

Chief Executive's Report to Council – Part 1

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**Classification - Public
Freedom of Information**

Not applicable as this paper is public

Summary:

My Part 1 paper includes information that members should be aware of and may share with their constituents. Where possible matters are included here to assist you.

The Strategy and Influence briefing (appendix 1) is attached to provide you with background information on the broad range of activity and engagement being undertaken by the teams within the Society.

The Member Experience briefing (appendix 2) provides an overview of the work being undertaken within the Member Experience directorate.

My part 2 paper covers progress being made against delivering our business plan which can be turned white after discussions and subsequently shared with members.

Recommendations / Conclusions:

This paper is for: information.

Assessments. This should be either a summary of what is in the paper (cross-referenced to the relevant paragraph), or, if the issues are very straightforward, a full statement of the relevant position.

Financial:	There are no financial implications arising from the paper.
Risk:	The plans in this report are covered by the Strategic and Operational Risk registers in place throughout the Law Society.
E D & I	ED&I implications are considered as part of all aspects of our work particularly around culture as creating an inclusive and proactive culture is an important outcome for the Law Society.
Organisational Values	Details of the ongoing work to embed our organisational values are included within the paper.
Consultation	Executive Leadership Team.

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1. Key Activities

In addition to the briefings at appendix 1 and 2, I would draw members attention to the following points.

a. Governance

Committee meetings continued to be held in person until mid-March. Since then, all governance meetings, including committee and Board meetings, have been held virtually in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which I provide an update on in my part 2 report. The team have made arrangements to enable the Council meetings on 3 June and 15 July to be held remotely. We have produced guidance on the use of Skype for Business and Microsoft Teams and virtual meeting protocols to support both chairs and participants and ensure that these meetings continue to operate effectively.

As members will be aware, we have given careful consideration as to how Council business – the AGM, presidential inauguration, deputy vice president elections and Council member elections – should be managed in light of the ongoing pandemic. This matter was discussed at a special Council meeting on 21 May, where it was agreed to defer the AGM to October 2020. I would like to thank Council members for their contributions to this matter and the flexibility and pragmatism that all have demonstrated.

We also continue our Internal Governance Rule (IGR) compliance work. Revisions to the committee application forms, Council nomination forms and induction training have been implemented. An audit of staff in relation to the dual role issue has been conducted and a similar audit will shortly be conducted in relation to elected and appointed members. A suite of training, to be delivered as a presentation, is being developed for Council members and others, including senior members of TLS staff. A set of General Regulation amendments related to IGR compliance has been developed and will be discussed under item 10 of the meeting agenda.

b. Public Affairs

How's this?

In March and April, the Law Society and its campaigns were mentioned 11 times in Hansard and 28 times in social media accounts linked to parliamentarians on issues including:

- Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill;
- Private International Bill;
- Domestic Abuse Bill;
- Lord Chancellor praising the Law Society in its support on responding to Covid-19 in a Justice Select Committee session; and
- Home Affairs Select Committee report on domestic abuse and coronavirus

The Law Society gave evidence to the Justice Select Committee three times in May. President Simon Davis and Head of Public Law Ellie Cumbo both gave evidence to their inquiry on the impact of coronavirus. Co-Chair of the Criminal Law Committee, Richard Atkinson, also gave evidence to the Committee in a private session on release under investigation / pre-charge bail.

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In the past three months, we have held high level stakeholder engagement on our priority issues with the following Government and parliamentary stakeholders:

- Lord Chancellor, Robert Buckland QC MP;
- Justice Minister, Alex Chalk MP;
- Director General, Ministry of Justice, James Bowler;
- Business Secretary, Alok Sharma MP;
- Professional and Business Services Minister, Nadhim Zahawi MP;
- Attorney General, Suella Braverman QC MP;
- Solicitor General, Michael Ellis QC MP;
- Treasury Minister, John Glen MP (also spoke about the proposed economic crime levy);
- International Trade Minister, Graham Stuart MP (also spoke about wider trade issues);
- Chair of the Justice Select Committee, Bob Neill MP;
- Future Relationship with the EU Committee Chair, Hilary Benn MP; and
- Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Clive Betts MP.

We have also met with the shadow ministerial team, including David Lammy MP, Lord Falconer and Karl Turner MP.

This work has led to raise the profile of our Covid work and secure the outcomes set out in the Covid-19 paper at agenda item 5.

c. Research

The depth research with the **largest 50 law firms** has been completed and being reviewed internally. The research explored engagement with and perceptions of the Law Society, firms' priorities over the next 3-5 years and interest in the Law Society's seven themes of work. The **Annual Member Survey**, which collects key data on satisfaction related KPIs is complete, results were shared with the Board in May.

