



# Committee Handbook

March 2023



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## CHAPTER 1 - THE COUNCIL AND ITS COMMITTEES

In order to understand the purpose and functions of the Society and the Council, it is necessary to start with the Charters establishing the Society. The Society was established under a [Royal Charter of 1852](#) (with a Supplemental Charter of 1888) with the stated purpose of:

- (a) facilitating the acquisition of legal knowledge; and
- (b) more conveniently discharging the professional duties of its members.

The Charters limit membership of the Society to solicitors entitled to practice in Ireland. In relation to the Council of the Society, the Charter of 1852 states its purpose as being “*for the better rule and government of the Society, and for the better direction and management of the concerns thereof*”. Both original Charters are displayed on the walls of the Council Chamber.

While much of the language and import of the Charters has been overtaken with the passage of time, they are still vital whenever questions arise about the powers and functions of the Society which are not more specifically provided for in statute.

### **Bye-Laws of the Society**

Under the 1852 Charter, the General Meeting (see Chapter 3) is empowered to make such Bye-Laws as it “shall seem necessary, convenient and proper for the regulation and good government” of the Society, the members and Officers. The Bye-Laws are comprehensive, containing sections which deal with:

- Members
- Accounts and Auditors
- Annual General Meeting
- Special General Meeting
- The Council
- The President and Vice-Presidents
- Officers and Staff of the Society
- Monies of the Society
- Regulations of the Council
- Common Seal
- Minutes of the Council and committees
- Suspension of Members of the Council
- Suspension and Expulsion of Members of the Society
- Effectiveness of the Bye-Laws

The Bye-Laws can only be amended by a General Meeting and, unlike some other resolutions passed by a General Meeting, a resolution enacting, amending or repealing a Bye-Law does not have to be adopted by the Council in order to be binding on the Society. Unsurprisingly, the Charter requires that the Bye-Laws must “be reasonable” and cannot be “repugnant or contrary to the laws and statutes” of the land.

### **Composition of Council**

Bye-Law 6 (the Bye-Laws are available [here](#)) outlines the composition of the Council as follows:-

- a) A total of thirty-one ordinary members who shall (if necessary) be chosen by a majority of votes of members of the Society in the annual election;

- b) Four provincial delegates being one for each of the provinces of Munster, Leinster (excluding the County and the City of Dublin), Connaught and Ulster (insofar as it is within the State), who shall (if necessary) be chosen by a majority of votes of eligible members of the Society in the provincial elections; and
- c) A total of thirteen extraordinary members who shall be nominated and chosen pursuant to the provisions of clause (3) of the Society's Bye-Laws; provided that at no time shall more than nine extraordinary members of the Council be entitled to attend and vote at the same time at any meeting of the Council.

Pursuant to Bye-Law 6 (3), the thirteen extraordinary members comprise of:

- 1. A maximum of five members from the Council of the Southern Law Association (SLA);
- 2. A maximum of five members from the Council of the Law Society of Northern Ireland (LSNI); and
- 3. A maximum of three members from the Council of the Dublin Solicitors Bar Association (DSBA).

In addition to the membership provided for in the Charters or by statute, Bye-Law 6(22)(a) allows a former President who is no longer a member of the Council to attend (but not vote) at Council meetings for 3 years after he/she ceases to be a member of the Council.

The Council year commences each November, finishing on the date of the Annual General Meeting the following November.

### **Council meetings**

In addition to Council members and some Past Presidents, Council meetings are also attended by the Director General and the Director of Policy. Under the Council Regulations (available [here](#)), at least six Council meetings must be held each year. Usually, eight/nine meetings are held annually with a break of 4 - 6 weeks between most. The dates of Council meetings for the following twelve months are set at the November Council meeting and, at the moment, Council meetings are held on Friday mornings at 11 a.m. Occasionally, special Council meetings are held to deal with urgent matters.

### **Election to the Council**

Since 1996, ordinary members of the Council are elected for a two-year term and approximately half the Council step down each year (fifteen in one year, sixteen the next). The same applies to the provincial delegates, with two stepping down each year and successful candidates being elected for a two-year term. The elections are conducted in October/November, with every member of the profession across the country (or the relevant province for provincial delegates) being entitled to vote.

On 3 March 2022, a Special General Meeting was held whereby 96% of members voted to introduce online e-voting for Council elections. Members can now submit their vote on the Law Society's website. More information on e-voting is available [here](#).

The results of the elections are declared at the Annual General Meeting in November of each year. Extraordinary members are appointed annually at the November Council meeting.

## **Election of Officers**

There are three Officers elected/appointed by the Council at each November Council meeting– the President, Senior Vice-President and Junior Vice-President – and each serves in that position for one year. Any Council member who has served on the Council for four years is entitled to seek election as Junior Vice-President and any Council member who has served on the Council for six years is entitled to seek election as Senior Vice-President. In both cases, two of those years must be served immediately before seeking election to the Office.

The outgoing Senior Vice-President is automatically appointed as President for the coming year, but there is no automatic progression from Junior Vice-President to Senior Vice-President. In fact, the convention is that the Junior Vice-President will not seek election as Senior Vice-President for a number of years after holding office, if at all.

## **Council Regulations**

Under the Bye-Laws, the Council has the power to make Regulations regarding the establishment of committees, the duties of Council members, the conduct of Council and committee meetings, the management of the Society's premises and business. The Council adopts its Regulations at the November Council meeting each year.

## **Appointment of Committees**

The Solicitors Acts 1954 – 2015, (eCompendium available [here](#)) and the Council Regulations provide for the appointment of committees by the Council. Committees are appointed from the November Council meeting in each year until the November Council meeting of the following year. The incoming President proposes the Chairperson and members of each and places their names before the Council for approval. In 1999, general guidelines for the appointment of committees were agreed by the Council, as follows:

- The incoming President should consult with the Chairperson of committees and the executive in relation to the appointment of Committees for the coming year;
- The incoming President should take great care to create a balance between expertise on a committee and accountability to the Council;
- Where possible, the Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson of each committee should be a Council member and, if possible, a Chairperson should not be appointed unless he/she previously served on the committee;
- Committee members who have attended less than 50% of committee meetings during the previous year should not be re-appointed to a committee, unless the Chairperson indicates that there are good reasons for the non-attendance and believes that the member should be re-appointed;
- In general, committee members should not serve on a committee for longer than five years;
- A Chairperson should serve for a maximum of two years or, in exceptional circumstances, for three years;
- At the Council meeting before he/she assumes office, the incoming President should seek the Council's approval for any proposed dissolutions or amalgamations of existing committees and for the establishment of new committees, with their proposals being notified in the Council book for that meeting.

## **‘Standing’ and ‘Non-Standing’ Committees**

The Council Regulations distinguish between ‘Standing Committees’ (in the Bye-Laws - Committees of the Council) and ‘Non-Standing Committees’ (in the Bye-Laws - Committees of the Society) and the distinction between each is set out below.

### **Standing Committees**

The Solicitors Acts provide that the statutory functions of the Society are exercisable by the Council. The Acts further provide that the Council may delegate the exercise of functions of the Council to a committee established for that purpose. As such, the Council appoints ‘Standing Committees’ which exercise statutory functions on behalf of the Council. They are the Complaints & Clients Relations, Co-ordination, Education, Finance, Money-Laundering Reporting, Professional Indemnity Insurance and Regulation of Practice Committees. The Council may, from time to time, appoint such other standing or ‘ad hoc’ committees, working groups or task forces as the Council may think fit, with such terms of reference, powers and membership as the Council shall decide.

### **Membership and Quorum**

In accordance with section 73 of the 1954 Act, as amended by section 34 of the 2008 Act, the membership and quorum of a committee shall be as specified by the Council and the membership may include solicitors who are not members of the Council or persons who are not solicitors (i.e. lay persons). Where functions of the Society which are performable by the Council are delegated to a committee, that committee, in the performance its duties, may sit in one or more divisions (i.e. subgroups) provided that the quorum of such division shall be three.

### **Designated Powers to Specified Officers of the Society**

Section 33 of the Council Regulations empowers any Standing Committee, subject to the approval by Council, to further delegate specified functions to specified officers (i.e. employees) of the Society for a specified period, with or without restrictions, with the power capable of being withdrawn at any stage by that committee. This power has been exercised and approved by the Council in respect of the Professional Indemnity Insurance and Regulation of Practice Committees.

Delegation of functions from (a) the Council to Standing Committees and (b) the Standing Committees to specified officers is effected through the Council Regulations.

