

**Minutes of the Legal Aid Committee Meeting held at 2nd Floor, Markwell House
on Wednesday 10th January 2024**

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

01/01	WELCOME AND MINUTES		
	<p>RC opened the meeting. No conflicts of interest were declared.</p> <p>The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 13th December 2023, having been previously circulated, were approved.</p>		
01/02	MATTERS ARISING		
		None.	
01/03	MATTERS REQUIRING ACTION AND DECISION		
	(a)	Update on Staffing/Operational Matters (CC)	
	(i)	<p>CC reported as follows: a steady work load was processed through the Legal Aid Office over the Christmas and New Year period. The current staffing levels are two Secretaries and two Administrative Officers. Going forward and in conjunction with the intended changes to legal aid delivery, it is anticipated that staffing levels and skills will need to be carefully reviewed in due course. A meeting between the Director of Social Security, CC and MJ (LACO) is scheduled for Friday, 12th January 2024 to discuss intended changes to Civil Legal Aid and any necessary and future actions that may arise as a result. Noted by the LAC.</p>	
	(ii)	<p>Following on from the above and in connection with the Legal Aid Review, there was nothing further to report on the Review at the present time. Noted by the LAC.</p>	


		(iii)	It was duly noted by HC that a new Legal Aid Bill will be required together with supporting secondary legislation. Given HC's previous role (legislative drafting), the offer of his expertise and assistance was very gratefully received by CC and MJ who are to be involved in the drafting process. Noted by the LAC.	
	(b)	Update from the Legal Aid Certifying Officer (MJ)		
		(i)	<p>MJ reported as follows: that the matter of an appeal to the LAAT on a refusal to approve a further disbursement cost in a criminal legal aid case has been resolved. Following the previous LAC Meeting, MJ felt it was appropriate to try and discuss the case with the instructed Advocate. The Advocate agreed and attended the Legal Aid Office on the 19th December 2023 to meet with CC and MJ.</p> <p>Very helpfully the Advocate provided key background information on the defendant together with the relevant legislative provisions contained within section 19 (1) to (4) of the Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1993. It was also helpful to know the view taken by the Deputy High Bailiff. Following on from this and after a thorough discussion of the case, overall it was felt to be in the interests of justice and also to achieve best evidence, that a further expert report be obtained as speedily as possible to minimise an already delayed criminal case. The disbursement cost was approved by the LACO and a further report is in the pipeline. It is hoped that there will be little further delay to the case progressing to final hearing and that the LAC are content with LACO's course of action in this case. Noted by the LAC.</p> <p>HC raised the point that it would be helpful if the LACO outlined the circumstances of this case and the necessity of evidence in support of such disbursement requests to the Law Society and the High Bailiff for future reference. MJ will take this forward and advise the LAC in due course. Noted by the LAC.</p>	
		(ii)	The Report of the Joint Consultative Committee Conference on Legal Aid has been drafted by Alex Powell (AP) and was provided to LACO for consideration/additions/amendments on the 5 th January 2024. Having duly considered the	

		contents and after further discussion with AP, it will now shortly be available to the LA for consideration/comment. Noted by the LAC.	
01/04	ANY OTHER BUSINESS		
		None.	

The meeting closed at 14:32pm

Minutes agreed

**By
Chair**



Date 13/03/24