

SRA BOARD

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SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY
Minutes of the SRA Board meeting
held on 16 and 17 March 2026 at Leonardo Royal Hotel London St Paul's 10
Godliman Street London EC4V 5AJ

Subject to final approval by the SRA Board at its meeting on 21 April 2026

Present: Anna Bradley (Chair)
Ann Harrison
Claire Bassett
Rob McWilliam
Simon Millhouse
Claudio Pollack
Lisa Mayhew
Vikas Shah
Liz Smart
Nicola Williams

In attendance: Sarah Rapson (for all items), Aileen Armstrong (not for item 5),
Deborah Jones (not for item 5), Jonathan Peddie (not for item 5),
Liz Rosser (not for item 5), Dominic Tambling (for all items),
Simon Wall (for item 5), Julie Swan (for item 7)

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

2.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS ON 27 JANUARY AND 11 AND 23 FEBRUARY 2026

2.1 The minutes of the meetings on 27 January and 11 and 23 February 2026 were agreed, subject to a sense check on what should be published and what redacted.

3 MATTERS ARISING AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no matters arising that would not be covered on the agenda. All actions due were completed or in hand.

3.2 Interests were as previously declared and available to view on the SRA website. Members would declare any additional particular interest in an individual item if necessary.

4 CHAIR'S UPDATE

4.1 The Chair reminded the Board that since its last meeting it had agreed to the reappointment of Rob McWilliam to the Board for a period of 18 months to the end of August 2027 and to the reappointment of Vikas Shah and Ann Harrison for a further term of one year each (subject to the completion of satisfactory appraisals) to the end of 2027. The Board had also agreed that the Chief Executive should be appointed as a director of the Board for as long as she remained CEO or until the Board decided otherwise.

SRA BOARD

CLASSIFICATION – CONFIDENTIAL BEFORE PUBLICATION

- 4.2 The Board also agreed that two new Board members should be recruited this year, and a number of points relating to the process for this and the recruitment of a new Board Chair.
- 4.3 The Board also agreed a prioritisation approach to PM Law Group claims and other Compensation Fund Claims which allows us to ensure that we are focused on supporting the clients who have the greatest need.
- 4.4 In workshop discussions on 17 March the Board discussed an outline narrative for the Business Plan 2026/27, our funding for 2026/27, with related proposals for the practising fee requirement, and also proposals for the Compensation Fund contribution requirement in 2026/27. The Board would be asked to approve, for consultation, a draft Business Plan and funding level, and Compensation Fund contribution for 2026/27, at its meeting on 21 April 2026.
- 4.5 The Board had also discussed strategic risks and ideas for our new Corporate Strategy for 2027-30. The development of this strategy would provide an opportunity for a significant shift, and reset, of the SRA's priorities and operating model. This would take into account factors including changes in the market and profession, our transformation programmes which were already underway, and a continuing increase in reports to us. The Executive would use the outputs from the discussion in developing an overall framework for the new Strategy and approach to pre-consultation engagement.

5 REVIEW OF EXECUTIVE TEAM STRUCTURE

- 5.1 The Board heard a presentation following the new Chief Executive's review of the executive layers of the organisation, both in terms of improving ways of working and delayering; and also proposals for expansion and stabilising of the Executive team. The Board supported the proposals and asked the Chief Executive to take steps to implement the changes.

NB: the paper for this item will not be published because it relates to emerging strategy or policy and contains personal data or matters involving a named individual, an individual who can be identified or who has a reasonable expectation that the matter will remain confidential

6 REPORT ON THE FOURTH FULL YEAR OF THE SOLICITORS QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

- 6.1 The Board was asked to consider an overview of the operation of the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) route to qualification, just over four years after the first assessment, and detail on the fourth year of the delivery of the assessments. Some reports which would be published in April had been made available to the Board: Kaplan's annual report; the annual report of the Independent Reviewer; and our quality assurance report. These reports covered the academic year 2024/25.
- 6.2 The Board was joined by Zoe Robinson, Managing Director at Kaplan Assessments, Soren Kroon, Managing Director, Kaplan Professional, Richard Hankins, Kaplan's Quality and Standards Director and Mike O'Rorke, Kaplan's

SRA BOARD

CLASSIFICATION – CONFIDENTIAL BEFORE PUBLICATION

Service and Operations Director. Topics covered in discussion included Kaplan’s work on the continuous improvement approach to the candidate experience, and the development of the training market and work to help support candidates’ choices.

