

News from the Board

Reflections on our October Board meeting in Birmingham

24 October 2022

Our Board met this week in our home city - Birmingham - and we had the pleasure of meeting with a wide variety of our stakeholders from the West Midlands at a reception and dinner.

A significant theme was how the cost-of-living crisis is affecting advisory service clients and what law firms could do to help. On the one hand we heard how important it was for many young lawyers to be able to give something back and on the other hand, how great the need is for such services.

The Solicitors Qualifying Examination provides the opportunity for this kind of initiative to count towards qualifying work experience. So making sure everyone understands this and bringing third sector advisory services and young lawyers together could deliver a real win.

Good food for thought as the Board discussed our 2023-2026 corporate strategy the following day. We started by considering how our strategy aligns with the objectives set out in the Legal Services Act and how we can help to drive high quality, modern and accessible legal services.

The Board is ambitious and the strategy will reflect this but delivery needs to be focused. The need to prioritise was something we also had firmly in mind as we discussed our policy work for the year to come.

A growing part of our work is tackling money laundering so we ran a 'deep dive' into that area. This is a rapidly developing area, not least as a consequence of the war in Ukraine, with national policy developments having a significant impact on our work. We discussed the government's approach and affirmed our commitment to playing our part in shaping the future landscape.

Finally, we covered emerging thinking around publishing regulatory decisions. We've recently consulted on how we do this and Board welcomed the opportunity to hear the feedback.

We concluded our day with a formal meeting in which we considered rule changes on health and well-being after the spring consultation. These are complex areas and the Board listened carefully to feedback from the sector.

We agreed that we wanted to make sure that the combination of rules and guidance really helps the profession. We were minded to make the new

rules relating to unfair treatment of colleagues - having taken on board some of the views expressed in the consultation - subject to being content with the accompanying guidance. We went on to agree the rules in relation to solicitors' health and fitness to practise and we will be publishing the consultation feedback and our responses in due course.

Altogether a really productive set of discussions informed by local insights. Next year will see us going to Leeds and Newcastle. I look forward to the insights that they will also give us.