



Matthew Vickers
Chief Executive
Scottish Legal Complaints Commission
The Stamp Office
10-14 Waterloo Place
EDINBURGH
EH1 3EG

Our Ref: KL/LJ/LB
Date: 6 March 2015

Dear Matthew

RE: CONSULTATION ON THE OPERATING PLAN AND 2015/16 BUDGET FOR THE SLCC

Thank you for your letter of 3 February and for providing us with a copy of your draft operating plan and budget for 2015/16. As with previous years, we took the opportunity to provide this information to our members and we have listened carefully to their views before responding.

As you know, our principal interest is to maintain a robust system for the handling of legal complaints and to ensure the system commands the confidence of the public and the profession. We realise that the necessary resources must be made available so that complaints can be dealt with as quickly and effectively as possible.

However, as with all bodies, it is important to look for efficiencies where they exist. Experience from both the public and private sectors has shown that standards can be maintained if not improved whilst also restricting or reducing the organisation's cost base.

To that end, we are pleased to see further 2.5% reduction in the SLCC's operating budget, although we recognise much of this comes from the reduction in depreciation charges. Nevertheless, this reduction comes on top of the 5% fall in overall expenditure in last year's budget and we recognise that further changes to staff headcount are also contributing to this overall reduction.

We also note the proposal to use a further £83,000 of the SLCC reserves to finance this year's operating budget. This is on top of the £76,000 of reserves which was identified for last year's budget. Whilst we agree that reserves can and should be used to finance operating budgets where it is prudent to do so, we also realise this is not a sustainable option for the long term. As such, it would be useful to get clarity



on the SLCC's reserves policy and any changes proposed so we can better understand the potential for impacts on the general levy longer term.

In terms of the rate of the levy for 2015/16, we are of course pleased to see you proposing a significant reduction, which comes on the back of last year's freeze in cash terms. In particular, we welcome the proposed 10% cut in levy for those solicitors working in-house. Given the pressure on this part of the profession, with increasing numbers being required to personally finance the costs associated with their professional qualification, we believe this is an important reduction.

We note from your letter that you plan to raise £25,000 from the complaints levy in 2015/16 and we recognise the increasing importance of this income as the SLCC moves further towards the 'polluter pays' principle. I note you plan to publish further policy around this for decisions made after 1 July 2015. We would certainly value early sight of this policy and any opportunity to feed in views before a final policy is agreed.

I hope this feedback is helpful and, as always, we would be more than happy to meet with you or any of your team to clarify matters or to discuss any aspect of the issues raised within this response.

Finally, I realise this will be the last budget and levy consultation before you step down as chief executive. Whilst I know there will be opportunities to express this in person, I would like to place on the record the sincere thanks of the Law Society of Scotland for your leadership, determination, openness and partnership approach over the last three years. There is no doubt that the working relationship between our two organisations and the exchange of relevant information has improved greatly during your time as chief executive. I believe this has been to the benefit of all of those who rely on us and the services which we provide within the Scottish system of co-regulation.

On behalf of the Law Society, we wish you all the very best in your new role as Deputy Chief Ombudsman at Ombudsman Services and for your move back to England. We look forward to working with your successor and the wider SLCC team in helping to maintain the highest possible standards within the profession.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lorna B Jack', written in a cursive style.

Lorna Jack
Chief Executive