

Council for Licensed Conveyancers
Minutes of the Council meeting held on
Thursday 20 February 2025
Room GA, WeWork, 17 St Helen's Place
London EC3A 6DG
11.00 a.m. - 2.30 p.m.

Council Present

Dame Janet Paraskeva (Chair)
Colin Wilby
Victoria MacGregor

Sarah Debney
Milton James
Jenny Quirke
Sheila Kumar, Chief Executive

In attendance

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

Head of Executive Office (*minutes*)
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 (for item 7)

Apologies for absence

Alan Cogbill
Sarah Ryan
Sally Szarka

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed members to the Council meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Alan Cogbill, Sarah Ryan and Sally Szarka.

No requests to discuss information items at 17-19 had been received.

2. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising

(a) *Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2024*

The Council **AGREED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2024 be approved as a correct record.

(b) *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.

4. Chief Executive's Report

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

- First meeting of the [Technology and Information Group](#) on 5 December 2024 and which is currently conducting [surveys](#) on CLC practices' experience of new technologies and technology providers operating within the industry
- A CLC Consultation on review of the [Compensation Fund Operating Framework](#) that was open up to 14 February 2025, responses to which will be considered prior to submission to the Legal Services Board (LSB) in Quarter 2
- Compensation Fund Claims
- Current education issues, including: revised English Apprenticeship Standards that were launched in time for National Apprenticeship Week; updating of the SQA Diploma that is currently being reviewed by a stakeholder focus group ahead of submission of detailed specifications to OFQAL with a view to roll out in Quarter 2; increased pipeline of students wishing to join the profession
- Preparation and the provision of information for a review by the LSB of the CLC's approach to Discipline and Enforcement, the process for which would include a day of interviews with CLC staff
- CLC's [response to the Office for Legal Complaints \(OLC\) consultation](#) on its budget and business plan for 2025/26
- Following submission of CLC proposals for a new Ongoing Competence Code in November 2024, the LSB had extended the time for its decision under Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Legal Services Act to 17 March 2025; subsequent to receipt of feedback from the LSB, the CLC had been asked to withdraw and re-submit its application. Any implementation of revisions would be dependent on timing of their consideration by the LSB
- A [government announcement](#) on plans to work with the Digital Property Market Steering Group for digitisation of the homebuying and selling process which was welcomed by the CLC

- The LSB had issued its draft Regulatory Performance Assessment of the CLC for comment on 14 February 2025, and which was being reviewed by staff for accuracy and which indicated some misunderstandings of the CLC's compliance regime.

It was noted that the LSB had indicated that the Regulatory Performance Assessment would also be informed by the LSB's reviews of regulators' discipline and enforcement processes. It was suggested that an opportunity for the LSB to meet with a CLC regulated firm(s) is considered

It was agreed that the Chair would write to the LSB on the CLC's approach to discipline, enforcement and compliance.

Chair of the CLC's Technology and Innovation Working Group advised that the Group would be meeting on 29 April 2025 to consider responses to the surveys that it is currently running to seek the views of service users and service providers. It was suggested that responses should be sought prior to changes to current SDLT rates at the end of March 2025.

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

Action Feb/25/01: Chair to write to LSB to clarify the CLC's approach to compliance

Action Feb/25 02: To consider whether the CLC should issue statements/articles comparing different front line regulators and/or apparent differences in LSB approach to oversight of them.

5. Delivering Strategic Growth

The Director of Strategy and External Relations introduced a report setting out new approaches to delivering growth in the CLC's regulation of conveyancing and probate that had been developed following discussion by the Council at its Workshop on 5 December 2024 and drop-in session for Council members that had taken place on 11 February 2025. The strategy would be supported by the CLC's Communications Plan which also features on this agenda.

It was suggested that future reports on progress with the delivery of the strategy detail a range of metrics, including data on practices and individuals applying to switch to CLC regulation. It was agreed to incorporate various metrics within progress reports to the Council, including data on applications to switch regulation and the following:

- Initial enquiries to the Licensing Team
- Number and aggregate turnover of practices applying for CLC regulation
- Cumulative total of new entrants and their aggregate turnover and market share
- Cumulative total of closures and exits
- Existing data on individuals entering and leaving CLC regulation

- Declared practice turnovers collected at annual Professional Indemnity Insurance round

It was agreed to discuss resourcing requirements under the Business Plan 2025 item on this agenda. It was noted that two additional posts within the Strategy and External Communications team created in 2024 had increased effectiveness and capacity for data capture and analysis, as well as policy development. Recruitment to a Finance Manager role would now be prioritised and which in addition to accountancy and support for the Monitoring Team would increase capacity for data analysis and management information.

Officers were thanked for their work on developing the growth strategy.

The Council **AGREED**:

- (1) Proposed steps to encourage and assist more practices to join CLC regulation
- (2) Proposed metrics which, alongside reports from the Senior Management team will provide sufficient data for the assessment of the effectiveness of the proposed approach
- (3) To receive a quarterly progress report against the metrics agreed above
- (4) To receive a checkpoint report on progress with the CLC's growth strategy at the Council's meeting in Quarter 1 of 2026 and annually thereafter.

Action Feb/25/03: To report to the Council quarterly on agreed growth metrics

Action Feb/25/04: To include annual checkpoint reports on progress with the CLC's growth strategy from Quarter 1 of 2026 onwards.

6. CLC Business Plan

6(a) 2024 Business Plan End of Year Report

The Council reviewed progress against the 2024 Business Plan, which was substantially complete.

It noted that some significant areas of work had been rescheduled to align with the LSB's timetable for research or policy development, including on Professional Indemnity Insurance and to ensure appropriate use of resources. The Regulatory Performance Assessment process and the LSB's project on discipline and enforcement in the legal sector had diverted significant resources over the year. The 2025 Business Plan, which also featured on the agenda for discussion had been designed to better reflect the demands of oversight regulation on frontline regulators.

The Council **NOTED** progress on the 2024 Business Plan.

6(b) 2025 Business Plan

The Council reviewed the proposed focus of activity and business priorities in 2025.

Areas of focus that had been developed in consultation with the Professional and Consumer Reference Groups included increases to the priority of work on title applications and post completions to improve standards that are central to conveyancing, and reshaping of the CLC's work on reducing consumer complaints. The CLC would continue to engage with the OLC to seek to improve the timeliness and quality of data on complaints provided by the Ombudsman. The Business Plan for 2025 included an additional capture of how the activities evidence achievement of the LSB's Regulatory Performance Assessment Standards.

It was noted that work to revise and implement changes to Adjudication Panel Rules would complete in 2025 and that events for first time buyers would be held in tandem with compliance and other events in England and Wales as part of the Public Legal Education Agenda.

The Council **AGREED** the Business Plan for 2025.

Action Feb/25/05: to publish the 2025 Business Plan on the CLC Website

7. Annual Review of Communications

Kerry Jack of Black Letter Law presented a review of the Communications Strategy and activity in 2024 and plans for 2025, based upon the CLC's Business Plan.

In particular, from the annual review it was noted that the CLC has developed strong channels to potential users of conveyancing services through regular articles in *What Mortgage* and *First Time Buyer Magazines* to educate consumers about using legal services, and which would be further reinforced in 2025 through the planned events for first time buyers that have been included in the Business Plan. The opening rates of the CLC's regular newsletters to its regulated community remain high, and which reflects the usefulness of the information that the CLC provides.

The Council was invited to comment on the proposed plan for 2025 that had been developed to support the delivery of the Regulatory Objectives and each of the CLC's strategy objectives as well as to support strategic growth. New additions to the current year's Communications Plan included:

- Highlighting disciplinary work in action and the production of an Annual Enforcement Report
- A series of short videos to demonstrate what to expect from CLC regulation and the benefits and value of the CLC's approach
- Local Law Society outreach work and publicity of outcomes arising from regional and national round table discussions

- Actively pressing for improvements in the home buying and selling process, and which will also be a focus of the CLC's Annual Round Table event in May 2025
- Public legal education on the options available for conveyancing
- To repeat a successful student roundtable in Quarter 3, with the objective of increasing the pipeline of conveyancing and probate professionals
- Participation in National Conveyancing Week and the creation of speaker packs for use by conveyancers in careers talks in schools and colleges
- Launch of the CLC's Annual Risk Agenda in Quarter 2, and which will include probate issues
- A third biennial State of Probate survey to increase engagement with probate professionals and prospective probate professionals

The following suggestions for inclusion within the programme were made:

- that the video material that is planned include what the CLC does differently, with links to related information on the CLC's website, as well as comments from insurers
- The Professional Reference Group is approached to support visits to practices and the growth agenda.

The Council:

- (1) **NOTED** the Communications activity in 2024; and
- (2) **NOTED** the proposed Communications Plan for 2025

8. 2025 Budget

The Director of Finance and Operations introduced the proposed budget for 2025, and which had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 20 January 2025, whose comments had been incorporated within the report.

The Council was informed the proposed budget was based on:

- Current contractual arrangements
- The proposed Business Plan for 2025 which featured elsewhere on the agenda
- Actual 2024 expenditure
- Amendments to the Practice Fee arrangements approved by the LSB

The Audit and Risk Committee had also recommended that a 3-year forecast be prepared to demonstrate the impact of the CLC's growth strategy, and which would be developed for the Council Workshops where growth and 2026 fees rates are considered.

The Council **AGREED** the proposed 2025 Budget.

9. 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 21 January 2025. Those comments had been incorporated and the Committee was recommending the revised version for adoption.

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

10. Review of Procurement Policy

The Council conducted an annual review of the CLC's Procurement Policy, which had been substantively updated following its consideration in January 2024.

It was noted that since approval of the Procurement Policy in January 2024, no external developments or changes to practice had occurred that would require further updating, and the Senior Management Team was not proposing any further amendments at this time.

The Council **AGREED** that no changes were required to the current Procurement Policy.

11. Anti-Money Laundering Update Quarter 4, 2024

The Council reviewed the quarterly update on Anti Money Laundering supervision activities and forthcoming work.

The Council **NOTED** the update on Anti Money Laundering activity.

12. Annual Review of Publication Policy

The Council conducted an annual review of the CLC's Publication Policy, which included proposed revisions relating to the publication of decisions of the independent [Adjudication Panel and Enforcement Determinations in relation to ABS practices](#) to increase the minimum timeframe for publication from two years to six years in recognition of the importance of transparency around disciplinary determinations for the regulated profession and for the public to have confidence in the CLC's work.

The Council agreed that the minimum publication period for disciplinary decisions and enforcement notices is increased to six years, both to enable consumers to easily access all relevant information about licensed practices and practitioners for a sufficient period and to align the timescales with that applicable to Professional Indemnity Insurance.

The Council **AGREED** the following revisions and updating of the CLC Publication Policy:

- (1) Adjudication Panel decisions should be published immediately after the end of the appeal period and that duration of publication of Panel Decisions or Enforcement Decision Notices should be calculated from the date of the decision;
- (2) Decisions of the Adjudication Panel and Enforcement Decision Notices should be published on the CLC website for a minimum of 6 years from the date of the decision or for the duration of any suspension, whichever is the longer
- (3) Decisions of the Adjudication Panel and Enforcement Decision Notices should continue to be published in full subject to the general exemptions in the Publication Policy; in the case of Adjudication Panel decisions, this includes full publication whether allegations are found proven or not
- (4) That the CLC website should provide links to the General Regulatory Chamber and Judicial Review decisions relating to the CLC.

Action: Feb/25/06: To revise and publish the CLC's Publication Policy (as amended above)

Action: Feb/25/07: to include links to the General Regulatory Chamber and Judicial Review decisions relating to the CLC.

13. Published Indicators and Metrics

The Council considered the indicators and metrics for Quarter 4 of 2024 for publication.

The Council **AGREED** to publish the indicators and metrics detailed at Appendix A of the report.

Action Feb/25/08: to publish the indicators and metrics for Q4

14. 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 21 January 2025 and an Annual Report of the Committee's work during 2024.

The Chair's reports included:

- Review of Principal Risk Register, provisional financial outturn for 2024 and proposed Budget for 2025 which were also included on this Council agenda
- Review of the 2024 External Audit Plan and proposed External Audit approach, the outcome of which would be presented to the Council's meeting on 27 March 2025. Fees for the External Audit were £17,000 + VAT and a fee for Corporation Tax Computation was £510 + VAT
- Review of a questionnaire to assess the Committee's Self-Effectiveness and

which would be reported to the Committee's next ordinary meeting on 29 April 2025

- A draft Annual Internal Audit Opinion based on reviews completed in 2024 which indicated that the CLC has an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance and internal control
- A further advisory audit of Microsoft M365 provision which was not yet finalised and which will be reported to the Committee when completed; the outcome of the advisory audit would not affect the Annual Internal Audit Opinion
- Annual Internal Audit Fees of £34,000
- Planned internal audit reviews for the 2025 programme as follows:
 - Monitoring and Regulatory Inspections
 - Advisory review on compliance with GDPR Regulations, particularly relating to information collated from licence holders
 - Business Continuity Planning
 - Regulatory Performance Assessment, the scope of which will be shaped following receipt of the current year's assessment
 - Follow Up audit of actions arising from 2024 reviews.

The Council:

- (1) **NOTED** the draft minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 21 January 2025 and summary report
- (2) **NOTED** the draft Annual Report of the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee
- (3) **AGREED** fees for the 2024 External Audit Plan of £17,000 + VAT
- (4) **AGREED** a fee of £510 + VAT for Corporation Tax Computation
- (5) **AGREED** the Annual Internal Audit Fee for 2024 of £34,000
- (6) **NOTED** that a final Annual Report of the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee would be circulated to Council members following finalisation and issue of an advisory review of Microsoft 365 Security.

Action Feb/25/09: To circulate a final Annual Report of the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee to Council members when an advisory review of Microsoft 365 Security has been finalised.

(b) Remuneration Committee Chair's report to Council

Officers declared an interest in this item.

The Remuneration Committee Chair introduced his Annual Report to Council, which included:

- Update on current staffing issues
- Remuneration
- Discussions with Council on recruitment and retention initiatives
- Arrangements for review of benchmarking in 2025

The Council **NOTED** 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:

- Annual review of the Committee's Terms of Reference
- Arrangements for an independent recruitment exercise to appoint to vacancies that had arisen on the Adjudication Panel for a legally qualified Chair and a professional member
- Overview of a pilot of 360 degree feedback and Council member appraisals
- Council membership and succession planning.

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

15. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

16. 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**17. 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 21 January 2025.

18. 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.

19. Council Workplan 2025

The Council **NOTED** its forthcoming Workplan.