



The **Scottish Justices** Association

The Scottish Justice – eNewsletter

June 2016

The SJA and You

This June edition of *'The Scottish Justice'* is a special edition designed to engage with all of our members and to seek your help in shaping the organisation for the future, and how it can best represent you and your interests as a Justice of the Peace in Scotland.

There are two particular areas where the SJA Executive Committee wants to have your input and your involvement. Firstly, the SJA is undertaking a full and thorough review of its structure and activities, and to ensure that we can be as objective as possible we shall be conducting a survey of all of our members into our role and functions. So, first and foremost we do want you to respond to the survey. Further background and details of the survey are contained below.

Secondly, the SJA is due to hold elections to its Executive Committee later this year. Due to the rotational nature of these elections there is at least one position in each Sheriffdom which requires to be elected every year, however, this year there are existing vacancies in at two Sheriffdoms, and this combined with recent resignations has resulted in a requirement to elect an unprecedented fourteen positions onto the Executive Committee. This is therefore your opportunity to stand for election to the SJA Executive Committee and to help shape and implement the structure and changes that the full membership wish to apply, as determined by the results of the survey. Again, further details of the election process and timetable are detailed later in this e-Newsletter.

The SJA Membership Survey

At the SJA Annual General Meeting held in Edinburgh on 22nd November 2015 the following motion was tabled and passed following an amendment to the dates contained within the motion: –

In the interest of current good governance practice and the future needs of the membership, that the Executive of the Scottish Justice Association objectively evaluates its activities and its work, and that of its committees and sub-committees, against the objects of the Association as set out in the SJA Constitution. Further, that this evaluation be concluded by 31st March 2016 and the findings reported to the members of the Association by 30th April 2016, together with clear recommendations for the future of the Association and its management. Further, that, members of the Association be able to discuss any recommendations and progress therewith at a General Meeting in due course.’

The AGM agreed revised dates for the evaluation, and were that it be concluded by 30th June 2016 and that the findings be reported by 31st July 2016.

To initiate work on this evaluation the SJA Executive Committee established a sub-committee of four of its members. Unfortunately, after an initial meeting of the sub-committee, two of the members resigned from the Executive Committee on separate and unrelated matters. Given that the Executive Committee meet at quarterly intervals throughout the year it was recognized that a different approach was necessary. In addition, the Executive Committee wanted to ensure that the review should be as objective and inclusive as possible; accordingly they decided that they would commission a survey of all SJA members.

It was also recognized by the Executive Committee that due to this complete change in approach it would not be possible to complete the action within the timescale identified within the AGM motion. This edition of *‘The Scottish Justice’* therefore advises the full SJA membership that the action will not be fulfilled in the timetable noted in the AGM motion due to circumstance that could not have been reasonably foreseen at the time. The Executive Committee are nevertheless committed to completing this action as soon as practical and will keep all members advised of progress.

The contents of this survey of members are currently being developed. Specialist guidance is being sought to ensure that the questions posed in the survey are as ‘open’ as possible are not meant to lead respondents to a particular perspective. All responses will be anonymous and the survey is designed to provide the opportunity for wide-ranging responses as to the role and activities of the SJA and will focus on what we currently do and what our members would like to see in the future.

The initial focal point for the role of the SJA will be its objectives as set out in the SJA Constitution which is as follows:-

The object of the Association is to assist Justices of the Peace to perform their Judicial duties and in so doing it shall:

- Take such action as required to promote and ensure judicial independence.
- Be associated with the issue of publications, and the promotion of conferences involving the participation of Justices of the Peace.
- Participate in consultations and discussions on relevant matters, including training and appraisal.
- Assist communication between members of the Association.
- Endeavour to keep itself well informed of developments in law and the administration of justice.
- Provide a system of communication between the Association and Scottish Ministers; the Scottish Government; the Scottish Court Service, the Judicial Council of Scotland; the Judicial Institute for Scotland; and any other appropriate body or institution.
- Take such other action, consistent with the object of the Association, as may from time to time be determined by the Association.

It should be noted that the SJA Executive Committee in reviewing these objectives did feel that it did not give appropriate clarity to the fact that the SJA should represent the views and interests of JP's across Scotland and should when appropriate collect, collate and present such views and interests to other relevant bodies. In addition the Executive Committee felt that the emphasis on training and appraisal in the third objective could be misleading as this function was primarily the responsibility of the Sheriffdom JP Training and Appraisal Committees. As a result, the Executive Committee does plan to draft amendments to the Constitution for consideration at the next AGM.

