



**Meeting:** Legal Services Board  
**Date:** 29 April 2025  
**Item:** Paper (25)16  
**Title:** CEO's Progress Report  
**Author:** Craig Westwood – CEO  
**Status:** Official

### **Introduction: Purpose of the paper/ Issue**

1. This paper updates Board Members on key developments across the organisation since the Board's last meeting on 25 March 2025.

### **Recommendation**

2. The Board is invited to **note** this report.

### **Appointment matters**

#### LSB Board

3. We are awaiting confirmation of a formal appointment of an interim Chair of the LSB by the Lord Chancellor. Catherine Brown, as Senior Independent Director, continues to act as Interim Chair.
4. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has started on the recruitment process for a new permanent Chair, which is expected to take 9-12 months. LSB will feed into and support with this work.
5. A case has been raised to the Lord Chancellor recommending the re-appointment of a non-lay member of the Board.

#### Office for Legal Complaints (OLC) and Legal Services Consumer Panel (LSCP)

6. The Board approved the recommendation of the re-appointment of a lay member of the Office for Legal Complaints.
7. The recruitment of a new Chair of the OLC is expected to be launched at the beginning of May 2025, ahead of the end of the current OLC Chair's term at the end of March 2026. The appointment process for this role includes formal engagement with both No.10 and the Justice Select Committee.

8. WIG Talent has started work on the search for three new members of the LSCP to take up post in April 2026. Recruitment will begin in early summer.

### **Colleague and organisational matters**

9. Following interviews in early April, we have made an appointment to the role of Director, Corporate Services, with the new appointee expected to start in May.
10. We have recruited a part time Finance Manager to replace the outgoing Finance Manager, with the new person starting in June.
11. We will shortly be recruiting for a Regulatory Policy Manager to replace an employee who left the LSB last month and for a 0.6FTE Regulatory Policy Associate for the Statutory Decision Team.
12. With the lease at the Rookery due to expire on 3 September, our plans remain to vacate the space by the 31 July 2025. Two visits to Redman Place in Stratford have taken place, to allow colleagues to see the potential new office, and a colleague survey has been issued to gather views about the office move. These will inform the developing business case for SLT discussion, and a Board decision in May. In the meantime, implementation of plans to exit the Rookery are underway.

### **Governance**

#### *Office for Legal Complaints (OLC)*

13. Since the March Board, the OLC provided a further commitment to increasing transparency of decisions, with an outline of its planned initiatives in 2025/26 to deliver changes from 2026/27 onwards by utilising the core staffing increase portion of the budget that the LSB has approved. The LSB Chair has now written to the OLC providing confirmation of which elements of their budget the LSB has approved, those elements not approved and our expectations for the year ahead (letter attached).
14. The LSB is working with the OLC and LeO to agree how progress on the commitment made at the March Board to publish 50+ public interest decisions will be monitored via the strategic scorecard and quarterly VAR letter, as well as how to refine the approach to the Budget Acceptance Criteria to make it more targeted.
15. LeO is devising a model complaints handling process to support the implementation of the LSBs First Tier Complaints Policy statement and guidance. It plans to consult on the proposals in summer with a view to publishing the MCHP in 2026/27.
16. The Chief Ombudsman will be leaving LeO this autumn to take up a new role as the next Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. OLC will recruit an interim Chief Ombudsman, as the OLC Chair's second term is due to end in March.

17. We have received LeO's high-level process plan for implementing changes to its case fee this business year and will be working closely with the LeO team to ensure we are aligned on points of process and approval mechanisms.

#### *Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal*

18. We continue to carry out our duty to consider and approve the SDT budget and met with the SDT in February to discuss suggestions on improving reporting of financial information ahead of their budget submission later this year, as noted in our decision letter of October 2024.
19. The SDT continues work on a range of reforms to improve its efficiency and effectiveness, whilst working through a significant increase in overall caseloads, including changes to their standard directions (to enhance the efficiency of hearing scheduling and further improve the cost per court) and issuing summary judgements (before the full/more detailed judgement
20. Despite the significant increase in caseload, we note that the SDT Key Performance Metrics (KPM) report for 2024, published in March 2025, shows that performance levels have generally been maintained; proceedings have been issued in a timely way; the average cost per court has decreased; and the SDT has improved the diversity of its staff team. The SDT recently announced that its Chief Clerk and Chief Executive Officer has stepped down. We will discuss succession plans with the SDT at our next meeting in May and understand that for now the Head of Operations and Interim Chief Clerk will continue to manage the SDT.

