

**Minutes of the FLBA Committee Meeting  
Held in 4 Paper Buildings, Temple  
on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

**Present:** **Frances Judd QC (Chair)**  
Cyrus Larizadeh (Vice-Chair)  
James Roberts (Treasurer)  
Katy Rensten  
Greg Williams  
James Holmes  
Mark Twomey QC  
Mehvish Chaudhry  
Victoria Wilson  
Peter Newman  
Sam Montaz QC  
Mandy Tanner  
Sandra Eze

The following joined the meeting by telephone link:

Sam King, Victoria Flowers, Corinne Iten, Justin Gray, Samantha Singer, Tim Parker, Siân Gough, Neil Owen-Casey, Katherine Duncan and Daniel Sheridan.

**Item 1. Apologies for absence**

Malek Wan Daud, Charlotte Hartley, Caroline Topping, Morgan Sirikanda, Olivia Magennis (on maternity leave), Joy Brereton, Nigel Page, Kate Burnell, Maria Hancock, John Wilson QC, Timothy Scott QC, Jacqui Wall, Leanne Targett-Parker, Chris Bryden and Cleo Perry.

**Non-attendance:**

Jeremy Weston QC, Jayne Pye, Susan Grocott QC, Tanya Zabihi, Ruth Henke QC, Katharine Bundell, Victoria Miller and James Rees.

**Item 2. Minutes of the meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> December 2017:**

- i) For approval + posting on the website

The minutes were approved as drafted for posting.

- ii) Matters arising from the minutes:

These will be dealt with in the rest of the agenda.

**Item 3. Election/appointment of secretary following Ian Bugg's appointment**

The committee agreed to elect Malek Wan Daud (MWD) as the replacement Secretary until the next Officers' election.

#### **Item 4. Sub-committees – composition**

The Chair explained that she will be asking people to volunteer for the various sub-committees, but in the meantime, Mark Twomey QC (MTQC) and Katy Rensten (KR) have kindly agreed to co-chair the children sub-committee. The Vice-Chair said it would be helpful to have a short, written update before each committee meeting from the sub-committees.

#### **Item 5. Children sub-committee verbal update**

The Vice-Chair reported that Cafcass is reviewing their 'use of professional time' guidance and the high conflict pathway. There will be an update in the Spring. Coming up also is the 'making arrangements for children' pilot which is starting in Manchester on 22 January; a proposal for reform of S.8 of the Children Act 1989 and in particular bringing in early intervention, which was a project supported by the FLBA in 2003/4 to introduce a template for contact. The Vice-Chair also reported that the MoJ are putting together a Green Paper. The Vice-Chair explained that he will start attending any meetings about settlement conferences and we will continue to receive feedback from the pilots. The Vice-Chair informed the committee that we will obtain a report in June regarding the Care Crisis Consultation. The Chair encouraged people to volunteer to help with any of the matters raised and that it would be greatly appreciated, however small.

#### **Item 6. Finance sub-committee verbal update?**

Morgan Sirikanda (MS) was not present but the Chair reported that the response to the Divorce (Financial Provision) Bill, has been sent by the former Chairman and that she would ask MS to prepare something ahead of the next meeting. The Vice-Chair understands from Charles Hale QC (CHQC) that the Department of Work & Pensions are undergoing a review of the child maintenance service with a consultation and has said he will be happy to take the lead on this and will ask him to provide a timescale. Peter Newman (PN) will be assisting CHQC with the consultation.

#### **Item 7. Vulnerable witness training**

The Chair reported that she, the Vice-Chair and Sian Gough (SG) attended various meetings with the Chairman of the Bar and the Inns. The Chair observed that the Family Bar needed to get up to speed and catch up with the Criminal Bar, as we are currently lagging behind. SG explained that it was important to start work on the materials and set up a working group, as it was a long process before we could properly get it off the ground. The Vice-Chair reported that ICCA said they would consider training a group of family practitioners to become trainers. The Vice-Chair hoped that we would have a group of trainers ready by the end of the year. The Chair reported that this should be placed back on the agenda in March.

#### **Item 8. Consultations:**

a) Future Bar training – completed with thanks to James Holmes

The Chair recorded her thanks to James Holmes (JH) for providing a response to the Future Bar Training consultation.

b) Transparency: publication of fees – completed with thanks to Victoria Flowers & Greg Williams

The Chair also recorded her thanks to Greg Williams (GW) and Victoria Flowers (VF), for completing a diligent piece of work, particularly over the Christmas period.

c) Call for evidence; care proceedings

The Chair reported that the consultation for this closes on 15<sup>th</sup> January. A reminder was sent to the membership, but the Vice-Chair asked the committee to send an email to their respective Chambers to remind them to respond. The Vice-Chair reported that he has received positive feedback about settlement conferences in London. The Chair encouraged members of the committee to provide feedback of their experiences too.

## **Item 9. Pilots:**

a) Flexible Operating Hours (evaluation process)

The Chair reported that she, Philip Marshall QC (PMQC) and the Treasurer met with the CEO of HMCTS about this. The CEO made it clear that they were keen to listen to the FLBA. Currently, they are proposing to have 2 days a week with extended court hours in a couple of courts, possibly doing FDRs and urgent care applications. In Manchester, they are thinking of allocating LiPs in the later slot. The Treasurer expressed that it could work well if the right type of cases were allocated appropriately.

b) Private law initiative - Manchester

The Vice-Chair reported that he will email Susan Grocott QC (SGQC) for an update. An email was sent to the membership about the pilot and the start date (22 January).