It is currently hoped that the survey of all SJA members will be ready and issued by the end of June 2016. It is planned to use an on-line survey facility (Survey Monkey) for members to respond to a range of questions. The survey will be sent to the private e-mail addresses of all members as held by the SJA.

The Executive Committee are however, aware that an on-line survey may not suit all of our members and will therefore be prepared to issue a paper version of the survey questionnaire upon request to the Secretary of the SJA. Such requests can be made through the Scottish Courts e-mail facility to dbarr@scotcourts.gov.uk, or by writing to his home address which is:

31 Knollpark Drive, Clarkston, Glasgow G76 7SY

Paper responses to the survey should be sent to the same address, and like the electronic responses should be anonymous. Postage-paid reply envelopes will be provided. If you are aware of a fellow SJA member who has limited access to a computer to provide an electronic response, and may similarly not be aware of this e-Newsletter, then do please advise them that this paper based response option is available.

The final timetable for the survey with regard to both issue and reply dates are still to be finalized but will be issued as soon as possible.

The SJA Executive Committee actively encourages all SJA members to respond to the survey and assist them to help you in your JP role and duties.

SJA Executive Committee Elections

The SJA Executive Committee comprises of three representatives from each of the six Sheriffdoms across Scotland. In order to encourage greater participation amongst members whilst maintaining a level of experience and knowledge, each representative is appointed for three years on a rotational basis, so that one position from each Sheriffdom is made available for selection every year. It should also be stressed that where more than one vacancy exists in a Sheriffdom the representatives will be appointed for one, two or three years dependent on the number of vacancies. This ensures that the rotational pattern of appointments can be maintained. This year we do have the regular six positions available for election, however due to outstanding vacancies in Grampian, Highlands & Islands and South Strathclyde, Dumfries & Galloway Sheriffdoms, plus the resignations from Lothian & Borders and Tayside, Central & Fife Sheriffdoms, there are a total of fourteen positions to fill on the SJA Executive Committee. The positions will be filled after the SJA 2016 Annual General Meeting which will be held in November.

The position for each Sheriffdom is detailed below:-

Lothian & Borders Sheriffdom – 3 vacancies in total, one position will be elected for a three-year term, one for a two-year term and one for a single year.

Grampian Highlands & Islands Sheriffdom – 3 vacancies in total, one position will be elected for a three-year term, one for a two-year term and one for a single year.

Tayside Central & Fife Sheriffdom – 2 Vacancies in total, one position will be elected for a three-year term and one for a two-year term.

Glasgow & Strathkelvin Sheriffdom - 2 Vacancies in total, one position will be elected for a three-year term and one for a two-year term.

North Strathclyde Sheriffdom - 2 Vacancies in total, one position will be elected for a three-year term and one for a two-year term.

South Strathclyde Dumfries & Galloway Sheriffdom - 2 Vacancies in total, one position will be elected for a three-year term and one for a two-year term.

Nomination Forms for any member interested in applying for these vacancies will be available on the SJA website before the end of June. Do please note however that there are separate Nomination Forms for each Sheriffdom. Every nomination has to be supported by two current members of the SJA and they are required to sign the Nomination Form.

Nomination Forms will have to be returned to the Judicial Institute address as shown on the Form by Friday 29th July 2016. Where there are more candidates than vacancies elections will be held and the SJA will issue voting ballot papers in those Sheriffdoms where necessary. These voting ballots will be issued by Friday 19th August 2016 and will be required to be returned to the Judicial Institute no later than Tuesday 20th September 2016. The results of all elections and non-contested nominations will be announced by Friday 30th September, with the new members taking up their positions at the AGM on Sunday 20th November 2016.

Again the SJA Executive Committee would encourage all members to consider applying for a position on the Executive Committee. It is an excellent opportunity to develop and shape the SJA into a fully representative body and to help all JP's across Scotland to develop and improve their role.

Other News from the SJA

There are two other short items of news from the SJA which you may have already noticed in the information above.

1. At the Executive Committee meeting on 18th April 2016 Dennis Barr, from Glasgow and Strathkelvin Sheriffdom was elected as the Secretary for the Association.
2. A date for your diary is Sunday 20th November 2016, when the AGM will be held at the Golden Jubilee Hotel and Conference Centre (previously known as the Beardmore Hotel) at Clydebank, commencing at 2:00pm. The Executive Committee hope as many members as possible will attend the AGM, and it will follow on from the North Strathclyde Sheriffdom Training Conference to be held at that venue.