

Company number: 04608905

Costs Lawyer Standards Board Ltd
Tuesday 14 April 2015 at 10.30 am
The Studio, 7 Cannon Street, Birmingham

Present: Steve Winfield (Chair)
Gillian Milburn (Vice Chair)
Richard Allen
David Gamble
Tracyanne Ayliffe

In attendance: Lynn Plumbley (Chief Executive)

1. Quorum, apologies & declarations of interest

The Chair declared the meeting quorate, there were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

The minutes dated 13 January 2015 & 3 April 2015 were approved as being a true record for signing, there were no matters arising.

3. Board matters

(i) Access to board documents

The board agreed the revised wording on the CLSB website.

(ii) Board appraisals

The board agreed these could be actioned by phone.

Action: SW: Undertake appraisal of Richard, Gill & Tracyanne before next board meeting.

Action: GM: Undertake Steve's appraisal process before next board meeting.

4. Finance

(i) 2015 Q1 finance report

The board noted the end of quarter position as per the report.

(ii) 2015 budget review

The 2015 budget against spend was noted.

(iii) Accounts 2014

The 2014 accounts were considered and approved.

Action: LDP: Arrange for signing and filing with Companies House

(iv) Cost of living rise

Following three years without a cost of living increase it was agreed that, subject to any review should there be deflation situation as at 1 April 2016:

- The CEO would receive a 3.5% rise on 1 April 2015 and a 3.5% rise on 1 April 2016.

- The Chair remuneration would increase to £6,240 on 1 April 2015 and £6,460 on 1 April 2016.
- The lay and non-lay NED day rate would increase to £260 on 1 April 2015 and £269 on 1 April 2016.
- The panel day rate would increase to £208 on 1 April 2015 and £215 on 1 April 2016.

Action: LDP: Notify payroll of changes

5. Risk management

(i) Review of format

The board considered the format of the three risk registers and agreed they be combined into one. Further, the CEO was requested to highlight main risks for consideration at the January, April & October board meetings with a full review being undertaken at the July board meeting.

Action: LDP: Revise format of risk registers.

(ii) Risk review

The board considered and reviewed risks on the three schedules.

6. Education (ACLT)

(i) General update

It was noted a meeting was scheduled for 20 April 2015 to discuss a competency framework and accelerated course for Solicitors & Barristers.

Action: LDP: Establish current feedback process by ACLT on trainee experience of new course.

7. Regulatory matters

(i) 2015 practising certificate position

The board noted that at 6 March 2015 there were 598 authorised and regulated Costs Lawyers, up from 577 at the end of 2014.

(ii) Professional conduct complaint

The board was advised a Costs Lawyers practising certificate had been suspended for a period of 6 calendar months from 10 April 2015 and a financial penalty of £1,000 and fixed costs of £1,000 had been ordered. No appeal had been filed against the decision of the conduct committee.

(iii) Feedback on how we may improve regulation

The board noted the positive feedback from 2015 applications forms.

(iv) Client care letters

It was agreed it was not appropriate for the CLSB to suggest a standard client care letter.

Action: LDP: Draft guidance note for board consideration on client care letters.

(v) Consumer engagement strategy

The strategy was approved.

Action: LDP: Provide a consumer feedback facility on the CLSB website

(vi) SRA changes on CPD

This change of approach by the SRA was noted, the board agreed to a watching brief.

(vii) 2015 stats

The board noted the stats on geographical location, insurance, legal aid, instructions, the profession and diversity.

(viii) Diversity: LSB annual report on progress

It was noted that there were no criticisms of the CLSB under this report.

8. Legal Services Board (LSB)

(i) Response to consultation on strategic plan & budget

The board noted the Chair approved response submitted on 5 February 2015.

(ii) Update on current projects on de-regulation

The board was advised on the current status of various projects being undertaken.

(iii) Self-assessment outcome, regulatory standards report

The board noted this outcome and the article written in response.

(iv) Cost of regulation survey

The board was pleased to note the survey identified the CLSB as delivering the right level of regulation at the right price.

(v) Regulation of in-house lawyers

The board noted an LSB discussion document had been issued but that the CLSB need not have arrangements in place whilst transitional arrangements prevailed. The board was advised there were currently only 7 in-house Costs Lawyers.

(vi) Strategic plan 2015-18 & business plan 2015/16

The board noted these plans.

9. Legal Services Consumer Panel (LSCP)

(i) Strategic plan 2015-18 & business plan 2015/16

The board noted these plans but questioned how the LSCP would achieve its new aim of "ensuring unregulated providers raise standards and offer access to redress."

10. Association of Costs Lawyers (ACL)

(i) ADR service launch

The board noted this service had been launched by the ACL and was advised it had met with concerns by the profession. The board was advised the LSB had been asked to consider whether the code of conduct & disciplinary procedures introduced by the ACL contradicted/confused/undermined the professional standard set by the Costs Lawyer Code of Conduct and associated rules of implementation under the Legal Services Act 2007.

(ii) ACL vice chair

The board noted with interest that the ACL membership were no longer allowed to elect the chair and vice-chair of the ACL.

11. Legal Ombudsman (LeO)

(i) Complaints update

The board was pleased to note there had been no service complaints since the last board meeting.

(ii) Strategic plan 2015-18 & business plan 2015/16

The board noted these plans.

12. Any other business

- The board noted the CLSB response to the QCA consultation dated 23 March 2015.
- The board was advised the 2015 register of authorised and regulated Costs Lawyers had been sent to all Costs Judges in March 2015.
- 2016 board dates were agreed as being 13 January, 13 April, 13 July, 12 October.
- Following continuing service issues by Centurion House, it was agreed the phone/reception facility be moved to a dedicated provider and a PO Box be established.

Action: LDP: Arrange new phone line service and PO Box.

13. Date & time of next meeting

Date & time: Wednesday 15 July 2015 @ 10.30am

Location: The Studio, 7 Cannon Street, Birmingham.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed.

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Chairman