### **Functions of Standing Committees**

In relation to the Standing Committees, the Council Regulations list the specific functions delegated to and, where the Committees have decided to delegate those functions further, list the functions delegated to officers of the Society. The Council Regulations are circulated to, and approved by, each new Council in November of each year, so that the delegation of functions is specifically approved and properly delegated by the Council before a newly-established committee performs the delegated functions or agrees to delegate those functions further.

### **Non-Standing Committees**

The Council may appoint any other committees which do not perform statutory functions where the Council believes the work of the Society may be better effected. These are known as ‘Non-Standing Committees’ and include specialist legal practice committees, such as the Alternative Dispute Resolution, Business Law, Criminal Law, Conveyancing,

Litigation, Probate, Administration & Trusts, Employment & Equality Law, Family & Child Law, Human Rights & Equality and Taxation Committees (a full list of all Committees and current membership of same is available [here](#)).

Since these committees do not perform statutory functions, they do not require a delegation of functions, they operate as the Council may require from time to time and their purpose/function is not listed in the Council Regulations, other than in a general acknowledgement of the fact that they may be established, as required.

### **Relationship between Council and Committees**

The Minutes of the previous meeting of each committee is circulated to the Council in the Council book and urgent business from committees is a standard item on every Council Agenda. This provides an opportunity for notification of important items to the Council and for seeking the approval of the Council for matters of policy.

In relation to functions delegated to the Standing Committees, the Council Regulations distinguish between functions that can be exercised by the Committees without reference to the Council and those functions that can be exercised by committees but with an obligation to report to the Council on their exercise. Committees should ensure that these functions are reported to the Council at its next meeting.

### **Working Groups and Taskforces**

From time to time, working groups and taskforces are established to work on a specific project which, depending on their purpose, usually involve research and policy development. A secretary is appointed to these groups to organise meetings and collate input from members on specific issues. These groups operate in a different manner to committees, convening meetings as required, rather than following a set schedule. Minutes are not generally required however, secretaries should ensure to record all agreed action points, next steps, and note the approval of reports/guidance etc.

## **CHAPTER 2 – CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LAW SOCIETY OF IRELAND COUNCIL MEMBERS**

This Code of Conduct applies to members of the Council of the Law Society of Ireland and its committees, sub-committees, task forces, and representatives. When attending Law Society of Ireland meetings or events or representing the Law Society of Ireland in any capacity, Council members should act in accordance with the principles as set out in this Code. Save where the context requires otherwise, all references in this Code of Conduct to members of the Council shall be of equal application to representatives of the Society and to members of its committees, subcommittees and task forces.

### **1. Core functions of the Council**

Council members should be conscious of their responsibility as Council members to commit to the core functions of the Council, namely, to carry out the business of the Society and, in particular:

- To lead the profession,
- To determine the policies of the Society,
- To ensure the proper regulation of the solicitors' profession in compliance with statutory requirements, the public interest and the interests of the profession,
- To ensure the proper education of the solicitors' profession in compliance with statutory requirements, the public interest and the interests of the profession,
- To represent the interests and needs of the solicitors' profession, having regard to the public interest and also having regard to the need to promote gender equality, diversity and inclusion within the profession,
- To enhance the image of the profession,
- To foster public confidence in the profession,
- To communicate respectfully and effectively,
- To consistently implement measures to promote gender equality, diversity and inclusion when dealing with the on-going business of the Society and also when promoting and publicising the work of the Society or its members.

### **2. Core principles underpinning these functions**

**2.1 Independence:** Council members should seek to promote the interests of the solicitors' profession as a whole, as opposed to the interests of individual solicitors, and having regard to the public interest.

**2.2 Honesty:** Council members should act in an honest and ethical manner in all their dealings with the Society. Council Members stand in a fiduciary relationship with the Society and should not act, or refrain from acting, so as to obtain any financial or other gain for themselves, their families, firms or friends.



**2.3 Integrity:** Council members should act with integrity, should avoid conflicts of interest and should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation that might influence them in the performance of their duties.

**2.4 Objectivity:** In dealing with the business of the Council, Council members should make decisions objectively and on the merits of the arguments advanced.

**2.5 Inclusion:** All Council members should be treated equally, and the expression of alternative views should be welcomed, encouraged and respected.

**2.6 Commitment:** Council members should commit sufficient time and energy to carry out their functions effectively.

**2.7 Respect:** At all times Council members should treat each other, members of the profession and employees of the Society and others with due respect, irrespective of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, race, class, disability or membership of the Traveller Community.

**2.8 Representation:** All Council members should endeavour to represent the interests of the profession as a whole, with due regard to the public interest.

### **3. Code of conduct during debate of Law Society Council members**

**3.1** When a Council member is speaking, other Council members should not engage in conversation or offensive behaviour and should not interrupt another speaker except to raise a point of order or to make an interjection for the benefit of the meeting.

**3.2** Council members should stand when addressing the Council.

**3.3** Council members shall address the President as President and shall address other Council members in respectful terms.

**3.4** Council members speaking to a motion or making a report should, as far as possible, prepare their contribution in advance, be as concise as possible and avoid repetition.

**3.5** If a Council member wishes to agree with the views expressed by another speaker, he or she may do so, but without repeating the views already expressed.

**3.6** Debates should be conducted with courtesy, respect for differing viewpoints and an objective approach. Attacks on fellow Council members, whether explicit or implicit, are unacceptable and are in breach of this Code.

**3.7** The letter and spirit of the Council Regulations should be complied with by Council members. Council members must respect rulings of the Chair on procedural matters.

### **4. Relationships with staff**

**4.1** Council members should follow the principles of mutual respect and co-operation in their dealings with the staff of the Society.

**4.2** Council members should not refer in critical terms to any member of the Society's staff in the course of a Council meeting. If a Council member has a concern about the performance of staff, or their handling of any particular matter, this should be raised with the Director General.

## **5. Conflicts of interest**

**5.1** Council members should be conscious of any potential conflict of interest, should declare it to the Council, should not contribute to any debate and should not vote on any such matter. If in doubt as to whether a conflict of interest exists, a Council member should declare it.

**5.2** A pecuniary interest that is common to the entire profession does not require to be declared.

**5.3** Council members should make choices on merit, when making appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits.

**5.4** Council members should avoid bias, whether actual or perceived.

## **6. Confidentiality**

**6.1** The business of the Council is confidential. Council members should not divulge to third party's information, which comes into their possession solely as a result of their membership of the Council or committees. This, however, does not prevent the bona fide dissemination of professional information to members of the profession.

**6.2** Council members should take care to keep safe Council and Committee papers at all times. Papers relating to regulatory matters or which disclose the names and personal details of solicitors should be destroyed as soon as possible after the meetings have concluded.

## **7. Contacts with the media**

**7.1** Council members should not speak to the media on behalf of the Society without the prior consent of the President or the Director General.

**7.2** If a Council member is speaking to the media, but not as a spokesperson for the Society, the Council member should clearly state that they are speaking in a personal capacity.

## **8. Attendance at meetings**

**8.1** Council members should attend all Council and Committee meetings, unless they have a good reason for not doing so.

**8.2** Council members should be fully familiar with the Council papers in advance of the Council meeting.

**8.3** Council members should attend the Annual General Meeting and any Special General Meetings of the Society.

## **9. Electioneering**

**9.1** Council members should not unfairly criticise other Council members, or members of staff of the Society, in their electioneering material.

## **10. Behaviour and demeanour**

**10.1** Staff, Council and Committee members have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. All forms of harassment, bullying or victimisation are unacceptable, as are discriminatory comments or conduct.

**10.2** Council members should behave at all times in a way that upholds the integrity and good reputation of the Society.

**10.3** Council members should not make improper use of their status, power or authority.

**10.4** Council members should not make improper use of information coming into their possession as a consequence of their Council membership.

**10.5** Council members should use Society resources and facilities in a proper manner.

## **11. Representation**

**11.1** Council members should be conscious of their role and responsibilities as representatives of the Society when attending official meetings, functions and events. Council members should behave in a manner that upholds the Society's values and should never undertake any action that would bring the Society into disrepute.

**11.2** At official events hosted by the Society, Council members should be conscious of their role as hosts.

## **12. Breaches of the Code**

**12.1** The Code expresses the views of the Council as to the standards of conduct and behaviour expected of Council members. Breaches of the Code may result in the censure or reprimand of a Council member by the Council. Where the Council deems that there is grave and serious reason, this may result in disciplining a Council member pursuant to Bye Law 13 of the Society's Bye- Laws.

