

**Part 1 - Public**  
**Minutes of the Bar Standards Board meeting**  
**Thursday 27 March 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  
Emir Feisal JP – via Teams  
Ruby Hamid – via Teams  
Tracey Markham  
Andrew Mitchell KC  
Ruth Pickering  
Irena Sabic KC  
Stephen Thornton CBE  
Leslie Thomas KC
- By invitation:** Steve Haines (Consultant)  
Lucinda Orr (Treasurer, Bar Council)  
Andy Russell (Director, Council of the Inns of Court) – via Teams
- Press:** Neil Rose (Legal Futures) – via Teams
- BSB Executive:** Ahmet Arikan (Senior Policy Officer)  
Graham Black (Head of Communications)  
Simon Cohl (Head of Professional Standards)  
Mike Farmer (Head of Programmes and Planning) – via Teams  
Rebecca Forbes (Head of Governance)  
Teresa Haskins (Director of People and Culture)  
Saima Hirji (Director of Regulatory Enforcement) – via Teams  
Joy Issacs (Interim Change Manager) – 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)  
Richard Parnham (Regulation Policy Manager)  
John Picken (Governance Officer)  
Debbie Stimpson (Director of Planning, Programmes & Engagement)  
Adelita Thursby-Pelham (Head of Authorisations)
- Resource Group:** Richard Cullen (Director of Finance) – via Teams

**Item 1 – Welcome / Announcements**

1. Kathryn Stone welcomed those present to the meeting, particularly Simon Cohl (Head of Professional Standards) who was attending the Board for the first time.
2. She also referred to the recent confirmation of her appointment to the role of HM Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Authorities (HMICFRS). She thanked colleagues for the warm words of congratulation that she had since received and confirmed that she will stand down as BSB Chair at the end of August 2025.

**3. Item 2 – Apologies**

- Kirsty Brimelow KC (Vice Chair, Bar Council);
- Malcolm Cree (Chief Executive, 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 30 January 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 3 Performance report - balanced scorecard /  
Transferring Qualified Lawyers (TQL) Action Plan  
BSB 009 (25)**

8. Mark Neale highlighted the following:
  - operational performance continues to improve (13 of the 19 key performance indicators were either reached or just narrowly missed);
  - the balanced scorecard illustrates some of the trade-offs in place ie the number of investigations concluded during the quarter was encouragingly high but the timeliness score fell back because a proportion of those had already extended beyond target time;
  - there is a continuing challenge in terms of the rising number of applications from transferring qualified lawyers (TQLs) and key performance indicators for these remain below target. The resource-based solution put in place in 2023 has proved insufficient on its own, so we need to implement systemic changes to streamline and simplify our decision rules.
9. In response to the latter point, Adelita Thursby-Pelham commented that:
  - the action plan to achieve systemic changes is already underway and delivery targets have been set which reflect those agreed at the November 2024 Board meeting;

- Members will receive a progress report after Quarter 1. Any significant deviation from the action plan will be reported to the Performance and Strategic Planning (PSP) Committee;
  - we have already received support from Steve Haines (consultant) and will appoint a Regulatory Lawyer in due course to assist with training and decision making.
10. For assurance purposes, Steve Haines added that:
- the action plan sets challenging targets ie to reduce the backlog by 40 - 50% over a six-month period to the end of June 2025;
  - further improvements in data management and process systemisation are still required but work to achieve this is continuing.
11. In response to a query raised (paragraph 11), the executive noted that the reference to “external” auditors is incorrectly stated. RSM is, in fact, a firm of *internal* auditors with whom the Governance, Risk & Audit (GRA) Committee has already agreed an audit plan for 2025/26. Part of that will be to review application processes and assure the Board about the robustness and deliverability of the TQL action plan.
12. Mark Neale also highlighted an earlier decision on how the balanced scorecard figures are calculated. For timeliness targets, we originally used “working days” as our basis for counting but later changed that to “calendar days” because this better reflected consumers’ experience. However, this then creates a knock-on effect from the Christmas shutdown period so there will be a subsequent impact on timeliness figures for Q4. We expect to consider returning to calculation based on working days for the future. Tracey Markham and Ruby Hamid asked that the Q4 results be presented in parallel, using both sets of calculations.
13. **AGREED**
- a) to note the report.
  - b) that the Q4 results for the Board are presented using calculations for both working days and calendar days (cf. min 12).
- Action IK**

### **Item 7 – Business Plan for 2025/26**

BSB 010 (25)

14. Mark Neale referred to the 2025/26 Business Plan and associated budget which had been recommended for approval by the Performance & Strategic Planning Committee. He commented that:
- the plan aims to:
    - hit operational targets;
    - continue delivery of our Reform Programme;
    - complete existing programmes of work;
    - undertake relevant research work in advance of the new strategy.
  - this is a transitional year between the end of one five-year strategy period and the start of another as from 2026/27.

