



**Council for Licensed Conveyancers**  
**Minutes of the Council meeting held on**  
**Thursday 1 February 2024**  
**By Video Conference**  
**12.55 p.m. – 3.15 p.m.**

**Council Present**

Dame Janet Paraskeva (Chair)  
Alan Cogbill  
Colin Wilby  
Victoria MacGregor

Sarah Debney  
Milton James  
Sarah Ryan  
Sheila Kumar, Chief Executive

**In attendance**

Ms. A. Cosens  
Catherine Drennan  
Mr. J. Hinrichsen  
Ms. C. Richardson

Head of Executive Office (*minutes*)  
Head of Policy and Regulatory Standards  
Director of Finance and Operations  
Deputy Director of Authorisations and New  
Business  
Director of Strategy and External Relations

Mr. S. Ward

**Also present**

Kerry Jack, Black Letter Law  
Neil Rose, Black Letter Law

(*for item 3*)  
(*for item 3*)

**Apologies for absence**

Jenny Quirke  
Sally Szarka

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed members to the Council meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Jenny Quirke and Sally Szarka.

No requests to discuss information items at 18-20 had been received.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

Sarah Ryan declared an interest in items 6, 18, and where closed practice Alexander Grace Law has been referenced, as a current employee of Amity Law, to which some cases of closed practice had transferred. Former directors of Alexander Grace Law had joined Amity Law as self employed consultant lawyers following the closure of their practice.

Sarah Ryan notified that PEXA had purchased Smoove Conveyancing with which Amity Law has connections.

Victoria MacGregor advised of a change of employer with effect from 25 February 2024.

Officers declared an interest in item 15(b) (Remuneration Committee report).

**Action Feb/24/01: to update the Register of Interests as above.**

### **3. Annual Evaluation of Communications**

Kerry Jack and Neil Rose of Black Letter Law presented a review of the Communications Strategy and activity in 2023 and plans for 2024, based upon the CLC's Business Plan.

The Communications Strategy had continued to build on the foundations of previous years to demonstrate that the CLC is an effective and innovative specialist regulator focussed on delivering quality outcomes for consumers.

Throughout 2023, CLC representatives took part in a wide range of industry forums, with an increasing emphasis on the transformation of home buying and selling, which has the potential to deliver significant improvements for the consumer, the property market and the UK economy. The CLC had become a member of the Digital Property Market Steering Group and support for transformation of the sector had been included in its forthcoming Business Plan and Strategy.

In 2023, the CLC had held a number of sector focused events, including four in-person compliance roadshows and webinars. The focus of these events was compliance, AML, IT risks and to foster engagement with consultations on policy. In addition, CLC representatives had made presentations or participated in panels various industry and third-party events and had achieved an increased presence and above industry average engagement levels across social media channels. The [CLC Risk Agenda](#), which brings together a list of the biggest risks faced by its regulated community and which had included anti money laundering, conflicts of interest, sanctions, the Accounts Code, complaints handling and breaches of undertaking was well-received and had been highlighted by the Legal Services Board as an example of best practice in their most recent regulatory performance assessment report.

The Council was invited to comment on the proposed plan for 2024 that had been developed to support the delivery of all the Regulatory Objectives and each of the CLC's strategy objectives. In addition to the standing items the proposed plan included:

- Engagement in National Conveyancing Week, 11-15 March 2024
- Industry Round Table events in February and May 2024
- Consumer Round Table event in September 2024
- Launch of the CLC Risk Agenda in April 2024 and associated webinars and face to face events
- Review of the Consumer Charter
- Participation in YouGov consumer research

- Regular columns and articles on consumer education
- Following its first Annual General Meeting in 2024, to continue to hold an Annual General Meeting to engage with stakeholders, property press and journalists.

The following comments and suggestions on the Communications Strategy 2024 were made:

- Development of the 2024 Risk Agenda could place emphasis on the CLC's commitment to compliance and initiatives to support compliance, for example setting out its expectations on undertakings
- To consider participation in National Consumer Week in November 2024, linked to a Consumer Round Table event planned for September 2024
- To progress any opportunities arising from the CLC's Business Plan activity to raise the profile of Probate Work

It was agreed to develop the Communications Strategy to reflect the Council's comments and suggestions for report to the Council's next ordinary meeting.

