

BRISTOL LAW SOCIETY

Minutes of 151st Annual General Meeting on 16 November 2021 at 6.00pm

12 Colston Avenue, Bristol, BS1 4ST

Present

In-Person: Ben Holt (**BH**); Erin Sawyer (**ES**); Edward Thompson (**ECT**); Coralie McKeivior (**CM**); Jonathan Peacock (**JPk**); Nick Lee (**NL**); Helen Read (**HER**); John Moriarty (**JM**); Rachel Fisher (**RF**); Michael Gupwell (**MG**); Ben Hanham (**BHa**); Stuart Henry (**SH**); Gary Lightwood, Pattinson & Brewer (**GL**); Salma Maqsood (**SM**); Fiona O’Kane (**FOK**); Clair Ponting (**CLP**) (admin only); Robery Rawle, Milsted Langdon Accountants (**RR**); David Sheridan, Wards (**DS**); (**JP**); Scott Silbereis (**SS**); Leon Smith (**LRS**); Ben Tarrant, Ashfords (**BT**)

Virtually: Nick Haywood (**NH**); Janis Purdy (**JP**); James Woodburn (**JW**), Scott Silbereis (**SS**)

Apologies: Marc White, Jo Campbell, Shahzia Daya, Jim Sheppard, Ashley Palminteri, Philippa Richardson. All those not giving apologies and didn’t attend the meeting were deemed apologies.

Proxies: 7 forms:
Shahzia Daya, WECA; Joanne Campbell, VWV; Ashley Palminteri, The Family Law Practice; Marc White, Marc White & Co; Polly McBride, DAC Beachcroft; Helen Staines, DAC Beachcroft; Matthew Butler, DAC Beachcroft; Jim Sheppard, Contract Answers Solicitors; Tabitha Barnes-Harris, Thrings



Proxies 2021.docx

1. Welcome, Introductions and Receiving Apologies

BH opened the meeting at 6.05pm and thanked all for coming to our 151st AGM. With the number of people in attendance (and holding proxies for the others) the meeting was quorate, and could proceed.

Apologies as above.

2. Minutes of the 150th Annual General Meeting held on 17th November 2020

The draft minutes having been posted along with the notice of this AGM. With no comments arising from these:

Proposed: BH

Seconded: CM

Voted: All

Motion carried the minutes would be adopted.

3. **Proposed Amendments to the Articles of Association of the Bristol Law Society**

SPECIAL RESOLUTION AMENDING ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

THAT the proposed amendments to the Articles of Association of Bristol Law Society as set out in the draft Articles of Association attached to this resolution be adopted as the Articles of Association of the Company in substitution for, and to the exclusion of, the Company's existing Articles of Association.



BLS - Amended
Articles of Associatic

You will all have received a copy of the tracked change amendments. The amendments will allow us to have 2 Co-Presidents and also to allow us to choose the title of various of the Council and Exec members. The amendments are made to the definition of officers in the Articles and to change the definition of president.

This allows us to vote in 2 Co-Presidents later.

The other ancillary amendment is in relation to Article 48 which sets out the list of council and officers.

The reasoning behind the change is to allow Co-Presidents/Joint Presidents or other Officers to job share.

Proposed: CM Seconded: JM Voted: ALL

4. **Report of the Council (including President's and Honorary Secretary's Reports)**

President's Report

BH started by saying it was the first time most of us were meeting in the office for 21 months due to the pandemic.

A copy of the President's Report as delivered on the evening is below at Appendix 1. The President's report was not circulated in advance.

ROUND OF APPLAUSE/RAISING OF HANDS ON ZOOM

Honorary Secretary's Report

A copy of the Report of the Honorary Secretary is below at Appendix 2. The Honorary Secretary's report was not circulated in advance. There were no questions regarding this report.

ROUND OF APPLAUSE/RAISING OF HANDS ON ZOOM

5. **Honorary Treasurer's Report**

A copy of the Report of the Honorary Treasurer is below at Appendix 3. The Honorary Treasurer's Report was not circulate in advance. There were no questions regarding this report.

ROUND OF APPLAUSE/RAISING OF HANDS ON ZOOM

Edward Thompson, Battens

Proposed: CM

Seconded: ECT

Voted: All CARRIED

BH introduced the 150th and first Co-Presidents of Bristol Law Society.