## **CHAPTER 3 - GENERAL MEETINGS AND ANNUAL REPORT**

### **Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

The AGM is a statutory meeting of members of the solicitors' profession, held in Blackhall Place in November of every year. The annual accounts of the Society (made up to the previous 31st December) are discussed and approved at the AGM, as is the Law Society's Annual Report. The results of the Council election in each year are also formally declared at the AGM. Bye-Law 4 sets out the relevant details in relation to the convening of the AGM, the conduct of business at the AGM, motions and procedures.

### **Special General Meeting (SGM)**

SGMs can be convened by the Council or on the written requisition of 100 members of the Society. The Council can refuse to convene an SGM sought by written requisition if the subject matter of the meeting has been discussed and dealt with at a General Meeting within the previous two years and "no change of circumstances makes it reasonable or appropriate" that it be discussed and dealt with again. Bye-Law 5 sets out the relevant details in relation to SGMs.

### **Annual Report**

Each year, the Society produces an Annual Report which is considered at the AGM. There are no rules governing the content of the Annual Report but, traditionally, it has contained reports from the President, Director General and each of the Society's Departments and committees, together with the Annual Accounts of the Society.

Every committee is asked to prepare and submit its report for the year for inclusion in the Annual Report. The report is normally prepared by the committee secretary, in consultation with the Chairperson. The request will usually identify a number of headings in relation to which the committee should provide details. All committee reports are edited to ensure consistency of length and style and the Annual Report is circulated to all members in advance of the AGM.

At the AGM, members may raise questions in relation to any specific committee report and it is usually the committee chairperson or, in their absence, the vice-chairperson, who will address same.

## **CHAPTER 4 - PREPARING THE AGENDA, COMMITTEE 'PACKS' AND MINUTES**

One of the most important tasks carried out by a committee secretary is the preparation of the Agenda and accompanying material in advance of every meeting. Suggested items for inclusion in the Agenda should be submitted well in advance of the meeting to ensure that the Agenda is comprehensive, and any relevant documentation relating to that item is contained in the booklet circulated to committee members.

The following should be remembered when preparing any Agenda:

1. Read through the Minutes of the last meeting to ensure that any items brought forward from the previous meeting are included. It is the responsibility of the committee secretary to ensure that matters do not lapse and this includes keeping a note of items that may have been adjourned a number of months previously to await developments.
2. New items are included on the Agenda as a result of correspondence received from committee members, referrals from other committees and queries/correspondence from members of the profession, staff and/or public. The committee secretary may also include relevant items which, in their opinion, may be of interest to the committee.
3. A booklet of all relevant material is then assembled. Once it has been proofread by the committee secretary, numbered, indexed, and the accompanying material checked, it is emailed to committee members. In accordance with the Society's Digital First Policy (see Chapter 16), all committee materials should issue by email wherever possible.
4. Invariably, between the time the Agenda is sent to the committee members and the date of the meeting, additional matters may arise. Relevant correspondence must be circulated via email to committee members prior to the meeting, or a hard copy must be circulated at the meeting itself.

Following the meeting, the Secretary is responsible for the preparation of the Minutes, and, in some cases, for issuing responses to correspondence that arises as a result of decisions made by the committee. Where committee members are not in a position to respond to correspondence received, it is the Secretary's responsibility to make sure that anyone who has referred a matter to a committee, receives a response.

The committee secretary must retain a copy of committee documents (agenda, minutes, booklet etc.). Committee documents must be saved in an easily accessible manner to ensure they can be located when required. The retention of committee documents is necessary for new committee secretaries, or those providing temporary cover, to understand ongoing/former committee projects and discussions.

## **CHAPTER 5 - FORMAT OF MEETINGS**

The following is the standard procedure for committee meetings within the Society:

### **1. Apologies**

At the start of a meeting, the committee secretary should note attendance of committee members and inform the committee of any apologies received.

### **2. Quorum**

The committee secretary is responsible for ensuring that all procedural matters relating to the meeting are properly observed. Check that the meeting is quorate before any business is undertaken. Council Regulation 9(2) provides that:

*“The quorum for a meeting of a committee or a division of a committee shall be three or such greater number in the case of any committee as the Council may from time to time determine.”*

If a meeting is not quorate, the committee secretary must advise the chairperson of that fact. Where committees are performing statutory functions, the meeting must be abandoned if the required quorum is not present. In the case of committees that do not perform statutory functions, the chairperson may ask those members present whether they wish to abandon the meeting or continue with the meeting on the basis that any decisions taken will be ratified by the next quorate meeting.

### **3. Minutes**

Minutes of the previous meeting must be approved by the committee. Previously, if approved, the chairperson would sign and date the Minutes. However, it is now sufficient to include the minutes as an Agenda item for approval, which is then recorded in the minutes of the current meeting.

If amendments are raised, the amended wording must be formally read out to the committee for approval. Small amendments may be made on the face of the Minutes and approved by the chairperson. If the amendments are substantial, the text of the amendment must be approved by the chairperson and the amended text recorded in the next set of Minutes.

### **4. Agreed Order of Business**

The Agenda will usually have been circulated in advance and this will determine the order of business. The committee secretary should bring to members' attention any additional material circulated at the meeting in relation to a listed topic, or as a new item of business.

- The chairperson and secretary should discuss in advance the time allocated for major Agenda items and every effort should be made to keep to this time allocation. If an item overruns by five minutes, the secretary should quietly bring it to the chairperson's attention.
- It is acceptable for members to request that an item of business be dealt with out of the order in which it appears on the Agenda - provided all members present are agreeable.

If a member has indicated that he/she wishes to speak on a topic but is not present when the item is reached on the Agenda, the committee secretary should advise the chairperson of same. The committee may then decide to adjourn the matter to the next meeting or may proceed to deal with the matter.

As each item of business is dealt with, the chairperson should check that everyone is clear on decisions made and action/s to be taken. Asking the committee to verbalise its decision sometimes helps the committee to clarify its own thinking.

When the Agenda is fully dealt with, the committee secretary informs those present of the date and time of the next meeting and whether it will take place in-person/online/both.

The chairperson then closes the meeting.

## **CHAPTER 6 - RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHAIRPERSON AND SECRETARY**

The chairperson holds primary responsibility for committee work and must ensure the full cooperation of all members in executing the Committee's objectives.

While the secretary provides support to the committee in carrying out its work, ultimate responsibility remains with committee members.

Chairpersons are drawn from the ranks of solicitors, both Council members and others, who are willing to expend time and to contribute their expertise on behalf of the profession on a voluntary basis. They bring their day to day experience as practitioners to the role.

Committee secretaries are drawn from staff across different departments within the Law Society. They bring with them their professional qualifications, training and wealth of accumulated experience of the work of the Society in general, and their committee work in particular.

### **Role of the Chairperson**

- To lead the committee with vision and enthusiasm;
- To ensure that the committee agrees an action plan for the year's work;
- To chair the meetings of the committee;
- To assign substantive committee tasks to committee members;
- To co-ordinate the work of the committee;
- To monitor the work of the committee to ensure that the objectives of the action plan are achieved;
- To be available to the committee secretary between meetings to ensure that all the work of the committee can proceed between meetings;
- To liaise with the President and Council of the Law Society, relevant members of Law Society staff and other committees as necessary;
- To finalise the agenda, in consultation with the committee secretary, in advance of each meeting; and
- To follow-up with any committee member whose attendance at meetings may be inconsistent or where they are not engaged in the work of the committee.

### **Role of the Secretary**

- To brief the committee on all matters arising;
- To inform committee members of their responsibilities;
- To bring knowledge of the Solicitors Acts, the Regulations thereunder, the Society's Bye-Laws, Council Regulations and relevant Law Society policy to committee meetings;
- To take the Minutes of the meeting;
- To process committee correspondence, bringing relevant items to committee attention as necessary;
- To contribute to the flow of information between committees through day-to-day contact with other committee secretaries and management;
- To support the committee in carrying out its work; and
- To review the committee's final draft of policy submissions prior to submitting same to the Policy Department (in accordance with the Society's Procedure for Submissions, available [here](#)).



## **Co-ordination between the Chairperson and Secretary**

In order for a committee to achieve its potential, there needs to be an excellent working relationship between the chairperson and secretary who should be in regular contact between committee meetings, making contact in advance of each meeting, if necessary, to discuss the business to be conducted. The vice-chairperson may also contribute to this planning process.

It is important that, early in the life of a committee, the role required of the secretary is understood by all.

