

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

Members Present:	Ruth Costain (Chair)	RC
	David Trace (Vice Chair) (<i>via Teams</i>)	DT
	Colm Andrew	CA
	Paul Coppell	PC
Officers Present:	Martina Jay (LACO)	MJ
	Ian Jackson (Note taker)	IJ
Apologies:	Howard Connell	HC
	Pam Pringle	PP
	Christine Clucas	CC
No attendance :	Bob Ayre	BA

01/01	WELCOME AND MINUTES		
14:00	<p>RC opened the meeting.</p> <p>The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 13 March 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>Discussion Topic – Joint Consultative Committee on Legal Aid</p> <p>A summary of each jurisdictional area and their reflections to date on Legal Aid provision was provided.</p> <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial sustainability and digitalisation (including upgrades to Case Management Systems). • Political consistency and future legislative plans. 	

	(b) Update on Legal Aid Steering Group Foundation Meeting (DT)	
	<p>(i) DT reported as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All attendees bar one at the meeting. • LACO is drafting legislative provisions with input from a representative of the Attorney General’s Chambers, prior to referral to a Legislative Draftsperson. • Noted Statutory Board requirement and a review of existing legislation. • Terms of Reference discussed and amendments to be made. • CC to draft Implementation Plan and Prioritisation Plan. • Legal Aid Office will provide support for this project, albeit with limited resources. • LACO succession planning needs attention. • CC to produce a business case to go to the Transformation Fund to finalise a business case in relation to a new Case Management System and digitalisation. • The Chair noted that there were no objections and that the meeting was positive. <p>A general discussion took place regarding the roles and future roles of the LACO and DLACO and the statutory obligation to have a Certifying Officer always in place.</p> <p>It is NOTED that there is currently a High Risk and a High Potential Key Person Dependency Risk. The expected resolution, being the Steering Group, will not be adequate due to the anticipated delivery schedule.</p> <p>Actions Captured:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Key Person Dependency Risk to remain open action. 2. CC to provide the LAC with the job description and person specification for the LACO and DLACO roles. 3. DT/CC to present an overview of the appointment process to the LAC for a LACO / DLACO. 4. The Committee to consider further action required regarding the LACO risk/dependence, together with 	<p>Noted – Risk</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>IJ</p> <p>CC</p> <p>DT / CC</p>

			<p>other areas which may require consideration and clarity.</p> <p>5. The Committee to consider further and provide their recommendations regarding a plan to set up an appraisal methodology for the LACO and the DLACO (DT subsequently revised is ongoing Operational Line Management and Support are provided by the Deputy Director of the Social Security Division of the Treasury).</p>	<p>All</p> <p>All</p>
	(c)	Update on staffing (MJ)		
		(i)	<p>MJ advised that the workload within the Legal Aid Office remains consistent and a timely service continues to be provided to Advocates and service users.</p> <p>At the next meeting, we hope to be in a position to confirm the appointment of an AO to fill one of the vacant posts.</p>	
01/04	ANY OTHER BUSINESS			
	(a)	<p>PC advised that he is unable to renew for a further term in office and that his last LAC meeting will be June or July. This update is provided as an informal notification.</p>		
	(b)	<p>MJ provided an update on the Legal Aid/Law Society Meeting of 8 April 2024.</p> <p>This was a very positive way to address the current issues and concerns of the Law Society Advocates, of which 16 attended.</p> <p>The Law Society requested further collaborative workshops of this manner, with statutory Charges to be the next priority.</p> <p>Date of next meeting 8 May 2024</p> <p>PC provided his apologies in advance</p>		

The meeting closed at 15:45pm

Minutes agreed

**By
Chair**



Date

12/06/24

