

Sent by email

Ed Nally
Chair
Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal
5th Floor, Gate House
1 Farringdon Street
London EC4M 7LG



Legal Services Board
3rd Floor, The Rookery
2 Dyott Street
London
WC1A 1DE

T 020 7271 0050

www.legalservicesboard.org.uk

29 October 2021

Dear Ed

SDT Budget 2022

Following our Board meeting on 26 October 2021, I am writing to confirm the LSB's approval of the SDT's operating budget of £3,156,354 for the calendar year 2022.

I am grateful to SDT colleagues for making the time to attend the challenge panel, which took place on 06 October. This was the second year of using such a challenge panel as part of the process to allow more detailed scrutiny of the application and discussion of current issues than would ordinarily be possible during a regular LSB Board meeting. We intend to repeat this process again next year.

In last year's decision letter, the Board identified a need to focus on equality, diversity and inclusion, measuring user satisfaction and reducing costs per court. The Board recognised that progress has been made in the first two of these areas. However, the SDT has been unable to achieve a reduction in cost per court. We note that the SDT has again overestimated by some margin its required sitting days. While I appreciate you are to a large extent dependent on the SRA for your numbers, this overestimation appears to be settling into a longer-term trend, which my Board would like to see addressed, for example through changes to your model and/or improved co-ordination with the SRA, a point we have made previously. As you know, the Board has for some time been exploring mechanisms for gaining better assurance of the quality and operation of end-to-end compliance and enforcement processes, and I am sure that early investment in improved co-ordination would put the SDT in an advantageous position as and when the Board's plans materialise.

While acknowledging the unique circumstances facing the SDT due to the pandemic, the Board reiterated its wish to see a downward trajectory in the cost per court. As part of this, we will wish to monitor the courtroom utilisation rate.

Finally, I would like to recognise how the Tribunal has continued to respond to the challenges posed by Covid-19 restrictions by offering virtual and hybrid hearings alongside in-person hearings as appropriate. This has helped to minimise delay in cases coming before the Tribunal, which has been important in maintaining public confidence in the disciplinary system for solicitors.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Helen Phillips', written in a cursive style.

Dr Helen Phillips
Chair

cc: Geraldine Newbold, Clerk and Chief Executive Officer of the SDT