

**Minutes of the FLBA Committee Meeting
Held in 4 Paper Buildings, Temple
On 5th June 2019**

Present: Frances Judd QC (Chair)

Cyrus Larizadeh QC (Vice Chair)
Malek Wan Daud (Secretary)
James Holmes
Peter Newman
Mandy Tanner
Mehvish Chaudhry
Greg Williams
Jacqui Thomas

The following joined the meeting by video/telephone link:

Mark Twomey QC
Hannah Markham QC
Melissa Elsworth
Sarah Pope
Sam Momtaz QC
Siân Smith
Cleo Perry
Joy Brereton
Bibi Badejo
Neil Owen-Casey

Item 1. Apologies for absence:

James Roberts QC (Treasurer), John Wilson QC, Katherine Duncan, Tim Parker, Victoria Wilson (attending Wellbeing at the Bar Working Group Meeting on behalf of the FLBA), Charlotte Hartley, Victoria Flowers, Katy Rensten, Caroline Topping, Victoria Miller, Richard Ager, Sam King QC, Ruth Henke QC, Morgan Sirikanda, Victoria Flowers and Jayne Pye.

Non-attendance:

James Rees, Susan Grocott QC, Katharine Bundell, Leanne Targett-Parker, Timothy Scott QC, Jeremy Weston QC, Kate Burnell, Justin Gray and Nigel Page.

Item 2. Minutes of the meeting 6th April 2019.

i) For approval + posting on the website

Minutes approved for posting

ii) Matters arising from the minutes:

These will be dealt with in the agenda.

Item 3. Children sub-committee, including progress on the President's public and private law working groups

Mark Twomey (MTQC) stated to the committee that he had no update at present in respect of the President's public and private law working groups but he understood that publication of the report for consultation was imminent and he felt that the committee should respond to the consultation once it was published.

Hannah Markham QC (HMQC) informed the committee that there was to be another meeting on 20th June when it was thought that the final version of Mr. Justice Keehan's report would be discussed before publication and then for consultation. She stated that there were a few last-minute tensions, which it was hoped would be resolved at the above meeting. HMQC stated that she was hopeful that the final version would be signed off shortly after the meeting. HMQC stated that the guidance would not be published until early June and the consultation period would be 3 months. Discussion took place as to how the FLBA will respond to the consultation and MTQC stated that a date for a meeting of the children sub-committee to respond to the consultation should be set up once the interim guidance had been published. The Chair stated that there would be two reports to be considered, one by Mr. Justice Cobb on private law and the other by Mr. Justice Keehan on public law. The Chair suggested that further committee members may be required to assist MTQC in responding to the consultations. He suggested that some of the regional representatives may wish to be involved. This matter would be included in the Agenda for the next meeting on 10th July for further discussion.

Item 4. Finance sub-committee update

Peter Newman (PN) reported to the committee with regard to the emailed response received from HHJ Hess. The committee agreed that there were some aspects of the response that needed to be considered and responded to. Discussion by the committee on various points that had been raised. HHJ Hess had asked for a response to his email within two weeks but the committee felt that more time was required to consider his email and the Chair suggested she would email HHJ Hess and ask that the period for the FLBA response be extended to the end of June. PN asked if the members could send him any comments and observations. He would then put these into a bullet point presentation to be prepared in order to put together a formal response to HHJ Hess. The Chair asked that members in the regions become involved with this process and contact either PN or Morgan Sirikanda (MS) with any comments.

Item 5. Well-being

The Vice Chair reported to the committee that the first big event is that the Wellness Forum is hosting a one-day wellbeing event at UCL on the 21st June. The President will be the main speaker, the Vice Chair will be speaking on the panel in the afternoon on the topic of vicarious trauma and family law.

The Vice Chair stated that he and the Chair, following a meeting with Resolution on 15th May, had agreed to a joint event the following week which will be held on Wednesday 26th June at 5.15pm in Sherrard Room, Middle Temple, with drinks to follow and free admission. One of the speakers will be Robyn Brady, who is an expert Social Worker from the Australian Royal Commission on child sexual abuse. She has also helped the FLBA to draft the well-being template which is now used across the country. Her speech is called 'Lawyers and Vicarious Trauma Triggers'. She will also talk about internal mentoring in Chambers. Details of this event will be sent to the members and it was agreed that it would be tweeted.

The Vice Chair stated that in October he has been asked to make the Resolution keynote speech on wellbeing which he was very pleased to do.

The Vice Chair stated that he would like individual members of the committee to consider voluntarily preparing a blog once a month about 'the week in the life of' or some stress related matter. This can then be published on the FLBA website.

The Vice Chair stated that Victoria Wilson (WV) put together a long list of well-being officers and he was pleased to confirm that many chambers have now got a well-being officer and he hoped that every member of the association would be able to access the well-being link on the website.

Item 6. Domestic Abuse Bill (response)

Cleo Perry (CP) addressed the committee with regard to the suggestion that there should be a FLBA summary response by the committee to the Bill and she and HMQC were liaising in that respect. CP asked the committee to consider how to respond to the Bill and whether she should send round a note to the members to canvas their views and concerns. Mehvish Chaudhry (MC) also suggested to the committee that the FLBA write a formal response to the MOJ letter which had been circulated. The Chair agreed that the letter was inaccurate in a number of respects and suggested that the FLBA should assist in the enquiry and if the MOJ agree, the committee will provide a full and thorough response. The Chair will email the MOJ in this respect.

Item 7. Vulnerable Witness Working Group

Siân Smith (SS) addressed the committee to say she was contacted by Martin Downes regarding Practice Direction 12(J) and how this was being viewed in the Sussex area. The local Court Quality Circle are circulating a questionnaire to local practitioners to canvas their views and SS felt that it may be something that should be considered by the committee. The Chair stated that she thought it very important senior members in Chambers speak to junior members to find out what happens in the District Judges' Courts and Magistrates Court.