Our **Future Worlds 2050** project is well underway. This research will examine the multiple factors / drivers of change impacting society and the provision of legal services over the next 30 years. The aim is to build a plausible picture of the world in 2050 and, within that world, question the changing role of the law, of legal services and modes of service delivery. This will enable us to explore the associated implications in the nearer term for our members and for the Law Society to inform a strategic approach to preparing for change.

Horizon Scanning remains an ongoing activity and is currently focussed on topics including the future of:

- Trade;
- Data;
- Payments;
- The Company;
- Privacy;
- Government; and
- Collaboration.

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The intention is to compile findings into short reports to share and discuss with a range of stakeholders. The next report to be published will be on Digital Transformation and provide an overview of the future of digital business. At present scanning is being run in parallel with a PESTLE (political, economic, sociological, technological, legal and environmental) analysis of the impacts of Covid-19 and how emerging signals of change might play out differently on the back of the current pandemic.

Publications

Findings from the [2019 PC Holder Survey](#) have been published, reporting on use of technology, health and well-being, access to flexible working, workplace culture, social mobility and earnings. A supporting [technical report](#) was also published with details on how an online approach was trialled to test response rates and to identify any potential response bias between online and telephone approaches. The LMS [Financial Benchmarking Survey](#) has also been published, providing insight into firm finances and guidance on how firms can use their accounts data to improve financial performance.

d. Digital

Website

The first phase of the new website is now live. In line with best practice, online traffic has been built slowly, but now a link from the old website is shown to all visitors, encouraging them to try the new site. The new website includes a significantly improved search function, redesigned content, and new navigation based on research with members. The new site includes Junior Lawyer and Small Firms content, and the previous community microsites are now being closed. This approach will ensure that all relevant content for these audiences is accessible in one place, improving the overall member experience.

My Law Society

The next phase of the website launch includes the new My Law Society (My LS) and practice notes. This is being 'soft' launched to a small number of members who will test it. A planned roll out will then encourage existing My LS account holders to set a new password. Many existing My LS account holders had not validated their status as a solicitor. The new approach has a much simpler registration journey, so we anticipate generating better data from these members as well as from those signing up to a My LS account for the first time. This data will enable us to present tailored content, ensuring that members see the most relevant content on My LS in the future.

Next steps

Once My LS is live and being rolled out to members, we will decide when to switch off the old website. We currently anticipate that this will take place at the end of June.

e. Learning and Development

The most significant develop in our member education offer is the beta launch of the new Learning Management System (LMS). This is being released to TLS staff, key committees and members in an iterative manner starting in late May. The launch date was deferred from late March, primarily due to resourcing issues (swapping personnel from contractors to fixed term contracts and our technical partner's capacity being impacted by Covid 19). Delaying

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the launch ensures that we'll go to members with a significantly enhanced offer, both technically and educationally. As per MCC's recommendation, content in our beta launch will be free, which will enable us to gather a body of learning analytics to inform the next stage of development. This will include delivery of individual and entity accreditations, and diverse forms of digital education content.

f. Policy impact

The vast majority of our policy work has focussed on the impacts of Covid-19 for the profession and for the rule of law. There are urgent and important issues affecting the profession, which we have prioritised over other pre-planned work, such as a planned seminar on disclosure in criminal cases and the routine reviews of practice notes. In addition, many developments which we had expected from, for example, government or regulators, have been delayed as a result of Covid-19. This has meant that work we had planned for, to respond to other's proposals or initiatives, has not been possible (for example, in relation to the LASPOA review, the LSB's next strategy and whiplash reforms). The exception to this has been ongoing work in relation to a number of regulatory matters, such as SQE and the compensation fund.

We are currently developing Covid-19 policy at pace on a broad range of novel issues in order to have impact and add value for our members. Input from EAMs in this context has been essential in shaping our priorities and positioning, but has necessarily had to be more informal – typically engaging a smaller group of relevant expert members with short deadlines for responses. Our ability to bolster our policy asks with evidence of the experiences and views of a large number of members (gained through our surveys) has meant we have had significant impact on the issues for our members.

2. Conclusion

You can see from the above that there has been a great deal of activity in relation to governance, public affairs, research and policy during the quarter, and we will build upon this as we move into the second quarter.

3. Recommendations

This paper is for information and discussion.

Appendices

1. Chief Executive's Report to Council on Strategic Insight and Influence – Part 1
2. Chief Executive's Report to Council on Member Experience – Part 1

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