

Update from Law Society Council Meeting on 8 February 2017 – Lubna Shuja

I attended the Law Society Council meeting on 8 February 2017 in my capacity as Council Member representing sole practitioners, along with Ian Lithman. I attach below an update on some of the work being carried out by the Law Society together with a summary of the key issues discussed by the Council during that meeting. Updates are also available on the SPG website. If you would like to discuss any issues affecting sole practitioners, which you would like me to raise at future Council Meetings, please do not hesitate to contact me on info@legalswan.com or on 0121 551 7866.

Chief Executive Officer

As you will probably be aware, Catherine Dixon resigned as Chief Executive Officer of the Law Society in January 2017. Paul Tennant has been appointed as Interim Chief Executive Officer while steps are taken to appoint a new CEO.

Recent Work done by the Law Society

- The Law Society has launched a campaign to highlight the recent proposals to reform small claims. The government has published a consultation on reforming soft tissue injury claims which includes a proposal to raise the limit on small claims for all personal injury claims from £1,000 to £5,000 as well as proposals to stop or radically reduce compensation payments for minor soft tissue injuries, including whiplash resulting from road traffic accidents. The Law Society responded to this consultation opposing the proposals, producing evidence to support the assertion that reducing insurers' costs is unlikely to have any significant impact on the cost of motor insurance premiums.
- The SRA is considering proposals around Open Data and how publishing regulatory data can be used to improve the information available to consumers. The Law Society has responded to this SRA paper requesting stronger evidence and recommending that impact assessments are carried out and published on this proposition.
- The Law Society has continued to meet with ministers and officials to help influence the Government's negotiating strategy on Brexit. These have included meetings between Robert Bourne (the LS President) and Keir Starmer MP - Shadow Brexit Secretary; Jeremy Wright MP – the Attorney General; Will Tanner – Deputy Director of Policy at No 10; and attending the Lord Chancellor's roundtable to promote legal services internationally,
- HMRC intend to send letters to firms advising them of their intention to issue formal notices seeking information regarding the firm's clients who hold offshore accounts. The HMRC have indicated they will not seek information covered by Legal Professional Privilege ("LLP") but it may be that their interpretation of material covered by LLP is different from the firm's view (eg requiring disclosure of clients' passports). The Law Society has guidance available on this issue and will assist firms with drafting letters when responding to HMRC notices.
- In 2020 the Solicitors Indemnity Fund will close and the Law Society is assessing how members can ensure they remain protected beyond this period.

Lubna Shuja
Law Society Council Member (February 2017)