## **Item 10. Wellbeing**

The Vice-Chair reported that both he and Victoria Wilson (VW) continue to receive an overwhelming response to the wellbeing initiative. The Treasurer is happy to provide funding, for example, to have a guest speaker or a workshop. Sam Momtaz QC (SMQC) suggested that we should re-introduce the 'Week at a Glance' survey, commissioned 10 years ago by Professor Debora Price. It explored how much work practitioners undertook, their practice, fees, income, wellbeing etc. The responses were collated into a detailed report, which also, in turn, provided us with evidence we could show the Legal Aid Board about the impact fees was having on practitioners. The Treasurer reported that it was a big undertaking but that the take up was very good. He said he would try to locate the survey and report by the next meeting. The Chair reported that she had a meeting with the Chairman of the Bar, who conveyed to her that the message he was getting from the Family Bar is burnout. The committee discussed the immense pressures upon the Family Bar, particularly those who have a public law practice. VW reported that she and the Vice-Chair are attending a Wellbeing at the Bar committee meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> February and they may be able to identify a few events specifically to address burnout. The Chair said that this should be brought put back on the

agenda in February. The Vice-Chair reported that the wellbeing policy has attracted attention from other non-legal organisations, one in particular have asked whether they could view the policy and circulate it generally. He reported that Khadija Khan (KK) suggested that instead of releasing the policy, we can signpost them to other versions on the internet.

## **Item 11. Volunteers**

- a) Court Reform Group – to attend meetings, including one at 9am to 11am on 16<sup>th</sup> January

The Chair requested volunteers for the meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> January and to contact KK if they are able to attend.

- b) Autumn Lecture Series FLBA

The Chair reported that Olivia Magennis (OM), is currently on maternity leave, and that we require someone to replace her, whilst she is absent, to assist VW with recruiting speakers for the Autumn Lecture Series.

- c) To attend Cafcass meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2018

The Chair requested volunteers for the Cafcass meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> January and asked that people report back to her, the Vice-Chair and KK, if they are able to attend this and indeed any of the meetings/committees listed below and again if they have any interest in volunteering for a sub-committee.

- d) Divorce online meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> February

- e) Vulnerable witness training working group

- f) FLBA scholarship/sponsorship committee

The Chair reported that PJMQC has volunteered to set up a sub-committee for this. JH and the Treasurer have also volunteered to be members of this sub-committee.

## **Item 12. Congratulations – His Honour Judge Bugg & new Silks**

The Chair congratulated the new Silks and personally congratulated SK, who dialed-in to the meeting. She also congratulated Ian Bugg on his appointment. The Vice-Chair reported that his welcome will take place on either 22 January or 22 February (NB now confirmed for 26<sup>th</sup> February). If he is free, he will attend on the FLBA's behalf but if not, he will arrange for someone to attend.

## **Item 13. Events**

- a) Annual Dinner

KK reported that numbers were low but that was only to be expected as the invite only went out recently. The Chair encouraged everyone to attend and also to encourage members of their own chambers to attend.

b) Scottish Conference

Samantha Singer (SS) reported that good progress had been made. She will liaise with the Treasurer regarding the budget.

c) Cumberland Lodge

The Chair reported that HHJ Hess and Mr Justice Mostyn have been asked to deliver a presentation on the new FRU. She will also ask a new money and children Silk to present the updates. PAUSE will be delivering a talk. The Vice-Chair suggested that we should have a wellbeing slot, delivered by a non-lawyer. Mr Justice Francis will be delivering the talk on the Friday evening. The Chair encouraged people to provide suggestions for further speakers.

**Item 14. Family Affairs**

The Chair thanked John Wilson QC for yet another great edition. The edition was delivered later than hoped and that the issue of printers will need to be addressed.

**Item 15. Venue for future meetings**

The Chair thought that being able to video-in to meetings was a great idea and would help people feel less excluded from the process of attending meetings. If it works, the Vice-Chair thought we could continue to have them at 4PB and occasionally at Garden Court Chambers and 1 Garden Court.

**Item 16. AOB**

The Vice-Chair reported that @eGlance has offered to provide a year's free subscription to the software program and an essay competition, attracting a prize for the best essay.

SMQC thought that fees should be included in the agenda for every meeting, with which the Chair agreed. The Chair explained that there was a pilot, which has been discussed in previous meetings, where the LAA paid the Bar directly when they did a high cost case and we want to see whether this can be resurrected. Greg Williams (GW) is on the Remuneration committee and the Chair suggested they both liaise at some point. SMQC expressed that he was keen to find out why the pilot scheme did not work. He observed that the FLBA used to have regular meetings with the LAA, which helped us develop a more personal relationship and he would like to see this reinstated. SMQC considered that we need to have evidence to show the LAA the impact the problems with cash flow are having on people's lives and that it would be helpful if people should email both him and GW with examples.

Meeting concluded at 6.03 p.m.

**Date of next meeting:** The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2018 at 5 pm in the conference room at 4PB

Khadija Khan  
FLBA Administrator