

**Minutes of a meeting held at 2nd Floor Markwell House
on Wednesday 12th April 2023**

Members Present:	Ruth Costain (Chair)	RC
	David Trace (Vice Chair) (<i>via Teams</i>)	DT
	Colm Andrew	CA
	Paul Coppell	PC
	Pam Pringle	PP
Officers Present:	Christine Clucas	CC
	Martina Jay	MJ/LACO
	Alex Powell (Note Taker)	AP
Apologies:	Howard Connell	HC
	Bob Ayres	BA

14/23	WELCOME AND MINUTES		
	<p>RC opened the meeting and apologies from HC were noted.</p> <p>RC congratulated DT on his appointment as Vice-Chairman of the Committee.</p> <p>The amended Minutes of the meeting 08th February having been previously circulated, were approved.</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting 8th March, having been previously circulated, contained typos but were agreed as an accurate record and, subject to amendments of typos were to be sent to the Chairman to be signed ahead of the next meeting.</p>	AP	
15/23	MATTERS ARISING		
	<p>12/23 (ii) Disbursements – MJ and CC had met with the Interim Chief Registrar and the Legal Officer of the IOM Courts. CC noted that there may be more work to do on the issue of disbursements before writing to the judiciary and changes will need to be incorporated into updated Regulations when they are drafted.</p> <p>It was noted that the Legal Aid Certifying Officer may be asked to attend a meeting of the Family Court User Group and there followed discussion which included but not limited to -</p> <p>CC was asked to seek advice from the Attorney General's Chambers.</p>	CC	

		<p>MJ wants clear criteria/direction about what disbursements she can grant as she is mindful that ultimately it is the public purse/Legal Aid budget being utilised for matters that other Departments (e.g. DHSC) should be funding.</p> <p>That in some instances, Advocates are capable of guiding and resolving mediation issues without resorting to professional mediators/Court Welfare Officers. This would also save resources.</p>	
16/23	MATTERS REQUIRING ACTION AND DECISION		
	(a)	Update from the Legal Aid Certifying Officer (MJ)	
	(i)	<p>Tribunals – AP was asked to circulate to the LAC a redacted copy of the Legal Aid Appeal Tribunal’s (LAAT) judgement regarding the ongoing Tribunal in which the LAAT was seeking to review both the merits <i>and</i> finances of an appeal.</p> <p>The Committee remained deeply concerned whether the LAAT had the authority to review the financial aspect of cases and, if this is the case, the potential impact on delays to the legal process, particularly where the Opponent may be using the Appeal system vexatiously.</p>	AP
	(b)	Update on Staffing/Operational Matters (CC)	
	(i)	<p>CC reported that the Legal Aid Office continues to be affected by long term staff sickness, temporary members of staff have been employed and the focus remains on maintaining service delivery.</p> <p>HM Attorney General’s Legal Aid Review was currently being considered by Treasury and a response is awaited.</p>	
17/23	ANY OTHER BUSINESS		
		<p>AP to provide revised version of the Code of Conduct to the Committee and also review the templates for the Attendance Policy and Register of Interests. PC said that he would enquire whether he could share with the Committee details of the Conflict of Interests documentation used by another body on which he sits.</p> <p>PC gave his apologies for the next meeting which is due to take place on Wednesday 10th May at 14:00.</p>	AP/PC

The meeting closed at 15:16

**Minutes agreed
By
Chair**



Date 6/05/23