The chairperson should ensure that all members are aware of their responsibility to conduct the work of the committee and that, while the committee secretary will support those efforts, they cannot carry the bulk of that work.

## **CHAPTER 7 - COMMITTEE MEETINGS – BOOKINGS, CATERING & OTHER**

When the date of the next meeting is known to the committee secretary, arrangements should be made to book a meeting room, arrange catering and attend to any special requirements. If the meeting is online, the committee secretary must arrange for a Zoom link to be made available (either through their own Zoom account or via the IT Department) to all members for the specified date.

### **Room Bookings**

The *Guidelines for Internal Booking System* are available [here](#). Committee secretaries must familiarise themselves with the internal booking system, particularly in relation to the catering function, prior to booking any meetings.

When organising a hybrid meeting, you must ensure that the room is equipped with the necessary facilities (i.e. laptop, microphone and camera/Owl and large screen) and you should liaise directly with the IT Department to ensure that all facilities necessary for a hybrid meeting are available.

### **Zoom Bookings**

Zoom booking facilities can differ between Blackhall Place and the Education Centre. Committee secretaries may also have varying degrees of access to Premium Zoom accounts necessary for hosting committee meetings (i.e. no time or capacity limit).

In some cases, I.T. will have notified committee secretaries if they may avail of their Law Society Zoom account to schedule their own meetings. In such cases, you may schedule your own meeting and circulate the Zoom link to Committee members.

If you do not have access to a premium Zoom account, you may request a Zoom link from the I.T. Section. This link can then be circulated to committee members.

Some rooms in the Education Centre have designated “Zoom Rooms” which allow members to join the designated Zoom room with a specific code. You can check this with the Education Centre I.T. Section prior to booking a room.

### **Internal Catering Policy**

Fitzers are responsible for internal catering. They have created the *Internal Catering and Bar Service Booking Policy* which can be accessed [here](#). All catering must be booked through the room booking system, as explained in the above guidelines.

To reduce food waste, the general rule is to order catering for 80% of the total number of confirmed attendees for general meetings (i.e. if ten persons have agreed to attend, order catering for eight).

Sit-down meals must also be booked through the internal booking system, in addition to direct communication to Fitzers Catering with specific details of the event. Lunch and/or dinner reservations usually involve a set menu, options for which are provided by catering for approval prior to the event. Guests’ dietary requirements must be taken into consideration when agreeing a set menu.

## Education Centre

The system is different for booking requests in the Education Centre where the following process applies:

- **Step 1:** [View master timetable](#) which identifies all occupied rooms.
- **Step 2:** Identify available, suitable rooms.
- **Step 3:** Email requested fields to [Donna O'Reilly](#) including any requests for catering.
- **Step 4:** Include in the subject line 'Room Booking Education Centre'.

**Note:** all facility requirements for Education Centre bookings should be emailed directly to the Facilities Operator, [Charles Mulvey](#).

## **CHAPTER 8 – COUNCIL BOOK, NOTICES OF MOTIONS & COUNCIL MEETINGS**

### **Council Book**

A Council book is produced for each Council meeting and, in addition to the Council Agenda and Minutes of the previous meeting, contains:

- the schedule of committee meetings on pre-Council Day and Council Day
- the Minutes of all committee meetings since the previous Council meeting
- papers relating to Agenda items
- information items e.g. correspondence and press cuttings

The Council book is compiled by Gayle Ralph, Council Support, in conjunction with the Director General of the Law Society. Any items for the Agenda or for circulation in the book should be notified to Gayle Ralph ([G.Ralph@LawSociety.ie](mailto:G.Ralph@LawSociety.ie)) as soon as a committee secretary becomes aware of the view that it should be included.

### **Production**

- The committee Minutes and agenda items are collated two weeks prior to each Council meeting. A notification of the deadline for receipt of items is circulated to all committee secretaries in advance.
- The Council book is dispatched to all Council members to arrive on the Friday before Council day.
- The Council book is Private and Confidential to the Council. However, it is distributed to all relevant Law Society staff including committee secretaries once the Council meeting has been held.
- Urgent items, which have missed the deadline for the Council book, must be brought to the attention of Gayle Ralph at least four days prior to Council day.
- No items should be tabled at Council that have not been notified and approved for tabling. Committee secretaries must email their approved tabled items, to Gayle Ralph by 4.00 p.m. on the Monday of Council week, at the very latest.
- Matters to be tabled for a Council meeting must be circulated no later than the Wednesday of Council week.

### **Notices of Motion**

Notices of motions to be put before Council are notified at one Council meeting for discussion at the next. The text of the motion, signed by a proposer and seconder, must be received by the Director General in advance of the Council meeting.

The following additional requirements are contained in the Council Regulations:

All motions should be accompanied by:

1. A memorandum not to exceed two A4 pages in length from the proposer of the motion outlining;
  - the reasons for bringing the motion; and
  - the benefits to be gained from passing the motion.

2. Where available, copies of any statutory instrument which it is proposed to put before the President for signature as a result of the Council passing the motion.
3. Except where the Council decides that the matter is one of urgency, where the Council agrees that any motion is of such import as to merit a full consultation process with the profession, copies of the documentation at paragraph (1) and such other documentation as shall be agreed by the Council as appropriate shall be sent by electronic means to each solicitor for the purposes of consultation and discussion prior to the Council debating the motion.
4. Council Regulations state that nothing in the regulations shall require more than one consultation process with the profession unless the Council otherwise decides.

## **CHAPTER 9 - COMMITTEE PROJECTS**

### **Annual Priority Project**

Non-Standing Committees are asked to propose one priority project each year to utilise the committee's time and resources on a project which will have the most impact. The project aims to focus the committees' efforts (rather than reduce them) and to get the most out of the members' expertise and sacrifice of time.

Committee secretaries are asked to notify the Director of Policy of the committee's priority project at the end of each year.

### **Special Projects**

From time to time, committees may decide to undertake special projects. These can originate from within the committee, they may be assigned by the Council, or they may arise from other specific requests.

It is important that there is no duplication of projects and that the benefits of each proposed project are independently evaluated, so that the Society's resources are properly applied.

For this reason, committees are required to complete a Projects Form (see Chapter 11) and to forward same to the Co-ordination Committee for approval before a project commences. Project Forms are also required in respect of any projects planned at the commencement of the year, when committees make their Budget Submission to the Co-ordination Committee.

The purpose of the form is twofold:

- It assists committees in evaluating the value and cost of proposed projects in real terms; and
- It allows the Co-ordination Committee to ensure consistency in the financing of projects for the year and ensures that the Society gets value for the time, effort and expense invested in the project.

It is usually the committee Secretary who initiates the completion of the form and it is important that the committee participates in the process, so that everyone agrees in advance who will be responsible for each element. The form also assists in focusing the committee on the non-financial resources required to complete a project - once a real assessment of time and effort is undertaken, a project has more likelihood of being successfully completed with a fair division of labour. All forms should be forwarded to the secretary to the Co-ordination Committee on completion.

### **Standing Committees**

Standing Committees are generally not required to complete a Project Form, given their remit under the Solicitors Acts.

The secretary to a Standing Committee should confirm with the Director of Policy whether the committee is required to complete a Project Form where projects arise throughout the year.

## **Committee Subgroups**

Committees may decide to establish subgroups to work on specific projects from time to time which do not require the participation of all committee members.

Subgroups generally meet outside of normal committee meetings and feedback any action items/decisions to the Committee.

Committee members are responsible for the formation and management of their subgroups:

- Establishment of the subgroup must be approved by majority vote of the Committee;
- The subgroup will agree its objectives at its preliminary meeting;
- The committee secretary is not required to act as secretary to the subgroup; and
- The committee secretary is not required to attend meetings of the subgroup.

The chairperson or secretary must inform all subgroups of their responsibility to self-govern i.e. arrange their own meetings, establish terms of reference and report back to the committee.

## CHAPTER 10 - EXTERNAL SUBMISSIONS

The Society is often invited to produce submissions to external bodies, Government Departments, working groups and policy-makers, which can be vital to the drafting and development of public policy and legislation. Accordingly, the Society welcomes the opportunity to submit its views to these processes.

Submissions extend the Society's profile and circle of influence and, as such, it is important that all submissions are of high quality, presenting well-researched arguments for the Society's policy positions.

Requests for submissions are usually made to the Director General, Director of Policy or Public and Government Affairs Manager but occasionally, they are sent to committee secretaries or chairpersons.

