

Minutes

Legal Services Consumer Panel Meeting

Date: 12 May 2010

Time: 11:00 – 14:00 pm

Venue: Victoria House, Southampton Row, London WC1B 4AD

Present:

Dianne Hayter	Chair
Jeff Bell	Member
Graham Corbett	Member
Elisabeth Davies	Member
Emma Harrison	Member
Paul Munden	Member
Neil Wightman	Member
Karin Woodley	Member
Steve Brooker	Consumer Panel Manager
Alanna Linn	Consumer Panel Associate
Craig Jones	Legal Services Board (Items 1-5)
Alex Roy	Legal Services Board (Item 7)

Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

1. The Chair welcomed the Legal Services Consumer Panel (“the Panel”).
2. The Chair congratulated Emma Harrison on her new role as Director of Public Engagement at RNID

Item 2 – Introductions and declarations of interests

3. The Chair declared a lunch with ILEX and Paul Munden declared a lunch with Ann Wright, IPREG.
4. Paul Munden declared his qualification as a non-practicing barrister in relation to the BSB consultation on authorisation to practise arrangements. (Item 8)

Item 3 – Minutes of the 10 March 2010 meeting

5. The Chair presented the Draft Minutes for the 14 January November 2010 meeting of the Panel.

The Panel approved the Minutes.

Item 4 – Matters Arising from the minutes

6. The Consumer Panel Manager advised that the planned Legal Ombudsman consultation on the publication of decisions had been delayed due to purdah but was expected to be released in late May. The proposed consumer research as part of this project would still go ahead.
7. The Consumer Panel Manager also advised that the Approved Regulator (AR) Consumer Engagement workshop has been organised for Friday 16 July, with Philip Cullum of Consumer Focus as a speaker. The Panel Manager requested that any Panel members wishing to attend this event to advise him as soon as possible.

The Panel noted the matters arising and agreed to advise the Consumer Panel Manager about attendance at the Consumer Engagement workshop.

Item 5 - Chair's report

8. The Chair presented her report, covering recent meetings, speaking engagements and press coverage.
9. In addition to the written report:
 - The Chair advised that a scheduled meeting with the SRA has been moved to 25 May.
 - The Chair reported on a meeting with David Edmonds, Chair of the LSB, this week. They had discussed the Panel's proposed work on AR consumer engagement, which the LSB supports, as well as work on will writing. The Chair advised that it is likely that the Panel will need to consider this issue in some form over the next year. The LSB will also be writing a letter shortly to ask for the Panel's input on quality assurance.
 - The Chair reported on a meeting with Avrom Sherr and Marc Mason, of the Institute Advanced Legal Studies. The meeting focussed on the peer review process for legal aid providers, and included meeting two peer reviewers. The Chair tabled a briefing note prepared by the Consumer Panel Associate which discussed ways of ensuring ongoing professional competence for lawyers and possible next steps for the Panel in this policy area.
 - The Chair noted that along with Elisabeth Davies, Karin Woodley, the Consumer Panel Manager and the Consumer Panel Associate, she would be travelling to Wales on Monday 24 May to meet with a number of academics, Consumer Focus Wales and the Welsh office of the Law Society.
10. Panel members also provided feedback on a number of their meetings:

- Graham Corbett advised that he would follow-up with the TUC on a breakfast meeting at its Conference.
 - Paul Munden advised he had had a useful meeting with Ann Wright from IPREG. The key topics of discussion included the challenges associated with collecting complaints data and the ability of patent and trade mark attorneys to choose whether to use IPREG as their regulator.
11. The Consumer Panel Associate advised that the website had been updated to show the Panel's 2010/11 projects and that a search function would shortly be operational. The Panel Associate also reported that there was still only a small amount of traffic to the site, and requested that Panel members promote it.

The Panel noted the paper and the additional items raised. It was agreed to respond to IPREG confirming the Panel's support for the proper collection of complaints data.

Item 6 – Referral Arrangements

12. The Consumer Panel Manager presented the draft report.
13. The Panel supported the overall position taken in the draft report, but made suggestions to improve the clarity of the core messages. Detailed feedback on individual points was provided by each member.

Action:

The Consumer Panel Manager to prepare a revised version of the Report, based on the comments made, for the Panel's review.

The Panel agreed:

- **to the substance of the referrals arrangements report, subject to a number of changes to wording and tone;**
- **to the Consumer Panel Manager preparing a final version of the Report for circulation and electronic approval; and**
- **to the proposed timeline for providing the report to the LSB and publication, subject to approval of final revisions.**

Item 7 – Research

14. The Chair introduced Alex Roy, Research Manager at the LSB.
15. Alex Roy gave a presentation on research at the LSB, including planned projects for 2010/11 and scope for Panel involvement in the research strategy.
16. Discussion of the presentation included clarification that the Panel is able to propose research where it considers it is needed, and that the research strategy is flexible enough to respond to unforeseen developments.

The Panel noted the LSB Research Manager's presentation.

Item 8 - Consultation responses

17. The Consumer Panel Manager presented a paper on consultation responses.

The Panel noted the submissions made:

- to the CLC on “Application to regulate Licensed Conveyancers in the exercise of Rights of Audience and Conduct of Litigation”; and
- to the BSB/IPS/SRA on “Advocacy Standards”.

The Panel noted the take up of Panel suggestions in post-consultation decisions by:

- the Legal Ombudsman in relation to “Scheme Rules”;
- the SRA in relation to the “Assigned Risks Pool review”; and
- the LSB in relation to “Alternative Business Structures”.

Item 11 - Any other business

18. Panel members discussed the all day meeting schedule for 8 December; including the need for this meeting involve mid-year review of the work programme and agreed to gather on the previous evening.

Item 12 - Draft agenda for next meeting – 14 July 2010

19. The Chair presented the Draft Agenda for the next meeting in July 2010

20. The Chair advised that Samantha Barrass, from the SRA, will be presenting at this meeting.

The Panel approved the Draft Agenda for the July 2010 meeting.