

CLASSIFICATION – PUBLIC

**SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY
Minutes of the SRA Board meeting
held on 21 October 2015 at 1:30pm
at The Cube, 199 Wharfside Street, Birmingham, B1 1RN
PUBLIC**

Present: Enid Rowlands (Chair)
Graham Chisnall
Martin Coleman
Jane Furniss
Bill Galvin
David Heath
Cindy Leslie
Paul Marsh
Moni Mannings
Peter Phippen
Chris Randall
Elaine Williams
David Willis

In attendance: Paul Philip, Richard Collins, Robert Loughlin, Jane Malcolm, David Middleton, Juliet Oliver, Crispin Passmore and Dominic Tambling

1 APOLOGIES

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including the journalists in attendance. Apologies had been received from Julia Black and Shamit Saggar.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2015

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2015 were agreed.

3 MATTERS ARISING AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 At the 9 September meeting Board members had considered changes to the arrangements for consumer credit activities but due to late comments from the Financial Conduct Authority the final set of proposed rule changes were not available until the day of the meeting. These had been circulated in hard copy and by e-mail for approval. 10 Board members had responded, all in agreement with the proposed changes, and the Board was therefore content to make the Draft SRA Amendments to Regulatory Arrangements (Consumer Credit) Rules [2015].

3.2 The Chair congratulated Elaine Williams who had been appointed General Counsel and Company Secretary for British Land and would be taking up her new role in the middle of November.

3.3 The solicitor members had previously declared their interests as solicitors and therefore part of the regulated profession. No other interests were declared.

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4 CHAIR'S UPDATE

- 4.1 The Chair reported that the SRA fringe events at all three major party conferences had been successful. Moni Mannings had led an event titled "Equal in the eyes of the law: diversity in the legal profession" at the Lib Dem conference in Bournemouth on 21 September 2015. Later the same evening David Heath had hosted a reception to promote the work of the SRA attended by around 150 delegates.
- 4.2 Jane Furniss had led for the SRA at a fringe event at the Labour Party conference: 'A Question of Trust - Public Protection in a Liberalising Market'. She had been joined on the panel by Lord Chancellor and Shadow Justice Secretary Lord Falconer QC.
- 4.3 The "A Question of Trust" fringe event hosted by the Chair in Manchester on 5 October 2015 at the Conservative Party conference was very well attended. The Chair had been joined on the panel by Justice Select Committee member Alberto Costa MP and Lord Holmes of Richmond. Solicitors Journal editor at large Kevin Poulter chaired a lively debate involving around 60 delegates and the feedback from attendees was very good.
- 4.4 The Chair had attended a dinner on 30 September 2015 to mark the Opening of the legal year and the ceremony itself on 1 October 2015. She had also been to Cardiff on 8 October 2015 to meet Theodore Huckle, the Counsel General for Wales and Mick Antoniw AM. The Chair underlined the importance of maintaining good contacts within Wales.
- 4.5 The Compliance officers conference on 14 October 2015 had been very successful with 571 delegates - 80 % of whom were compliance officers - against 241 (50%) the previous year. Feed back from delegates had been very positive.
- 4.6 The governance review was progressing well and recommendations would be brought to the Board in January 2016.
- 4.7 Finally, interviews for new SRA Board members would take place on 29 October and 3 November 2015.

5 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

- 5.1 Paul Philip drew the Board's attention to paragraph 3 of his report which dealt with the Practising Certificate Renewal Exercise for 2015/16. This exercise had not always gone smoothly but was progressing very well with IT and contact centre resources dealing well with the increased traffic.
- 5.2 The November Handbook release would include a host of regulatory changes including relating to separate businesses, accounts rules and accountants' reports and sole practitioners.
- 5.3 The A Question of Trust campaign was progressing well. There had been a great deal of interest in this at the Compliance Officer conference on 14 October 2015 and it was generating a lot of activity on social media.
- 5.4 The work on improving the experience of stakeholders engaging with the SRA was continuing, including in embedding a new corporate tone of voice in written material, though it was difficult to get people to write differently.

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- 5.5 Finally, operational performance continued to improve and was probably better than it had ever been.

6 2015 REGULATORY STANDARDS SELF ASSESSMENT SUBMISSION TO THE LEGAL SERVICES BOARD

- 6.1 The Chair explained that the self assessment for the Legal Services Board was an important process and that it was therefore important for the Board to be fully sighted and for the SRA to be transparent about the exercise. That was why it was being discussed in public session for the first time. The draft before the Board showed that there were still areas where work needed to be done but also celebrated achievements and progress that had been made.
- 6.2 Paul Philip said that this was the second time a full self assessment had been undertaken. A mini self assessment had been carried out in 2014. The document was necessarily lengthy because it followed the LSB format. The assessment asked for examples of best practice, and those used included the work done with small firms and the A Question of Trust project.
- 6.3 The LSB asked for self assessment against the LSB's five regulatory standards. It was debatable whether the mark against each of these should be "work well under way" or "satisfactory" but he had opted for the former.
- 6.4 The Chair took the Board through the document section by section and Board members made a number of comments and suggestions on the draft. Board members discussed the
- 6.5 Paul Philip said that when the first full self assessment had been undertaken the LSB had asked for the evidence to be reviewed by someone independent. He has written to the LSB to say that the organisation had changed fundamentally since then and that the Board now had a clear role in holding the executive to account. need for independent scrutiny of what the Board did in relation to the Executive was therefore unnecessary and
- 6.6 The Chair said that the assessment would be reworked and cleared by her and the Senior Independent Director before submission. She would also ensure that a covering letter took a very positive tone about what had been achieved in the last year or two.

7 CHARGING FOR DEEMED APPROVED COMPLIANCE OFFICERS IN ABS NEW FIRM APPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Crispin Passmore explained that the Board was being asked to approve the removal of the charge which would otherwise apply to Compliance Officers for Legal Practice (COLP) or Compliance Officers for Finance and Administration (COFA) nominees within alternative Business Structures who met the new deeming criteria rules. He asked the Board to note that these new rules were awaiting approval by the Legal Services Board and the removal of the charge was therefore subject to that approval.
- 7.2 The Board agreed to amend the Fee Determination for Licensed Bodies to ensure that no application fee is paid for the approval of COLP/ COFA nominees in ABS who meet the new deeming criteria under Rule 13.3. of the SRA Authorisation Rules

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8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 The Chair would circulate a note to Board members with some thoughts on ensuring that Board meetings ran as effectively as possible.

**NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER AT THE GRANGE HOLBORN HOTEL,
50-60 SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, WC1B 4AR COMMENCING AT 1:30PM**

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Solicitors Regulation Authority Action Log: Public - 2 December 2015

Meeting date	Paragraph	Action	Owner	Date for action
3 Dec 2014	6.4	Bring further recommendations to Board on possible extension of post six year run off cover for one or two years	Crispin Passmore	Early 2016
21 October 2015	6.6	Amendments to be made to LSB self assessment and then signed off by the Chair and Senior Independent Director	Paul Philip	31 October 2015
21 October 2015	8.1	Chair to circulate a note reviewing the meeting	Enid Rowlands	23 October 2015

Solicitors Regulation Authority Board Record of Actions Completed: Public

Meeting date	Paragraph	Action	Owner	Date completed
9 September 2015	7.1	Circulate Consumer Credit rules to Board members for approval	Dominic Tambling	9 September 2015