The Council:

- (1) **NOTED** the Communications activity in 2023; and
- (2) **NOTED** the proposed Communications Plan for 2024
- (3) **AGREED** to review the Communications Strategy at its next meeting on 16 May 2024.

**Action Feb/24/02: To include the Communications Strategy on the Council's forward Work Programme**

#### **4. Minutes and Matters Arising**

##### **(a) Minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2023**

The Council **AGREED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

##### **(b) Ratification of Decision taken outside of a Council Meeting**

The Council **AGREED** to ratify the decision taken outside of a Council meeting to agree recommendations of the Remuneration Committee held on 5 December 2024 regarding staff remuneration.

(c) ***Actions Arising from previous meetings***

The Council reviewed actions arising from previous meetings, most of which had either been completed or featured on the current agenda or forward programme of work.

The Council **NOTED** actions arising from previous meetings.

**5. Chief Executive's Report**

The Chief Executive introduced the report, which included updates on the following:

- Following discussion by Council 9 January 2024, the CLC had submitted an action plan in response to the recommendations made by the Office for Professional Body Anti-Money Laundering (OPBAS) following its inspection in autumn.
- Subsequent to the CLC's submission of information in July 2023, the Legal Services Board's (LSB) Regulatory Performance Assessment report had not yet been received. The report would be circulated to Council members when available.
- Interim CEO responsibilities at the LSB that would be in place following the departure of current LSB Chief Executive Matthew Hill, who would be leaving the role in March 2024.
- The CLC and LSB would be holding a joint Board to Board meeting on 12 February 2024.
- In January 2024, the CLC had published its [Trust and Company Service Provider \(TCSP\) review](#), the focus of which had been undertaken to identify the risks presented by money laundering and ways in which the CLC can mitigate against identified risks through its monitoring and support to practices
- Work on a thematic review of Suspicious Activity Reporting will commence in Q1 of 2024 with the objective of assessing its quality and effectiveness across the regulated population.
- The CLC would be meeting with the Competition and Markets Authority to highlight its progress on quality indicators and in particular Informed Choice following a letter by the Legal Services Consumer Panel which had criticised front line regulators for a lack of progress, as well as issues around probate and issues presented to consumers by unregulated service providers.
- The CLC is one of the founding members of the Digital Property Market Steering Group (DPMSG) which comprises legal sector regulators, representative bodies, representatives of the mortgage lenders and estate agents and has recently met with HM Land Registry to discuss the need to address barriers to progress in homebuying and selling.

Officers were requested to circulate a breakdown of attendance at its first Annual General Meeting which had taken place on 1 February 2024 and feedback received to Council members.

It was suggested that the letter to thank Baroness Penn for her attendance at the CLC's Annual General Meeting mention identified barriers to the homebuying and selling process which are the focus of the DPMSG.

The Council **NOTED** the Chief Executive's Report.

**Action Feb/24/03: to circulate feedback received from Annual General Meeting delegates to Council.**

## **6. 2024 Budget**

The Director of Finance and Operations introduced the proposed budget for 2024, and which had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 23 January 2024, whose comments to improve the clarity of budget-line item descriptions had been incorporated within the report.

The Council was informed the proposed budget was based on:

- Current contractual arrangements
- The proposed Business Plan for 2024 which featured elsewhere on the agenda
- Actual 2023 expenditure
- Amendments to the Practice Fee arrangements approved by the LSB

It was confirmed that the proposed budget was based on existing revenue streams and did not reflect additional future cost recoveries or entrants to the profession which are unknown at present. The CLC would be considering its Reserving Policy in Quarter 2, when the OLC levy is known. The nature of CLC expenditure and costs is stable and regular, the majority can be predicted, with the exception of legal costs associated with disciplinary cases, which, while unknown, may be controlled if necessary.

The Council **AGREED** the proposed 2024 Budget.