All committees must comply with the Society's *Procedure for Submissions (March 2022)* (available [here](#)) which aims to ensure professional standards and consistency in all Law Society submissions.

### Knowledge Management System (KMS)

Committee secretaries submit content to KMS, which is an internal resource to share their information and knowledge, which comprises four sections as follows:

1. **Submissions** - made by the Society;
2. **Policy positions** - involving a statement of decisions already taken or recommendations on action to be taken, including approved guidance;
3. **Legal Advice/Opinions** - received from legal advisors; and
4. **Research** - conducted/commissioned by the Society comprising a statement of facts or the law or a collation of research.

Staff are encouraged to consider what material might usefully be uploaded for the benefit of colleagues and the Society generally. In particular, secretaries to committees which produce submissions are required to upload them to KMS as soon as possible.

Queries regarding access and login for KMS should be directed to [Martin Kearney](#) or [Michael Keys](#). Queries regarding how to use KMS should be directed to [Louise Campbell](#).



## CHAPTER 11 – THE SOCIETY’S POWER TO MAKE A STATUTORY INSTRUMENT

The authority to make regulations is provided at Sections 5 and 79 of the Solicitors Act, 1954.

Section 5 provides as follows: -

1. *The Society may make regulations in relation to any matter or thing referred to in this Act as prescribed or to be prescribed or as being the subject of regulations.*
2. *The Society may make regulations for the purpose of the execution of the provisions of this Act.*
3. *Every regulation made under this Act shall be laid by the Society before each House of the Oireachtas as soon as may be after it is made.*

Section 79 provides as follows: -

1. *A regulation, certificate, notice or other document made or issued by the Society may be signed on behalf of the Society by the president of the Society, the secretary of the Society, or the registrar, or by any officer of the Society nominated for that purpose by the Council.*
2. *Prima facie evidence of a regulation, certificate, notice or other document made or issued by the Society may be given by production of a document purporting to be a copy thereof and to be signed as specified in subsection (1) of this section.*

The [Legal Services Regulation Act 2015](#) made amendments to the powers of the Society to make regulations as follows:-

- The Society must seek the concurrence of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority in relation to any Solicitors Accounts Regulations made under section 182 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015.
- The Society must seek the consent of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority in relation to any Professional Indemnity Insurance Regulations made under section 201 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015.
- Once commenced, section 178 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 will require the Society to seek the approval of the Authority in relation to any regulations made by the Society.

A Statutory Instrument may require a signature by one or more of the following, depending on the type of Statutory Instrument:

- The President of the Law Society;
- The President of the High Court;
- The Minister for Justice;
- The Minister for Justice together with another Minister if the matter relates to the brief of another Department; and/or
- The Chief Executive Officer of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority.

## Procedure for making a Statutory Instrument

1. The proposed secondary legislation will generally have been reviewed by a committee with the relevant functional expertise and it is usually the case that the proposer will be a person nominated by that committee to bring the motion to Council (through the Co-ordination Committee).
2. Prepare a draft Statutory Instrument together with an Explanatory Note.
3. Motion to Council must be in writing, signed by the proposer and seconder, to be notified to the Council meeting immediately before the meeting at which the motion will be discussed.

The motion coming before the Council to be accompanied by:

- (a) A memorandum not exceeding two A4 pages in length from the proposer of the motion outlining (i) the reasons for bringing the motion and (ii) the benefits to be gained from passing the motion.
- (b) Except where the Council decides that the matter is one of urgency, where any motion - the passing of which has the effect of imposing disciplinary measures upon solicitors, within ten days of the motion first coming before the Council – copies of the draft Statutory Instrument should be sent to the Secretaries and Presidents of each Bar Association for the purposes of consultation and discussion prior to the Council debating the motion.
- (c) The Government recently introduced a new electronic system for making a Statutory Instrument. The main feature of the system is that minor amendments can be made swiftly and efficiently, therefore a Statutory Instrument should be available in electronic and printed format within a number of days of the relevant person signing it.

The new electronic system is overseen by the Office of Public Works (OPW) and the current State contractor for the making of Statutory Instruments is Propylon. Once the Statutory Instrument has been made, it must also be laid before each House of the Oireachtas in accordance with Section 82 of the Solicitors (Amendment) Act 1994. This is done using the Documents Laid procedure within the Oireachtas, available [here](#).

Further information and assistance on implementing Statutory Instruments can be obtained from Mary Ann McDermott in Practice Regulation at [m.mcdermott@lawsociety.ie](mailto:m.mcdermott@lawsociety.ie)

## The Legislative Process

The legislative process, as it applies to both Houses of the Oireachtas, is explained [here](#).

## CHAPTER 12 - BUDGETS, INCOME & EXPENDITURE SYSTEMS

Committee budgets are set from 1 January to 31 December. The Finance Committee sets the inflation rate in September/October of each year for Budgets for the following year.

The objective of the Society's budgeting process for committees is to identify all potential income and expenditure which is likely to arise in the course of the committee year at the beginning of that year. In addition, it requires committees to think about the value for money, impact and resource commitments required for projects the committee may wish to undertake during the course of the year. Both the proposed projects and the consequent expenditure must be approved in advance by the Co-ordination Committee. Committees cannot carry over unspent budget to the next year.

In November/December of each year, all committees receive a letter from the Co-ordination Committee, attaching a Committee Budget Form and a Committee Project Form for completion by the committee and return to the Co-ordination Committee for consideration and approval at its January meeting.

A separate Committee Project Form must be completed in respect of each proposed project. Miscellaneous expenditure of €500 is automatically allowed for each committee. A Business Requirement Document (BRD) is required for all proposed expenditure of €10k and over (inclusive of VAT).

The Society's Procurement Policy (available [here](#)) must be observed when incurring expenditure, both budget and unbudgeted.

### Budget Guidelines

The following Guidelines have been provided by the Finance Department and may help a committee when compiling its budget:

- **Legal Fees:** Committees should make provision for any legal fees which it anticipates might arise. However, please note that the obtaining of Opinions or the engaging of counsel must be approved by the Co-ordination Committee and/or the Litigation Management Sub-Committee in advance, even if provided in the committee's budget. It is the Society's general policy, in so far as is possible, that legal fees be fixed in advance and in accordance with the agreed fee rate table. In urgent circumstances, a Committee Chair may obtain independent legal advice of a value up to €5,000 without having to first revert to the Co-ordination Committee or Litigation Management Sub-Committee. However, the Chair must inform said Committees as soon as is feasible in such instances. Should the value of this advice exceed €5,000, approval from the Co-ordination Committee or Litigation Management Sub-Committee is required.
- **Grants/Subsidies:** Any requests from external bodies for grants/subsidies should be provided for in the budget.

### Committee Members' Expenses

The chairperson and secretary should ensure that all committee members (particularly new members) are aware of the procedures for claiming expenses and are provided with an Expenses Claim Form which is available [here](#).

The following is the procedure for travel and overnight expenses:

- **Travel Expenses:** Members may claim the cost of a first class return rail fare or where they use their own car 55c per kilometre (irrespective of engine size). The number of kilometres travelled should be specified. Taxi and parking costs associated with travelling to/from meetings may be claimed on a vouched basis.
- **Accommodation Expenses:** The maximum allowance is €200 for an overnight stay. In exceptional circumstances where €200 is not adequate an explanation should be written on the hotel bill. Where an overnight stay is required, a contribution of €55 towards the cost of dinner is made. All claims must be vouched.
- **Air Travel:** This should be the exception unless time constraints or economies dictate otherwise. Air travel claims must be vouched.
- **Claims submission:** Claim forms must be submitted quarterly. Expenses not claimed within 12 months will not be paid.

### **Procurement Policy**

The Society operates a Procurement Policy for all expenditure. The key objective of the policy is to ensure that the Society is receiving value for money, to minimise risk, and that all expenditure is properly authorised, recorded, and monitored.

The Procurement Policy is available [here](#) and all Society staff and representatives are required to comply with the procurement processes (which have been simplified in the decision tree at page 6).

### **Invoice Processing**

It is essential that committee secretaries submit invoices for any committee expenditure to Accounts immediately on receipt of the invoice. Invoices will be processed using the Kefron system and forwarded to the relevant budget holder for approval.

If it is anticipated that it will take time to verify/quantity cost etc. then, to ensure timely recording of information, committee secretaries should forward the invoice to Accounts for logging in the system, advising that the invoice is under review and should be held.

Once this review is complete, Accounts should be advised and the invoice will be released to the relevant budget holder for approval on Kefron.

