

**Minutes of the Legal Aid Committee Meeting held at 2nd Floor, Markwell House
on Wednesday 13 March 2024**

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

01/01	WELCOME AND MINUTES		
14:02	<p>RC opened the meeting.</p> <p>The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 10 January 2024, having been previously circulated, were approved.</p> <p>Conflicts of interest were sought, none were declared.</p>		
01/02	MATTERS ARISING		
		None.	
01/03	MATTERS REQUIRING ACTION AND DECISION		
	(a)	Update from the Legal Aid Certifying Officer (MJ)	
	(i)	<p>MJ Reported as Follows:</p> <p>Workflow and type have been consistent and considered normal to business as usual.</p> <p>Summary provided on the two very high costs cases currently progressing, being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One civil case but if successful, costs will be recovered through the Statutory Charge; - One criminal case currently c£157k but if successful, costs will be from central funds. 	

	(b)	Update on Staffing/Operational Matters (CC)	
		<p>(i) CC reported as follows:</p> <p>An update on the Legal Aid Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The support of Treasury has been secured - The Steering Group is being set up with the first meeting scheduled for 8 April, attendees and their representation, are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dr Alex Allinson MHK – Chair of the Steering Group - Dr Michelle Haywood MHK – as Deputy Chair of the Steering Group/Political Member for Social Security - Rebecca Cubbon and Alexander Armstrong – representing the Courts - Nicola Pitts (or deputy) – representing Attorney General’s Chambers - David Trace – Legal Aid Committee representative - Malgorzata Simpson – Critical Friend - Michele Mountjoy – Director Social Security/Treasury Board member - Martina Jay – Legal Aid Certifying Officer - Victoria Unsworth – pending appointment of a representative for the Law Society - Christine Clucas – Project Manager - The priorities for the first meeting are to include drafting of the implementation plan. <p>(ii) An update of a meeting held between CC/MJ and Victoria Unsworth, representing the Law Society. Key areas raised were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality of Legal Aid applications from Advocates remains unsatisfactory with c.57% incomplete. This is to be raised at a Legal Aid User Group Meeting scheduled for 8 April - The Law Society have requested an increase in hourly rates. This has been considered by Treasury and the Council of Ministers and awaits agreement with 	

		<p>the Deemsters. The proposed rates are currently embargoed until announcement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staffing – Remains adequate for current workload. Ian Jackson (IJ) has been appointed to a newly created role, on a fixed term basis, to provide support for the Legal Aid programme and manage the Legal Aid office on a day to day basis. 	
01/04	ANY OTHER BUSINESS		
	<p>(a) PC requested that the Report of the Joint Consultative Committee Conference on Legal Aid be circulated.</p> <p>MJ advised that content was confidential but that a précis of key findings will be produced and circulated to the LAC.</p> <p>Brief discussion regarding experience of differing jurisdictional interlock between Legal Aid Offices with their judiciary.</p> <p>(b) HC requested update regarding new Legal Aid regulations. CC provided update regarding the legislation being at drafting stage between CC/MJ and Attorney General's Chambers.</p> <p>(c) RC confirms the next meeting to be 10 April 2024. Apologies, in advance, received from PP and HC.</p>	<p>Action: MJ</p>	

The meeting closed at 14:23pm

Minutes agreed

**By
Chair**



Date

10/04/24