

Part 1 - Public

Minutes of the Bar Standards Board meeting

Thursday 27 November 2025 (5.00 pm)

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

- Present:** Professor Chris Bones (Chair)
Gisela Abbam
Jeff Chapman KC
Emir Feisal JP
Ruby Hamid
Tracey Markham
Andrew Mitchell KC
Ruth Pickering
Irena Sabic KC
Stephen Thornton CBE
- By invitation:** Steve Haines (Consultant)
Malcolm Cree (Chief Executive, Bar Council) – via Teams
Lucinda Orr (Treasurer, Bar Council)
Andy Russell (Director, Council of the Inns of Court) – via Teams
- Press:** Neil Rose (Legal Futures)
- BSB Executive:** Rhys Bevan (Head of Legal) – via Teams (items 11 - 12)
Graham Black (Head of Communications)
Ben Bray (Head of Regulatory Risk & Insights)
Naznin Chowdhury (Governance & Risk Manager)
Rebecca Forbes (Head of Governance)
Teresa Haskins (Director of People and Culture)
Saima Hirji (Director of Regulatory Enforcement)
Alex Kuczynski (Director of Legal & Information Management)
Ewen Macleod (Director of Strategy, Policy & Insights)
Rupika Madhura (Director of Regulatory Standards)
Mark Neale (Director General)
John Picken (Governance Officer)
Debbie Stimpson (Director of Planning, Programmes & Engagement)
Adelita Thursby-Pelham (Head of Authorisations)
Hannah Watkins (Senior Lawyer) – via Teams
Kieron Young (Interim Head of Programmes and Planning) – via Teams

Item 1 – Welcome / Announcements

1. The Chair welcomed those present, in particular two staff members who were attending for the Board for the first time ie:
 - Hannah Watkins (Senior Lawyer);
 - Kieron Young (Interim Head of Programmes and Planning).
2. He also highlighted the following:
 - Stephen Thornton CBE stands down from office after eight years of service on 31 December 2025. He thanked Stephen for his outstanding contribution both as a lay Board Member and as Chair of the Governance, Risk and Audit (GRA) Committee;

- Barbara Mills KC stands down as Chair of the Bar Council on 31 December 2025. He thanked Barbara for her hard work on behalf of the profession and looked forward to working with Kirsty Brimelow KC when she takes over as Bar Council Chair on 1 January 2026.

3. **Item 2 – Apologies**

- Leslie Thomas KC
- Kirsty Brimelow KC (Vice Chair, Bar Council)
- Barbara Mills KC (Chair, Bar Council)

Item 3 – Members’ interests and hospitality

4. None.

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

5. The Board **approved** the Part 1 (public) minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2025.

Item 5a – Matters arising & Action List

6. The Board **noted** the action list.

Item 5b – Forward agenda

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

Item 6 – Quarter 2 Performance report – balanced scorecard

BSB 057 (25)

8. Mark Neale highlighted the following:
- we have experienced a significant rise in the volume and complexity of reports received about barristers. *Note: the first half of the year saw a 25% increase;*
 - there appears to be no obvious cause for this though the change in complexity may relate to increased use of artificial intelligence tools;
 - there has been a knock-on effect in terms of our key performance indicators (KPIs), particularly in respect of timeliness. Notwithstanding that, our productivity remains high (a record number of 571 reports were cleared in Quarter 2 – slightly ahead of the 567 new reports received in the same period);
 - our Authorisations Team continues to work through its backlog. Three times as many applications were cleared in Quarter 2 as were received, so good progress is being made;
 - we are taking further action to mitigate the effect of our increased workload by using appropriate outsourcing arrangements.
9. In response to a question about measuring complexity, Saima Hirji said that:
- we use three separate criteria on which to base scoring for the “complexity” of investigation cases;
 - similar measures are not, as yet, in place for the initial assessment stage but we have recently seen an increased complexity in those reports as well.
10. **AGREED**
to note the report.

Item 7 – Annual Report 2024/25

BSB 058 (25)

11. Mark Neale referred to the current draft of the Annual Report as set out in the Annex to the paper. This will be amended to include a foreword from the current Chair that will look to the future. *Note the former Chair, Kathryn Stone OBE, was in post during the period covered by the Report.*
12. He added that it includes (for the first time), information about the BSB's regulatory decision making and its activity around education and training. Previously these had been separately reported. He also thanked Graham Black for his excellent editing work.
13. The Chair welcomed the Report, in particular the "year in numbers" page which he found helpful. He was also encouraged by the statistics quoted about barrister pupils. This suggests the profession is becoming more diverse, in line with the BSB's Regulatory Objectives.
14. **AGREED**
to approve the Annual Report for publication subject to the inclusion of a foreword from the Chair (cf. min 11). *Note: the text of that additional document will be sent to Board Members in advance of formal publication.*