## **7. CLC Business Plan**

### **7(a) 2023 Business Plan End of Year Progress Report**

The Council reviewed progress against the 2023 Business Plan which is published [here](#).

- The end of year report noted that progress against the Business Plan overall had been good, with the following notable highlights:
- Review and enhancement of the CLC's internal risk registers of regulated entities and an AML-specific risk register
- Continued enhancement of AML activities and work to ensure compliance with the sanctions regime

- The CLC's database had been brought in-house and on to a more flexible platform to meet particular data and process needs and enhancement of the [online register of the regulated community](#)
- Completion of a review of the CLC's Ethical Principles and the [Code of Conduct](#), which will be the basis for a rolling review of the Handbook of rules and guidance for the regulated community when approved by the LSB
- Further progress to ensure the stability and sustainability of the CLC Compensation Fund work that will be completed in 2024
- Review of the Adjudication Panel Rules which will be submitted to the LSB for approval in 2024.
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Officers were requested to circulate a link to the CLC's recent [State of Probate Survey](#) to members for information. In response to a question about resourcing requirements to lobby for improvements to probate provision, the Council was advised that CLC representatives have been engaging with stakeholders, including the banking, legal sector and Ministry of Justice to improve services available. It was suggested that a nationwide service for probate similar to that of HM Land Registry would be of benefit to consumers.

The Council **NOTED** the end of year position against the 2023 Business Plan.

**Action Feb/24/04: to circulate a link to the published State of Probate Survey responses.**

### **7(b) 2024 Business Plan**

The Director of Strategy and External Relations introduced the proposed Business Plan for 2024, which had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 23 July 2024, which had observed that the proposed Plan is ambitious.

The Senior Management Team and Deputy Directors had reviewed the plan in detail, which had resulted in some changes to timetabling to ease the call on resources. Core activities that take place each year, including the annual Regulatory Performance Assessment submission, the scope of which varies from year to year were captured within the proposed Business Plan for completeness.

It was noted that revised Compensation Fund Rules would be submitted to the Council following their consideration by the Consumer Reference Group and prior to a consultation exercise.

The Council **AGREED** the proposed 2024 Business Plan, subject to any revisions that need to be made in the event of additional requirements during the year.

**Action Feb/24/05: to submit revised draft Compensation Fund Rules to the Council in advance of a consultation exercise.**

## 8. Principal Risk Register

The Principal Risk Register had been discussed and reviewed by the Senior Management Team (SMT), who had identified no new risks. The Audit and Risk Committee had reviewed the Principal Risk Register in detail at its meeting on 23 January 2023 and recommended it for adoption.

The Council **AGREED** to adopt the Principal Risk Register as proposed.

## 9. Updated Procurement Policy

The Director of Finance and Operations introduced proposed revisions to the Procurement Policy, which has been updated to be less prescriptive and to recognise the challenges to small organisations in procuring expert services by placing more weight on regular review of value for money. The Council was informed that the CLC had spoken to several other regulators and compared policies and practices.

Proposed revisions to the policy had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 23 January 2024, whose suggestions were reflected within the proposed revisions, which included:

- The incorporation of specific limits when rolled over contracts should be re-allocated to different lead teams (for example External Audit)
- The incorporation of an annual supplier review report back to the Audit and Risk Committee.

It was noted that the CLC delegation of financial authority permits the Chief Executive or any Director to authorise any amount of intervention expenditure, including administrative and logistical expenditure. It was also noted that the revised Policy includes that:

- Contracts that have terms exceeding one year and of a high value exceeding £50k in total should be referred to the Council for review and ratification prior to commitment
- Unbudgeted expenditure or expenditure that will require unplanned use of reserve or deficit would continue to be submitted to Council for approval.

The Council was informed that where an intervention into a large CLC firm is required, consideration may also be given to splitting the intervention contract to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to undertake any requisite work. In agreeing the proposed revisions to the Procurement Policy, the Council recommended the assembly of a Panel of agents for interventions which will be reviewed on a regular basis.

The Council **AGREED** the Procurement Policy (as amended above).

**Action Feb/24/06: To incorporate the above revisions within the Procurement Policy.**

## 10. Watchlist and Interventions

The Director of Finance and Operations introduced the report, which provided an update on the practices that have been assigned to the watchlist and ongoing intervention activity.

The Council **NOTED** the report.

## 11. Ongoing Competency Requirements

The Deputy Director of Authorisations and New Business introduced the report, which invited the Council to approve Ongoing Competency Framework requirements for CLC Lawyers and Practices. Subject to the Council's approval, the Framework would be implemented with effect from 1 November 2024 and reviewed following the first complete cycle of operation.

The Council was informed that the proposed Framework had been developed in liaison with Council members and licensed practitioners, including Heads of Legal Practices and Heads of Financial Accounting.

The CLC's existing CPD requirements for licence holders include:

- 6 hours minimum CPD for all licence holders
- 8 hours for dual probate and conveyancing licence holders
- 12 to 14 hours where a CLC licence holder is also a Registered Manager
- All licence holders must maintain an up to date training log that is verified by their employer.

The design of the Ongoing Competency Framework for individuals and practices has taken account of [The LSB Statement of Policy on Ongoing Competence](#) and the [CLC Risk Agenda 2023](#). The requirements, which will be effective from 1 November 2024, set minimum standards for completion of assessed and non-assessed activities to be declared within a self-certified Ongoing Competency Return at the same time as licence renewals, with evidence to be submitted through a new digital platform that will be accessible from September 2025. CLC practices will be required to designate a senior office holder – i.e. the Head of Legal Practice, Partner or Director who will be responsible for certifying adherence to ongoing competency requirements, which should annually cover core areas such as AML, Know Your Client and Complaints management. The period November 2024 to October 2025 will be used as a pilot year to enable practices to familiarise themselves with the new arrangements.

It was confirmed that the CLC has sufficient resource to monitor adherence to the proposed ongoing competency requirements, evidence of which will be assessed at the same time as annual licence renewals.

The Council **AGREED**:

- (1) The Ongoing Competency Framework Requirements for CLC Lawyers as set out at Annex A of the report



- (2) The Ongoing Competency Framework Requirements for CLC Practices as set out at Annex B of the report.

## 12. Revised Code of Conduct following 2023 Consultation

The Director of Strategy and External Relations summarised feedback received from a consultation and proposed revisions made to the draft new Ethical Principles and Outcomes in response to comments received. Subject to the Council's agreement and LSB approval, the revised principles would be included in a revised version of the Code of Conduct.

The recent consultation had included a questionnaire to encourage responses, and which had received an improved but modest response rate. The Council was informed that interest in CLC consultations is reasonable compared to other regulators. It was noted that most respondents (88%) had indicated that they were supportive of the proposed changes.

The Council **AGREED** proposed revisions to the Code of Conduct for submission to the LSB for approval.

**Action Feb/24/07: to submit the proposed revisions to the Code of Conduct the LSB for approval.**

## 13. Annual Review of Publication Policy

The Council was invited to conduct an annual review of the Publication Policy, which included proposed amendments to reflect changes arising from the AML Action Plan and OPBAS inspection and observations by internal auditors who had conducted a review of the Policy in Autumn 2023, as well as to reflect the CLC's publication practices more closely.

It was noted that the Internal Audit review of the Publication Policy, which had been considered in detail by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 23 January 2024, had attained a substantial assurance rating, confirming that the CLC does not limit its published information. It had made one recommendation, that the Policy should be updated to record that any data breaches are reported to the Audit and Risk Committee and included within the [CLC Annual Report](#).

Other revisions to the Policy included:

- Expansion of the published Register of Interest to include key anti-money laundering staff
- Quarterly publication of AML activity
- The incorporation of the CLC's existing publication of Enforcement and Discipline data and routes to enforcement
- The incorporation of the CLC's existing publication of data for comparison websites.

The Council **AGREED** the proposed revisions to the Publication Policy.

**Action Feb/24/08: to update the CLC Publication Policy.**

**14. Published Indicators and Metrics**

The Council considered the indicators and metrics for Quarter 4 of 2023 for publication.

The Senior Management Team had reviewed the current KPI's to determine if they still effectively measure the CLC's regulatory activities and whether to amend the existing metrics or add new metrics. Proposed changes include the following additions:

- Practice regulatory authorisations
- Practice applications that are not progressed
- Amendment of existing practice applications and notifications to include categories specifically captured on the database
- Addition of Technician applications
- Comparisons to previous years' applications
- Additional table to show outcomes of monitoring inspections
- Additional table to show non-compliant ratings per code over the past few years to indicate any trends

It was noted that additional information on HM Land Registry requisition data, volumes and trends, may be available later in the year and which would then be incorporated. Similarly, upon implementation of revised Adjudication Panel Rules later this year, the Adjudication Panel's performance against timescales specified within the revised Rules may also be included within reported data.

It was suggested that an explanation of issued Notice Letters, referred to under Disciplinary information at Section 4 be included, and to include an additional category of "No Further Action" within the Disciplinary Information section.

The Council **AGREED:**

- (1) to publish the indicators and metrics detailed at Appendix A of the report;  
and
- (2) to incorporate the above information within future reports.

**Action Feb/24/09: to publish the indicators and metrics for Q4**

**Action Feb/24/10: to incorporate the above information within future performance and metrics reports.**

**15. Committee Chairs' Reports**

**(a) Audit and Risk Committee Chair's Reports**

The Council received a report summarising the business considered at the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 23 January 2024 and an Annual

Report off the Committee's work during 2023.

The Chair's reports included:

- Review of the Director of Finance and Operations' end of year report
- Review of the 2024 Budget
- Review of updates to the Procurement Policy
- Governance Report and Quarterly Statements of Internal Control
- The appointment by External Auditors Scrutton Bland of John Perry as Responsible Individual for the 2024 audit to replace Mark Smith, who has undertaken the role for a number of years
- Internal Audits of the CLC Publication Policy and Key Financial Controls, which had attained substantial assurance ratings
- The Annual Internal Audit Opinion found that the CLC has an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance and internal control, representing the seventh successive year in which the CLC has attained the highest level of assurance possible
- Annual review of the Committee's Terms of Reference
- Annual review of the CLC's probity policies and Business Continuity Plan.

The Council **NOTED**:

- (1) the draft minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 23 January 2024 and Chair's report;
- (2) The Audit and Risk Committee Chair's Annual Report to Council.

**(b) *Remuneration Committee Chairs' reports to Council***

Officers declared an interest in this item.

The Remuneration Committee Chair introduced his Annual Report to Council and a report of the Committee's meeting held on 5 December 2023.

The Chair's reports included:

- Update on current staffing issues
- Remuneration reports
- Adjudication Panel and contractual Monitoring Inspector remuneration
- Review and updating of the Standards of Business Conduct Policy within the Staff Handbook to reflect suggestions that were made by an internal audit review
- Annual review of Committee Terms of Reference.

The Council **NOTED**:

- (1) The report of the Remuneration Committee's meeting held on 5 December 2023;
- (2) The Remuneration Committee Chair's Annual Report to Council.



**(c) *Appointments Committee Chair's Annual Report to Council***

The Chair of the Appointments Committee introduced her Annual Report to Council for the year 2023 which included the following:

- Adjudication Panel appointments and succession planning
- Annual review of the Committee's Terms of Reference
- Overview of Council appraisals
- Council membership succession planning.

The Council **NOTED** the Appointments Committee Chair's Annual Report to Council.

**16. Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

**17. Dates of Council meetings**

Forthcoming meetings of the Council have been scheduled as follows:

- Wednesday 27 March 2024 (Annual Financial Statements)
- Thursday 16 May 2024
- Thursday 25 July 2024
- Thursday 7 November 2024.

**INFORMATION ITEMS**

**18. Q4 Performance Outturn**

The Council **NOTED** the performance outturn for Q4, which had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 23 January 2024.

**19. Property and Law Round Up**

The Council **NOTED** the round up review of major developments and the economic outlook that will affect the conveyancing market.

**20. Council Workplan 2024**

The Council **NOTED** its forthcoming Workplan.