

City of London Law Society
Associates Forum
1 October, 2008 5.00pm
Herbert Smith

Minutes

Present: Sarah Hawes (Chair) (SH), David Slocombe (Vice-Chair) (DS), Lucinda Bowman (LB), Kate Higgins (KH), Catherine Passmore (CP)

In attendance: Robert Leeder (Policy & Committees Coordinator) (RL)

1. Apologies

The apologies for the meeting were noted (Graham Denny, Gaby Kaiser, Sam Parr)

2. Welcome to new members

Catherine Passmore (Ashurst), Kate Higgins (Stephenson Harwood) and Andrew Brown (Skadden Arps) were welcomed as new members.

3. Quality of life debate

a. Progress on issue to date.

Robert Leeder to update the Forum on:

1. Progress of the issue with the Law Society; and
2. Progress re sending out Quality of Life submission to the member firms

RL mentioned that he had been in contact with the Law Society of England & Wales (LSEW), and that Richard Schofield, who had been responsible for the Quality of Life debate at LSEW, had left.

The original LSEW project with the Work Foundation, which had been discussed at the previous Associates Forum meeting, was not now being carried forward. The overall issue was now being handled by Kate Walmsley, the LSEW's Corporate Responsibility Coordinator.

Kate had mentioned that the LSEW was looking at the issue of work-life balance within the remit of a broader study that it might be undertaking. RL had discussed with Kate the manner in which the Associates Forum could interface with the LSEW. Kate had mentioned that this was really a matter to be discussed and that she was waiting for her members to come back and tell her whether they thought that the study was something that the LSEW should be doing at all.

RL mentioned that Kate had stated that if the firms did think that it was worth pursuing then perhaps a representative of the Forum and/or RL could attend a meeting to see how the Associates Forum could support it.

Action: It was agreed that RL would follow up with Kate on this matter.

Concern was expressed that the messages/documents that the CLLS was sending to the portals (e.g. the e-briefing) was not getting through to solicitors in the City, as

most of those present had not received the latest e-briefing. Generally it was considered that the profile of the CLLS was low with little awareness of its functions.

It was suggested that an e-mail be sent out to the portals asking them who would be the most appropriate person in the firm for information to be sent to in order to ensure wider/appropriate circulation. It was also suggested that it may be more appropriate for the CLLS to target some groups of lawyers (e.g. PSLs) more specifically, rather than going through the portals.

Action: CLLS to send e-mail to portals

The question was raised as to whether the Work-Life Balance submission should be sent again to the firms. It was agreed that this document would not be sent out until there was a clear sense as to what the Society is doing on this issue.

b. Development/consideration of sub-issues of interest within overall quality of life issue (e.g. training, paying conditions, career path progression and so forth).

It was suggested that the Forum could focus on developing some best practice points at each meeting, independently of the LSEW's project. In this way, if the LSEW project developed then the Forum would have something to add but also this could be used positively in any event.

For example, the best practice proposals could be sent to member firms to seek to ensure that recent developments with respect to solicitors working conditions did not regress during the economic downturn. In addition, sharing knowledge of the practice of each others firms could in itself assist in developing new and better ideas to increase the quality of life of associates across the City.

It was agreed that, in order to ensure this progressed, each of the next few forum meetings should (amongst other things) focus on a particular area within the submission to the Law Society Quality of Life debate.

<http://www.citysolicitors.org.uk/FileServer.aspx?oID=301&lID=0>

Action: The two best practice points to be considered for the next meeting of the forum would be (a) challenge/quality of work and (b) management and communication.

It was agreed the RL would find out what the London Society of Chartered Accountants were doing with regards to quality of life issues, and if appropriate, would seek their input to the Forum's debate.

4. Joint social events with the London Society of Chartered Accountants

Robert Leeder mentioned that there had been some discussion earlier as to whether the Forum should be involved in joint social events with the London Society of Chartered Accountants, and inquired as to whether the Forum would be interested in organising a joint event.

It was agreed not to progress the matter at this stage.

5. Next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the group would be a breakfast meeting at 830 a.m., and that the meeting would be held at Macfarlanes, 20 Cursitor Street.