Action -
GB

Item 8 – Governance, Risk and Audit (GRA) Committee Annual Report 2025

BSB 059 (25)

15. Stephen Thornton introduced the report and also expressed his thanks for the support he had received from the executive during his tenure as Committee Chair. He noted, in particular, the "forward view" section which hints at imminent changes to simplify the structure of the BSB's risk register.
16. At the Chair's request, he commented further on this point ie:
 - the revised register will focus on Board level corporate risks which should give the Committee a better and more appropriate focus;
 - other (equally legitimate) risks that occur at an operational level will be managed through separate Departmental risk registers.
17. **AGREED**
to note the report.

Item 9 – Performance and Strategic Planning (PSP) Committee Mid-Year Report 01 May 2025 – 31 October 2025

BSB 060 (25)

18. Tracey Markham summarised the workload of the Committee over the past six months which focused on:
 - quarterly business reporting including operational delivery and KPIs;
 - organisational change brought about by the Reform Programme.
19. She added that:
 - the existing forward agenda of Committee items will be streamlined to give better focus;
 - we have introduced regulatory risk "deep dives" so that the Committee understands how resource allocation maps to these items.

20. The Chair asked about the extent of alignment that now exists between the respective Committees (GRA and PSP). It is obviously important to have full coverage of committee business but without any duplication of effort. In response Tracey Markham confirmed this is already under discussion and her intent is to iron out any residual matters by Quarter 1 of 2026/27.

21. **AGREED**
to note the report.

Item 10 – Governance documents

BSB 061 (25)

22. Rebecca Forbes introduced the report which seeks to clarify the definition of a “lay person” for the purposes of recruitment to the BSB Board and its Committees and Decision-making Bodies. This follows a challenge received from an unregistered barrister. It also provides an update to the Seven Principles of Public Life (this changes the descriptor for “Leadership” to make it a more active duty).

23. The amendment changes the BSB’s Constitution, and in line with the requirements of the Constitution, the Bar Council was consulted on this proposal and did not raise any objection. *Note: the amendment confirms the Board’s existing policy that an unregistered barrister is not deemed to be a “lay” member.*

24. **AGREED**

- a) to approve the revised definition of “lay person” within its governance documents so that no unregistered barrister might be deemed eligible to apply for posts for lay members on BSB governance bodies (including the Board itself).
- b) to note the changes in respect of the Seven Principles of Public Life as set out in the paper.

**Action -
RF**

**Board to
note**

Item 11 – Director General’s Report – Public Session

BSB 062 (25)

25. Mark Neale drew attention to Annex A of the paper concerning revisions to the Enforcement Regulations and the executive’s request that Proposal One set out in the earlier consultation document is implemented immediately. This would move the drafting of allegations to the end of the investigation (rather than at the start, which has previously been the case). *Note – this change does not require a formal amendment to the Regulations.*

26. Alex Kuczynski stated that this proposal was supported by consultation respondents on the grounds that it will enhance accuracy and efficiency in the investigative process. In response to a question from Ruby Hamid, he confirmed that processes are in place to ensure that any investigation will continue to be properly targeted even if formal allegations occur later.

27. **AGREED**

- a) to note the report.
- b) to implement the change to the Enforcement Regulations as described above (cf. min 25) with effect from 1 December 2025.

**RB / AK
to note**

Item 12 – Chair’s Report on Visits and External Meetings

BSB 063 (25)

28. The Board **noted** the report, though one of the dates listed has since changed. The meeting with Sir Jonathan Cohen, originally set for 25 November 2025, has been rescheduled for Tuesday 2 December 2025.

Item 13 – Schedule of Board Meeting Dates (Jan 2026 – Mar 2027)

BSB 064 (25)

29. Members **noted** the Board meeting dates as set out in the report.

Item 14 – Any Other Business

30. None.

Item 15 – Date of next meeting

31. Thursday 29 January 2026 (2.00 pm)

Item 12 – Private Session

32. The Board resolved to consider the following items in private session:
- (1) Approval of Part 2 (private) minutes – 25 September 2025.
 - (2) Matters arising and action points – Part 2.
 - (3) Following up the Board offsite: actions taken and in progress.
 - (4) Performance: Quarterly update – Quarter 2 2025/26.
 - (5) BSB Corporate Risk update to the Board.
 - (6) Enforcement Regulations – outcome of consultation
 - (7) Board member appointments to Committees and Board recruitment.
 - (8) Director General’s Report – Private Session.
 - (9) Any other private business.
 - (10) Annual Board evaluation (Board Member-only item)
33. The meeting finished at 5.25 pm.