

The Court of the Seneschal

Progress and Development Plan 2019 – 2020

Introduction

For the purposes of this Plan, the term “Court of the Seneschal” includes the Deputy and Lieutenant Seneschals, the Prevot and, in the Greffier’s case, only when dealing with Court, rather than Island business.

This first “Business” Plan for the “Sark Court” seeks to provide readily accessible information to assist the general public and the government of Sark in the workings and aspirations of the Court. There will be year on year assessments of any progress made in achieving targets.

The Court personnel

Seneschal	C.J. La Trobe-Bateman
Deputy Seneschal	E.M. De Carteret
Prevot	K.N. Adams
Deputy Prevot	Mrs J. Godwin
Greffier	T. J. Hamon
Deputy Greffier	G. Hamon
Lieutenant Seneschals	P. Talbot, A Merrien, H. Marshal, C. McMillen

Our Mission Statement

- To deliver justice and court services to the inhabitants of Sark.
- To do so in as professional way as possible, given the constraints and limitations of this small independent island.
- To identify and act upon possible improvements to all aspects of the court process.
- To provide procedural information to members of the public having business with the Court.
- To remain within a budget agreed with the relevant Island committee and identify in advance any likely future expenses.
- In conjunction with the Greffier, enable document and property registration.
- To act as Coroner and provide Notary services to Islanders.
- To liaise with the Bailiff’s Office, the Royal Court and Law Officers of the Crown in matters affecting the judiciary within the Bailiwick.

Strategic Priorities

- In the short term, introduce Civil Rules and Family Proceedings Rules.
- Investigate the cost / benefits of remote access to the Court.
- Finalise a decision on whether to extend the bench by the appointment of additional members, as suggested in the Venne Report.
- Formalise a professional development plan for both Seneschal and Deputy Seneschal.
- Update Data Protection compliance.

- Improve public access to information on court processes (Greffier)
- In conjunction with a Chief Pleas initiative, update Court of the Seneschal website to make it easier / cheaper to upload material.
- Initiate a review of the appointment procedures for Court officers.

2018 review

- The Court sat 35 times. The Seneschal presided 23 times, Deputy Seneschal 8 times and Lieutenant Seneschal(s) 4 times.
- There were 3 criminal cases, 8 civil cases (some with multiple sittings), 1 inquest, 8 registrations, 9 liquor licence extension courts, 6 swearing in of island officers.
- The court service remained within budget (£60,095). Figures follow:-

Salaries	£44,095*
Court expenses	£542
Lt. Seneschals	£13,723
Total	£58,360

*Greffier(s) spend the bulk of their time on Island, not Court, business, and therefore these figures exaggerate the cost of the Court for the sake of simplifying accounting.

2019 to date

Until the end of July 2019, the Court has sat 20 times with the usual mix of civil cases, registrations and liquor licence applications. Miss Cherry McMillen, recently retired from the bench in Guernsey after a distinguished career as a Family court Judge, was appointed as a Lieutenant Seneschal.

So far this year, there not been any requirement to use the services of Lieutenant Seneschals.

Civil Rules are due to go before the Royal Court for approval in September (there are no sittings in August) before being brought into force on the **1st. October 2019**.

Prevot

The Prevot attention will be focused on achieving a pan Bailiwick recognition of orders of the Islands respective courts with regards to enforcement. Whilst this has been agreed in principle further progress has stalled due to the Law Officers workload.

Greffier

Fire proof safes have been installed in the Greffe Office to protect valuable Island records. (see Venne Report)

July 2019