

**MINUTE OF A BOARD CONFERENCE CALL OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SCOTTISH
LEGAL COMPLAINTS COMMISSION: 10am on MONDAY 23 MARCH 2026 on MS
Teams**

PRESENT:

LAY:

Jane Malcolm, Chair
Jean Grier
Thane Lawrie
John Stevenson

LAWYER:

Lynne Collingham
Richard McMeeken

Apologies:

Anne Gibson, Niki Maclean (Vice Chair) and Dale Hughes.

In attendance:

Neil Stevenson (CEO)
Vicky Crichton (DoPP)
[REDACTED] (PCo)

Louise Burnett (DoBP)
Caroline Robertson (DoR)
[REDACTED] (Secretariat - minutes)

Abbreviations used:

SGvt – Scottish Government
DoPP – Director of Public Policy
LSS – Law Society of Scotland
MP – Master Policy

DoBP – Director of Business Performance
DoR – Director of Resolution
FoA – Faculty of Advocates
PCo – Project Co-ordinator

Private Member only session, after which, the Chair invited SMT, PCo and Secretariat to join the meeting at 10.20am

1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the Conference Call, and noted the apologies as recorded from Anne Gibson, Dale Hughes and Niki Maclean (Vice Chair).
- 1.2 The Chair explained the purpose of this meeting was to receive an update from SMT on current Key Issues, to fully discuss the responses received to the Budget Consultation, which closed at 12noon on 18 March 2026, and to formally approve the Budget and Operating Plan for 2026/27.

2. Declaration of Interests

- 2.1 The Chair noted the standard declarations of interest declared by Lynne Collingham and Richard McMeeken in relation to any pecuniary interest with regards to budgetary and the reform discussion process/response by the SLCC.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 The CEO spoke to the paper presented and provided an update on the following specific matters.
- 3.2 **Ratification of the Typographical Correction to the Scheme of Delegation (SoD)** – the CEO apologised for the minor typographical error, which has now been rectified, with the updated document being brought to board for ratification. This related to a transposition of text within the SoD. Members raised points on the consistent use of language and the roles of the chair, interim and deputy chairs in the document, and suggested these be considered for review. Following discussion, the Chair reminded Board that a full review would be undertaken at a later date. Board agreed to ratify the correction and noted that a full review of the SoD framework would be undertaken as part of the Reform transformation programme.
- 3.3 **S17** – the DoR provided an update on the current number of cases being considered as S17, and also gave a brief updated on the four Contempt of Court Hearings, of which two

were against the same firm. The DoR reported in all four cases no Contempt was found. A further Contempt case will be called on 25 March and the DoR will provide an update at the next meeting.

3.4

McClure –

[REDACTED]

Board agreed it should continue to monitor this issue, recognising that related complaints may arise after long quiet periods.

3.5

Legal Panel Retendering Work – the CEO confirmed the retendering exercise had commenced and was progressing as planned, with considerable interest from potential suppliers. Board noted an update would be brought back in due course when the deadline had concluded on 16 April.

3.6

Individual Solicitor and Associated costs – Board discussed a single solicitor whose repeated legal actions have resulted in significant cumulative legal costs across multiple proceedings (including appeals, tribunal proceedings and court matters). It was noted that these costs had previously been reported across several budget lines, reducing their visibility as a single issue. The CEO reported these costs (£105,000) applied from October 2024 to February 2026, and did not include staff time.

3.7

[REDACTED]

3.8

Board agreed the Executive has acted proportionately within legal constraints. Board also agreed with the CEO this should remain on the Key Issues paper for ongoing oversight, and that options for high-level transparency about exceptional costs (without identifying individuals) should be considered through appropriate reporting in the Annual Report.

3.9

Post Wilson Process Appeal – Board noted that an appeal has been lodged

[REDACTED]

Board noted that the matter will continue to be monitored.

3.10

Scottish Parliament Election Guidance – the Chair and CEO reminded Members the Scottish Parliamentary Elections take place on 7 May, with SGvt publishing guidance applicable during the election period of 26 March to 7 May. This guidance is for public bodies to remain politically impartial, and to ensure that public resources are not used for party-political purposes.

3.11

Board Member Appointment Process – the Chair and CEO confirmed the process for appointing new board members was nearing completion, with final contracts pending. Once finalised, Members will be updated with details and biographies of the new

appointees. It was hoped these would be completed before the start of the election period that starts on 26 March.

3.12 The Chair thanked SMT for their updates to the paper presented.

4. Draft Budget and Operating Plan Consultation document for 2026/27

4.1 The Chair advised this paper would be discussed in detail, giving consideration to all the consultation responses, and after discussion, Members would be asked to formally approve the final draft Budget for 2026/27.

4.2 The DoPP confirmed the consultation was launched on 15 January 2026 and formal letters were sent to all key stakeholders:

- The Law Society of Scotland
- The Regulatory Committee of the Law Society of Scotland
- The Faculty of Advocates
- The Association of Construction Attorneys
- The Scottish Government
- The SLCC Consumer Panel
- The Competition and Markets Authority
- Consumer Scotland.

4.3 The DoPP reminded Board the consultation was also published on our website and released in a press statement. The DoPP noted that SLAS and LSS has released press statements on the consultation.

4.4 The DoPP reported that five responses had been received by the statutory deadline, these were from:

- Consumer Scotland
- Law Society of Scotland
- Scottish Law Agents Society (SLAS)
- The SLCC Consumer Panel
- Faculty of Advocates

4.5 The DoPP reported the Sponsor Team at SGvt sent a holding letter on 15 January and whilst there has been close contact with the SGvt Sponsor Team, no formal response from SGvt or the Minister had been submitted for the Board to consider. It was noted that SGvt does not generally respond to this type of consultation and there had been considerable dialogue on funding linked to reform during this period.

4.6 Board carefully considered the five consultation responses received on the draft 2026–27 Budget. Members noted that responses were written with respondents' own memberships in mind, and varied in tone and focus. Board discussed the key themes raised rather than revisiting the detailed figures, these were:

4.6.1 **Funding of reform and implementation**, particularly the expectation that costs should be met by SGvt funding rather than the profession, and the need for clear messaging on what is and is not SGvt funded.

4.6.2 **Unregulated legal services**, with respondents highlighting concerns about the costs and risks associated with this area and the need to consider its future financial impact.

4.6.3 **Staffing and costs**, including queries about pay costs and capacity, which the Board noted were driven by sustained increases in complaint volumes and complexity.

4.6.4 **Perceptions of SLCC's role**, particularly suggestions that SLCC should focus narrowly on complaints handling. Board reaffirmed that complaints handling is a core function of the SLCC but not the organisation's sole responsibility, noting its wider statutory public interest, regulatory oversight and improvement roles.

4.6.5 **Transparency and clarity**, including requests for clearer explanation of budget assumptions and reserves.

4.7 After full discussion, Board agreed that consultation responses did not require amendment of the proposed budget.

- 4.8 Board also agreed that a single consolidated response addressing common themes would be published, with continued engagement with key stakeholders. This response should clarify budget assumptions, SGvt funding, staffing rationale, training, and SLCC’s statutory role, and correct any misunderstandings where appropriate. The Executive’s engagement with key stakeholders and respondents should continue alongside publication of the consolidated response.
- 4.9 Board confirmed that none of the consultation responses raised issues requiring a change to the proposed budget figures and the proposed levy. Members were satisfied that the draft budget appropriately reflected operational pressures, reform activity, and known funding commitments.
- 4.10 After full consideration, Board formally confirmed and approved, the draft Budget and Operating Plan for 2026/27, and noted the following would apply:
- General Levy would be set at £644
 - Complaint Levy would be set at £7,000
 - Approved Regulator (AR) Fee set at £0
 - AR Complaint Levy would be set at £8,000
 - Licensed Provider (LP) Fee set at £1,000
 - Licensed Provider Complaint Levy would be set at £7,000
- 4.11 Board confirmed their approval of the listed suggested discounts from the General Levy for different practitioner groups, as detailed below:

Actual General Levy Set	£
Private Practice Solicitors +3 Years (Principals/Managers)	644
Private Practice Solicitors +3 Years (Employed)	522
Conveyancing or Executry Practitioner 3+ years	522
Solicitors in first 3 years of practice	221
Practising out with Scotland	156
In-house Conveyancing or Executry Practitioner	156
In-house Lawyers	156
Advocates +3 Years	246
Advocates in first 3 years of practice	207
Association of Commercial Attorneys	165

- 4.12 The Chair confirmed that Board:
- 4.12.1 **Approved the 2026–27 Budget**, having considered the consultation responses.
 - 4.12.2 **Approved the Consumer Duty Assessment**.
 - 4.12.3 **Delegated finalisation of the Strategy and Operating Plan** to the Chief Executive, reflecting the agreed budget.
 - 4.12.4 **Delegated finalisation of communications**, including the consultation response document, to the Chief Executive.
- 4.13 The CEO confirmed all responses received to the Budget consultation would be published in line with the consultation process before the end of March, and that the Budget would be laid in Scottish Parliament by the end of April.
- 4.14 The Chair requested that SMT draft an appropriate communication as agreed by Board. The CEO and DoPP confirmed this would be drafted and shared with the Chair prior to publication.

Action	Owner	Due Date
CEO/DoPP to draft an appropriate communication to be shared with the Chair, and to ensure that all responses are published on the website in line with the Budget Consultation process.	CEO/SMT/Chair	By 31 March 2026
CEO/SMT to finalise the paper which will be laid in Scottish Parliament, along with our Budget and Operating Plan and Consumer Duty Impact Assessment, in line with our statutory timescales.	CEO/SMT	By 30 April 2026

- 4.15 Members thanked the CEO and SMT for their explanation to the papers presented.

5. Reform Update

- 5.1 The PCo spoke to the paper presented, giving Board an update on progress with the Transformation Programme and associated Reform projects.
- 5.2 The PCo confirmed the initial tranche of SGvt funding has been received, and discussions were ongoing with SGvt finance officials on how and when the second tranche will be released. The PCo reported this was expected to be on or around 1 July, which will align with the financial planning cycle.
- 5.3 The PCo reported progress across all workstreams remains on track, with some interim milestones re-profiled due to short-term resource pressures, which will have no impact on the overall programme end date. The DoPP advised this was due to the new Policy Officer's start date being slightly later than anticipated, and they were working with the PCo to ensure project deadlines are still met.
- 5.4 Good progress was reported on the Consumer Panel project, and preparatory work for new rules, with a multi-disciplinary approach was in place to ensure operational clarity. Board noted there was ongoing engagement with key stakeholders, including the Lord President's Office, Law Society and Faculty, alongside continued offers of collaboration, whilst maintaining delivery momentum. Members sought reassurance the drafting of new rules would also involve non-legal staff to ensure clarity and accessibility. The CEO confirmed there would be a multidisciplinary approach, including the use of plain English requirements.
- 5.5 Board considered the project Risk Register, highlighting the importance of tracking SGvt funding, the role of the new Policy Officer post, and the need for clear language regarding internal audit and project risks. SMT agreed to review and update the risk register accordingly.
- 5.6 Board discussed apparent variances between original project budgets and current spend. The DoBP clarified that these reflected a presentation and timing issue, which included the need to demonstrate commitment of funding within the SGvt financial year, rather than any uncontrolled overspend. The DoBP and CEO confirmed that all expenditure can be traced back to invoice level detail, and that re-forecasting will take place in-line with normal financial monitoring processes.
- 5.9 Board noted the clarification on project spends and confirmed that the financial monitoring, audit trail, and risk management arrangements were in place. The updated programme risk register was also noted, and it was agreed this would be updated to reflect earlier discussions.

Action	Owner	Due Date
PCo and CEO to review the project risk register to incorporate Board's suggested changes..	PCo & CEO	By 31 March 2026

6. AOCB

- 6.1 The Chair confirmed matters were moving forward with the new Board Members, with SGvt still waiting on one response, as soon as confirmation is received from SGvt, information will be shared with Board.

7. Date of Next Meetings

- 7.1 Members noted the next full Board Meeting and Development Session will take place in person, in the Boardroom on **Monday 27 April 2026**, with lunch being provided.
- **Board Development Session will commence at 10am**
 - **Board meeting will start thereafter, with a short lunchbreak in between.**

8. Review of the Meeting

- 8.1 The Chair thanked everyone for their time and input on to the Conference Call.
- 8.2 With no other business the meeting concluded.

Private Member only session, where SMT, PCo and Secretariat left the meeting at 11.46am
Call ended 11.55am