## CHAPTER 13 - PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THE LAW SOCIETY

The Press Office is responsible for all media activity on behalf of the Society and the solicitors' profession to promote access to justice for all.

This centralised approach ensures a consistent voice, tone and messages that advances our strategic objectives among key external audiences, the public and stakeholders including Government and State agencies.

The Press Office works to champion and defend the reputation of the solicitors' profession and the Law Society by proactively telling stories about the contributions the profession and the Law Society make to Irish society.

The team works closely with committees and senior leadership to identify compelling stories to advance access to justice for all. Through proactive media campaigns and responses to media queries, the Press Office regularly engages with media to share policy and law reform recommendations to improve legislation and the wider justice system in the public interest.

### Media Policy

Staff and members of the Society, including Council and committee members, may come into contact with journalists in a variety of ways and circumstances. This policy assists in the correct way to manage this contact to safeguard the integrity and reputation of the Society and the profession.

The objectives of this policy are to position the Law Society as the trusted voice of a respected solicitors' profession by:

1. Ensuring informed, accurate and consistent messages are communicated on significant external and operational issues.
2. Managing contentious issues.
3. Positively promoting the work and policy positions of the Law Society.
4. Leveraging expertise within the profession on topical legal matters.

### Process for all media enquiries

Any media query that is received seeking a response from the Society must be directed to the Press Office. Only approved media relations staff should make any response, comment or statement to the media. They are:

| Name              | Position            | Phone         | Email  |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------|--|
| Teri Kelly        | Director, RMS       | (01) 672 4960 | <a href="mailto:t.kelly@lawsociety.ie">t.kelly@lawsociety.ie</a>         |
| Miriam Taber      | Senior PR Executive | 087 163 7916  | <a href="mailto:m.taber@lawsociety.ie">m.taber@lawsociety.ie</a>         |
| Siobhán Masterson | PR Executive        | (01) 672 4831 | <a href="mailto:s.masterson@lawsociety.ie">s.masterson@lawsociety.ie</a> |

The Director of RMS (or in their absence, two subject matter experts) approves all media comments, statements and responses to inbound queries.

The language used in media responses is carefully drafted to be understood by members of the public without a legal background as part of the Law Society's commitment to increase access to justice for all citizens.

### **Approved media spokespeople**

The Press Office may identify appropriate subject matter experts or others with a special role in a matter to act as spokespeople on behalf of the Law Society. This regularly includes committee and Council members.

### **Committee assistance with media queries**

We receive a significant number of media queries all year round, which typically require a response within a short timeframe to meet deadlines. There are many considerations to take into account with each media query. It is important that the Law Society speaks with a consistent, informed and trusted voice.

Committees, via committee secretaries, are expected to support information requests for media responses in a timely and accurate manner, which is appreciated.

### **If you receive a media enquiry via email**

If you receive a media query via email, please forward this to the Press Office to consider the request and advise as to an appropriate response.

### **If you are approached at an event or other public occasion**

If you are approached by the media looking for comment on a Law Society policy or issue, politely acknowledge the enquiry and inform the journalist that the enquiry must be directed to the Press Office for a response. This can be done in various ways:

1. If a member of the Press Office is also present at the event, please refer the journalist to that person.
2. If no member of the Press Office is present, advise the journalist to contact the Press Office directly (contact details above). Alternatively, take the journalist's contact details and any specific details of the questions asked and send these to a Press Office member yourself.

### **Can a committee issue their own statement or press release to the media?**

Our media activity is largely guided by our policy and strategic objectives in the public interest. Therefore, committees are asked not to issue statements/press releases (to national/local media or elsewhere) independently of the Press Office. Committees cannot represent positions of the Law Society or their committee in the media without first receiving approval.

If, as part of your work, you have a potential media story or identify an access to justice issue which the Society may wish to comment on, please contact a member of the Press Office where the matter will be considered.

Keeping in mind that news cycles move quickly, we are always keen to plan ahead where possible. Please share details of upcoming or emerging issues that may be of media and/or public interest early so that the team can plan an impactful campaign.

The team has the expertise to design a media strategy to maximise the potential impact and reach of a story, and can advise on any information needs that can support the ability of your work to influence in the public interest.

**Always remember!**

There is no such thing as “off the record”. Anything you say to a member of the media may be reported, and be attributed to the Law Society.

**Further information**

The online newsroom provides details of all media releases, and supporting information about the Law Society, the profession and its work. It can be found on [www.lawsociety.ie/news](http://www.lawsociety.ie/news).

## CHAPTER 14 - COMMITTEES AND THE GAZETTE

The *Gazette* is the Law Society's multi-award-winning magazine. As such, it is the definitive source of news and information for the solicitors' profession and those interested in the law. It informs members of the profession and others about the significant legal issues of the day through its news and feature articles, and in-depth analysis pieces. Regarded as Ireland's premier legal magazine, it receives regular coverage in the national media.

The interactive PDF version of the *Gazette* is available [here](#). It includes all content featured in the hard-copy issue –with the added bonus of useful links to legislation, case law and relevant literature.

Both versions of the magazine are published ten times a year. The hard copy has a print-run of 13,200, equating to a circulation of 39,600 readers which delivers:

- The monthly 'President's Message';
- News on matters of current and practical relevance to the legal profession;
- News about the Law Society, its committees, and the legal profession;
- Analysis of changes to legislation, bills, and new regulations;
- Commentary, featuring op-ed pieces, articles on human rights, and letters;
- Law Society briefings, including Council reports, practice notes, guidance notes, and recent developments in European law. (Council messages, committee news, and various Law Society initiatives are usually referenced in the President's Message, in the news section, and in news analysis features);
- Reviews of recently published books; and
- Professional notices (including wills, title deeds, recruitment, employment and miscellaneous notices).

*Gazette.ie* – the magazine's daily online news service (Mondays to Fridays) publishes breaking legal stories, news and analysis articles of interest to the profession, and the general public. An archive of back issues (commencing January 1997) is available at the above link. Online indices provide useful assistance in locating articles from past issues, and are available up to the year-end of each preceding year, with each new annual index being added to the site every January.

The 68-page *Gazette* is published monthly, with joint January/February and August/September issues. Its official publication date is the first Friday of every month (with some exceptions). The *Gazette* is a Law Society member service available to all member solicitors and trainee solicitors (whether enrolled or still awaiting enrolment on a professional course). Complimentary copies are sent to every judge in the country. The *Gazette* has a subscriber list of approximately 100 subscribers (a substantial proportion of whom are barristers).

In all, 50 copies are sent to a highly select range of national Eason's outlets for sale to the general public. At December 2022, the magazine's print-run stood at c.13,200 copies.

### Editorial Policy

The magazine's editorial policy aims to meet a number of objectives:

- To keep its readers abreast of professional developments,
- To be relevant, readable and appealing to readers,
- To act as a channel of communication between the Law Society and its members,
- To reflect credit on the Law Society,
- To present a professional image to the outside world,



- To promote the Law Society to influential non-members (such as Government Ministers and TDs, the Bar Council of Ireland, other professional bodies, and the business community).

The *Gazette* is one of the most visible, useful and regular benefits received by members from the Law Society; it is also the most direct line of communication with them. As a result, it can be used to deliver key messages that the Council and the committees wish to impart. It is also the ideal conduit for making members aware of the Society's policies, regulations and services.

### **Committee Reports**

The 'Briefing' section is intended to be a 'one-stop shop' covering committee practice and guidance matters, professional information and regulatory developments of interest to members, including reports of the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal.

### **Deadlines**

The publication schedule for the forthcoming year is circulated to all committee secretaries at the end of the preceding year. It details the various copy deadlines that must be met in order for the *Gazette* to publish on time. This is to facilitate advertisers who have booked spots in the magazine and with whom we have negotiated deals on the basis that the magazine will be delivered to the Society's members, subscribers and other readers on a specified date each month. These deadlines mean that committees can plan in advance for events they wish to publicise in the magazine, or have reported.

### **Feature articles**

Feature articles in the *Gazette* can range from the 'highly legal' to those of a more practical nature, focusing on practice-management issues, or wellbeing.

Features are sourced in a number of ways: provided through the recommendations of the *Gazette* Editorial Board, commissioned articles, or unsolicited articles – usually emailed directly to the editor. Commissioned articles are sourced from contributors because they are topical or have been suggested by the *Gazette* Editorial Board as being potentially worthwhile. Others are submitted by the committees as being urgent or worthwhile. Unsolicited articles are submitted by lawyers or readers who consider them worthy of inclusion.

