

**BAR
STANDARDS
BOARD**

REGULATING BARRISTERS

Part 1 - Public
Minutes of the Bar Standards Board meeting
Thursday 22 May 2025 (2.00 pm)

Hybrid Meeting, Rooms 1.4-1.7, BSB Offices & MS Teams

- Present:** Kathryn Stone OBE (Chair)
Gisela Abbam – via Teams
Jeff Chapman KC
Emir Feisal JP
Ruby Hamid (items 7-14)
Tracey Markham
Andrew Mitchell KC
Ruth Pickering
Stephen Thornton CBE
- By invitation:** Steve Haines (Consultant)
Andy Russell (Director, Council of the Inns of Court) – via Teams
- BSB Executive:** Graham Black (Head of Communications)
Laura Cassidy (Stakeholder Engagement Officer) – via Teams – items 7-14
Naznin Chowdhury (Governance & Risk Manager)
Mike Farmer (Head of Programmes and Planning)
Rebecca Forbes (Head of Governance)
Teresa Haskins (Director of People and Culture)
Saima Hirji (Director of Regulatory Enforcement) – via Teams
Alex Kuczynski (Director of Legal & Information Management)
Ewen Macleod (Director of Strategy, Policy & Insights)
Rupika Madhura (Director of Standards)
Mark Neale (Director General)
John Picken (Governance Officer)
Debbie Stimpson (Director of Planning, Programmes & Engagement)
Adelita Thursby-Pelham (Head of Authorisations)
- Resource Group:** Richard Cullen (Director of Finance)

Item 1 – Welcome / Announcements

1. Kathryn Stone welcomed those present to the meeting, particularly Nazin Chowdhury (Governance & Risk Manager) who was attending the Board for the first time.
2. **Item 2 – Apologies**
 - Irena Sabic KC
 - Leslie Thomas KC
 - Kirsty Brimelow KC (Vice Chair, Bar Council);
 - Malcolm Cree (Chief Executive, Bar Council);
 - Barbara Mills KC (Chair, Bar Council).
 - Lucinda Orr (Treasurer, Bar Council)

Item 3 – Members’ interests and hospitality

3. None.

Item 4 – Approval of Part 1 (public) minutes (Annex A)

4. The Board **approved** the Part 1 (public) minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2025.

Item 5a – Matters arising & Action List

5. The Board **noted** progress on the action list. At the Chair’s request, Mark Neale explained why the point around full cost recovery of authorisation applications had been removed (min 16d – 30/11/23). He stated that:
- an increase in authorisation fees to account for inflation was applied as from 1 April 2025, following the decision at the last Board meeting;
 - a further review of these authorisation arrangements is also now in progress so there is no continuing need to retain this item on the action list.

Item 5b – Forward agenda

6. The Board **noted** the forward agenda list.

**Item 6 – Ratification of Out of Cycle Board Resolution –
Recommendations from the Nomination Committee
BSB 021 (25)**

7. The Board formally ratified the decisions taken out of cycle concerning appointments recommended by the Nomination Committee.

**Item 7 – Performance in 2024/25 & Quarter 4 Performance Report
BSB 022 (25)**

8. Mark Neale highlighted the following:
- operational performance steadily improved during 2024/25. Based on year-on-year figures, we saw sustained or improved results in 14 of the 17 key performance indicators;
 - the Q4 results also show sustained improvements in timeliness and the quality of decision making remains high;
 - all this has been achieved without detriment to the implementation of our Reform Programme.
9. Emir Feisal JP noted, with satisfaction, the positive impact of the Authorisations Team’s proactive management of external communications. This led to a considerable reduction in the number of calls received in Q4 compared to Q3.
10. In response to other questions raised, the executive stated that:
- we aim to hit all current operational targets by the end of 2025/26. As described in Annex A of the paper, sizeable improvements in some areas will need to be made in order to achieve that target;
 - as explained in paragraph 22, the number of unanswered or abandoned calls is artificially high because they include those received outside standard business hours. We are considering new software (Freshdesk) as a means to disaggregate those calls and so provide a more accurate figure. However, this is not likely to be in place for at least six months;

- we regard “case flow” as those items which are received and managed within the anticipated delivery times set out in the key performance indicators (KPIs). In contrast a “backlog” refers to cases that have already gone beyond KPI parameters.

11. The Chair referred to the BSB’s Tech at the Bar conference (15 May 2025). This prompted her to enquire about the possible utilisation of artificial intelligence in BSB operations. In response, Mark Neale stated that:
- at present we are prioritising software upgrades for the BSB’s enforcement processes;
 - notwithstanding that we have initiated a project to introduce an online self-service model for pupillage. This will complete once capacity allows;
 - we also expect to harness artificial intelligence to manage other routine tasks, eg initial checks for authorisation applications in due course once other priority IT changes are in place.

12. **AGREED**

to note:

- the operational performance across the 2024/25 year and in quarter 4 of the same year as set out in annexes A and B of the paper; and
- the progress made in delivering the 2024/25 business plan (annex C).

Item 8 – Performance and Strategic Planning Committee (PSP) Year-End Report November 2024 to end April 2025

BSB 023 (25)

13. Tracey Markham introduced the Year-End report (the second of the bi-annual reports for 2024-25). She also referred to the last meeting of the Committee held on 8 May 2025 (her first as PSP Chair). This included a well-received “deep dive” into the Reform Programme and an update on the management of applications from Transferring Qualified Lawyers (TQLs).
14. Ruby Hamid welcomed the report, commenting positively both on the chairmanship of the last PSP Committee meeting and the useful and candid nature of the discussion held.

15. **AGREED**

to note the report.

Item 9 – Nomination Committee and Independent Decision-making Body (IDB) Terms of Reference

BSB 024 (25)

16. The Board considered proposed changes to the Terms of Reference for the Nomination Committee and the Independent Decision-making Body (IDB). The Chair confirmed that the phrase “standard to be expected” in respect of re-appointments (paragraph 21(h) of the Terms of Reference of the Nomination Committee) refers to both the job description of the postholder and the Code of Conduct for Board Members.
17. **AGREED**
- to approve the amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Nomination Committee and the Independent Decision-making Body (IDB).

**Action -
RF**

Item 10 – Director General’s Report – Public Session

BSB 025 (25)

18. The Board **noted** the report. In response to a question from the Chair, Mark Neale confirmed that the outcome of the Harman Review is expected at the end of September 2025.

Item 11 – Chair’s Report on Visits and External Meetings

BSB 026 (25)

19. The Board **noted** the report.

Item 12 – Any Other Business

20. None.

Item 13 – Dates of next meetings

21. • Thursday 26 June 2025 (BSB Away Day), 09.30 am, Inner Temple.
• Thursday 24 July 2025 (ordinary meeting), 5 pm, BSB Offices.

Item 14 – Private Session

22. The Board resolved to consider the following items in private session:
- (1) Approval of Part 2 (private) minutes – 27 March 2025.
 - (2) Matters arising and action points – Part 2.
 - (3) BSB Corporate Risk update for the Board.
 - (4) TQL Performance.
 - (5) BSB Equality Rules.
 - (6) Reform Programme: Modernising Delivery Update & the desired outcomes of the Reform Programme.
 - (7) Change: targets and measures.
 - (8) Director General’s Report – Private Session.
 - (9) Any other private business.
23. The meeting finished at 5.15 pm.