



Law Society Council meeting summary: 14 September 2017

Council report

Council met for the first meeting of the new 2017-18 'season', with a full agenda, led by Joe Egan as President. Joe took the opportunity to welcome 16 new members to Council. You can find the full list of Council members here: <http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/about-us/our-council/council-constituencies/>.

Changes to governance for 2018

As noted in July's update, the agreed changes to Law Society governance are moving towards implementation in early 2018, and further work has been going on to agree the nomenclature for the new structure, including that the 'main board' should be known simply as the Board; and to agree the composition and terms of reference of the Board's two supporting committees (the Policy and Regulation Committee and the Membership and Operations Committee). The role of Board Chair is now being advertised. Work is also continuing on the shape and composition of Council itself with a view to bringing forward proposals later this year.

Law Society – culture and business planning

Following discussions at Council in July, there were further discussions at the September meeting, focusing on the development of a common understanding about why culture is important and how our behaviour impacts on shaping our culture, and on the development of a culture code for the organisation building on the pride and passion of Council, boards, members, and staff. The Society is also working on the business planning process, the outputs from which will come formally to Council in October, focused on the objectives of promoting the profession, attaining influence and impact, developing the membership offer, and securing an efficient and effective business.

Brexit action

Council heard reports of the hard work the Society has been doing to help government and promote the interests of the profession and the public as negotiations continue. The Society has five key priorities: continued mutual access for solicitors as between the UK and the EU; continued mutual recognition and enforcement of judgments; continued collaboration in policing, security and criminal justice; the maintenance of legal certainty throughout the withdrawal process; and the continued effective promotion of England and Wales as the jurisdiction of choice. The government published its paper on civil justice co-operation in August, and Council noted that all of the major aspects of the Society's agenda had been adopted, including the seeking of a new cross-border civil justice agreement, the incorporation into domestic law of the Rome I and Rome II instruments on choice of law, and continuing participation in the Hague and Lugano conventions. The importance of a smooth transition was also noted.

Strategic engagement

Council noted that we continue to engage with parliament and the judiciary, including delivering valedictory speeches for the outgoing Lord Chief Justice and the President of the Supreme Court. We were also approached by Lord Justice Jackson's office to host the launch of his report on fixed recoverable costs.

Support to the profession

Council noted the Society's response to the SRA's consultation on the solicitors' qualifying examination highlighting the importance of ensuring that academic and work experience requirements receive proper scrutiny to ensure that standards are maintained. The Society has also published briefing for our members on the implications of the changes to the SRA Handbook. In other areas, the Society has published a quick guide to the new anti-money-laundering regulations to help members' understanding and practice, and a new practice note designed to assist solicitors in identifying circumstances which may warrant a refusal to undertake legal aid work.

Supporting the profession internationally

Council noted that the Vice President, Christina Blacklaws, had chaired a round-table on the international programme on women and the law which attracted 20 women solicitors from law firms and academia. The Society has also successfully secured a UK government prosperity fund bid for a project to support members' access to the South Korean market, and hosted a Carey Street dinner with members working in China, which was attended by Lord Keen and other distinguished guests. More broadly, the Society attended the International Bar Association investing in Africa conference, and has hosted a party of Kazakh judges as part of the Kazakhstan judicial training programme.