SS stated that she now arranged dates for training the senior trainers. She stated that unfortunately dates had been put back for various reasons, but she confirmed there would be two dates in July and a further date in September. The next stage would be in late September/October for the next level of trainers to be trained and she would be sending out an email in this respect. She asked for a few volunteers to work their way through the website and check that it all works properly. This would probably be in the next few weeks. Bibi Badejo (BB), Jacqui Thomas (JT) and CP volunteered to assist. The Chair suggested that if SS could prepare an email with regard to the timetable and roll out dates, this can go out to the regional representatives by the end of July and they can then be encouraged to respond.

SS agreed that she would be pleased to speak at the National Conference in November. MC stated there would be 15 minute slot before lunch.

Item 8. Fees

The Chair expressed the committee's thanks to Sam Momtaz QC (SMQC) for his input into the meeting with the LAA on 3rd May which resulted in the LAA

agreement for the high cost limit for single counsel to be increased to £32,500. SMQC confirmed that the LAA should be make an announcement in respect of the raising of the limit for two counsel cases by the latter part of June. SMQC asked for feedback from the committee and the membership as to how this is working in practice. He will be meeting with the LAA again in September. SMQC still wishes to pursue the case for direct payment scheme. The LAA are resistant to this at the moment. SMQC asked for members to continue to email directly with examples of late payments to Anthony Leal. SMQC also asked the membership to email him in this respect as previously this information has been extremely useful and asked for any responses to the email that was sent out by the committee on the 28th May.

Item 9. Regional Elections

The Secretary addressed the committee and reported that he had been in touch with those regions where elections had not taken place. In Manchester their elections are in hand. He stated that he was aware that Ruth Henke (RHQC) has been contacting the regional committee in South Wales West in respect of their overdue election but they had not responded to her. The Secretary reported that in Devon and Cornwall James Rees (JR) had stated that he did not want to stand for renewal of his post and that he had contacted other committee members to ascertain whether there was any interest but had received no response. The East Midlands region is in the same position and he is aware that none of the existing officers want to stand again. East Anglia and Wessex are also overdue for elections. In summary, there are 6 regions where the association is inactive. Discussion followed by the committee as to how the regional associations could be revitalised and it was suggested that by the President stating at the Judges' conference that local DJs should get in touch with their local FLBA, this may encourage members in the areas to consider election to their local FLBA.

Item 10. Website – meeting with Graham (Sygnet) on 30th April and for approval

The Chair stated that following the meeting she and PN had with the Website Designer, the website would be going live within the next few weeks. It was agreed that the website should go live as soon as possible with other features being added and improved after the launch. Notification would be sent to all members advising when the website goes live.

Item 11. Conferences/meetings attended - feedback

(a) FOH Pilot Advisory Committee

Joy Brereton (JB) and the Chair stated that there have been ongoing discussions with the way the pilot will be evaluated. The process is ongoing but the FLBA very much want to be involved as it is clear that this will only effective in a very limited way.

(b) Parliamentary Taskforce on Kinship Care

CP reported that she had provided evidence and had given evidence in this respect. She said that there were 5 working groups who all seemed to be very engaged around the country, looking at various issues and that she had put them in touch with the Family Justice Council through Jane Craven. The Chair expressed her thanks to CP for her input in this respect.

- (c) POAM (Protection for Abducting Mothers) conference in Aberdeen

Victoria Miller (VM) attended the conference on behalf of the FLBA but she was not available to speak to the committee in this respect.

- (d) Meeting with Resolution on 15th May

This item was mentioned in Item 5 above.

Item 12. Volunteers needed –

- (a) President's draft guidance on reporting in the Family Courts (deadline 30th June)

Neil Owen-Casey volunteered to draft a response and it was agreed that he would send a draft to the Chair and Vice Chair to approve.

- (b) Bar Standards Board request for feedback on pupillage proposals re: Gateway timetable and written agreements.

The Chair stated that the response was due by the end of July and asked for a volunteer to do this. The Chair asked for a volunteer to email her. Jacqui Thomas has subsequently agreed to do this.

- (c) FreeBar event (Secretary and SKQC)

The Secretary stated that he has been touch with the Freebar Association but they had not responded.

Item 13. Cumberland Lodge – for report

The Chair and Vice Chair stated that the Conference was a great success and expressed their thanks for the organisation of the event and had received several positive comments from attendees.

Item 14. Forthcoming Events:-

- (a) FLBA/Resolution Well-being event – 26th June

This is mentioned above in Item 5 above and will be held in the Sherrard Room at Middle Temple at 5.15pm on 26th June 2019

- (b) FLBA Garden Party – 3rd July 2019

Discussion by the committee as to whether the event could be put forward to 5.30pm as the 3rd July is also the date for the Lord Mayor's Dinner. It was agreed that this would be raised with Middle Temple and the membership informed.

- (c) National Conference in Oxford – 9th November 2019

The Chair encouraged the membership to attend. MC stated that there would be an email going out at the end of the month with ticket prices.

(d) Autumn Lecture Series

There was no further update on this at present except that the dates had been allocated for 6 lectures and that Melissa Elsworth (ME) and VW were in the process of organising the speakers.

Item 15. AOB

The committee congratulated Greg Williams upon the publication of his book.

The committee also congratulated SMQC for being appointed to the FJC.

Meeting finished at 6.05pm

Next meeting Wednesday 10th July 2019 at 5pm at 4 Paper Buildings

Diane Edwards
FLBA Administrator