



REGULATING BARRISTERS

**Part 1 - Public**  
**Minutes of the Bar Standards Board meeting**  
**Thursday 24 July 2025 (5.00 pm)**

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

- Present:** Kathryn Stone OBE (Chair)  
Gisela Abbam  
Jeff Chapman KC  
Ruby Hamid - via Teams  
Tracey Markham  
Andrew Mitchell KC  
Ruth Pickering  
Stephen Thornton CBE
- By invitation:** Kirsty Brimelow KC (Vice Chair, Bar Council) – via Teams  
Steve Haines (Consultant) – via Teams  
Barbara Mills KC (Chair, Bar Council) – via Teams  
Lucinda Orr (Treasurer, Bar Council) – via phone  
Andy Russell (Director, Council of the Inns of Court) – via Teams
- Press:** Neil Rose (Legal Futures) – via Teams
- BSB Executive:** Graham Black (Head of Communications)  
Laura Cassidy (Stakeholder Engagement Officer) – via Teams  
Mike Farmer (Head of Programmes and Planning)  
Rebecca Forbes (Head of Governance)  
Teresa Haskins (Director of People and Culture)  
Alex Kuczynski (Director of Legal & Information Management)  
Ewen Macleod (Director of Strategy, Policy & Insights)  
Rupika Madhura (Director of Regulatory Standards)  
Anna McNee (Lawyer) – via Teams  
Natasha Mutch-Vidal (Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Manager)  
Mark Neale (Director General)  
Richard Parnham (Handbook Manager)  
John Picken (Governance Officer)  
Mark Platt (Head of Policy)  
Debbie Stimpson (Director of Planning, Programmes & Engagement)  
Rishi Taneja (Senior Policy Officer) – via Teams  
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, in particular Kirsty Brimelow KC who was attending her first BSB Board meeting.

**2. Item 2 – Apologies**

- Emir Feisal JP
- Irena Sabic KC
- Leslie Thomas KC
- Malcolm Cree (Chief Executive, Bar Council)
- Saima Hirji (Director of Regulatory Enforcement)

**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 22 May 2025.

**Item 5a – Matters arising & Action List**

5. The Board **noted** the action list (all items completed).

**Item 5b – Forward agenda**

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

**Item 6 – Performance in 2025/26: Quarter 1 Performance Report**

BSB 034 (25)

7. Mark Neale commented as follows:

- in this quarter, the BSB completed more applications from Transferring Qualified Lawyers (TQLs) than it received (so achieved a net reduction in the caseload). This is welcome news and is the result of sustained effort by the Authorisations Team;
- we received a substantially higher number of reports about barristers during this period (a rise of almost a third) which has added to pressure on the Contact and Assessment Team (CAT), although its timeliness performance was nevertheless maintained;
- as a contingency measure, we have utilised external support from one of our retained law firms. This recent event underlines how swiftly the BSB’s workload can fluctuate so we shall need to consider how best to build in short-term resilience in next year’s budget.

8. Andrew Mitchell KC congratulated the Authorisations Team on the reduction in the backlog. He also asked about steps to reduce the overall number of incoming applications - he noted that there are no reciprocal arrangements in place for barristers practising in England and Wales. Adelita Thursby-Pelham confirmed that our immediate focus has been on the administration of applications but that the BSB is aware of, and considering, these wider issues. This may require legal advice.

9. The Chair also expressed her appreciation of progress made on TQL applications. She also asked why a spike in the number of barrister reports had occurred.

10. Mark Neale confirmed this was due to social media usage and associated commentary on international events. These reports may be complex to resolve given they hinge on striking a balance between preserving the reputation of the profession and the rights of an individual to freedom of expression.

