

**Part 1 - Public**

**Minutes of the Bar Standards Board meeting**

**Thursday 29 January 2026 (2.00 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
- By invitation:** Malcolm Cree (Chief Executive, Bar Council) – via Teams  
Andy Russell (Director, Council of the Inns of Court) – via Teams  
Heidi Stonecliffe KC (Vice Chair, Bar Council) – via Teams
- Press:** Neil Rose (Legal Futures)
- BSB Executive:** Rhys Bevan (Head of Legal)  
Graham Black (Head of Communications)  
Rebecca Forbes (Head of Governance)  
Steve Haines (Interim Chief Operations Officer)  
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)  
Mark Neale (Director General)  
John Picken (Governance Officer)  
Paul Pretty (Head of Investigations & Enforcement) – via Teams  
Maddison Sears (Project Lawyer)

**Item 1 – Welcome / Announcements**

1. The Chair welcomed the appointment of the new Bar Council Officers who have since taken up their respective posts ie
  - Kirsty Brimelow KC (Chair);
  - Heidi Stonecliffe KC (Vice Chair).
2. Malcolm Cree's tenure as Chief Executive of the Bar Council has now been extended to the end of March 2026.
3. **Item 2 – Apologies**
  - Leslie Thomas KC  
*(Note: Leslie Thomas KC attended during the Part 2 (private) session of the meeting)*
  - Kirsty Brimelow KC (Vice Chair, Bar Council)
  - Lucinda Orr (Treasurer, Bar Council)
  - Debbie Stimpson (Director of Programmes, Planning & Engagement)

**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 27 November 2025.

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

6. The Board **noted** the action list and the adjustment to the action point at 17 (25/09/25) concerning a cost estimate for first-tier data collection. This will be provided before June 2026.

**Item 5b – Forward agenda**

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

**Item 6 – Enforcement Regulations – outcome of consultation**

BSB 002 (26)

8. The Chair referred to the draft consultation feedback statement on the BSB’s Enforcement Regulations (Annex 1). He explained that:
- a Board Member has challenged the feedback statement in respect of of Proposals 27-29 concerning changes to Disciplinary panel composition and requested further data ;
  - in response, he agreed to defer this element of the consultation statement for further debate. In consequence, he asked that any resolution made at the meeting on this item should not include those Proposals. Instead, these will be re-visited at the next meeting.
9. Notwithstanding the caveat mentioned above, the Board unanimously welcomed the paper. Members noted the consultation responses and the positions set out in the draft feedback statement in respect of all remaining proposals, following the BSB’s regulatory objectives and supported the remaining Proposals as set out in the Annex. The Chair expressed his thanks to the Legal Team on behalf of the Board for such a comprehensive and high quality report.

10. **AGREED**

- a) with the exception of Proposals 27-29 to approve the feedback statement for future publication on the terms as drafted in the Annex to the report, subject to textual amendment and formatting.
- b) to further discuss Proposals 27-29 (cf. min 8) and to reconsider these at the Board meeting on 25 March 2026.

**AK to  
note**

**Action -  
AK / JP**

**Item 7 – Annual report on diversity at the Bar**

BSB 003 (26)

11. Ewen Macleod commented as follows:
- the report summarises the Diversity at the Bar report. This identifies the continuation of longer term trends showing greater diversity at the Bar. It also shows a welcome increase in the number of pupils;
  - some response rates are noticeably lower than others and we will seek to improve this through modifications to the architecture of the authorisation to practise process;
  - the report will be published in due course as the final version is still subject to some additional drafting.

12. Emir Feisal JP welcomed the increase in diversity but also highlighted the attrition rate whereby aspiring barristers are Called to the Bar but do not progress further in their careers. He asked about the diversity profile for this group and what positive steps could be taken.
13. Ewen Macleod referred to the BSB's previous research on barriers to progression for students and pupils. This has informed our evolving work on education and training and will also feature in our five-year strategy.
14. The Chair suggested the Board re-visits this topic towards the end of the year, as part of the Board seminar programme. Ruby Hamid welcomed this idea and asked for input opportunities prior to delivery of the seminar so it can be appropriately tailored.
15. At the Chair's invitation, Heidi Stonecliffe KC recalled an earlier iteration of the report (2019) which, at the time, also highlighted low response rates on questions about social mobility. She noted that this continues to be the case and asked if any research on the reasons for this has, or will be, undertaken.
16. In response, the Chair reflected on his own experience from the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEx) where similar circumstances arose. The difficulty resided in the attitudes and personal perspectives of respondents some of whom may have felt stigmatised by the questions and others who may not have considered them appropriate.
17. Ewen Macleod noted that the social mobility questions are relatively new compared to other equality related data we hold and there does seem to be a lag between introducing new questions and accumulating a statistically valid number of responses. The adjustments to how the AtP process is structured (cf. min 11) may assist with this in future.
18. Andrew Mitchell KC suggested that a useful precursor would be to explain the value of increased response rates to diversity data to Heads of Chambers with a request that this is then communicated to their barrister colleagues. This approach may prove to be more productive.
19. **AGREED**
  - a) to note the report.
  - b) to schedule a date for a Board seminar on barriers to progression (cf. min 12). **Action - EM**
  - c) that the executive contacts Board Members prior to this seminar (cf. min 14) and ensures feedback reflects themes and content. **EM to note**
  - d) to follow up the suggestion of contacting Heads of Chambers with Sam Mercer, Head of Diversity & Inclusion and Corporate Social Responsibility at the Bar Council (cf. min 18). **Action - EM**

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

BSB 004 (26)

20. Mark Neale commented on the most recent headlines about BSB performance as set out in Annex A of the paper. The salient points were as follows: **Note: a full report on Q3 performance statistics will be provided for the March meeting.**
- strong productivity, particularly in the Contact and Assessment Team (CAT) which assessed a record 639 reports during the quarter;
  - an increase in the number of investigations concluded;
  - a reduction in the backlog of applications received from Transferring Qualified Lawyers (TQLs).
21. The Chair welcomed the responsiveness of the Senior Leadership Team in addressing the operational challenges of the BSB. He thanked the Insights Team for the quick turnaround on performance headlines and congratulated the CAT, Investigations, and Authorisations Teams on their productivity gains. The Chairs of the Planning, Resources and Performance (PSP) and Governance, Risk & Audit (GRA) Committees also commented positively on progress made in their respective areas of activity.
22. **AGREED**  
The Board **noted** the report.

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

BSB 005 (26)

23. The Board **noted** the report

**Item 10 – Any other business**

24. None.

**Item 11 – Date of next meeting**

25. Wednesday 25 March 2026 (5.00 pm)

**Item 12 – Private Session**

26. The Board resolved to consider the following items in private session:
- (1) Approval of Part 2 (private) minutes – 27 November 2025.
  - (2) Matters arising and action points – Part 2.
  - (3) LSB consultation on statutory guidance and business plan
  - (4) BSB Strategic Plan
  - (5) Budget for 2026/27 & 2027/28
  - (6) BSB Committee Structure
  - (7) Board recruitment
  - (8) Presentation to the LSB Board
  - (9) Director General’s Report – Private Session.
  - (10) Any other private business.
27. The meeting finished at 2.25 pm.