6.2 Board members welcomed Kaplan’s commitment to enhancing SQE candidates’ experience, and the maturing of the relationship with the SRA. Topics covered in discussion included the pleasing diversity of SQE candidates, the performance of candidates with different neurodiversity characteristics, and the actions being taken by the SRA to address the causes of differential outcomes by ethnicity. The annual reports on the SQE, including that of the Independent Reviewer, provided evidence the assessments are performing well.

6.3 The Board welcomed the work being undertaken by Kaplan to inform changes to enhance the experience of candidates sitting SQE1. It was supportive of changes that would not compromise the standard or integrity of the assessments.

6.4 The Board noted improving candidate satisfaction with the administration and delivery of the exams. It welcomed efforts to help candidates and training providers understand the design of the SQE as this should build confidence. However, it noted the challenges of securing high levels of candidate satisfaction with a demanding, high stakes exam.

6.5 The Board discussed a number of ideas for improving the candidate experience and agreed work should be taken forward to implement, including consulting on a rule change where necessary. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

6.6 The Board noted key developments since it considered the third year of delivery at its meeting in February 2025, noted progress against our actions to address the causes of differential outcomes and confirmed the SQE fees for the academic year 2026/2027 of: SQE1: £2,006 (£1,934 for 2025/26) and SQE2: £3,086 (£2,974 for 2025/26).

7 CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S REPORT

7.1 The Board was asked to consider an update on progress made in developing our 2026 priorities which the Chief Executive would set out at the Law Society Council meeting on 18 March 2026.

SRA BOARD

CLASSIFICATION – CONFIDENTIAL BEFORE PUBLICATION

- 7.2 The Board noted that the Chief Executive had spent a lot of time in her first few months in post talking to stakeholders and that the objectives she had identified in her first few weeks in post had been widely welcomed.
- 7.3 Board members suggested that it was particularly important to get the language right around our work on data and risk to be clear about what we would and would not be able to do. It would also be important to make sure that this work dovetailed with that on developing the Business Plan for 2026/27 and Corporate Strategy for 2027-30, which would be discussed in the following day's workshop session.
- 7.4 The Chief Executive updated the Board on management of the PM Law case. A steering group had been established to manage work around the case and we have begun work to review touchpoints with the firm ahead of its closure and what action we had taken in response. This will help us identify any immediate lessons that should be applied elsewhere and inform risk reviews of firms with similar profiles. We will then need to carry out a fuller review in relation to this case given the limits of the initial work.

[REDACTED]

- 7.6 Board members suggested that the outcomes of any in-depth review should ideally include proposals for what we needed to do to give us the best chance to identify any similar firm that are or might be close to posing a similar risk, and to enable us to take the appropriate action at pace. This was likely to include a move towards a more supervisory model, which we were already exploring in our work to develop a supervision pilot. Culture change was also important so that staff had the confidence to speak out when they identified problems. The Board asked the Executive to report back with further detail in relation to its insights from the PM Law case, and the supervision pilot.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- 7.9 The Board noted the report.

8 BOARD EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION

- 8.1 The Board was asked to comment on recommendations for implementing the Board Effectiveness Review it had received at its 23 February 2026 meeting. At the

SRA BOARD

CLASSIFICATION – CONFIDENTIAL BEFORE PUBLICATION

Board's request the Executive had grouped suggested actions for implementing the potential enhancements set out in the report under six headings.

- 8.2 On specific enhancements, the Board agreed that it would be helpful to revisit the Board's connections with staff, including through the staff networks, to ensure that it had a good understanding of the culture of the organisation. This, alongside a review of reporting to the Board on performance and risk, would strengthen the Board's understanding of what was happening in the organisation.
- 8.3 The Board Chair suggested that in addition to the enhancements in the report, it would also be helpful to provide regular opportunities for the Board to reflect on whether it was doing the job that it should. This might be more deliberately done at the end of meeting review which already takes place and with discussions on the meeting agenda twice a year.
- 8.4 The intention was to share the report with the LSB with information on what view the Board had taken about the report and, following its own reflections, for the Board to say what it thought it could do better and what sort of Board it aspired to be.

NB: annex 1 of this paper will not be published because it contains information which is commercially sensitive

9 REVIEW OF MEETING AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 9.1 There was no other business. The next meeting would be held on 21 April 2026.