



# Criminal Justice Board Minute

Held on 4 December 2023 chaired by the Rt. Hon. Alex Chalk KC MP, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice

## Members

- Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Rt. Hon. Alex Chalk KC MP)
- Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice (Mike Freer MP)
- Minister of State for Crime and Policing, Home Office (Rt. Hon. Chris Philp MP)
- Solicitor General (Michael Tomlinson KC MP)
- Senior Presiding Judge (Lord Justice Edis)
- Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service (Sir Mark Rowley QPM)
- National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Criminal Justice (Rob Nixon)
- Director of Public Prosecutions, Crown Prosecution Service (Stephen Parkinson)
- Chief Executive, HM Courts and Tribunals Service (Nick Goodwin)
- Director General Chief Executive, HM Prison and Probation Service (Amy Rees)
- Victims' Commissioner, Office of the Victims' Commissioner (Baroness Helen Newlove)
- Director General, National Crime Agency (Graeme Biggar CBE)
- Chair, Youth Justice Board (Keith Fraser)

## By Invitation

- Executive Director, HMPPS Change, HM Prison and Probation Service (Jim Barton)
- Chair, Bar Council (Nick Vineall KC)
- Vice President, The Law Society (Richard Atkinson)
- Deputy Lead for Criminal Justice, Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (Emily Spurrell)

## Senior Officials

- Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice (Antonia Romeo)

- Director General Policy, Ministry of Justice (Jerome Glass)
- Director, Courts, Criminal and Family Justice, Ministry of Justice (Ed Lidington)

### **Apologies**

- Secretary of State for the Home Department (Rt. Hon. James Cleverly MP)
- Attorney General (Rt. Hon. Victoria Prentis KC MP)
- President of the King's Bench Division (Rt. Hon. Dame Victoria Sharp, DBE, PC)
- Criminal Justice Lead, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (David Lloyd)
- Head of Justice, Law Society (Richard Miller)
- Chair, National Police Chiefs' Council (Gavin Stephens)

### **Agenda Item 1: Lord Chancellor's Welcome**

1. The LORD CHANCELLOR thanked members for their attendance and welcomed the new members of the Board.
2. The LORD CHANCELLOR thanked members for their ongoing work, in particular their support for the measures announced to address the issues that the Criminal Justice System (CJS) was facing.
3. The LORD CHANCELLOR said that both actions from the July meeting had been closed. The action on supporting the local Criminal Justice System (CJS) would be addressed in the first item of the meeting and the action around early guilty pleas (EGPs) had been addressed by the Criminal Justice Task and Finish Group (CJTFG), chaired by Minister Freer.
4. MINISTER FREER outlined what was discussed in the most recent CJTFG meeting and the Board agreed that the points raised would be taken forward by the CJTFG and updates reported back to the Board.

### **Agenda Item 2: Supporting the local Criminal Justice System**

5. JEROME GLASS said that the Board took an action in July to consider how the national CJB could better support Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs). The first LCJB Conference was held in April 2023 and further work to support LCJBs would be carried out in 2024.
6. AMY REES said that in 2020, the CJB for Wales had successfully established 4 priorities which were monitored in an annual report; 1) victims and witnesses; 2) people who have offended; 3) early intervention and prevention; and 4) race equality. She said that there was space for the Board to establish national priorities in a similar way, whilst still leaving space for local autonomy.
7. EMILY SPURRELL PCC said that national priorities would be helpful in gaining buy-in from partners and removing blockages. Rob Nixon and Keith Fraser agreed.
8. JEROME GLASS said that a key theme that emerged from the LCJB Conference was a local desire for national direction.

9. The LORD CHANCELLOR said that the CJB should set high level priorities, whilst balancing the need for direction with local autonomy. Progress in these priority areas should be measurable to some extent and a mechanism should be put in place to allow LCJBs to raise and escalate local issues.

### **Agenda Item 3: Crown Court Outstanding Caseload**

10. ED LIDINGTON said that the outstanding caseload in the Crown Court was discussed at the July meeting, and it was agreed that the Board should consider long and short-term solutions to tackle this. Excellent work was being driven forward across the system to aid efforts to reduce the caseload, including through the Crown Court Improvement Group (CCIG) and the Criminal Justice Action Group (CJAG). However, there was no one place where all this work came together.

11. The SENIOR PRESIDING JUDGE said that all agencies were represented at CCIG and that improvements were being steadily made.

12. During the discussion the following points were made:

- i. The Board should introduce a standing item to consider the outstanding caseload on a strategic level to identify and tackle systemic issues.
- ii. The Board should be given sight of the work going on across the system to address the issue so that there could be a collective consideration of whether there were any gaps.
- iii. Longer term solutions should be considered alongside addressing immediate issues.
- iv. It would be important to consider the impact of any action taken to tackle the outstanding caseload on the wider system.

### **AOB and Closing remarks from the Chair**

13. The LORD CHANCELLOR thanked members for their attendance and brought the meeting to a close.

**Action 1: The Board agreed to continue to explore possible levers on the early guilty plea rate.**

**Action 2: The Board agreed that the CJB should set priorities and establish an escalation mechanism for LCJBs, and that work would be carried out and fed back to members to agree in due course.**

**Action 3: The Board agreed that information should be gathered from cross-CJS governance groups on the ongoing work to tackle the outstanding crown court caseload, to be presented to the Board at the next meeting.**

**Action 4: The Board agreed that outstanding caseloads in the Crown Court should be a standing agenda item for the CJB.**