

SRA BOARD

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**SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY
Minutes of the SRA Board meeting
held on 25 October 2017 at 10.00
at The Cube, 199 Wharfside Street, Birmingham B1 1RN**

Subject to final approval by the SRA Board at its meeting on 6 December 2017

Present: Enid Rowlands (Chair)
Sharon Darcy
Jane Furniss
David Heath
Geoff Nicholas (for items 1 to 9)
Dame Denise Platt
Chris Randall
Deep Sagar
Tony Williams
David Willis

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

1 APOLOGIES

1.1 The Chair welcomed Board members to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Julia Black, Paul Marsh, Barry Matthews, Shamit Saggar, Elaine Williams and Richard Collins.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2017

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2017 were approved as a true and accurate record.

3 MATTERS ARISING AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 The Board reviewed the action log and noted that all actions that were due had been completed with the exception of a revised Governance Handbook having been produced. The Chair said that a new version had been drafted but that this would require further editing if the Law Society Council agreed changes to the General Regulations when it met the following day.

3.2 The Chair declared that she had been appointed a non-executive director of Border to Coast Pension Partnership Ltd which would act as an alternative investment fund manager for a number of local authorities. The Chair noted that a Board Member also had an additional new appointment. New appointments would be added to the Register of Interests. Interests were otherwise as previously declared and available to view on the SRA website. One member reminded the Board of previously declared interests in relation to one agenda item. Members would declare any additional particular interest in an individual item if necessary.

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4 CHAIR'S UPDATE

- 4.1 The Chair reported on recent meetings with the Law Society and the Business and Oversight Board. She thanked Board members for their support at the major party conferences and other events. The Chair also noted that the annual Compliance Conference would take place the following week and that several Board members were attending.
- 4.2 The Chair updated the Board on the recruitment of three new Board members. Shortlisting had been carried out the previous day and interviews would take place in mid November.

5 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

- 5.1 The Chief Executive Officer, introduced his report (link).
- 5.2 The CEO covered a number of issues, for decision and noting. These included proposed changes to the General Regulations, which the Law Society Council was discussing the following day, an update on the Practising Certificate Renewal Exercise and a progress report on Modernising IT programme.

6 SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP ON PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FINAL REPORT

- 6.1 The Board was asked to consider future actions proposed by the Short Life Working Group on Public Engagement (SLWGPE) which had been considering how we could further improve our work.
- 6.2 Board members discussed the proposed actions and noted that the Modernising IT Programme would bring about improvements in accessibility, for instance through a better designed website. It was particularly important to ensure that vulnerable groups were reached through working with intermediaries.
- 6.3 The Board agreed the future actions recommended by the SLWGPE, including building on the success of existing virtual reference groups and working towards a public engagement charter.

7 RESPONSE TO THE CORPORATE STRATEGY 2017-20 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Board was asked to consider the responses to a consultation on the draft Corporate Strategy for 2017-20. This was the first time that the SRA had consulted on its Corporate Strategy and the response document summarised the key points and themes from the responses.
- 7.2 Board members noted that a number of amendments had been made to the Strategy following the consultation. It was also noted that engagement through the consultation had been very useful and that it would be important to engage further with some of the respondents. Board members also underlined the need to

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evaluate the effects of regulatory changes and to be clear that that was a priority for the SRA.

- 7.3 The Board agreed the response to the consultation on the draft Corporate Strategy subject to some small amendments which, along with the Strategy itself, would be published in November.

8 SRA BUSINESS PLAN 2017/18 AND SRA BUDGET 2017/18

- 8.1 The Board agreed the budget and emerging Business Plan for 2017/18. The Business Plan set out activity designed to deliver the aims of the Corporate Strategy in that year. The Board agreed that it was a living document and would inevitably evolve during the year. It would be published in November.

9 RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON SOLICITORS QUALIFYING EXAMINATION (SQE) REGULATIONS AND PRINCIPLES FOR QUALIFIED LAWYERS

- 9.1 The Board was asked to consider the responses received to the third consultation on the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE). The consultation had sought views on proposed regulations for the introduction of the SQE and proposals for recognition of qualified lawyers.
- 9.2 Board members discussed the responses to the proposals and asked for some specific issues to be refined and for further information to be circulated.
- 9.3 Subject to these amendments the Board agreed the response to the consultation on SQE regulations and the process for recognition of qualified lawyers for publication in November.

10 OUR APPROACH TO WAIVERS AND THE INNOVATION SPACE

- 10.1 The Board was asked to agree a response to the consultation on a new approach to making and publishing waivers decisions and on formalisation of the SRA's Innovation Space.
- 10.2 Board members noted the need to ensure that the explanations for why appeals to waiver decisions would not be allowed was clear. They also underlined the need for the Innovation Space to be accessible to all.
- 10.3 The Board agreed that the new waivers decision making guidance, which would introduce a single set of decision making criteria and commit to publishing waiver decisions, should be published in the coming weeks. The Board also agreed criteria for assessing applications for delivering legal services in the Innovation Space.

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11 REVIEW OF MEETING AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 11.1 The Board received an update from committee chairs in relation to committee meetings that had taken place since the last Board meeting.
- 11.2 One Board member asked about action following a case in which the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal had advised the SRA to review its guidance to solicitors on sexual relations with clients. The case related to matters of conflict where a sexual relationship had taken place. It was confirmed that a review of the guidance was underway and that this would include decision trees and case studies.
- 11.3 The Chair reviewed the meeting and thanked Board members for their contributions.
- 11.4 The next meeting of the Board would be on Wednesday 6 December 2017 October 2017 at The Grange Holborn Hotel, 50-60 Southampton Row, London WC1B 3AR at 10.00.