8. The Investiture of the new Co-Presidents of the Society

BH placed the Presidential chain of office over ECT & ES's head.

ROUND OF APPLAUSE

See Incoming President's speech at Appendix 4 below.

ROUND OF APPLAUSE

9. Any Other Business

None arising.

Meeting closed at 6.40pm

**BRISTOL LAW SOCIETY 150TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 16
NOVEMBER 2021 BY ZOOM AT 6.00 PM**

REPORTS

OF

OUTGOING PRESIDENT, BEN HOLT (Appendix 1)

HONORARY SECRETARY, CORALIE McKEIVOR (Appendix 2)

HONORARY TREASURER, JONATHAN PEACOCK (Appendix 3)

**INCOMING CO-PRESIDENTS, ERIN SAWYER AND EDWARD THOMPSON
(Appendix 4)**

BRISTOL LAW SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021 **OUTGOING PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Well, we got there. Bristol Law Society is 251 and we did just about manage to squeeze in some celebrations for the 250th (with literally 5 days to spare).

And we also got here, back at the BLS office for a Council meeting for the first time in 21 months.

This is the first time any President has done two AGM speeches on the bounce. Some may well feel that it is more true than ever that quantity does not necessarily mean quality.

The "normal" part of my first term ended just over three months in when lockdown started. We only really started seeing each other again face to face, and in a relatively limited way, in September of this year.

But the level of activity for the Society has probably been greater than any year I can recall. There have also been significant positives to take out of the unusual times we have faced. Its only when you sit down to write a speech like this that you look at quite how much we have done over the past year. For a small business, with two staff and some volunteers, it is truly incredible. Here are just some of the highlights:

- ▲ We hosted a Nightingale Court until March 21, helping the court out and also the income from which made an enormous difference to what is a small turnover business.
- ▲ The "weekly" webinars that we started last year have continued and, on numerous occasions, there has been more than one a week, offering huge benefit to our members and probably more than a 50% increase on pre-pandemic training BLS offered - including black letter law, soft skills, and wellbeing.
- ▲ We have held a series of very popular and well received managing and senior partner briefing meetings with some superb contributions from sponsors and external expert speakers, including Mayor Marvin Rees. The advent of these being on line has, I think, really been the making of them - allowing us to lose the associated travel time for getting senior leaders to an in-person event. It has also allowed us to hear from the local legal leaders on issues they are keen to discuss and helped build on our ties within the business and local government communities.
- ▲ BLS paid a key part in the Bristol & Bath legal tech group, the highlights of which were the commissioning of the Whitecap report on legal tech in the region and speaking at the Bristol Tech Festival
- ▲ The 250th anniversary book has been produced. That was something I was personally really keen for us to do, to mark the anniversary and to capture the moment and the history for future generations of Bristol lawyers and BLS representatives - I am bowled over by the quality of the book and particular thanks, as ever to Helen, Clair and John for their work in helping to produce this. It's a fantastic history of the society.
- ▲ Our Equality Diversity and Inclusion group has gone from strength to strength and is now arguably one of the most active parts of the society, thanks in particular to the sterling work of Coralie and Salma
- ▲ We have also seen real progress and collaboration through our CE group, of which Peter Morris has recently taken over chairing from John. Amongst other things, the group has been mapping support needs against skills to try to maximise the outcome of what is being offered. On behalf of all of us, thank

you for your continued efforts. And that is a really good example of what BLS is all about, promoting local lawyers working together.