Due to pressure on space, there is usually only room for five main feature articles per issue; two news analysis pieces and one or two opinion ('Viewpoint' articles). This necessarily means that there is some jockeying for editorial space in each issue, with less pressing articles being held over for future issues.

### **Length of Articles**

The ideal length of a feature article is between 1,500 and 1,750 words – though this can be pushed to 2,000 words if an article is considered particularly worthy. Most features occupy three to five pages of the magazine with photos, illustrations or graphics.

All features in the *Gazette* are edited by the editorial team for sense and style, with an emphasis on plain English and clarity of thought. The use of jargon is always discouraged on the grounds that articles are easier to read and digest when written in plain English – and are therefore more appealing to all readers. Headlines, intros and graphics are chosen by the editorial team (although if one provided is particularly apt, we will happily use that).

## **News Stories**

News stories are derived from a number of sources including the SMT and executives (specifically on Society initiatives or issues affecting the profession), information from Government and State agencies, other media outlets (newspapers, websites, and other law magazines), information from interest groups and other professional bodies and personal contacts.

The *Gazette* uses the same news criteria as most other magazines so that, if a story is relevant, timely and newsworthy, we will publish it on the news pages. Social items are covered in the more colourful 'People' pages.

Committee chairs or secretaries are welcome to contact the editor to discuss how best to cover upcoming events or initiatives or to report on recent seminars/conferences.

## **In-House Advertisements and Notices**

Wherever possible, the *Gazette* will try to accommodate in-house ads for forthcoming products, services or events. These advertisements can be designed by the Law Society's Print and Design Coordinators (if necessary), where text has been supplied.

Depending on the available space and the impact these ads need to make, the *Gazette* can usually make available a quarter-page, half-page or (on rarer occasions) a full page. Space does not always mean impact, and sometimes greater impact can be achieved by including a short note in the news pages. In these cases, if committees supply draft text, the *Gazette* will rewrite it into a style more appropriate for the magazine.

## **CONTACTS:**

### ***Law Society Gazette – magazine***

*(For all editorial material, including: feature articles, news analysis features, opinion/Viewpoint articles, Council and Committee reports, news stories, letters and photos):*

#### **Mark McDermott**

*Gazette Editor*  
Law Society of Ireland  
Blackhall Place  
Dublin 7  
D07 VY24 (DX 79 Dublin)

T: 01 672 4826  
E: [gazette@lawsociety.ie](mailto:gazette@lawsociety.ie)  
W: [www.gazette.ie](http://www.gazette.ie)

### ***Gazette.ie – the online daily news service***

*(For all editorial material, including: breaking and current legal news of interest to the legal profession and the general public):*

#### **Mary Hallissey**

*Gazette Journalist*  
M: 087 185 6174  
E: [m.hallissey@lawsociety.ie](mailto:m.hallissey@lawsociety.ie)  
W: [www.gazette.ie](http://www.gazette.ie)

**Professional Notices:**

*(Re. Wills, title deeds, small recruitment ads and miscellaneous notices in the Gazette):*

**Catherine Kearney**  
Gazette Admin Office

T: 01 672 4828  
F: 01 672 4801  
E: [catherine.kearney@lawsociety.ie](mailto:catherine.kearney@lawsociety.ie)

**Commercial Advertising:**

**Seán Ó hOisín**  
10 Arran Road  
Dublin 9

T: 01 837 5018  
M: 086 811 7116  
E: [sean@lawsociety.ie](mailto:sean@lawsociety.ie)

## CHAPTER 15 - WEBSITE AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

The website, weekly member eZine, President's Bulletin and social media profiles are managed by an integrated digital communications team.

The team supports committees by processing routine content changes, circulating updates to the profession, and organising social media campaigns to promote particular initiatives. Outline information on the relevant channels is set out below.

- **Website:** The website receives approximately 2.8 million visits per year, with 140,000 monthly users. While many of these are trainee solicitors or members of the public, all practising solicitors in the state need to interact with the website to complete their Practising Certificate applications and other key functions.
- **eZine:** The weekly eZine is sent to 15,000 subscribers - all solicitors who have shared their emails with the Society and selected staff – with engagement rates significantly outperforming industry norms. Sent on Tuesdays, it contains all the news items (including committee updates) published on the website the preceding week.
- **President's Bulletins:** The President's Bulletin is sent at the discretion of the President and reserved for high priority or time-sensitive items that cannot await the publication of the next eZine. Examples include the statutory notice for Annual/Special General Meetings and notification of the Practising Certificate renewal period.
- **Social media:** Our solicitor-facing social media channels - LinkedIn and Twitter - have audiences of 33,000 and 14,122 followers respectively, and post content daily.

### Connecting with the profession

Committees are encouraged to use these channels to share updates and information with the profession. Typical lead times for different types of work that may be requested are set out below.

- **Small-scale content updates:** this might include a change to membership (outside the normal November membership updates), an update to a document, or removal of material no longer relevant. **One working day**
- **Larger-scale content updates:** this would include a deep 'first principles' review of a Committee's pages. **Three working days (unless otherwise advised)**
- **News update:** Editing for web and publication of a news item or Practice Note on the website. **One working day**
- **eZine item:** The Member eZine each Tuesday contains all news updates published in the preceding week. **Friday deadline for publication**
- **Social media post (with existing graphics):** News updates are supported with posts on social media channels as part of the team's normal processes. Where a committee wishes to have a social media post only, this can be facilitated. **One working day**
- **In-house video production:** video can be produced for committees but this requires a process of scripting, shooting, editing and approval. **Three working weeks**

During busy periods, it may not be possible to fulfil all work in line with the timelines above. If this is the case, the committee secretary will be informed and a projected fulfilment date provided.

Generally speaking, particularly where a more involved campaign is envisaged, the earliest possible contact with the team is encouraged to maintain the Society's communications standards and allow for optimum scheduling.

### **Contacting the team**

In the first instance, the committee secretary should relay their request to [webmaster@lawsociety.ie](mailto:webmaster@lawsociety.ie) to be assigned to the most appropriate member of the team to respond directly to the committee secretary.

## CHAPTER 16 - RUNNING A SEMINAR

All Law Society CPD events are run by Law Society Professional Training (LSPT) and/or Law Society Skillnet as a matter of policy. The process for organising a CPD event is as follows:

### Date and Venue

1. The LSPT Committee Course Manager (the Manager) will liaise with the Committee Secretary as regards a proposed date and venue (online/onsite). The Manager will circulate the proposed date(s) in January of each year and ask the Committee Secretary to add the event to the Committee Agenda for discussion. The Manager will book the venue if on-site.
2. The Committee (or a sub-group of the Committee) will propose topics/speakers/format taking into account the following:
  - A. **Subject Matter:** The success of a seminar almost invariably depends on the appropriate choice of subject matter for the target audience, and the appropriate choice of speaker. It is crucially important to decide whether the concept for a seminar will be marketable to the profession. The choice of subject matter will, in many instances, be influenced by the following factors:
    - Legislative Changes
    - Judicial Developments
    - Changes in practice (e.g. the Contract for Sale and Requisitions on Title)
    - Market Forces

In choosing the subject matter, it is important to establish clearly the target audience and the profile of practitioners likely to attend. This is relevant to the extent that one should ensure that the design of the particular course is refined sufficiently to be of benefit to the target audience. Feedback from previous events is also informative.

It is of paramount importance that the seminar is directly relevant to the day-to-day practice needs of practitioners. Principles of law should, where possible, be illustrated by reference to working examples and precedents. All relevant legislation should be supplied with the material.

- B. **Choice of Speaker:** It may seem self-evident to state that the speaker should have the requisite expertise in the subject area. However, an academic knowledge of the subject area, although essential, is insufficient for the purposes of a seminar for the profession. A high degree of practical experience is required. The presentational ability of any prospective speaker should be assessed. He or she should be able to communicate clearly and succinctly.

### Tasks

3. At least three months in advance of the event, the committee secretary will contact the LSPT Manager with proposed topics and speakers. Either the committee or the Manager will invite speakers depending on the circumstances (a committee member might prefer to invite a colleague speaker/judge etc.).
4. The Manager will confirm recruitment with speakers. The format/structure /programme of the event will be finalised at this stage and the Manger will liaise with the committee in this regard.

## **Marketing**

5. The Manager is responsible for designing the brochure, and the LSPT Marketing Executive is responsible for marketing the event in collaboration with the Manager and the committee.

