

Minutes of the ACL Council Meeting
held on 11 March 2021
 by Conference Call



Council members present: Claire Green, Chairman (CG), Francis Kendall, Vice Chairman (FK), Stephen Averill (SA), David Cooper (DC), Kris Kilsby (KK), Jack Ridgway (JR), Adam Grant (AG), Rachel Wallace (RW)

Also present: Diane Pattenden (DP), Head of Operations, Kerry Jack (Black Letter), Neil Rose (Editor, *Costs Lawyer*)

Apologies for absence: Natalie Swales (NS)

The meeting started at 11am

Item	
1	Welcome and apologies
	CG welcomed all to the meeting. NS's apology for absence was noted.
2	Minutes of the council meeting held on 5 February 2021
	The minutes of the council meeting held on 5 February were agreed for publication.
3	Actions arising from the council meeting held on 5 February 2021
3.1	The actions arising (with the exception of Item 16) were carried over.
3.2	Item 16 - NR will ask Frenkel Topping to write an article for the <i>Costs Lawyer</i> .
4	Education update/working party report
4.1	In the absence of NS the education report was carried over to the April meeting.
4.2	CG reported that she had recently had conversations with Kate Wellington and Carol Cook to discuss the audit process.
4.3	JR reported that the working party was considering the best way to deliver the training product. Discussion on the structure of the current course took place. CG clarified that the role of the working party was to look at education as it currently stands and its future viability in order to provide recommendations for the way forward.
4.4	CG advised that two current tutors had not renewed their membership for 2021. CG said she felt strongly that only qualified costs lawyers and members of the Association should be tutors and asked council members for their views. A general discussion followed and it was agreed that this would be revisited with NS with a view to ensuring that a higher proportion of tutors are members of the Association
5	PR Review
5.1	FK acknowledged that several council members had not previously met Kerry Jack and Neil Rose and introduced them for the benefit of the newer members of council. KJ delivered an annual review which included a summary of Black Letter's work with ACL over the years and an outline for 2021. During the presentation KJ suggested that she and NR attended more council meetings in order to aid 'news' gathering.
5.2	A discussion followed regarding social media and KJ suggested that the lack of presence

	<p>on LinkedIn should be rectified as a matter of priority. KJ proposed two options to help ACL raise its profile through social media. Council members will review these and discuss the options at the next council meeting.</p>
5.3	<p>RW raised her idea of having a weekly or monthly topic for discussion to try to encourage use of the ACL Forum. She went on to speak about her ideas to raise the profile of the costs lawyer profession and her views regarding the procurement of legal services which she believed to be largely inefficient. RW added that she felt there was a potentially large market and a PR challenge to persuade those responsible for buying legal services to become informed about the work of costs lawyers.</p>
5.4	<p>KJ commented that many years ago the ACL Forum was thriving and that there was a real demand from members. A discussion followed on whether there was an issue with members being able to access the Forum. DP said she would investigate. Other council members confirmed that whilst they could access the Forum, there were aware of some members who had issues. KJ suggested that a news story was created for the Forum to give members a reason to log on in an attempt to reintroduce members to the Forum. RW felt that take up would be better if members could be anonymous. DP will look into this. NR added that in every issue of the magazine there could be a page highlighting some of the Forum discussions. KJ asked council to let her know what was required of her to help and added that she would like to spend some time with RW to hear more about her ideas for raising the profile of the profession.</p>
5.5	<p>CG raised a question about Legal 500. KJ will make some enquiries with Legal 500 and Chambers.</p>
5.6	<p>FK asked if NR would write some advertising copy for the ACL April seminar. DP will provide details to NR.</p>
5.7	<p>NR suggested, that on the basis that the Costs Lawyer journal was remaining online the use of 'turning pages' was reviewed. The idea of adding the content of the journal to the website as a feature was discussed and NR suggested that if ACL was committed to the journal being online, further thought should be given to being more creative. Several ideas were discussed including the option of integrating the newsletter with the magazine and spreading out content over the year within a sub domain of the main website. It was agreed that this should be discussed further.</p>
5.8	<p>CG reported that KW had recently set up an SME (subject matter experts) focus group, the purpose being to gather a variety of opinions and data to be used to create an up to date competency framework setting out the standards expected of newly qualified costs lawyers. CG has been asked to join the group for a discussion on 25 March.</p> <p>CG thanked KJ and NR for their input and both left the meeting.</p>
5.9	<p>A general discussion regarding the Costs Lawyer journal and NR's ideas followed. Council will consider NR's ideas. It was agreed that FK would confirm to NR that the council decision is that there is no plan for a paper journal in the near future and that council would like to discuss his proposals further.</p>
6	<p>PI Policies for Costs Lawyers</p>
	<p>It was agreed that this item would be carried over to the next meeting.</p>
7	<p>Options for attracting non-qualified costs professionals</p>
	<p>It was agreed that this item would be carried forward to the next meeting.</p>
8	<p>Policy Report</p>
8.1	<p>AG confirmed that following the last council meeting a GHR review working party consisting of AG, Dale Gibbons and Ian Curtis-Nye was set up. He reported that the group</p>