- ▲ We have also been involved in a number of charitable initiatives. Special mention of course to my charity of the year, Feeding Bristol, which provides strategic support in tackling food insecurity across the city. Once again, a fantastic effort from the Bristol legal community in terms of volunteer time for supporting their summer holidays initiative of getting a decent packed lunch out to the region's less privileged children. On behalf of Bristol Law Society can I say thank you to every individual and firm that has got involved. Literally thousands have benefitted from this. Well done.
- ▲ We also thankfully managed to raise a decent amount of money for Feeding Bristol at the dinner - around £4,500 in the end, which was a great result
- ▲ I also hosted the Great Legal Quiz, which was done online this year and raised £700 for the Access to Justice Foundation which I think was the second highest amount achieved nationally.
- ▲ In a similar vein, thank you to all of those who took part in the recent Bristol Legal Walk organised by the South West Legal Support Trust. Despite the frankly awful weather, it was a great turn out to raise money and awareness for those most in need of support.
- ▲ Particular mention should also be made of the Bristol Pro Bono group and Bristol Law Centre. The work they do truly makes a difference in delivering access to justice in a world where that is becoming harder to access.
- ▲ Over the past couple of years, we have launched an in-house lawyers conference with a promise that our in-house friends won't be swamped with lots of us pesky private practice lawyers fawning over them for instructions! Well done and thanks in particular to Shahzia for taking the lead on that.
- ▲ We have continued to build our strong ties with the Joint 5 law societies - the big ones outside of London being Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool; as well as with the Association of South Western Law Societies. These collaborations of local law societies means that collectively we represent something like 50,000 members across the country - which helps to get our members voices heard. There have been round table debates with the LSB, the SRA and the national Law Society. We have contributed to the important debates on issues such as the SQE and the proposed withdrawal of the Solicitors Indemnity Fund. We have also had a number of discussions with the Law Society in relation to their change of approach to regional representation, which I am sure will continue over the next year.
- ▲ Congratulations also to our own Salma Maqsood who has taken over as the Bristol rep for on The Law Society Council - and thanks to Ian Kelcey for his many years of service as her predecessor.
- ▲ We have continued our work with Weston College on their law advisory board, and the same with UWE and also hosting one of their distinguished address lectures with Jacqueline De Rojas - on the importance of diversity in an increasingly digital world, which was particularly relevant for us
- ▲ Perhaps the most impressive achievement of the year was the Annual Award Dinner. Due to the pandemic, we left it until about July before finally making the decision to "go for it". We had some nervousness about whether we were going to hit the magic 200 attendees to break even on the event. That was not an issue. We sold out again, with over 400 attendees. But what was most notable was how Helen and Clair and the various supporters, including our events manager Ceri, turned it around - getting the whole thing done in 3 and a half months, when it normally takes about 10. What a fantastic night. Thanks to a bit of nepotism via my predecessor, Mr Nick Lee, we also managed to persuade the sixth doctor from Doctor Who, Colin Baker, to do us a video intro and he gamely agreed to regenerate into me. I am never going to top that and may as well retire. Which is convenient, given what is about to happen.

- ▲ A few final thanks before I wrap up
- ▲ To our individual and corporate members who have continued supporting us through difficult times. Rather than a reduction, we have actually managed to add a few new members. As should be clear from my summary tonight, it is becoming increasingly easy to answer the question "*what does Bristol Law Society do for me*" and I believe and hope that our members truly recognise what a great service they get.
- ▲ Thanks also to the continuing support of our sponsors and strategic partners: Howden, Landmark, Insight Legal Software, Nine Feet Tall, LawCare, Annecto Legal, Lloyds Bank, Hays Recruitment, Wessex Searches and Milsted Langdon.
- ▲ Obviously thank you to everyone on Council who has supported and run the events and got involved in the initiatives. Council is made up of working lawyers, with limited amounts of time as volunteers. I would like to offer thanks, on behalf of the Society, for their efforts.
- ▲ Thanks also to John Moriarty for his continued support. Those who attended the dinner will be aware that he was the recipient of the President's Outstanding Achievement award to recognise all he has done for the legal community and BLS over the years. While he has stood down from an official position with the society, I am sure we haven't quite got rid of him yet! Thanks John.
- ▲ Last but most importantly, thank you to Helen and Clair. I've said similar things a number of times recently but its absolutely true - you are both superstars. Tireless dedication to the cause and lovely to work with. I am sure we will all appreciate how awful it must be to work with a committee of lawyers. But seriously, well done and thank you. You keep the ship afloat. No, more than that. You make it soar. So if we can all please thank them in the traditional way.