## **Additional Tasks**

6. The Manager will organise a Zoom test session for online events in advance of the online events.
7. The LSPT team/Manager is responsible for requesting/collating and circulating materials, registering delegates, recording attendance, organising catering, organising room set up, sending Zoom links (if relevant), payments, evaluations and all other pre/post event administrative tasks.
8. The chairperson of the committee will generally chair the event on the day. The Manager will provide the chairperson with a set of notes to include speaker biographies. The chairperson is responsible for:
  - (i) Welcoming the delegates and making brief opening remarks in relation to the seminar itself;
  - (ii) Introducing each speaker;
  - (iii) Ensuring that each speaker keeps to the allocated time in accordance with the timetable; and
  - (iv) Chairing the Q & A and contributing to same by answering questions where appropriate.
9. The Manager will collate evaluations and send a thank you email to speakers after the event.

## CHAPTER 17 - PUBLICATIONS AND DOCUMENT TEMPLATES

### Digital First

On 6 December 2019, the Council passed a motion to establish the Environmental and Sustainability (EAST) Task Force, comprised of practitioners with specialist expertise in environmental law, as well as those with a passion for promoting environmental sustainability in the Law Society and the profession.

The purpose of the Task Force was to establish a set of recommendation to improve environmental sustainability within the Law Society. The Task Force recommended a Digital First Strategy for printed publications, outlining that all publications should be brought online instead of printed.

There is now general agreement across the Society that all documents will be produced and circulated online, where possible. This has become known as the Digital First Policy.

### Publication Design

All Law Society publications (reports, booklets, programmes etc.) should be produced digitally, in coordination with the Society's Design Team (contact details below). Once committee secretaries have finalised the text of a publication, the Design Team will then create graphic designs for the publication, in compliance with the Society's branding guidelines (available [here](#)).

The Design Team generally charge for their work and committee secretaries should ensure to factor in such costs prior to commissioning publications.

#### Contact:

- **Lisa Duffy**, Graphic Designer [lawsociety@paperdoll.ie](mailto:lawsociety@paperdoll.ie)
- **Eugenea Leddy**, Print and Design Coordinator [e.leddy@LawSociety.ie](mailto:e.leddy@LawSociety.ie)

### Template Documents

The Society's intranet contains a list of [template documents](#) which must be used when issuing certain items on behalf of the Society including letters, presentations and press releases.

In addition, all submissions must use the [submission template](#).



## **CHAPTER 18 - MAILSHOTS TO THE PROFESSION**

Mailshots are used to inform the profession of an announcement, a letter from the President or any other information item which is deemed to be appropriate.

Mailshots are rarely used now as a form of communicating with the profession. In the first instance most correspondence will be sent electronically unless it is deemed necessary by a Department Head to send out by bulk mail. Other means of communication (the Gazette, website etc.) should always be considered before a mailshot.

### **Procedure**

1. Seek approval from Department Head.
2. Once approved by Department Head, send confirmation by email to the Facilities Department.
3. Contact the Facilities Department by telephone or email, at which point the Facilities Team will go through the necessary procedures and requirements with you and will inform you if the mailshot will be managed in-house or outsourced to a printing and packing company. Most mailshots are printed and packed off site.
4. The Facilities Team requires 14 days' notice of intention to send out a mailshot.

## CHAPTER 19 - LAUNCHING A COMMITTEE 'PRODUCT'

The launch of a product or service marks the transition from preparation stage to public circulation. Usually a notice is placed in the Gazette, and the product or service is advertised on social media channels.

An official launch, usually marked by a reception, may be more appropriate for large-scale projects which are likely to attract substantial interest from the profession and the public. However, if the product or service relates to a relatively small cohort of the profession, a small-scale launch will likely be more appropriate.

### Preliminary considerations

1. **Style and scale:** when you are sure that an official launch is the right approach, decide on the style and the scale of the reception. These will be dictated to a large extent by the nature of the product, number of persons likely to avail of the product or service, and the budget available.
2. **Advance planning:** plan ahead to ensure everything runs smoothly and allow time to organise alternative arrangements in case of last minute cancellations.
3. **Setting a date:** decide on priorities in setting a date. Who absolutely must be there and who is less essential? Be prepared to be flexible to accommodate a speaker or guest who is in great demand. A government minister or other public figure will normally require two/three months' notice. If necessary, have an another option if there is any likelihood of a late cancellation.
4. **The right time:** early evening is the most popular time of day for launches and receptions in general. However, consider traffic, competing events, press deadlines etc.
5. **The format:** if speeches are likely to be longer than 15-20 minutes, guests should be seated. If there is more than one speaker, a speakers' table with name cards is a good idea.
6. **Guest lists and invitations:** depending on the size/ type of event, you may choose to circulate direct invitations. If so, it is advised to prepare the guest list at least four weeks in advance, inviting two/three times more people than you want to attend. Remember to include all duty invitations: contributors, Council/committee members, appropriate staff members. Do not cause needless offence by leaving people out. In keeping with the Law Society's Digital First Policy (see Chapter 16), direct invitations should be sent by email. Check protocol around who the official host should be; most Law Society invitations are sent in the name of the President.
7. **Registration:** For larger events open to members of the profession and the public, arrangements must be made for an online registration platform, and details of the event should be posted on the Society's social media channels.

### The Countdown

#### *Long term* (6-12 weeks)

- Decide and confirm principal speaker/guest of honour and finalise date
- Co-ordinate with all essential participants
- Organise sponsorship, if appropriate
- Book venue

### ***Medium term*** (3-4 weeks)

- Compile guest list
- Prepare invitations and/or posts for social media
- Make arrangements for catering
- Send notice of event to the Gazette or other appropriate publications
- Make your own checklist

### ***Week Before***

- Assess numbers; issue further invitations informally if appropriate (about one third of those who accept the invitation will not show up)
- Arrange set-up with Facilities; furniture, display stand, presentation stand etc.
- Book photographer; schedule photo-call for principal speakers/guests etc. before reception begins
- Confirm numbers and times for catering
- Liaise with the Public Office (see Chapter 13) in relation to press invites and press releases if appropriate.
- Confirm final arrangements with speakers: provide detailed schedule of the sequence of events from arrival to departure
- Arrange for reservation of parking spaces, if necessary
- Order flowers

### ***Day Of***

- Check every detail again, including numbers, catering and premises arrangements, photographer/press, speakers
- See that display boards, lighting, registration desk etc. are in place
- Be at the venue early
- Brief the photographer in detail, giving names and details for captions
- Ensure that speeches begin promptly and the schedule is followed

### ***After the event***

Send photographs, press releases and reports to Gazette or other appropriate publications, collect all press cuttings for onward provision to your committee members.

## **CHAPTER 20 – DATA PROTECTION AND CYBERSECURITY**

### **Data Protection**

Council and Committee members, while acting for or on behalf of the Law Society, are considered agents of the Society, and the Society is considered the data controller, for the purposes of data protection. As such, Council and Committee members are required to adhere to the Society's data protection policies and procedures.

The Society does not engage third parties in the processing of personal data without a prior assessment of the suitability of the party to be engaged. Third party processing is based on the data processing or data sharing agreement between the Society and the third party processor. A third party is any entity or agent not directly employed, contracted, elected or appointed by the Law Society. It is irrelevant as to whether the third party is in receipt of payment(s) from the Society.

Council and Committee members may be the recipients of data subject requests, including, but not limited to, requests related to access, rectification, erasure or restriction of processing. Should a Council or Committee member be in receipt of such a request, they must acknowledge the receipt of the request without undue delay, and forward the request to the Society's Privacy Officer.

The Privacy Team must review new projects that involve the processing of personal data during the project's initial planning stage to ensure compliance with data protection legislation.

Council and Committee members should report any loss or unauthorised disclosure of person data immediately to the Society's Privacy Officer.

Boris Selak, the Privacy Officer at the Law Society, is available to contact if any queries arise in relation to data protection on [b.selak@lawsociety.ie](mailto:b.selak@lawsociety.ie).

### **IT and Cybersecurity**

Council and Committee members, while acting for or on behalf of the Law Society, are considered agents of the Society, and are therefore required to adhere to the Society's IT policies and procedures. In addition, all members must:

1. Familiarise themselves and adhere to the IT Cybersecurity policy at all times;
2. Ensure that electronic devices (phone, tablet, laptop) supplied by the Society is only used for work related to the Law Society;
3. Never divulging personal access credentials to enable anyone to access the Law Society network and resources;
4. Report any loss of a Law Society device, or a device used to access the Law Society networks, immediately to the Privacy Officer.





