

**Meeting:** Legal Services Board

**Date:** 24 March 2026 Paper

**Item:** (26) 65

**Title:** CEO's Progress Report

**Author:** Richard Orpin – CEO

**Status:** Official

### **Purpose of the paper**

1. This paper updates Board Members on key developments across the organisation since the Board's last meeting on 24 February 2026.

### **Recommendation**

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

### **Appointment matters**

#### LSB Board

3. Minister Sackman, on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister/Lord Chancellor has confirmed the preferred candidate for LSB's new Chair is Monisha Shah. The executive is supporting the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in preparing Monisha for the pre-appointment scrutiny hearing before the Justice Select Committee. The hearing is expected to take place on 25 March 2026. An induction plan is being prepared ahead of the new Chair's arrival in April 2026, including meetings with stakeholders across the legal services sector.
4. MoJ is planning to recruit three lay members to the LSB Board. This is to address the current vacancy from Kate Briscoe's resignation in September 2025, an upcoming vacancy in April 2027 when Catherine Brown's second term ends, and a further existing vacancy that the MoJ has decided to fill with a lay appointment. MoJ will also recruit for one non-lay member following the resignation of Flora Page. The executive is supporting with these campaigns. We expect interviews to occur by early summer, with the successful candidates joining the Board from the Autumn onwards.

### Office for Legal Complaints (OLC)

5. LSB's recommended candidate, Richard Blakeway, for the Chair of the Office of Legal Complaints (OLC) attended his pre-appointment hearing with Justice Select Committee on the 11 March 2026 and the appointment was approved. Richard will start as OLC Chair from 1 April 2026.
6. Work is starting on the recruitment campaign for a new non-lay vacancy for the OLC Board. A member of LSB's Board will be asked to lead the recruitment panel, with support from the Chair of OLC and an independent panel member.

### **Colleague and organisational matters**

7. We are progressing the permanent appointment of the Director of Policy and Strategy position. LSB Board members Lizzie Peers and Christine Nwaokolo will join me on the recruiting panel. The closing date for applications is 8 April and the interviews are scheduled for 7 May 2026.
8. Work is underway on the People Plan, to bring together and enhance activity to support the organisation under the strategic priorities of leadership, inclusion, growth and ways of working.

### **Governance**

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

9. The OLC / LeO's budget proposals for 2026/27 along with plans for review and transformation of the LeO scheme are the subject of a dedicated Board paper.

### **Regulatory Developments**

#### *Research*

10. Fieldwork for the Small Business Legal Needs Survey has now reached over 6,600 of the total 10,000 responses to be collected.
11. The Law Society have published an individual legal needs report for Wales. This was enabled by the additional responses from people in Wales that we funded.

#### *Statutory Decisions*

12. Since the last update, we have approved the practising certificate fee (PCF) application from the General Council of the Bar which proposes a 4% increase for individual barristers and 3.8% for firms.
13. We are currently considering two requests for exemptions from the Faculty Office for changes underpinning its conduct and disciplinary rules for notaries. The first relates to the costs payable to adjudicators and prosecutors working as part of the Faculty Office's disciplinary arrangements and the second introduces Sanctions Guidance to support consistency of outcomes in the Faculty Office's disciplinary arrangements.

### *Mazur – Conduct of Litigation*

14. The Court of Appeal hearing was held between 23-26 February 2026. The judgment was reserved and is expected in one to three months' time from the date of the hearing. The final report from our review of the advice and guidance that regulators have given to the profession on the conduct of litigation will be informed by the Court of Appeal decision. This will mean that the report is published later than March 2026, which was the anticipated publication date set out in the scope of the review.
15. We continue to monitor the steps we and the regulators have taken to ensure that these are proportionate to the impact of the Mazur judgment. We are monitoring the data and evidence – both within legal services and beyond – in case other risks emerge.

### *Access to Justice*

16. On 9 March we submitted a response to the government's consultation on introducing an Interest on Lawyers' Trust Account Scheme (ILCA). Under the government's proposal, a proportion of the interest earned on lawyers' client accounts in England and Wales, including Third Party Managed Accounts, would be remitted to government for use in general departmental priorities. Our response encourages government to ensure benefits for legal services consumers and minimise disproportionate administrative burdens for legal services providers.

### *Consumer Protection*

17. We have developed analysis of the different litigation funding streams to consider whether there are policy and regulatory gaps. We are exploring with the SRA whether the findings from their High Volume Consumer Claims (HVCC) work surface any risks regarding litigation funding and increased consumer harms. The work will build on the recommendations from the Civil Justice Council's review and the government announcement to introduce proportionate regulation of litigation funding agreements.
18. We continue to progress our research project examining the opportunities and risks consumers face when using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and online legal tools. The outcomes from this research should be published by April 2026. This will inform the scope of our consumer protection project in respect of unregulated legal services to ensure the right balance between access to justice and consumer protection.

### *Professional Ethics and Rule of Law*

19. At its meeting of 24 February 2026, the Board discussed the consultation outputs and gave its approval to the final policy statement. The project team is now finalising materials ahead of publication at the end of March.

