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Dear Paul

Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry

The LSB Board continues to take a close interest in the ongoing Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry (Post Office Inquiry). As hearings resume this week as part of phase 5 and 6 of the Inquiry, I am writing to convey the LSB's views on next steps.

As you are aware, the LSB has long been concerned to ensure that the collective response from legal services regulators to the Post Office Horizon scandal helps to build public confidence in the regulation of the legal profession and in the rule of law. We have been in regular contact with both the SRA and BSB on this issue since November 2021, when the role of legal professionals in the Post Office Horizon scandal emerged as an area of increasing concern, in order to receive assurance about the steps you are taking.

We note that both the BSB and SRA are aligned with the Post Office Inquiry as core participants, albeit in different ways regarding accessing and using information, and we are assured that you are following proceedings closely. The LSB recognises the need for proper consideration of the evidence, both from the Inquiry and that gathered from your own information gathering powers, but it is equally concerned to ensure that regulators are seen to be moving at pace, should the evidence justify regulatory action.

We are pleased to note that you have both published statements in January of this year, setting out your respective approaches so that the profession and the wider public can be assured that investigations are underway. It is crucial that the public, in particular, should feel assured that regulators can and will take action where there is evidence of misconduct by legal professionals. While the LSB Board recognises that these are currently matters for the SRA and BSB, it wanted me to emphasise that

there will be a high expectation of regulatory action in light of the nature and detail of the evidence heard by the Inquiry on how barristers and solicitors have conducted themselves.

I am grateful for the regular working-level updates that your teams have provided to the LSB since January and we anticipate these continuing for the foreseeable future, and at least until the Inquiry reports. In the meantime, we will continue to progress our broader policy work regarding professional ethics and the rule of law, the importance of which is underscored by the evidence heard by the Inquiry and the wider cultural issues that it raises for the profession as a whole.

I have also written to Mark Neale at the BSB on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Orpin', written in a cursive style.

Richard Orpin
Interim CEO