### **Legal**

#### *Post Office*

21. Regular meetings with the enforcement and policy teams of both the SRA and the BSB are continuing.

#### *SLAPPs*

22. A meeting was held with the SRA to explore the perceived barriers it is facing in prosecuting SLAPPs cases. The LSB and SRA have agreed to continuing discussions as more cases progress. A note of the meeting will be shared with the Board.

### **Regulatory Developments**

#### *Research*

23. The Prices Survey report is now complete and will be published by early summer. Executive colleagues are considering the policy implications of its findings.
24. Work to profile potential participants for our Public Panel by linking data from the most recent LSCP Tracker Survey is nearly complete. Once this is complete, approved regulators and regulatory bodies will be able to access the Panel for

their research, if appropriate. We will work with the external contractor to raise the awareness of this opportunity.

### *Statutory Decisions*

25. Since the last update, we have issued one Exemption Direction. This was a request for exemption from the SRA for minor alterations to the SRA Application, Notice, Review and Appeal Rules to correct an inconsistency between these regulatory arrangements and the Solicitors Act 1974.

### *Access to justice*

26. We continue to refine the scope and approach of the access to justice project and the specific actions the LSB may take to reduce unmet legal need amongst those who rely on low-cost or free legal advice.
27. The LSCP hosted a formal launch for Nottingham Trent University's research report into regulatory approaches to Access to Justice on 1 April. The LSB CEO provided closing remarks at the end, emphasising the importance of action from regulators, and noting that the LSB is considering the use of sandboxes to identify innovative approaches to address access to justice challenges is a potential option.

### *Consumer Protection*

28. We continue to scope our forthcoming policy work on consumer protection, with a particular focus on inter-dependencies with other work on access to justice and technology and innovation. We are developing a project initiation document and specification for research which we expect to be in place by the autumn. Our vision for this work is that the LSB's regulatory oversight approach makes sure that consumers are protected from emerging risks arising from market changes while enabling technological innovation to thrive for the benefit of consumers.

### *Professional Ethics and Rule of Law*

29. Our consultation runs to 29 May, supported by a communications and engagement strategy. Coverage and stakeholder reaction has been positive. We have scheduled a meeting of the PERL reference group on 7 May to discuss the consultation and maintain momentum across the sector. We have invited the Chief Executive of the Institute of Business Ethics (IBE) to speak on the role of leadership, corporate governance and business culture in supporting and enabling lawyers to uphold professional ethical conduct
30. We attended the IBE Ethics Taskforce's launch of its report on Kleptocracy, State Capture and Grand Corruption on 2 April which was well attended by stakeholders including some from our PERL Reference Group. The report makes a series of recommendations to law firms, including greater governance transparency and a "legitimate provenance of wealth test" which requires explanations for clients' wealth and addresses gaps in current AML frameworks. We will consider the recommendations within the wider context of our PERL programme, including our post consultation policy proposals.

31. We have responded to the House of Lords Constitution Committee's call for evidence as part of its inquiry into the rule of law. The inquiry is seeking to understand the rule of law as a constitutional principle and practical matter, and the state of the rule of law in the UK. The Committee consideration will include the role of education, the media and civic society in creating and maintaining a culture that values the rule of law.

#### *Disciplinary and Enforcement*

32. We completed our stakeholder engagement and information gathering on each of the regulators' disciplinary and enforcement frameworks last year. We have used the information gathered from stakeholder engagement and our own desk research to consider and refine our approach to our proposed disciplinary and enforcement principles for the regulators and preferred policy options. Through our own fact finding and stakeholder engagement, we have identified common issues related to transparency and timeliness that could be improved to provide better outcomes for the public, consumers and legal professionals.
33. There are several interdependencies with other projects, including the review into CLC's disciplinary framework, and we need to ensure our policy development takes account of these. We therefore intend to bring proposals to the Board in the autumn, ahead of a public consultation on our preferred policy option shortly thereafter.