I am sure I will have forgotten to mention something or someone - apologies for that but I think I have spoken for long enough. My name will be on the wooden plaque. Although sadly my unique position as being the only person to have consecutive terms as president is due to be immediately equalled by my two successors. I didn't mess the job up too much. Mission accomplished. My time is done, but BLS is in safe hands with Erin and Edd. It's been an honour. Saving cryogenics, I'll probably not be around to raise a glass in 2270 for the 500th anniversary, so here's to the first 251 years of BLS and hopefully many more to come.

Thanks again for all your support and please continue to support BLS moving forward.

Ben Holt
President 2019/20/21
16 November 2021

Honorary Secretary Report to AGM – 16 November 2021

Resignations

Ordinary Member's resignations during 2020/2021

The following people resigned during the year:

1. Tara Connor-McLaren, Thrings.
2. Saida Bello, Bristol City Council.
3. Leonie Parkin, Computershare.
4. Laura Nazemi, Burges Salmon.

We thank them for contribution during their time on Council.

Ordinary Member's resignations for AGM

Mike Gupwell of Wards and Marc White of Marc White Solicitors and have come to the end of their four-year term.

We thank them all for their contributions over the years.

Co-optees and Special Members at AGM

Rakesh Singh of DAC Beachcroft and Scott Silbereis of UWE also finished their 1-year terms. We also thank them for their contributions over the years.

Nominations for 2021/22

Nominations for Officers

Co-President: Erin Sawyer (Irwin Mitchell)
Co-Vice President: Edward Thompson (Battens)
Vice President: Stuart Henry (Taylor Rose)
Honorary Treasurer: Rachel Fisher (Stowe Family Law)
Honorary Secretary: Coralie McKeivor (Freeths)
Immediate Past President: Benjamin Holt (VWV)

Nominations for Ordinary Members

Carrie Stoneham (Burges Salmon)
Michael Gupwell (Wards)
Tabitha Barnes-Harris (Thrings)

Membership

Corporate Members:

3PB
Albion Chambers
Ashfords
Barcan + Kirby
Burges Salmon
Clarke Willmott
Cooke Painter Ltd
Clyde & Co
DAC Beachcroft
The Family Law Practice
Foot Anstey (including Enable Law)
Fussell Wright
Gregg Latchams Ltd

Guildhall Chambers
Irwin Mitchell Solicitors
Kelcey & Hall
Lyons Davidson
Marc White & Co
Meade King
Osborne Clarke
Paragon Costs Solutions
Queen Square Chambers
Sharp Family Law
Simmons & Simmons LLP
St John's Chambers
Thrings
TLT Solicitors
Unity Street Chambers
VWV
Wards Solicitors
Womble Bond Dickinson

New Corporate Members for 2020/21:

Battens
Beale & Co
BLM
CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang
No.5 Barristers Chambers
Royds Withy King

In addition to our corporate members I am pleased to report that this year we have been joined by 3 Full members, 2 Associate Member, 38 Local Government Lawyers Pro Bono.

Coralie McKeivor
Honorary Secretary
16 November 2021

HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT TO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

TUESDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2021

Executive Summary

1. The financial year end for Bristol Law Society is 30 November. The published accounts are for the year to 30 November 2020. Copies have been circulated.

2019/20

Budget

2. The usual budgeting arrangements were overtaken by the events of 2020 and our previous approach to budgeting became redundant as we operated through the series of lockdowns and other Covid measures which followed. Staff worked from home, ticket income from training seminars was wiped out and the annual awards dinner cancelled. During part of the year HMCTS occupied No 12 for use as a Nightingale court.

Actuals

3. The Society made a pre-tax loss of £18,117 (including depreciation on fixed assets) as stated in the accounts. This was £5560 greater than the loss in the preceding year and represents an excellent outcome in the very challenging circumstances.
4. Income was £110,957 as against £166,772 in the preceding year. This was largely offset by substantial reductions in cost of sales and administrative expenses.
5. Income profile for 19/20 includes substantially increased subscriptions income and rental income of £16,500. Other substantial variations can be seen in greatly reduced seminar income and the absence of AAD income (which of course always comes with substantial cost of sales figures and so the loss was substantially offset by the lack of those).
6. A Bounceback Loan (BBL) was taken out to provide a contingency fund. At year end this remained untouched in our #2 account.
7. Expenditure was £123,552 made up of £1,703 cost of sales (down from £44,191 in the previous year) and administrative expenses of £121,849 (down from £129,311).