15. He added that:
- in line with earlier feedback received, the Business Plan highlights a number of key dates, including those for future public consultations;
  - we have been very grateful for the previous engagement of stakeholders, notably that around our equality rules. *Note: the executive now expects to present a paper to the Board on this issue at its next meeting (22 May 2025).*
16. Stephen Thornton referred to the further increase of £0.771m in the BSB budget (paragraph 6). He acknowledged the unexpected nature of the Chancellor's decision to increase National Insurance Contributions but also asked about the reasons for increased costs in the Resource Group and whether this could have been anticipated earlier.
17. In response, the following comments were made:
- Resource Group costs are shared between the BSB and the Bar Council. As the size of the BSB has expanded, its share of that cost is proportionately more than it was;
  - resources in information technology have been increased to keep up with additional demand, including our Reform Programme;
  - at the point of our initial budget (agreed in September 2024) these costs were not fully known. However, as new costs became apparent relevant reports were made to both to the Joint Finance Committee and the Performance and Strategic Planning Committee.
18. The Chair noted this but added that only those who attend such Committees would be aware of the changes. She therefore asked that further thought be given to keeping all Members informed about budget revisions.
19. **AGREED**
- a) to approve the final budget and Business Plan for 2025/26 as set out in Annex 1 of the paper and publish this on the website.
  - b) to consider further how best to keep all Board Members informed about revisions to budgeted expenditure.

**Action**  
**MN**  
**JP to**  
**note**

**Item 8 – Committee Terms of Reference and the Appointments Policy**  
BSB 011 (25)

20. Rebecca Forbes commented as follows:
- the relevant Board / Committees have proposed amendments to their respective Terms of Reference as identified in Annexes 1 - 3;
  - the substantive change is to relocate primary responsibility for oversight of regulatory risk to the Performance and Strategic Planning Committee. The Governance, Risk and Audit Committee will retain oversight of risk management processes;
  - the key component of change to the Appointments Policy is to bring IDB terms of office in line with other BSB non-executive appointments ie four years instead of the current three.

21. In respect of appraisal and quality control processes she confirmed that Board Member appraisals occur annually and that “quality control processes” which relate to other non-executives will now require a review of performance within two years of appointment. She agreed to separate out the clause in paragraph 9.1 of the appointment policy to give this the necessary clarification. *Note: the term “quality control” is used to ensure that those non-executives (other than Board Members) who provide services to us under contract continue to be classified as “self-employed” for tax purposes.*
22. Emir Feisal JP referred to the Board appointment process (paragraph 4) and asked about the means to further amend this part of the policy. In response, Rebecca Forbes advised that
- any amendments would first need to be agreed by the Nomination Committee.
  - any subsequent recommendations about policy changes would then need to be approved by the Board;
  - in the meantime, the existing policy at paragraph 4 remains extant.
23. As Chair of the Nomination Committee, Andrew Mitchell KC confirmed that this item could be discussed at its meeting on 3 April 2025 providing there is time to do so. Leslie Thomas KC suggested that advance notice be given on the changes proposed prior to the April meeting date. **EF to note**
24. **AGREED**
- a) to approve:
    - (i) the amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Governance, Risk & Audit Committee (GRA), the Performance and Strategic Planning Committee (PSP) and the Centralised Examinations Board (CEB); **Action RF**
    - (ii) the revisions to the Board Appointments Policy as set out in Annex 4; **Action RF**
    - (iii) generic amendments to the suite of governance documents arising from the recent restructure and reorganisation. **Action RF**
  - b) to amend paragraph 9.1 of the Board Appointments Policy as described above (cf. min 21) **Action RF**

### **Item 9 – First-tier complaints: implementing the LSB’s new expectations**

BSB 012 (25)

25. Ahmet Arikan explained that the Legal Services Board had recently issued a direction on how “first-tier” complaints should be handled by frontline regulators ie client complaints received by barristers, chambers or BSB regulated entities. A summary of those expectations is listed under Annex B and one consequence is that the BSB will now need to collect more data than it currently does. He confirmed that:
- the BSB will consult on implementation proposals for these new requirements. This will cover additional data collection as well as potential changes to the BSB Handbook;
  - we have already held a roundtable discussion on this issue with peer regulators and the Legal Ombudsman.

26. **AGREED**

to approve consultation proposals on first-tier complaints in line with requirements from the Legal Services Board (to include data collection requirements and potential changes to the BSB Handbook).

**Item 10 – Director General’s Report – Public Session**

BSB 013 (25)

27. The Board **noted** the report.

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

BSB 014 (25)

28. The Board **noted** the report.

**Item 12 – Any Other Business**

29. None.

**Item 13 – Date of next meeting**

30. • Thursday 22 May 2025, 2.00 pm.

**Item 14 – Private Session**

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

- (1) Approval of Part 2 (private) minutes – 30 January 2025.
- (2) Matters arising and action points – Part 2.
- (3) BSB Corporate Risk update for the Board
- (4) Regulatory Risk Framework Review – Board update
- (5) Ethics Call for Evidence
- (6) Review of fees for authorisation applications
- (7) Director General’s Report – Private Session.
- (8) Any other private business.

32. The meeting finished at 5.35 pm.