

Ian Bond

Solicitor

133103

Agreement Date: 31 March 2022

Decision - Agreement

Outcome: Regulatory settlement agreement

Outcome date: 31 March 2022

Published date: 6 April 2022

Firm details

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

Name: Bond Joseph

Address(es): 65 Burgate, Canterbury, CT1 2HJ

Firm ID: 261587

Outcome details

This outcome was reached by agreement.

Decision details

1. Agreed outcome

1.1 Mr Ian Robertson Bond, a solicitor and sole practitioner of Bond Joseph (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 £600.

Reasons/basis

2. Summary of Facts

2.1 Mr Bond was admitted on 1 March 1986. He set up sole practice of Bond Joseph on 12 February 1997.

2.2 In July 2019 a client instructed the firm to represent them. In November 2019 the client raised a number of complaints with the firm.

2.3 On 31 December 2019 Mr Bond sent a letter signed by him to the client which provided an offer to settle the client's complaints. The letter detailed the offer but stated that it would be subject to a number of conditions. One of these conditions was that the client would not pursue a complaint to any regulatory body.

2.4 The client's complaint was not settled and in July 2020 the firm's insurers instructed an independent law firm to respond to the client in relation to their complaints. Instructions were given by Mr Bond to the independent law firm to write to the client on 23 November 2020 with another offer which included a condition that the client would not pursue a complaint to any regulatory body.

2.5 Mr Bond accepts that he should not have made any attempt to prevent the client from making complaints to a regulatory body.

3. *Admissions*

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

- a. That by attempting on two separate occasions to insert terms into an offer to the client that prevented them from pursuing a complaint about the firm to a regulatory body, he breached Rule 7.5 of the SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs ("the Code")

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 Bond and the following mitigation which he has put forward:

- a. Mr Bond accepts that he should not have offered to settle the client's complaints on the condition that he should not pursue complaints with any regulatory body
- b. Mr Bond accepts that he should have reflected further before signing and sending the letter to the client and giving instructions to the independent law firm
- c. Mr Bond did not intend to prevent the client from providing information to bodies exercising regulatory functions in the public interest
- d. Mr Bond apologises for including the offending term in his correspondence with the client.

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

- a. Mr Bond is a senior solicitor and is a sole practitioner in charge of his own firm, and so he should be held to the highest standards
- b. Some public sanction is required to uphold public confidence in the delivery of legal services
- c. The breach admitted by Mr Bond demonstrates his repeated conduct and this therefore occurred longer than is reasonable
- d. There is a low risk of repetition
- e. The offer was not accepted by the client and therefore there was no lasting significant harm.

Other information

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 Bond agrees to the publication of this agreement.

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

6.1 Mr Bond 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 Bond denies the admissions above 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 of the Principles and paragraph 7.3 of the Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs.

7. Costs

7.1 Mr Bond agrees to pay the costs of the SRA's investigation in the sum of £600. Such costs are due within 28 days of a statement of costs due being issued by the SRA.