8.2	<p>felt an element of frustration regarding the evidence base used by the CJC which it is seen as being too narrow. He went on to say that whilst some of the issues raised in the consultation were straightforward, ACL, as a membership body, could not comment on some of the issues. It was however felt that ACL could express views on the methodology. AG asked for council members' views on how controversial ACL should be in its response. <i>DC asked for it to be recorded in the minutes that he needed to abstain from the discussion due to his involvement with the GHR Committee.</i></p>
8.3	<p>AG said that a draft was being prepared and would be circulated to council members for their input. CG stressed the importance of their feedback on the draft.</p>
8.4	<p>AG informed council members that he and CG attended a meeting of the ACL Legal Aid Group on 10 March and that a response to a LAA consultation was being prepared. He said that from a policy position the response should be from ACL, even if much of the input was from the ACL Legal Aid Group.</p>
8.5	<p>KK reported that he had been to a number of meetings with the ACL Legal Aid Group in recent weeks and gave a summary of key outcomes. He said that the LAG would be sending out a survey to members in order to help with the response to the consultation paper from the MoJ as to the abolition of Court Assessments in legal aid cases.</p>
8.6	<p>AG acknowledged that at the last council meeting he was asked to raise the subject of having a separate Practising Certificate fee. He has a relationship management meeting with the LSB in the next few weeks and will raise the issue. CG will also attend the meeting.</p>
8.7	<p>AG reported on a meeting that he and CG attended with the LSB in December. The LSB was keen to obtain some data from the ACL regarding its BAME members. AG went on to say that the LSB had acknowledged that Costs Lawyers as a profession had the highest percentage of any legal professional body in terms of BAME members. It was agreed that an article covering this is written for the <i>Costs Lawyer</i> journal. RW suggested that any such information should also be given to NR/KJ to use in PR. AG will email NR with details of what the LSB would like to see in the article.</p>
8.8	<p>The LSB has invited AG to a round table meeting on 12 April regarding quality indicators in the legal services market.</p>
9	<p>Operations Report</p>
9.1	<p>DP confirmed that the next ACL seminar has been booked for 30 April. The format will replicate the last seminar held in November 2020 ie 2 hours in the morning, 2 hours in the afternoon (including a panel session). Most speakers are now confirmed but CG said she would like 2 Costs Lawyers to be included. FK agreed to take a speaking slot and CG said that she would like a female Costs Lawyer to take the other slot and asked for suggestions.</p>
9.2	<p>It was agreed that it should be planned to hold an 'in person' conference in November. CG expressed a wish to reinstate the gala dinner after the event if practical. It was decided to source a venue but to ensure that there would be no financial penalty for cancelling if it was unable to be held due to further government advice or lockdown.</p>
9.3	<p>Discussion took place regarding the online networking meetings that had been agreed at the meeting in February and whether the meetings should attract CPD. After some discussion it was agreed not to offer CPD. FK suggested that depending on take up members should be limited to attending one meeting per month. CG will confirm the date and agenda for the first meeting.</p>
10	<p>Any other business</p>
	<p>DC referred to an email circulated ahead of the meeting regarding reference documents relating to court fees to be added to the website. All agreed with DC's suggestion. DP will arrange for the documents to be uploaded to the website.</p>

11	Date of next council meeting
	The next council meeting will be held by conference call on Friday 16 April at 11am
	There being no further business the meeting ended at 13.40pm