

# Meepe Widyaratne

## Solicitor

### 487973

*Agreement Date: 16 April 2024*

### *Decision - Agreement*

Outcome: Regulatory settlement agreement

Outcome date: 16 April 2024

Published date: 18 April 2024

### *Firm details*

#### **Firm or organisation at date of publication and at time of matters giving rise to outcome**

Name: Corbin & Hassan LLP

Address(es): Patman House, 23-27 Electric Parade, South Woodford, E18 2LS

Firm ID: 566851

### *Outcome details*

This outcome was reached by agreement.

#### *Decision details*

##### *1. Agreed outcome*

1.1 Mr Meepe Widyaratne (Mr Widyaratne), a solicitor of Corbin & Hassan LLP (the Firm), agrees to the following outcome to the investigation of his conduct by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA):

- a. he is rebuked
- b. to the publication of this agreement
- c. he will pay the costs of the investigation of £300.

##### *2. Summary of Facts*

2.1 On 17 August 2023, the SRA received a self-report from Mr Widyaratne advising that he had been convicted at Colchester Magistrates' Court on 15 August 2023 of the offence of driving whilst unfit through excess alcohol, contrary to Section 5(1)(a) of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and Schedule 2 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988.

2.2 On 23 December 2022 a police officer discovered Mr Widyaratne asleep in the driver's seat of a car in Great Leighs, Essex. The vehicle was parked at the side of the road partly on a verge, and the engine was running. Mr Widyaratne told officers that he was driving from his office to his home address, a journey of over 30 miles. Mr Widyaratne failed to provide a sample of breath at the roadside and was arrested and taken to a police station.

2.3 While at the police station Mr Widyaratne provided an evidential sample of 85 microgrammes of alcohol in 100 millilitres of breath. The legal limit for driving being 35 microgrammes of alcohol in 100 millilitres of breath. He was subsequently charged with driving whilst unfit through excess alcohol.

2.4 On conviction, Mr Widyaratne was sentenced to:

- i. an 18-month driving disqualification (reduced by 18 weeks following the completion of a course approved by the Secretary of State)
- ii. a fine of £849.

2.5 Mr Widyaratne was also ordered to pay:

- i. costs of £105
- ii. a victim surcharge of £336.

### 3. Admissions

3.1 Mr Widyaratne makes the following admissions which the SRA accepts:

- a. he admits that by driving whilst under the influence of excess alcohol, for which he was convicted, that he breached Principle 2 of the SRA Principles, which says:

'You act in a way that upholds public trust and confidence in the solicitors' profession and in legal services provided by authorised persons.'

### 4. Why a written rebuke is an appropriate outcome

4.1 The SRA's Enforcement Strategy sets out its approach to the use of its enforcement powers where there has been a failure to meet its standards or requirements.

4.2 When considering the appropriate sanctions and controls in this matter, the SRA has taken into account the admissions made by Mr Widyaratne and the following mitigation which he has put forward:

- a. he promptly reported his conviction to the SRA and co-operated fully with its investigation, including the timely



provision of all necessary information

- b. he co-operated with the police during their investigation
- c. the incident was isolated and out of character
- d. no harm was caused to person or property.

4.3 The SRA considers that a written rebuke is the appropriate outcome because:

- a. Mr Widyaratne was directly responsible for his conduct
- b. the conduct was reckless and disregarded the risk, or potential risk, of harm to persons or property
- c. the court issued a driving disqualification which was above the statutory minimum
- d. Mr Widyaratne produced a level of alcohol in his breath which was more than double the legal limit.

4.4 A rebuke is appropriate to maintain professional standards and uphold public confidence in the solicitors' profession and in legal services provided by authorised persons.

4.5 A rebuke is also intended to deter the individual and others from similar behaviour in the future. Any lesser sanction would not provide a credible deterrent to Mr Widyaratne and others. A rebuke therefore meets the requirements of rule 3.1 of the Regulatory and Disciplinary Procedure Rules.

## 5. Publication

5.1 The SRA considers it appropriate that this agreement is published in the interests of transparency in the regulatory and disciplinary process. Mr Widyaratne agrees to the publication of this agreement.

## 6. Acting in a way which is inconsistent with this agreement

6.1 Mr Widyaratne agrees that he will not deny the admissions made in this agreement or act in any way which is inconsistent with it.

6.2 If Mr Widyaratne denies the admissions or acts in a way which is inconsistent with this agreement, the conduct which is subject to this agreement may be considered further by the SRA. That may result in a disciplinary outcome or a referral to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal on the original facts and allegations.

6.3 Denying the admissions made or acting in a way which is inconsistent with this agreement may also constitute a separate breach of Principles 2

and 5 and paragraph 7.3 of the Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs.

#### 7. *Costs*

7.1 Mr Widyaratne agrees to pay the costs of the SRA's investigation in the sum of £300. Such costs are due within 28 days of a statement of costs due being issued by the SRA.

The date of this Agreement is 16 April 2024

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