

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 4 DECEMBER 2001**INTEGRATION OF SCOTTISH CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION SYSTEMS****JOINT REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF LAW AND ADMINISTRATION, THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK AND THE DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY****ABSTRACT**

This Report advises members of progress in creating a system of automated information sharing and exchange between the various agencies within the Criminal Justice System.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is requested:-

- (i) to note the contents of this Report; and
- (ii) to authorise officers to proceed with implementation of the relevant connections subject to funding being obtained from the Scottish Executive.

2. INTRODUCTION

As long ago as 1991, it was recognised that the efficiency of criminal justice could be improved if information was more easily shared and exchanged amongst those organisations which currently contribute to the Criminal Justice System.

The main parties in the Criminal Justice System are:-

- (i) Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service;
- (ii) Scottish Criminal Record Office;
- (iii) Police Service in Scotland;
- (iv) Scottish Local Authorities;
- (v) Scottish Children's Reporter Administration;
- (vi) Scottish Court Service;
- (vii) Scottish Prison Service; and
- (viii) Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

At present, most information is exchanged amongst the parties in paper form and most of the Criminal Justice Organisations have their own computer systems which are not necessarily compatible.

The type of documents which could be exchanged electronically include:-

- Police Reports to the Procurator Fiscal;
- Records of previous convictions;
- Lists of cases to be called in Court prepared by the Procurator Fiscal for use by the Court; and
- Reports compiled by Social Work Departments to assist a Court or a Children's Hearing to come to a decision on appropriate sentencing.

As can be seen from the above, the Angus Council Criminal Justice Service and the District Court administered within the Law and Administration Department would become key players in any automated document exchange system. For example, the District Court receives information from the Procurator Fiscal in the form of court lists, complaints, previous convictions and DVLA information. It sends information to the Police in the form of warrants, to the Prison Service in the form of committal papers, to the Procurator Fiscal in the form of disposals, to DVLA in the form of endorsements, disqualifications and to Social Work Departments in connection with the Social Work Enquiry Reports.

The Criminal Justice Service receives information from the Courts and from the Scottish Criminal Record Office.

The Scottish Executive, who have seconded a member of staff to progress the development of ISCJIS across Scotland, have set a target for implementation of the automated system by 2003.

3. CURRENT POSITION

Angus Council is reasonably well placed to proceed with this automated document transfer system in that the District Court has been using a computer software package which will be compliant with the ISCJIS security standard. Angus Council's Criminal Justice Service has recently submitted a bid for funding from the Scottish Executive as part of the Criminal Justice partnership with Perth and Kinross and Dundee City Councils. If successful, the bid will enable the Criminal Justice Service to contribute to the Tayside Criminal Justice partnership through the effective application of information technology. It will provide a 1:1 ratio of PCs and a robust network environment for all essential operational, management and administrative workers. This environment will permit the partnership to embark on future joint systems development and will better equip the Angus Council Criminal Justice Service with the capability of using electronic communication, including the Internet and email, to work together with its partners and with other agencies.

The Criminal Justice Service and the District Court have already commenced exchanging Social Enquiry Reports by electronic method using the Council's network, as this is considered sufficiently secure. In order to extend the electronic transfer of documents to other Criminal Justice organisations it will be necessary for the Council to lease a connection to one of the secure networks used by these organisations.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are a number of legal implications in connection with the electronic exchange of documents, the most important being that documents being relied upon within Court require to have a principal and not an electronic signature. For example, complaints issued by the Procurator Fiscal require to be signed personally by the Fiscal and the use of electronic exchange would preclude this facility. It is therefore essential that prior to full introduction, the legislation is appropriately amended.

In addition, the various organisations which form partners within the Criminal Justice System are understandably anxious to retain the high level of security within their own information networks. All links within the various organisations will therefore require to meet the stringent security standards laid down in the ISCJIS Data Standards manual.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Scottish Executive has made available a degree of funding for the Scottish Criminal Justice Service to update its computer hardware and an appropriate bid, which included the cost of a connection to one of the secure networks, was submitted in early October 2001. It is unclear at present whether the cost of connection to the secure network qualifies for funding or whether this cost has to be met by the Council. Setup costs for the first year will be in the order of £20,000 and running costs in subsequent years will be approximately £9,000. The outcome of this bid will not be known for some time but early indications are that bids in excess of the available sum have been submitted. The outcome of the bid is expected from the Scottish Executive in December 2001.

If the Tayside bid is unsuccessful or successful only to a degree, a further report will be brought back before the Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

6. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no human rights implications arising as a result of this Report.

7. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and the Director of Information Technology have been consulted in the preparation of this Report.

CATHERINE A COULL
Director of Law and Administration

BILL ROBERTSON
Director of Social Work

A GREENHILL
Director of Information Technology

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing this report.

