

MEETING OF THE COURTS SERVICE BOARD
9th December, 2019

The Courts Service Board met on 9th December, 2019.

Minutes and Documentation from Committees of the Board

The Board noted minutes and reports of meetings of Committees of the Board as follows

- Minutes of the Finance Committee – 8th October 2019
- Minutes of Audit & Risk Committee – 8th October 2019
- Minutes of Family Law Court Development Committee – 22nd July 2019

The Board considered and approved the following Reports:

Report on Financial Outturn 2019 and Proposed Budget 2020

The Board considered the Report on Expenditure and Budget 2019, as circulated. The Board noted:

- **Financial position to end October 2019** – Gross expenditure to 31st October 2019 was €112.378m showing a gross underspend of €3.475m. made up of underspends on Pay of €1.77m., Capital of €0.98m and the PPP Regional Unitary payments of €0.63m. and overspends on ICT of €0.117m and on the CCJ Unitary payment of €0.063m. Appropriations in Aid (Income) to the end of October shows a shortfall against profile of €0.383m relating to Court Fees. Expenditure will be monitored very closely to the end of the year and the Service is still in line for a balanced budget with an underspend on pay and a projected overspend on non-pay.
- **Proposed Budgets for 2020** – There was gross funding allocation announced for the Courts Service in the 2020 Estimates was €156.378m which represents an increase of 13% on the allocation for 2018 and includes increases in current funding of 4% (€3.473m) and capital funding of 105% (€14.5m). The Target for **Appropriations in Aid** shows a decrease of **€3m** on 2019.

Chief Executive Officer's Report

The Board considered and approved the Report by the Chief Executive Officer and noted major issues including:

- **Oversight agreement with the Department of Justice & Equality** – The CEO had a productive meeting with the Department on the issue.
- **Appearance at Public Accounts Committee** - The Service appeared before PAC on 14 November. Ms. Denning indicated that the Committee's main areas of interest were the project to construct a courthouse complex at Hammond Lane and the interim use of the site, the application of the Fines (Payment and Recovery) Act 2014 and application of penalty points to persons found guilty of motoring offences.
- **ICT** - The service is to roll out the e-Licensing system nationwide in the new year, but the approach is being changed to oblige solicitors' firms to log on to the system to receive court orders. The new centralised jury office was to be launched on 11th December 2019 as part of the Civil Service's Innovation Week. Work on the new website is continuing. The Service's new twitter account has over 500 followers and will be used to publicise significant events.
- **GDPR Awareness:** 93% of staff have completed the GDPR on-line training module. The remaining staff will be approached on the issue shortly.
- **Human resources:** A new head of energy management has been recruited to enable the Service to achieve its targets under the Government's energy strategy. Interviews are under way for a Head of Health and Safety.
- **Provincial Courthouses:** Efforts are continuing to find an alternative venue for sittings in Roscommon town following the discovery of problems with the roof and the M and E systems. Correspondence has been received from local representatives on the future of Carndonagh Courthouse. Athlone Courthouse is now only open on Mondays and Wednesdays under new arrangements which were put in place during the week beginning 2 December 2019.

Report on Risk Management

The Board considered the Report on Risk Management and noted the progress made.

Risk Management continues to be actively addressed throughout the organisation and was considered by the both the SMT and the Audit & Risk Committee. The Risk Overview provides a high level focus for the major risks facing the Service which include 7 High Risks, 12 Medium Risks and 3 Low Risks. Courthouse security, the Fines (Payment and Recovery) Act and conditions in courthouses have been identified as more elevated risks and will be taken into account in future calibrations of the risk register.