#### Regulatory Performance

##### *Regulatory Performance Update*

34. The Regulatory Performance Assessment for 2024/25 was published on 31 March. The SRA and BSB both received ratings of "insufficient assurance" against at least one standard and we are taking action to address the concerns identified for both these regulators. In addition, we will follow up specific concerns identified about other regulators' performance through our established relationship management approach and other means as appropriate. The Regulatory Performance Assessment also identified some thematic issues on which we will focus in the coming year.

#### *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

35. On 21 March, we attended the Judicial Diversity Forum (JDF) officials meeting alongside colleagues from the Judicial Appointments Commission, Judicial Office, Ministry of Justice, and representative bodies. We explored in discussion with JDF partners collective steps to support the Forum to enhance its strategic approach to actions and how to advance collaboration across the Forum. This is an ongoing discussion, and the LSB remains committed to using its own levers and legal services regulation, where appropriate, to achieve the wider outcomes of the Forum.
36. We are currently planning pre-consultation engagement workshops in May to discuss our developing policy proposals with key stakeholders, including regulatory bodies, representative bodies, leading sector experts in EDI, as well

as professional interest groups. These will be vital to informing our approach before we undertake formal consultation later this year. The workshops are planned for 13 and 22 May.

### *Economic Crime*

37. HMT is expected to announce the outcome of its review of AML Supervision in the coming months. Potential developments regarding the regime may impact regulators as well as the LSB's work related to economic crime in the future. We are due to meet HMT shortly to discuss this issue.

### *Curating the Strategy*

38. We have been engaging with academics from the University of Bristol on their research about sexual misconduct in the legal profession. They have written a blog on the microsite about their "Powerful perpetrators" project, which looks at how professional employers, bodies and regulators understand and respond to the perpetration of sexual misconduct and abuse and invites submissions of evidence.

### Communications and Engagement

#### *All chairs meeting*

39. On 2 April 2025, the interim chair met with representatives of the approved regulators and regulatory bodies. The agenda focused on areas of mutual strategic importance, including professional ethics and the rule of law, encouraging sector growth, and horizon scanning and market intelligence. Attendees noted the importance of developing their collective understanding of the barriers to growth in the legal services sector, as well as initiatives designed to stimulate growth. The LSB is coordinating views from the approved regulators and regulatory bodies that will inform ongoing discussions with government.

#### *Board stakeholder engagement 2025*

40. Work is underway for the Manchester Board engagement event on 26 June. Law firm Fieldfisher will host an event in the late afternoon for the Board to meet regional stakeholders. A meeting has been confirmed with the Justice Hub in Manchester. We are looking for other local engagement opportunities. All Board members are invited to attend.
41. We have confirmed Clifford Chance as the host for the London board meeting and stakeholder engagement event on 16 September 2025.

#### *External events*

42. On 1 April we attended the launch of Nottingham Trent University's Regulatory Leadership on Access to Justice Report hosted by the Legal Services Consumer Panel.
43. On 3 April, Westminster Legal Policy Forum held an event on professional ethics, at which both the Chief Executive and Director, Regulation and Policy,

spoke. This was an excellent opportunity to go into the details of our consultation with an informed audience and led to positive media coverage.

### *Business plan*

44. On 17 April we published the LSB Business Plan 2025/26.

### *Meeting Schedule*

The following senior-level meetings took place 11 March – 14 April 2025.

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Meeting</b>                             | <b>LSB</b> |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------|------------|
| 13 March    | Solicitors Regulation Authority            | CEO        |
| 18 March    | Legal Utopia                               | CEO        |
| 21 March    | Judicial Diversity Forum officials meeting | CEO        |
| 26 March    | Bar Standards Board                        | Chair, CEO |
| 27 March    | Institute of Regulation conference         | CEO        |
| 31 March    | Solicitors Regulation Authority            | Chair, CEO |
| 2 April     | All Chairs meeting                         | Chair, CEO |
| 4 April     | MoJ Director, quarterly meeting            | CEO        |

### **Annexes**

Annex A - 28.01.25 - CW letter to OLC (budget confirmation)

Annex B – 14.04.2025 - VA letter from MN to CW

| <b>Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Fol)</b> |                                  |                |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Para ref</b>                              | <b>Fol exemption and summary</b> | <b>Expires</b> |
| N/A                                          | None                             | N/A            |