

News release

For immediate use

Report on governance at Community Justice Scotland

The Auditor General has submitted a report to the Scottish Parliament relating to governance issues at Community Justice Scotland (CJS) in its first year of operation.

CJS was established by the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 as a non-departmental public body to promote and encourage improvements in community justice, shifting from short custodial to community-based sentences to reduce reoffending and reintegrate people into the community.

The report highlights governance issues including lengthy absence of the chair, limited financial capacity and committee structures.

A chair and chief executive were appointed in 2017 along with four non-executive directors. Throughout 2017/18 CJS has operated with a chair and four members, one fewer than the minimum stipulated in the Act. The chair has been absent since October 2017. An interim chair was appointed in April 2018.

The Scottish Government recently appointed an additional four new members to Community Justice Scotland.

Auditor General Caroline Gardner said: "In terms of governance, Community Justice Scotland had a challenging first year.

"In 2018/19, its budget increased to £2.2 million. This will likely increase during 2019/20 as it starts to commission community justice services itself. All public bodies, irrespective of their size, must demonstrate clear and effective governance and financial management.

"I have asked the auditor to monitor CJS's progress and report again next year".

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Notes to editors

1. This is a section 22 report which allows the Auditor General to bring attention to Parliament and the public matters of wider interest arising from the annual accounts of public bodies.
2. This report is based on the 2017/18 annual report and accounts of Community Justice Scotland. The independent auditor has given an unqualified opinion on these accounts. This means that they show a true and fair picture, follow accounting standards and the income and expenditure for the year is lawful.
3. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Auditor General for Scotland. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk
 - The Auditor General appoints auditors to Scotland's central government and NHS bodies; examines how public bodies spend public money; helps them to manage their finances to the highest standards; and checks whether they achieve value for money. The Auditor General is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Government or the Scottish Parliament

- Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland.