

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF CILEx REGULATION LIMITED (CRL)
HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2024**

Present:

Jonathan Rees (Chair), Helen Astle, Alice Belcher and Douglas Blackstock.

In attendance (CILEx Regulation):

John Barwick, Chief Executive Officer

Simon Blandy, Director of Regulation

Richard Hood, Interim Director of Governance, Policy and Legal

Gerrard McCarthy, Finance Manager (items 12 and 13– Financial Update and Budget/PCF)

Note: the formal meeting had been preceded by a private Board discussion.

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Apologies had been received from Patricia White who was recovering from a recent operation.

2 Declarations of Interests

Douglas Blackstock in relation to Minute 7 and the reference to contract negotiations with U Law.

3 Minutes of previous meetings and action log

The Board received and **APPROVED** as a correct record the minutes of the meeting on 9 July 2024.

The Board noted that all outstanding actions had been picked up on this agenda.

4 Chair's Update

The Chair updated the Board on feedback received from his recent individual meetings with Committee Chairs. Coming out of these he had identified benefits in promoting closer working of the Committees with the Board, with such actions being agreed including inviting the Chairs to attend the meeting of the Board in July (when their annual reports were considered) and for a Board Member to attend, occasionally, meetings of a Committee as an observer and representative of the Board.

(Note: Helen Astle agreed to attend the Admissions and Licensing Committee on 23 October 2024)

5 Chief Executive's Report

The Board considered the Chief Executive's report, which had been circulated within the Board pack and updated the Board on key activities across the organisation over the last few months.

The Board reviewed the information on the key strategic and performance activities, which included the review of the Strategic Implementation plan, BAU plan, Strategic Risk Register and RPA Action Plan 2023. The Board noted the positive progress being made with many elements of the Corporate Plan and that there was no change in the prevailing assessment of the strategic risks following the reduction of SR3 in July.

The Chief Executive highlighted recent 'positives' such as the approval by the LSB of the Consumer Transparency Rule change application and the launch of new family advocacy training courses in association with Barbri.

The Board noted that staff turnover remains low and significantly reduced compared to the same period last year as evidenced by the Balanced Scorecard. Where vacancies occurred, the opportunity is used to review resource requirements and organisational structures.

The consultation on the new Strategy had now closed and the responses were generally very supportive of what was being proposed and, indeed, within this 90% of respondents had indicated that they remained pleased with the specialist independent regulation of the profession provided by CRL. There had been a high-level of engagement in the consultation events and around 22,000 had viewed the recording of one of the webinars. There would be a further report to the November meeting of the Board to formally adopt the new Strategy and agree the Corporate Plan.

The role of the Strategic Risk Committee was being reviewed with a view to extending its remit to consider CRL's strategic risks. Proposals will be presented to the November 2024 Board meeting.

Regarding the Staff Survey, the results had generally been positive with encouraging levels of engagement and satisfaction. An action plan had been produced, informed by discussion at the All-Staff event in July, addressing areas where there could be improvement, including such themes as enhancing the training and development opportunities available to staff and improved systems. The Board noted the action plan and the progress already being made with objective setting and approvals. Regular progress updates will be provided as part of the CEO Board report.

6. Director of Regulation Report

The Director of Regulation provided an update on the work of his Directorate undertaken since the last meeting. This was contained within a comprehensive report circulated within the agenda papers.

Further progress was being made in developing the staffing and Panel capacity, and measures to improve the processing of enforcement to provide better and more timely determination of cases.

The Director highlighted the following:

- the PAS team was working well with additional resource being recruited;
- An increase in the number of foreign qualified lawyers applying with the standard of applicant being generally good;
- entities - undertakings had been agreed and action plan to bring one entity into compliance;
- the high AML workload;
- enforcement team changes to improve performance and progression of cases, noting the oldest case had been concluded; and
- the new scorecard for monitoring E&I performance in development, which will be shared at November Board.

The Board **NOTED** the report and **ENDORSED** the action being taken. They were keen to see the increase in enforcement action planned.

7. Director of Governance Report

The interim Director of Governance, Policy and Legal provided an update on the work undertaken in his Directorate since the last Board meeting, referring to the paper that had been circulated with the agenda papers.

By way of updates:

- work would commence in preparing full applications to amend the statutory rules relating to both Education Standards Pathways and correct the Immigration Practice Rights, the LSB having confirmed that these could not be considered under a s.181 Exemption Direction;
- The Director reported back on his recent attendance at a LSB Event in Bristol, which had been interesting and engaging; and
- CRL would now be communicating with entities on the implementation of the new Transparency Rules.

The Board **NOTED** the report.

The Board extended their thanks to Sue Chandler, Senior Policy Officer, for all her work on the application for the statutory rule change for transparency and customer empowerment.

8. EDI Annual Report

The Board received this paper providing an annual update to the Board on progress against the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategic objective.

The Board reflected on the content of the four parts of the report and the further actions proposed, noting significant improvements in quality and breadth of our data, and the research we had commissioned, notably Beyond Buzzwords published earlier this year. The Board agreed that whilst progress had been made, key issues like uneven progression and recognition require a major cross-sector approach, and a programme of work to help achieve this was required.

The Board **NOTED** progress in 2024 and the proposed workstreams for Q4 2024 and Q1-Q2 2025

9. Artificial Intelligence Update

The interim Director of Governance, Policy and Legal provided an update on action being taken by CRL.

The Board was maintaining a keen interest in the development of AI and its implications on the sector, particularly regulation of legal services.

Similarly, the Board noted the heightening interest too within the CILEX community. The webinar held on 15 July 2024 had been attended by around 200 people the recording of the event having been viewed around 20,000 times.

CRL activity would remain focused on:

- Maintaining vigilance and monitoring the adoption and implications of AI within the sector;
- continuing to consider how CRL can adopt and harness AI to aid its own work, driving efficiencies and greater effectiveness;
- continuing to raise awareness of AI within the regulated community; and
- working with and partnering with others where possible to increase impact of our response and actions.

10. Annual Cycle of Business

The Board **NOTED** the annual cycle of business without comment.

The Calendar of Meetings for 2025 had been agreed and dates circulated for everybody's diaries.

The next Board meeting would be held on 14 November 2024 with a Telecon scheduled for 16 October 2024.

11. Any Other Business

None

12. Financial Update

This minute is not for publication on the basis it contains commercially sensitive information.

13. 2025 Budget and PCF Consultation

This minute is not for publication on the basis it relates to emerging strategy or policy.

14. Consumer Empowerment – LSB request for Board assurance

This minute is not for publication on the basis it relates to emerging strategy or policy.

15. Additional provision - payments to panel members

This minute is not for publication on the basis it contains commercially sensitive information.

16. Board Remuneration

This minute is not for publication on the basis it includes legal or other professional advice on sensitive or confidential matters.