



Matthew Vickers
Chief Executive
The Scottish Legal Complaints Commission
The Stamp Office
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EDINBURGH
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Our Ref: PY/LJ/LB
Date: 25 March 2013

Dear Matthew

**SCOTTISH LEGAL COMPLAINTS COMMISSION PROPOSED BUDGET AND
LEVY 2013/14**

Thank you for providing the Law Society with a copy of the SLCC's proposed budget and levy along with a copy of the accounts for 2011/12. I also appreciate your adjusted timeframe which has allowed us to give this proper consideration and to properly consult with our members.

I realise that the SLCC are proposing a budget which would require most Scottish solicitors to pay a levy of £324, which represents a below inflation increase of 1.8%. However, any increase needs to be seen in the context of both the extremely challenging economic backdrop against which our members are working as well as the SLCC's significant levy increase in June last year.

I should say that the Society is absolutely committed to maintaining a robust and transparent legal complaints system. We recognise that the SLCC needs proper resources in order to effectively deliver its important statutory responsibilities.

Nevertheless, our members remained concerned by the further proposed increase which, as I said, comes on top of an increase of over £100 last year. We recognise the reasons for that last increase, following the use of significant amounts of reserves to fund the 2011/12 budget. Nevertheless, the increase still comes at a time when solicitor firms work hard to overcome tough trading conditions and an uncertain economic outlook.

We noted that the increase in the SLCC's total budget sits at odd with the rest of public sector where there is substantial pressure to deliver greater efficiency and



reduce expenditure. We certainly do not believe the SLCC, as a body funded by the legal profession rather than taxpayers, should be immune from this wider drive within the public sector to live within their financial means. In terms of the responses to the consultation, members have expressed clear concerns around the length of time taken to deal with complaints, service standards in general and the lack of clear and adequate reasons in decisions they are receiving in some cases.

As such, we believe the SLCC needs to clearly explain how it is controlling costs as well as identifying and eliminating unnecessary expenditure, both this year and in the future. We would certainly be happy, not only to share such information with our members but also to assist the SLCC in identifying ways in which the existing system could be delivered more efficiently. I believe our members and the public they serve would strongly welcome this, not least because a number of them used our recent consultation to raise specific concerns about the SLCC's operation of the existing scheme and identified areas where the current system could be more efficient.

This is particularly important as we have noted the intention to utilise £204,000 of the SLCC's reserves as part of this year's operational budget, despite the proposed 1.8% increase. This is of concern in relation to next year's fee level if operating costs are not reduced.

Longer term, the SLCC and Law Society have already begun a joint initiative, looking at the whole system of complaints as set out by the 2007 Act. We are now four years on from the start of the new system and I think most would accept that the system needs reform and improvement. We certainly look forward to working with the SLCC and others, including those representing consumer interests, to identify reforms which can maintain a robust system that protects the interests of the public and a system that is more efficient and ultimately places less cost on those required to fund it. I am confident that by working together, we can deliver a complaints system truly fit for purpose and believe this needs to be maintained as a priority for both our organisations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Lorna Jack'.

Lorna Jack
Chief Executive