

News from the Board

Reflections on our October Board meeting - Anna Bradley

25 October 2021

Since lockdown last year I have really missed the opportunity to get away from the screen and talk to people face to face. Technology is hugely useful of course, but there really is no substitute for the 'in real life' conversations about what's happening in the legal sector and beyond.

So I was delighted that this month we were able to take our Board to Manchester to do just that. In addition to an insightful session with members of Manchester Law Society, we met with around 30 North West organisations – from local charities to legal innovators, universities to local authority solicitors. We had some fascinating discussions, ranging from the challenges of recruitment in some public-facing legal services, to how consumer charities are using legal technology. Thank you to everyone who took time to come and talk to us.

It was the perfect context-setter for a Board workshop on our strategy the next day. We had a wide-ranging discussion looking at how things were progressing one year into our three-year corporate strategy, and what issues may be coming over the horizon. That includes considering issues that are not just specific to legal services. For instance, climate change or the potential for steep increases in living costs having knock on effects for the sector, and how we need to regulate.

We also talked about how we work with our stakeholders and evaluating our communication work. In particular we discussed some of the areas we want to say more about – for example our focus on high professional standards, our research and the contribution it can make to a better understanding of the sector, and our commitment to openness and transparency, including on where we need to do better.

Solicitors Indemnity Fund

We only had one item for decision on the Board formal meeting agenda, but it was an important one – options for the future of post six-year run-off cover and the Solicitors Indemnity Fund.

This is an emotive issue but not a simple one, and that is reflected in the fact this was our Board's sixth discussion on the issues since the start of 2020. In that time, we continued to engage extensively with stakeholders, including solicitors, local law societies, other representative groups, the insurance sector, government and other regulators. We have also set up a diverse, 29-strong virtual reference group, which has met twice now and will continue to do so.

We explored all the options in our Board meeting, looking carefully at the financial implications. We are planning to move to formal consultation on the next steps, providing the background information and evidence that we have worked with key partners and stakeholders to gather. I anticipate that will be in early November and will take us through into January 2022, ahead of making our final decisions in February.

As ever, I urge all those with an interest to get involved, read the consultation and have your say at the events we are planning.