

Minutes of the FLBA Committee Meeting Held in 4 Paper Buildings, Temple on 7th March 2018

Present: **Frances Judd QC (Chair)**
Malek Wan Daud (Secretary)
Katy Rensten
Mehvish Chaudhry
Victoria Wilson
Morgan Sirikanda
Charlotte Hartley
Samantha Singer
Caroline Topping
Maria Hancock
Corinne Iten
Sam King QC
Katherine Duncan
Siân Gough

The following joined the meeting by video/telephone link:

Cyrus Larizadeh (Vice-Chair), Victoria Flowers, Justin Gray, Sandra Eze, Daniel Sheridan, Nigel Page, Jacqui Wall, Jeremy Weston QC, Tim Parker, Tanya Zabihi, Jayne Pye, Neil Owen-Casey, Mark Twomey QC and Mandy Tanner.

Item 1. Apologies for absence

James Roberts (Treasurer), James Holmes, Cleo Perry, Victoria Miller, Peter Newman, Olivia Magennis (on maternity leave), John Wilson QC, Chris Bryden, Susan Grocott QC, Joy Brereton and Greg Williams. Sam Momtaz QC, Ruth Henke QC and Kate Burnell all tried attending but due to technical difficulties at our end, were unable to join in.

Non-attendance:

Timothy Scott QC, Leanne Targett-Parker, Katharine Bundell, and James Rees.

Item 2. Minutes of the meeting of 8th February:

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 agenda.

Item 3. Children sub-committee update

Katy Rensten (KR) reported that there are a few consultations appearing on the horizon. With regards to Oliver Cyriax, who is instrumental in early intervention in respect of contact, concerns have been raised about getting involved at this stage and these were discussed. It was agreed that it was not a priority at this stage but would keep our position under review.

Item 4. Finance sub-committee update

Morgan Sirikanda (MS) confirmed that he submitted the response to the DWP's consultation paper on proposed compliance measures regarding child maintenance. There was nothing further to report at this stage.

Item 5. Vulnerable witnesses

Caroline Topping (CT) gave a brief update of what the ICCA training involved, which she observed is very much focused on criminal proceedings. The Chair reported that Andrew Walker QC (Chairman of the Bar) had informed her that the Criminal Bar have expressed concerns about the FLBA inviting their members to attend the advocacy course, as they are already currently overworked providing training to the Criminal Bar. The Chair said that she would ask the membership to wait until we have set up a training course. KR suggested that reading the course materials for the training is hugely beneficial, so if we could encourage people to do that in the meantime, it should be of great assistance to them. The Vice-Chair reported that there was a discussion about devoting one or two sessions for up to 6 family practitioners to train facilitators. CT reported that they are trying to identify the lead facilitators/trainers from the regions. The Chair said an email should be sent to the regions in the near future about organising a meeting to co-ordinate the training.

Item 6. Retention of women at the Bar initiative

Sam King QC (SKQC) reported that a message to the membership has been sent in order to gather information about what is already in place in chambers (i.e. policies) to encourage, for example, a female barrister to return to chambers after maternity leave. Their intention is also to send out an email to heads of chambers. They will present their initial findings at a meeting on 13th June.

Item 7. Meetings attended since 8th February and feedback

a) Settlement conferences

The Vice-Chair attended a settlement conference meeting and understands that a report is going to be published soon. He has viewed an interim report, which revealed that there is a definite change of attitude in favour of settlement conferences in areas where they are being piloted. The Vice-Chair also reported that HHJ Brasse and HHJ Wright are going to have regular reviews regarding how settlement conferences are progressing in London and would like the FLBA to be involved and have our say.

b) Cafcass: use of professional time guidance

There was no information about this at the meeting.

c) Stakeholder event

Tim Parker (TP) attended this meeting on 8th February. TP reported that there was discussion about the operational aspects of it. TP believes that people will be signposted more to taking advice at the point where legal rights are being affected. There will be another meeting in due course.

Item 8. Fees

There was nothing to report on this occasion.

Item 9. Pro Bono scheme for cross examining complainants pending

The Chair reported that David Burrows was very keen for the FLBA to be involved in this scheme. There was general discussion about where the FLBA should stand on this and how the scheme would work on a practical basis. On the one hand, it is not right that our members should feel obligated to offer their time pro bono to do what the government should be paying the profession for. On the other hand, it is unconscionable that people are being cross examined directly by their abusers. After some discussion, it was agreed that we should let members know about the scheme and let them decide but still continue to put pressure on the government. It should not be designed to bridge the gap however and members should not feel obligated to do it.

Item 10. Bar Council mentoring training

The Vice-Chair reported that Sam Mercer of the Bar Council is willing to train up to 30 FLBA members a session to become mentors nationally. The approximate cost is £600 for a 1 ½ hour session. The Chair suggested that we should put this forward to the next meeting, so the Treasurer has an opportunity to consider the scheme and the cost of it.

Item 11. At A Glance offer

The Chair reported that Sir Peter Singer and others who are responsible for producing @eGlance want to make an offer to all pupil supervisors, who are members of the FLBA, to give a free copy of @eGlance to their pupils. The committee agreed.

They would also like to have an essay competition and offer the winner a free year's subscription.

Item 12. Volunteers

- a) For the working group on expert evidence
- b) Care Crisis meeting on 19 March in Sheffield
- c) Care Crisis meeting on 15 March in London

The Chair asked for volunteers for all the above meetings and asked that people email her if they are able to attend.

- d) Possible visit by a delegation from People's Court of Jiangxi Province

The Chair reported that a delegation of 6 Judges would like to meet for an hour or so to find out how we deal with matters such as women's issues and children's rights. The committee agreed that it would be really useful for both sides to meet and would contact them to arrange it.

Item 13. Events

- a) Annual Dinner

The Chair thanked the committee for attending and KK for organising it. There was a lot of negative feedback about the food, however, and the Chair thought we should report this to Middle Temple.

- b) Scottish conference

Samantha Singer (SS) reported that delegation would be attending from Ireland as well as Scotland. SS updated the committee with the progress being made and is expecting 40 people to attend.

- c) Cumberland Lodge programme

The Chair reported that the programme is being drafted. The Chair hopes to thin it out this year so that the weekend feels more relaxed.

- d) Regional officers meeting

The Chair reported that we were close to finalising a date.

- e) Speakers for the Autumn Lecture Series

Victoria Wilson (VW) reported that they will hopefully have a line of speakers in time for the next meeting.

Item 16. AOB

Siân Gough (SG) reported that there has been quite a lot of interest and that we will require volunteers to assist with the Vulnerable Witness training.
There was also a brief discussion about whether it was necessary to toast the Queen at the Annual Dinner.

Meeting concluded at 6.05 p.m.

Date of next meeting: The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 11th April 2018 at 5 pm in the conference room at 4PB

Khadija Khan
FLBA Administrator