



Ministry
of Justice

Sir Robert Neill KC (Hon) MP
Chair of the Justice Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

The Right Honourable
Alex Chalk KC MP
Lord Chancellor & Secretary
of State for Justice

MoJ ref: SUB114559

1 May 2024

Dear Sir Bob,

THE REGULATION OF THE LEGAL PROFESSIONS

Thank you for your letter of 21 March regarding the conclusions of the Justice Committee's sessions on the regulation of the legal professions.

I appreciate the Justice Committee taking the time to hear and examine evidence from a range of interested parties on what is, as you say, a complex regulatory landscape.

In this letter, I will respond to each of your recommendations and conclusions in turn.

Post Office Horizon Scandal and the public's perception of the legal professions

I am immensely proud of the reputation that English and Welsh law and our legal sector has around the world, and the overwhelming majority of legal professionals who uphold high ethical and professional standards. The independent regulators of legal services continue to hold professionals to high regulatory standards and, of course, it is essential that any breaches of such standards are identified and rooted out with the full force of the robust sanctions available to the regulators.

I will watch closely for the outcome of the Post Office Horizon IT inquiry. Of course, it will be important for the regulators and government, where necessary, to respond appropriately to the inquiry's conclusions. The Solicitors Regulation Authority is also conducting its own investigation into the Post Office scandal. I expect this to be finalised after the inquiry concludes.

The case for re-examining the Legal Services Act 2007 (the Act)

I recognise that there is a growing case for a review of the Act and have asked my officials to consider when the appropriate time to conduct a thorough review of the Act might be.

Review of the Legal Services Board (LSB)

The Ministry of Justice has considered a review of the LSB under the 2022-25 Public Bodies Review Programme on several occasions. Given the need to prioritise bodies based on risk profile, size of budget, and opportunities for efficiencies, the LSB has not yet been included. However, I note the arguments for a review of the LSB and will keep this matter under consideration.

Role of Chair of the LSB to be subject to pre-appointment scrutiny

I note your argument for adding the Chair of the LSB to the list of roles subject to pre-scrutiny by the Justice Committee. My officials are giving consideration to this recommendation and I will keep you updated.

Matters for the independent regulators and representative bodies

In your letter, you make conclusions on some topical work of various bodies within the legal services regulatory framework:

- The Legal Services Board's review of the Internal Governance Rules
- CILEX's proposals to re-delegate its regulatory function and change the titles of CILEX lawyers
- The Law Society and Solicitors Regulation Authority's approach to in-house lawyers
- The Bar Standards Board's institutional independence

As you know, the regulation of legal services is independent of the Government and therefore it would not be appropriate for me to comment on these matters. My department enjoys positive working relationships with the regulators and representative bodies, and I will draw their attention to your recommendations and conclusions.

Thank you again for the time and expertise you have invested in this and for your thorough letter which sets out sensible evidence-based recommendations and conclusions. I hope you will find my response to be satisfactory and evidence that I and my department value the work you have done here. I will continue to keep the Committee updated on the areas set out above.

Yours sincerely,



RT HON ALEX CHALK KC MP

LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE