

**MINUTE OF A BOARD CONFERENCE CALL OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SCOTTISH  
LEGAL COMPLAINTS COMMISSION: 10am on Monday 15 December 2025 on MS  
Teams**

**PRESENT:**

**LAY:**

Jane Malcolm, Chair  
Anne Gibson (*joined at 11.10am*)  
Jean Grier  
Thane Lawrie  
Niki Maclean, Vice Chair  
John Stevenson

**LAWYER:**

Lynne Collingham  
Dale Hughes  
Richard McMeeken

**Apologies:** none

**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  
RPO – Relevant Professional Organisation  
LPP – Legal Professional Privilege  
SGvt – Scottish Government

DoBP – Director of Business Performance  
DoR – Director of Resolution  
FoA – Faculty of Advocates  
CoS – Court of Session  
SP – Scottish Parliament  
MP – Master Policy

***Private Member only session, after which the Meeting Chair invited SMT, PCo and Secretariat to join the meeting at 10.12am***

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the Conference Call and advised that Member, A Gibson would be joining later due to a prior engagement.

**2. Declaration of Interests**

2.1 The Chair noted the standard declarations of interest declared by Lynne Collingham, Dale Hughes, and Richard McMeeken in relation to any pecuniary interest with regards to budgetary discussions and the Reform Bill process/responses by the SLCC.

**3. Key Issues**

- 3.1 The CEO spoke to the paper presented and agreed all items would be taken as read, with additional updates provided on specific matters.
- 3.2 **ABS** – Members noted the updated provided by the DoPP.
- 3.3 **S17** – Members noted the update provided by the DoR.
- 3.4 **Standard of Proof/Scottish Solicitors Discipline Tribunal (SSDT)** – Members noted the recent SSDT statement and looked forward to receiving more information in due course.
- 3.5 **Legal Services Panel Retendering** – Members noted this project had now started, with the appointment of a procurement adviser to help ensure the process is legally and fully compliant with the Public Procurement Process, and looked forward to receiving updates in due course.
- 3.6 The Chair thanked SMT for their input to the paper presented.

**4. Draft Strategy, Op Plan and Budget 2026/27**

- 4.1 The CEO gave an update on the proposed SGvt transition funding, advising that whilst they have been informed that whilst this has been formally signed off by the Minister, the payment will be delayed due to the new SGvt finance payment system. The CEO hoped this would be received before the proposed budget goes out for consultation in January.
- 4.2 The CEO reminded Members of the statutory obligation to consult on the budget model by the end of January, advising they might wish to consider consulting on two different budget models.
- 4.3 Members noted the new board paper cover sheet. The Chair noted that Board needs to formally delegate, in principle, to the SMT to formally consult on the draft Strategy and draft Budget presented, along with the draft Operating Plan. The CEO reminded Board, they were requested to formally agree and approve both documents, or to give sufficient feedback to SMT, so a finalised strategy and budget could be brought back to the January Board for approval, as this would be the last possible date to approve a Budget in line with the Act. The CEO reiterated, that if Members required further discussion, this could be done at the January Board, but there would be a very tight turnaround to issue the documents within the timescales for the consultation period.
- 4.4 The Chair agreed the draft Budget could be finally presented to the January Board if Members felt further information or discussion was required.
- 4.5 The Chair suggested each document should be considered, discussed, and approved individually, with everyone agreeing to this proposal.
- 4.6 Annex 1 – draft Strategy for 2026-2030 – The Chair sought formal approval for the draft Strategy which was discussed in detail at the November Workshop. Board was in full agreement that the final drafting be delegated to the CEO.
- 4.7 Annex 4 – Additional items for discussion – The Chair suggested Board review and consider this information presented by the Executive.
- 4.7.1 Forecasting – Members noted the incoming year to date figures presented and gave due consideration on how these reflect on the risks of the organisation, and whether if these figures continue to rise as they have been, what impact this will have on future forecasting. The CEO reiterated these projections were an estimate, which will be continually reviewed by SMT. Members also considered how the actual headcount of CIs is reported and agreed going forward they should be reported as fulltime equivalents (FTEs). The DoBP gave an example, a headcount of 38 equates to a 37.1 FTE. Members suggested it might be helpful to include additional information on FTE data and it was agreed that for future reporting SMT recalibrate to FTE for longer-term future paper presentations.

Action	Owner	Due Date
CEO to include additional information on FTE data in future forecasting for presentation to Board.	CEO	Q3

- 4.7.2 Members also requested rewording from 'salaries' for members of the consumer panel to 'remuneration'.
- 4.7.3 The Chair reiterated that Members should submit any final typographical changes on Annex 1 to the CEO by close of play on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December.
- 4.8 Annex 2 - Draft Budget 2026/27 - The Chair thanked the DoBP for providing four different draft General Levy options for Board to consider, noting that the need to deliver acceptable performance levels while delivering significant reform meant the inclusion of additional staff in three of the options . It was also noted that the proposed budget did not include a component relating to the introduction of ABSs, given the Law Society of Scotland's position on the timing of their introduction. The Chair suggested Members consider these different options individually, and in particular, the rationale and impact these would have on the draft Budget and the profession as a whole.
- 4.9 The DoBP and CEO spoke to the options presented, and reminded Members that these figures were based on discussions at both the October Board and November Workshop.
- 4.10 The DoBP advised these figures were based on the usual fixed costs (rent, staffing etc.) but also accommodates any potential rises, for example, inflation, SGvt pay policy, legal fees.

- Option 1 – no CI vacancies and a 9% Levy increase.
  - Option 2 – 2 x CI vacancies starting on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2026 and a 10.5% Levy increase.
  - Option 3 – 3 x CI vacancies starting on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2026 and a 11% Levy increase.
  - Option 4 – a budget with 3 x CI vacancies starting on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2026 and a 12.5% Levy increase.
- 4.11 Members fully considered each of these options and the impact they would have on the Commission’s reform programme, service levels, relationship with the professions, management of the risks identified and the obligation to maintain appropriate reserves..

*11.10am Member, A Gibson joined the meeting*

- 4.12 Board had a free and frank discussion on each of the options presented, during which they considered these in detail. Following which, the Chair sought confirmation that Board approved the proposed draft Budget for 2026/27. In light of key factors including the need to maintain performance while managing a major change programme and associated risks, and to offer clarity to the profession, Board was in full agreement with the proposed Option 4. This comprised a planned income of £6,007,232 (including an anticipated £300,000 from SGvt) and planned expenditure of £5,990,482, and would mean a General Levy increase of 12.5%.
- 4.13 Board formally agreed to consult on:
- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| 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 |
- 4.14 The Chair noted key messages would also be included, and that these would be reviewed following Board’s final decisions on the other points being discussed today. Members reiterated it was important to ensure that discussions with SGvt on future funding and how this is used for transition of the new Bill were reflected in the consultation. Board agreed Annex 2 was formally approved.
- 4.15 Annex 3 - Draft Operating Plan 2026/27 – The Chair asked for comments on the proposed draft Op Plan, with none received, Board formally approved and delegated final drafting to the CEO.
- 4.16 Annex 4 – Inconvenience and Distress Tariffs – Members sought clarification on whether there had been any formal benchmarking with other Ombudsman organisations. The DoPP advised this had not been done and following a free and frank discussion it was agreed it would be. Members considered whether the current tariffs were still pertinent given the CPI (consumer price index) rates since the tariffs were set, and whether the current top level of £5000 should be maintained. Following discussion, it was agreed the DoPP would seek further information to be brought back to Board for further discussion.
- 4.17 Annex 5 - Consumer Duty – The Chair sought confirmation that Board approved the proposed approach on Consumer Duty. Board was in full agreement.
- 4.18 Annex 6 - Other Policy and Risk Considerations – The Chair asked Board for their formal approval for the proposed approach to the other Policy and Risk Considerations. Board was in full agreement.
- 4.19 The Chair thanked both Board and SMT for their helpful input on these discussions today.
- 4.20 The Chair confirmed Board formally approved and agreed:
- 4.20.1 Draft Strategy for 2026-2030.
  - 4.20.2 Draft Budget 2026/27.
  - 4.20.3 Draft Operating Plan 2026/27.
  - 4.20.4 Consumer Duty.
  - 4.20.5 Other Policy and Risk Considerations.
- 4.21 The CEO noted further work on drafting would take place, and that the consultation would be as planned in line with the statutory process.

## **5. Reform Update**

- 5.1 Members noted the update presented on the Transformational Programme. The CEO gave thanks to the PCo for the drafting of the paper, with the Gantt chart and Risk Register also noted.

## **6. Board papers – publishing minutes or full papers**

- 6.1 The CEO spoke to the paper presented, giving an update on current capacity and the PCo having benchmarked with similar organisations. Following a free and frank discussion, it was agreed to postpone this work due to the additional transitional work on Reform, and that we were already reasonably aligned with similar Scottish organisations in the publication of the final approved minutes. This matter would be considered at a later date. Board agreed to continue with the publication of copies of the final approved minutes.

## **7. AOCB**

- 7.1 None noted for discussion..

## **8. Chief Executives Report**

- 8.1 Members noted the paper presented.

## **9. Date of Next Meetings**

- 9.1 Members noted the next full Board Meeting and Development Session will take place in person, in the Forth Boardroom on **Monday 19 January 2026**, with lunch being provided.
- **Board Development Session will commence at 10am**
  - **Board meeting will start thereafter at 1pm**

## **10. Review of the Meeting**

- 10.1 The Chair thanked everyone for their time and input on to the Conference Call and wished everyone good wishes for the festive season.
- 10.2 With no other business the meeting concluded.

*12noon SMT, PCo and Secretariat left the meeting*

## **Further Private Member only session**

Call ended 12.05pm