



Minutes

Legal Services Consumer Panel meeting

Date: 25 February 2015

Time: 13:00-17:00

Venue: One Kemble Street, London WC2B 4AN

Present:

Elisabeth Davies	Chair
Michelle Goddard	Member
Frances Harrison	Member
Marlene Winfield	Member
Catherine Wolthuizen	Member
Steve Brooker	Consumer Panel Manager
Harriet Gamper	Consumer Panel Associate
Ramandeep Bhatti	Legal Services Board
Julie Myers	Legal Services Board

Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

1. The Chair welcomed the Legal Services Consumer Panel ('The Panel'). The Chair noted apologies from Philip Marsden, Andy Foster and Cathy Gallagher.

Item 2 – Declaration on interests

2. None.

Item 3 – Minutes of 28 January meeting

3. The Chair presented the draft minutes for the 28 January 2015 meeting.

The Panel approved the minutes of 28 January 2015 meeting.

Item 4 – Matters arising

4. Item 6 – BEUC unexpectedly contacted the Panel to inform us they are discontinuing partnership agreements and suggested the Panel become an Affiliate member. This would be cheaper for the Panel and we would not lose anything in policy/information terms, however this option was not thought possible when we first sought membership because the Panel didn't fit with BEUC's membership criteria or statutes. We have sought clarity from BEUC and await a response to our enquiries.
5. Item 7 – the Separate Business Rule response was finalised and submitted to the Solicitors Regulation Authority, with helpful input from Catherine, Cathy and Philip.

Item 5 – Next strategy and work programme

6. The Chair introduced the draft strategy 2015-18 and work programme for 2015-16 for The Panel's approval.
7. The Panel agreed this is a very clear plan that includes just the right level of detail, and credit for this should be given to the Panel Manager and Associate. Subject to a small number of amendments the Panel agreed the narrative in the Chair's Foreword and Future Focus section, agreed the work programme content and agreed the proposed Panel leads.

The Panel approved the draft strategy 2015-18 and work programme for 2015-16.

Item 6 – Self-regulation

8. The Panel Manager introduced a paper on self-regulation, which set out for discussion the boundaries of the Panel's role in relation to raising standards through self-regulatory initiatives.
9. The Panel considered the principles that should guide decisions on its level of engagement in shaping the development of self-regulatory schemes. Among principles suggested were whether self-regulatory schemes are likely to get reasonable coverage, the prospects of success, level of consumer detriment, whether the Panel or other organisations are best placed to offer support, and our resource capacity.
10. When considering the degree of engagement it should have with self-regulatory schemes, the Panel agreed it needed to be clear about its role and remit and that of others, and that it needed to find a suitable middle ground for its level of engagement. The Panel discussed upper limits of engagement and agreed, for example, that we should never agree to sit on the boards of self-regulatory schemes. In essence the Panel saw its role as 'encouraging the consumer voice without being that voice'.
11. The Panel also discussed what steps could be taken in relation to the self-regulation of McKenzie Friends. The Panel confirmed it was comfortable with the current level of support given to the new trade association but would not wish to go beyond this.

Following points raised by the Panel, the Panel Manager will develop a draft set of principles for the April meeting to inform our level of engagement with self-regulation schemes.

Item 7 – Guest speaker: Richard Moriarty

12. The Chair welcomed Richard Moriarty, Chief Executive of the LSB.
13. Richard Moriarty outlined the areas in which he would like the LSB to make tangible progress. These include reinforcing the public's confidence around the LSB's oversight role, addressing the access to justice deficit and enabling further innovation in the sector. He also noted how he has been impressed by the work of Panel, which is clearly rooted in evidence, especially in a sector that is so evidence light.
14. Richard also discussed how he will be getting to know the different areas and issues in the sector and also discussed legal services consumers and how far developments have been made since the implementation of the Legal Services Act.

The Panel noted the points raised by Richard Moriarty and thanked him for his time.

Item 8 – Chair's report and members' updates

15. The Chair presented her report on her recent activities.

The Panel noted the Chair's report and Members update.

Item 9 – Projects update

16. The Chair invited Panel Members to share any updates that were not covered in the Project updates paper.
17. Michelle Goddard advised that she had written a blog post on the topic of comparison websites for The Panel website. The blog was featured on the Legal Futures website and there has been an enquiry from the Law Society Gazette.

The Panel noted the projects update and additional item raised.

Item 10 – Consultation responses

18. The Consumer Panel Associate presented a paper on recent and upcoming consultation responses.

The Panel:

Noted submissions made to the SRA's consultation on the *Separate business rule*, and to the Legal Ombudsman's consultation on *Draft strategy and budget 2015-17*.

Item 11 – Draft agenda for 29 April meeting

19. The Chair presented the proposed agenda for 29 April 2015 meeting.
20. The Panel Manager advised a paper on self-regulation would also be added to the 29 April agenda.

The Panel agreed the proposed agenda and the additional item added to the 29 April 2015 meeting.

Item 12 – Any other business

21. Catherine Wolthuizen advised she will be away for 3 weeks.
22. Michelle Goddard advised the LSB's Corporate Governance Manager had recently sent through a revised version of the LSB's publication scheme. She enquired as to whether the Panel would also review its publication policy. The Panel Manager advised this would be added to a future meeting agenda for consideration.
23. The Chair reminded the Panel that the Panel Associate will be leaving at Easter to take up a new role at the Office of the Rail Regulator. The Chair and Panel Members thanked the Panel Associate for her contribution to the Panel over the past few years and wished her all the best for the future.