Conclusions

8. We made an operating loss of £12,595 and a pre-tax loss overall of £18,117 (which includes depreciation on fixed assets).
9. We closed the year with £109,119 cash (including the BBL).
10. We remain in a very strong position as regards the balance sheet with substantial equity in the property.
11. Despite the Covid related challenges BLS continued during the year to try and maintain member benefits and maximise income from the property. A varied and successful programme of online seminars was offered and sponsorship income increased on the previous year.

12. Our Events Coordinator, Head of Operations and Chairman continued during 19/20 to support a substantial programme which offered benefits and good value to members. Thanks are due to John Moriarty for his efforts particularly in connection with the HMCTS licence and to Helen and Clair who worked extremely hard and showed great flexibility in meeting the challenges of the year with their usual spirit and commitment.
13. Membership fees were increased this year and the increases were received positively by members with no significant issues arising.

2020/21 Preview

14. We are projecting substantial profit on the year.
15. BLS continued to pay off the mortgage on the property.
16. We ended the year with substantial cash at bank including a sum in #2 Account which included full amount received under the Bounceback Loan.
17. The AAD was successful and profitable.

2021/22 Key Objectives

18. The property will be let again and negotiations are ongoing for a 10 year lease with 5 year break clause.
19. Next year's budget will project a substantial profit assuming successful completion of the lease of No 12.
20. Consideration is being given to the possibility of utilising the rental income to reduce our liabilities (BBL and mortgage).
21. Our conference programme will be reviewed with in-person events (and ticket sales) hopefully becoming a reality during 2022.

Investment/Property

As per previous reports:

22. We have converted most of our historic cash reserves into equity in property.
23. The estimated value of the property is £375,000-440,000 with outstanding mortgage of £140,000.
24. Our mortgage continues to decrease by £6-7k per year with repayments of approximately £12k per year.
25. Going forwards the lease on the property will provide income and cover most of the expenses associated with No 12. We will have the opportunity to review what scope we have to reduce liabilities (BBL and mortgage) in coming years.

**Jonathan Peacock
Honorary Treasurer
16 November 2021**

Erin Sawyer and Edward Thompson
Co-Presidential Acceptance Speeches

Erin Sawyer

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as BLS co-presidents.

Edd and I are looking forward to working with all of you to drive forward the BLS initiatives and interests that those before us have championed, such as ED&I and Bristol and Bath LegalTech and to create new opportunities to support our legal community, and the issues that concern it, with particular attention to wellbeing and community engagement.

We are excited to be able to realise our respective professional goals while maintaining a balance with our busy personal lives. I am passionate about the South West as a business hub. We have a lot of exciting opportunities forthcoming to build our national profile while supporting our colleagues across the legal sector.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing president, Ben Holt, for his unwavering leadership over the last 2 years. If the last almost 2 years has taught us nothing else, we know we can find ways to do more than just keeping calm and carrying on. We can leverage situations and make them work for us as a law society and as a legal community, finding new ways to connect and support each other, and I'm looking forward to being able to contribute as a co-president to continue to make BLS a more progressive and inclusive law society, which I promise will have a new website during our term.

I will be disappearing for a few months after December for reasons that I'm sure are visibly apparent (*Erin is due to go on maternity from January 2022*), so Edd will be steering the ship without his co-captain but well supported by all of you. So I will hand you over to my co-president, Edd, to say a few words.

Edward

Thank you Erin and thanks to Ben for his year's of service. I had an interesting conversation with a tipsy Ben at the Awards Dinner, where Ben then realised because we now have for the first time co-presidents, unfortunately for him he doesn't just have 1 more year left of service as Immediate Past President but 2 – I'm guessing by his reaction that he has forgotten this conversation!

I am very much looking forward to working with Council and the Executive Committee to drive forward social inclusion and corporate engagement which are very important to me. Erin and I have a fantastic opportunity and are very thankful to have that opportunity in the 252nd year to jobshare – with me as a new parent and Erin as an impending parent. We are both pleased and would like to thank the oldest local law society for supporting parents and allowing us to jobshare and to set the tone for modern working. Thank you very much.