



## **FACULTY OFFICE**

### **Minutes of the Meeting of the Advisory Board held remotely via Zoom conference on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 at 11.00am**

**Present:** Mark Craig (Chair)  
Michael Heap  
Elaine Standish  
Christopher Vaughan  
Michael Lightower  
Edward Gardiner  
James Barnes-Miller

**In attendance:** Howard Dellar, Registrar Faculty Office  
Ian Blaney, Deputy Registrar Faculty Office  
Neil Turpin, Chief Clerk Faculty Office & Clerk to the Board  
Mili Bhanji, Risk, Compliance and Investigation Officer and Deputy Chief Clerk  
Lynne Boyer, Ecclesiastical Secretary in Faculty Office (minute taking)

## **Part I – open**

### **1. Introductions and welcome**

MC confirmed that the Master had appointed two new lay members:

- James Barnes-Miller works for the British Deaf Association as a mentor and will be in attendance today, and
- Lesley Hurst who is Deputy Director of Education for the Diocese of Chichester and will attend her first Board meeting in September

MC reported that going forward from today's meeting onwards, there would be qualified British Sign Language/English interpreters in attendance with JBM.

JBM confirmed that he had been welcomed on the Board due to his background and experience in the community. He has worked in different roles and currently involved in the BSL Act 2015 (Scotland).

## **2. Apologies for absence**

Christopher Vaughan and Jonathan Coutts were unable to attend and their apologies were accepted. Both will attend the next meeting.

## **3. Minutes of the last meeting**

- a. The Board approved the minutes from the last meeting, which had been circulated in advance.
- b. NT confirmed that all items identified for publication at the last meeting had been uploaded on to the Faculty Office website.

## **4. Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda:**

- a. LSB Governance Review

HJD confirmed that the FO were still waiting for the outcome of the review, although there had been a preliminary catch up. It was clear that there would be more work in terms of producing policies around FO and LBMW conflicts of interest.

MC confirmed that the LSB had recommended that the FO develop a governance manual and the Master had invited MC to create one. The final draft would be ready for the next meeting.

- b. Quality Indicators

NT confirmed that the FO did not formally respond to LSB's Quality Indicators paper, which was produced at the last Board meeting. However, this was discussed with the LSB during the regular relationship management meetings.

JBM queried whether this was like a benchmark against set criteria to form a type of 'kitemark'? NT confirmed the purpose was to help the consumer to find a service with assurance of the quality of that service.

## **5. Faculty Office updates**

- a. Glossary (Data and analytics)

MC explained that the FO had prepared a glossary of terms after discussions at the last meeting about technical terms to do with the analysis of activity on the FO website.

The Board acknowledged the previously circulated glossary and no further questions were raised.

b. Ten Thousand Black Interns

MB reported that the FO had signed up to this initiative to take on young black interns and provide them with an opportunity to gain exposure to working at the FO. The application process was starting in August. There was no contractual requirement for a specific number of interns although the FO had committed to two in the first round.

IB confirmed the internship would provide exposure and experience for career professionals but not an apprenticeship or qualification. The purpose is purely to provide exposure to a career.

c. Advisory Board Lay Membership

MC noted that this issue had already been covered.

## 6. AML/OPBAS

NT reported that the FO staff had a meeting with the OPBAS representative shortly after the Board's last meeting and OPBAS were content with the progress made to date.

## 7. Additional KPIs (paper)

MC confirmed that the Master had asked for the FO to develop a fourth KPI relating to diversity.

This led to a discussion around the proposed KPI paper and the degree of control over notaries opting to enter the profession against the degree of control for retaining those that have already entered. The proposal was to adopt a KPI which is based on the retention of individuals with defined characteristics by putting into place a mechanism for additional support.

ES confirmed that in terms of mentoring the Society would be happy to participate. She added that the Council has decided to look at some kind of scheme or bursary or support either for students who want to train as notaries who have financial difficulties or those that face challenges which might make it harder for them to qualify or might struggle if the financial backing has been removed by their firm, with a view to particularly encouraging those from diverse backgrounds.

JBM pointed out that he is a linguistic but not disabled. It would be helpful if the KPI included additional disabled or sensory categories to be more inclusive. We need to be more distinct within subdivisions.

NT explained that the diversity data collected uses the statutory definition, which refers to long-term disability lasting more than 12 months. There is no breakdown within this definition.

MC confirmed that a revised version of the KPI paper would be produced for further comment.

**ACTION - the Master will be updated on progress on this issue, and a second draft of the paper circulated well in advance of the next meeting.**

## 8. Faculty Office Risk Matrix

MC explained that the Risk Matrix belongs to the Master's Audit Committee. The purpose of adding this item to the agenda was to inform the Advisory Board, provide useful insight and demonstrate the change in risk levels.

IB explained the register is used to maintain a note of major risk arising from catastrophic events such as a bomb at Westminster to minor HR matters. For example, matters that influence the register and are recorded include:

- Working from home could give rise to various dysfunctionalities. However, we have been emailing and meeting by zoom very effectively so team working has not been impaired.
- A new staff handbook is in place.
- Concern around FO finances is less worrisome than expected.
- Whether covid will have any impact is open to speculation but this year's income has been OK compared to a conservative budget.
- We do want a more in person contact and to do an away day to work together creatively and professionally.
- We are in the process of recruiting inspectors and have two interviews lined up
- Brexit has become a theoretical risk as opposed a real risk, so we have noted this is no longer a red alert.

This led to a discussion around the impact of Brexit on notaries and support for Faculty Office staff when returning to work.

A number of comments were made on the risk matrix, and these will be carried forward for discussion to the next Master's Council and the Master's Audit Committee.

#### **9. Law tech/AI – FCDO E-App project for digital certificates (including digital signatures)**

ML reported that the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office had raised two questions: the first relates to whether notaries will be using digital seals and if so, will they be digital seals and signatures. The consensus is that the use of the seal will be retained, and the reasons are outlined in the accompanying note to this agenda item. The second question is to establish whether there is any legal obligation in using a digital seal and whether it is quite sufficient for an individual to use a digital signature as we are using qualified signatures. That alone should be sufficient to identify the signer and for a 3<sup>rd</sup> party to identify the signature.

#### **10. The Post Office trademark applications paper**

NT confirmed that the Master's initial view was that subject to the Board's views, the FO may put in observations but was unlikely to formally object to the proposals. The item was also on the agenda to enable the wider profession to be made aware of the proposals as an information sharing exercise.

This led to a discussion about the benefits of seeking advice from a trademark lawyer and the Board deliberated on the grounds for objecting to the Post Office trademark applications under "legal Services". The objection would need to be submitted by the end of June.

It was agreed that HJD and ML would work together to draw up a plan of action.

**ACTION - the Master will be updated on progress on this issue.**

#### **11. Any other urgent business**

None

#### **12. Date of next meetings for 2021**

21<sup>st</sup> September 2021

7 December 2021

Part II - closed