

CLASSIFICATION – PUBLIC

SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY
Minutes of the SRA Board meeting
held on 18 January 2017 at 14.00
at The Cube, 199 Wharfside Street, Birmingham, B1 1RN

Present: Enid Rowlands (Chair)
Sharon Darcy
Jane Furniss
David Heath
Paul Marsh
Geoff Nicholls
Barry Matthews
Dame Denise Platt
Chris Randall
Deep Sagar
David Willis

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

1 APOLOGIES

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Julia Black, Shamit Sagar, Elaine Williams, Tony Williams and Jane Malcolm.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 DECEMBER 2016

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2016 were agreed.

3 MATTERS ARISING AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 The Chair reviewed the action log and noted that the Asylum Thematic Report had been shared with the Select Committee on Home Affairs.

3.2 The Chair noted that interests were as previously declared and available to view on the SRA website. Members would declare any particular interest in an individual item if necessary.

3.3 Dame Denise Platt declared an interest in relation to item 7 on the Committee on Standards In Public Life (CSPL) report. She had been a member of the Committee until 2015 and had commented on a draft version of the report. Sharon Darcy declared an interest in item 9 on the Competition and Markets Authority report as she was a Trustee and Council member of Which.

4 CHAIR'S UPDATE

4.1 The Chair reminded Board members that the next meeting on 8 March 2017 would be in Cardiff and that there would be a reception and dinner the evening before.

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4.2 The Chair and CEO had Paul met their counterparts at the LSB on 15 December 2016.

4.3 The Chair congratulated David Heath on his appointment as a Director of the Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust and the Chair of its remuneration committee.

5 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

5.1 Paul Philip introduced his report and drew Board members' attention to paragraph 3 which reported on the publication of the 2016/17 Business Plan. The consultation on the Solicitors Qualifying Examination had closed on 9 January 2017 and the responses were now being analysed.

5.2 Operationally things were progressing well and paragraph 13 included the three new KPIs which the Board had agreed to publish following its review of KPIs the previous year.

6 COMPETITION AND MARKETS AUTHORITY: LEGAL SERVICES MARKET STUDY: FINAL REPORT

6.1 Crispin Passmore said that he had had regular discussions with the Government about the implications of Brexit and the organisation had probably done as much preparation as possible given the information available to it. He had not had the opportunity to consider the Prime Minister's speech on Brexit from the previous day in detail though it did suggest that the Government would be pushing a deregulatory agenda to allow flexibility for business.

6.2 Board members recognised that we were already working on many of the actions recommended by the report though tweaking would be needed in some cases, for example in relation to producing an online register of solicitors.

6.3 In relation to solicitors working in unregulated firms, Board members suggested that a good deal of work needed to be done on what information solicitors themselves provided to consumers on eg insurance given that we would not be able to require the firms to do so.

6.4 Board members asked how the implementation of the report's recommendations, including the requirement to work jointly with the other legal regulators, would be handled. Paul Philip said that there had been a meeting of the CEOs of the legal regulators the previous week and a programme board would meet for the first time the following day. An action plan would be produced by the end of June.

6.5 The Chair thanked Board members for their comments and said that regular updates on progress would be provided.

7 COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE (CSPL) REPORT: STRIKING THE BALANCE: UPHOLDING THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

7.1 Paul Philip said that this item had been included on the agenda to give board members an opportunity to consider and advise on a self-assessment against the statements of best practice within the CSPL report. Dame Denise Platt's interest was noted.

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- 7.2 Board members remarked that the self-assessment would not have been as positive a few years' earlier and noted that the governance review process which was now in place had contributed greatly to that improvement.
- 7.3 Board members agreed that the possibility of regulatory capture was something that needed to be watched closely, especially given the potential for a problem to be perceived even when it did not actually exist.
- 7.4 It was noted that although the statements relating to Ministerial guidance did not currently apply to us having such guidance might well be an important part of the argument underpinning the case for independence.
- 7.5 Board members noted that the seven principles of public life on which the report was based were clearly relevant to senior staff and Board members but that it was less straight forward to explain how they applied to more junior members of staff. The Chair thanked Board members for their contributions. Further work would be done in preparation for a CSPL survey which was expected in March.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 There was no other business.