### *Public Bodies Review*

20. The Public Bodies Review (PBR) of the LSB, and accompanying Call for Evidence, were announced on 10 February 2026. The stakeholder engagement phase of the PBR has now begun and evidence submitted via the wider Call for Evidence (which closed on 10 March) will be reviewed by the MoJ review team in due course. We continue to engage with the Lead Reviewer, Richard Lloyd, and MoJ to support the PBR.

## Regulatory Performance

### *Review of Oversight*

21. Following the Board's agreement of the revised approach to Oversight, we will now move towards implementation, beginning with discussions with the regulators. We are in the process of finalising the implementation plan, after which we will hold briefing sessions for regulators.

### *Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal*

22. We met the SDT on 26 February to discuss its observations on the High Court ruling which overturned the SDT decision in the Hurst v SRA case. The case centred on the intended effect of using 'Confidential and without prejudice' in correspondence, which the SRA had judged constituted a strategic lawsuit against public participation (SLAPP) and referred the case to the SDT. In its decision, the SDT dismissed the notion that Mr Hurst had attempted a 'SLAPP' but nonetheless found that the action amounted to misconduct. The High Court judgement found that the decision of the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT) was "insufficiently analysed and reasoned, vitiated by misdirection and error of law, and unfair". The SDT noted that it is committed to learning from this case. We discussed quality assurance measures that were already in development and have been put in place and the wider learnings that could be drawn from the experience and criticism in the High Court decision.
23. We requested that the SDT conduct a formal lessons learned exercise and that it provides a report setting out its findings, outcomes and any recommended actions. We have asked that this review is completed by the end of April 2026.

### *Regulatory Performance Update*

24. The next meeting to monitor the BSB's progress against the Voluntary Undertakings will take place in mid April.
25. We held the third progress meeting with the SRA on 9 March 2026. The progress report will be published on our website when we have concluded the review of the evidence provided.
26. We held a Board-to-Board meeting with the SRA on 9 March 2026. We discussed the SRA's regulatory performance in the context of the LSB's enforcement action; its intervention into PM Law and related matters; and high volume consumer claims. A further meeting will be arranged shortly.

### *Enforcement action against the SRA*

27. Following the Board's decisions at the February Board in relation to enforcement action against SRA in respect of SSB, we have [published](#) the censure and directions to set performance targets and the SRA has also published its performance targets as required. These can be found on its website [here](#).

#### *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

28. Our consultation on proposals to encourage a diverse legal profession closed on March. We are currently analysing responses, after which we will develop next steps for our policy in this area. We intend to seek input from the Board later in 2026 following analysis and any further required engagement with respondents and wider external stakeholders.

#### *Economic Crime/AML*

29. We continue to engage with relevant stakeholders and expect to begin a dialogue imminently with the FCA about its plans for implementation of the new approach.

#### *Strategy, Business Plan & Budget*

30. We have made some changes to our draft Business Plan following feedback on the consultation. The final Business Plan is on the agenda for this meeting of Board and, subject to approval, will be published alongside our Consultation Response Document in mid-April.
31. We responded on 29 January to an invitation from the House of Lords Regulators and Industry Committee to give evidence to the committee's inquiry on regulators and growth. Our evidence was published by the committee and is available on our website.

#### Communications and Engagement

##### *Regional stakeholder engagement events in 2026*

32. Board Members and colleagues will meet stakeholders in Wales on 23 April 2026 as part of our ongoing programme of engagement events. So far, meetings have been arranged with Citizens Advice and Swansea Law Clinic. We are also collaborating with Legal News Wales on a roundtable event. This will be an opportunity to update stakeholders in Wales on our work. It will also serve as a listening event and help us understand the opportunities and challenges facing the legal services sector in Wales, and as we develop a three-year business plan focused on where regulation has the greatest impact.

##### *LegalEx London 2026*

33. I [spoke at LegalEx](#) on 25 February 2026. The speech was focused on ensuring consumers are protected in an AI-enabled world. I expressed the view that we would consider the evidence as to whether to use powers in the Act to introduce voluntary standards for unregulated legal tech providers; and I acknowledged that the case for a review of the reserved legal activities was growing. The speech was well-received and generated positive engagement from delegates. It has

subsequently received coverage in the legal press. We also exhibited at the event.

### *International Conference of Legal Regulators 2026*

34. The conference is being planned for September 2026 in the UK. We are working with the organisers to provide support. We will encourage the regulators to participate too and collaborate to explore how regulation can encourage an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession, promote competition and bolster the UK's international reputation as a leading legal hub

### *Meeting Schedule*

35. The following senior-level meetings took place between 13 February 2026 and 10 March 2026.

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Meeting</b>                                    | <b>LSB</b>                                      |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 17 Feb 26   | LSB/SRA 4Way meeting                              | Interim Chair, CEO                              |
| 17 Feb 26   | Commissioner for Conduct, Bar Council             | CEO                                             |
| 18 Feb 26   | LSB/TLS Board to Board                            | Interim Chair, CEO                              |
| 19 Feb 26   | LSB/Bar Council CEO meeting                       | CEO                                             |
| 24 Feb 26   | The Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys Event | CEO                                             |
| 25 Feb 26   | LegalEx (keynote speaker)                         | CEO                                             |
| 26 Feb 26   | Chief Clerk, SDT                                  | CEO                                             |
| 9 Mar 26    | LSB/SRA Board to Board                            | Interim Chair, CEO, and other LSB Board members |

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