the organisation's risk management processes.
- the operation of the organisation's governance arrangements
- the follow-up action taken to remedy weaknesses identified by internal Audit review, ensuring that good practice is identified and communicated widely.

3.7 Confidentiality

It is the responsibility of all auditors to ensure that confidentiality is maintained over all information and records obtained in carrying out audits. Internal auditors respect the value and ownership of information they receive and will not disclose information without proper authority unless there is a legal or professional obligation to do so.

3.8 Audit Planning

The Head of Internal Audit will develop and maintain an Audit Risk Universe. The Audit Risk Universe will seek to identify all possible auditable areas/topics in each Corporate Risk Category and using a set of defined criteria, each topic/area so identified will be risk assessed and ranked as high, medium or low audit priority. The Audit Risk Universe will

be reviewed and updated prior to the commencement of the annual audit planning process.

At the start of each year and following consultation with the CEO, the Head of Internal Audit, will submit an annual audit plan for approval by the Audit Committee. The audit plan will be developed using the Audit Risk Universe to identify areas within each Corporate Risk category for audit. In order to ensure audit coverage across the organisation, at least one topic or area from each Corporate risk category will be included in the annual audit plan and the audit plan may include a mixture of high, medium and low priority auditable areas.

The Head of Internal Audit will review and adjust the plan, as necessary, in response to changes in the organisation's business, risks, operations, programs, systems, and controls. Any significant deviation from the approved internal audit plan will be communicated to senior management and the Board through periodic activity reports.

3.9 Audit Reporting

At the end of each audit, draft audit reports will be issued to relevant managers, and Heads of Directorates where appropriate, for management comment. Final reports, incorporating management's response and an audit opinion, will be issued to the relevant Head of Directorate and their senior managers. All final audit reports will be sent to the Chief Executive. Executive summary of final audit reports containing key audit findings, significant risks if any identified, and audit opinion will be provided as standard to the Audit Committee and the Senior Management Committee.

The Head of Internal Audit will report to the Audit Committee on the status and results of the annual Audit Plan and is accountable to the Audit Committee for:

- providing regular assessments of the adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's risk management, governance, and control processes. based on the work of Internal Audit
- reporting significant control issues and potential for improving risk management, governance and control processes
- providing periodically updates on the delivery status of the annual audit plan.

At least once a year the Head of Internal Audit will meet with the Audit Committee without Executive Committee Members or management representatives being present.

3.10 Audit Follow up

Internal Audit will carry out appropriate follow-up action on significant audit findings and recommendations. The Audit Committee and relevant Heads of Directorates and managers will be informed of the outcome of follow-up activity undertaken by Internal Audit and whether audit findings and recommendations reviewed have been adequately addressed.

3.11 Management Roles and Responsibilities

It is management's responsibility to establish and maintain a proper and effective control environment and to manage risk. Management also has the primary responsibility for the safeguarding and use of assets and the prevention and detection of fraud. The objective of Internal Audit is to assist all levels of management in the effective discharge of this responsibility, by carrying out appraisals and analysis, and by making recommendations, where appropriate, concerning the activities and operating procedures under their control.

Heads of Directorates and their managers will proactively interface with auditors and respond promptly to request for information and to draft audit reports. They and their senior managers will be responsible for deciding the appropriate action to be taken in response to reported audit findings, in the absence of specific recommendations by Internal Audit.

3.11 Quality Assurance Procedures

Internal Audit will conduct its work in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing, as adapted by the Department of Finance for use by Government Departments and Offices. The Head of Internal Audit will develop a Quality Assurance Improvement Programme (QIAP) for the quality assuring the work of the unit. Comprehensive records will be maintained to demonstrate that internal audit work has been performed in accordance with accepted standards of best practice. As part of the QIAP and as required by IIA Standards, the work of the unit will be subject to periodic external review and evaluation at least every 5 years. All external quality assessment reports will be provided to the Audit & Risk Committee, CEO and SMT.

3.12 Relationship with External Auditors (C&AG)

The Head of Internal Audit is responsible for establishing a professional and co-operative relationship with the C&AG in order to reduce the likelihood of audit duplication. Summary of final audit reports will be provided as standard to the C&AG after each Audit Committee meeting. Full audit reports will be provided to the C&AG on request.

3.13 Charter Review

This charter will be reviewed annually by the Audit and Risk Committee and if any changes are considered necessary, revised charter will be brought to the Board for approval.

Approved by the Board at its meeting on 26th September 2022