11. Kirsty Brimelow KC asked for further information about social media reports ie how such decision making is made and how often external legal advice is needed. Mark Neale agreed to respond to these points outside the meeting.
12. Ruth Pickering referred to the metric on quality of Independent Decision Making Body (IDB) reviews. The 75% KPI figure quoted is outside target but does not fairly reflect the low numbers involved (just four reviews in total and only one decision reversed following receipt of new information). She therefore asked that a more accurate metric be selected instead. Mark Neale agreed and suggested a rolling annual indicator rather than a quarterly figure.
13. **AGREED**
- a) to note the performance report for Quarter 1 (2025/26).
  - b) to contact Kirsty Brimelow KC about the process for resolving reports generated from social media usage (cf. min 11). **MN**
  - c) to change the indicator used for IDB quality metrics from a quarterly to a rolling annual figure (cf. min 12). **MN**

#### **Item 7 – Designation of Right of Appeal for EFTA applicants**

BSB 036 (25)

14. Richard Parnham highlighted the following:
- the paper concerns two sets of agreements between the Government and European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) countries. One agreement covers Switzerland and another refers to the remaining countries (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein).
  - the effect of these agreements is both to require changes to the Handbook to designate rights of appeal and to create new classes of applicant (because those covered by the pre-agreement arrangements are differently stated).
  - new delegated powers need to be in place to facilitate these changes to the Handbook. *Note: Richard Parnham asked to amend the recommended course of action in line with advice from the Head of Governance. It is the case that the Board delegates authority to the Director General, who then sub-delegates as appropriate.*
15. **AGREED**
- to approve delegation of authority from the Board to the Director General to introduce rights of appeal for eligible lawyers from EFTA countries. *Note: these powers will then be sub-delegated to the Director of Regulatory Enforcement, the Director of Strategy, Policy and Insights and the Director of Regulatory Standards.*

#### **Item 8 – Director General’s Report – Public Session**

BSB 037 (25)

16. At the Director General’s request, Ewen Macleod commented further on paragraph 6 of the report concerning the Inns Conduct Committee (ICC). He stated that:
- in addition to the issues quoted in the report, a further point requiring clarification has arisen. This relates to the permission (which is not clear at present); to hold Inns Conduct Committee meetings online;

- change to the regulatory arrangements for the ICC is reserved for the BSB Board (there is no delegated authority in place);
- in consequence, a proposal will be circulated to the Board immediately after the meeting seeking permission for this change. We hope to have approval before the new term on 1 August 2025.

17. Andy Russell noted that custom and practice has moved ahead of regulations in this case. He confirmed that the intent is to ensure that ICC's Screening Panels can take place online.

18. **AGREED**

- a) to note the report.
- b) to contact the Board with a request to amend the regulations governing the Inns' Conduct Committee as described above (cf. mins 16 & 17).

EM

**Item 9 – Chair's Report on Visits and External Meetings**

BSB 038 (25)

19. The Board **noted** the report. She again highlighted the value of her external meetings with barristers and stakeholders and confirmed she would encourage the incoming Chair to do likewise.

**Item 10 – Any Other Business**

20. Kathryn Stone OBE.

Andrew Mitchell KC spoke on behalf of the Board in sending their good wishes to Kathryn Stone who stands down as Chair of the Board after the end of August 2025. He expressed his profound thanks for Kathryn's exceptional performance as Chair. He paid tribute to her hard work, collegiate style and willingness to engage with stakeholders, Board colleagues and the executive alike. Kirsty Brimelow KC expressed the same sentiments on behalf of the Bar Council.

**Item 11 – Date of next meeting**

21. Thursday 25 September 2025 (2.00 pm)

**Item 12 – Private Session**

22. The Board resolved to consider the following items in private session:

- (1) Approval of Part 2 (private) minutes – 22 May 2025.
- (2) Matters arising and action points – Part 2.
- (3) Consolidated Business Plan Update – Q1.
- (4) Risk Tolerance: New Approach and Setting of Tolerance.
- (5) Anti-Racism Action Plan Year 2.
- (6) Performance: voluntary undertakings to Legal Services Board.
- (7) Director General's Report – Private Session.
- (8) Board recruitment, Board reappointment and Chair appointment.
- (9) Any other private business.

23. The meeting finished at 5.20 pm.