

Justice Committee

Appointment of Monisha Shah as Chair of the Legal Services Board

Ninth Report of Session 2024–26

HC 1771

Justice Committee

The Justice Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Ministry of Justice (including the work of staff provided for the administrative work of courts and tribunals, but excluding consideration of individual cases and appointments, and excluding the work of the Scotland and Wales Offices and of the Advocate General for Scotland); and administration and expenditure of the Attorney General's Office, the Treasury Solicitor's Department, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office (but excluding individual cases and appointments and advice given within government by Law Officers) and its associated public bodies.

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Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No. 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

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1 Background to the hearing

Pre-appointment hearings

1. Pre-appointment scrutiny hearings by select committees for certain public appointments have been conducted since 2008 and are provided for in the Cabinet Office Governance Code on Public Appointments 2024.¹
2. There are ten ministerial appointments in relation to which the Justice Committee undertakes formal pre-appointment scrutiny to assess the suitability of the candidate and whether they are appointable to the role. Nine of these are appointments by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice:
 - Chair of the Independent Monitoring Authority for the Citizens' Rights Agreements;
 - Chair of the Judicial Appointments Commission;
 - Chair of the Legal Services Board (LSB);
 - Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints;
 - HM Chief Inspector of Prisons;
 - HM Chief Inspector of Probation;
 - Prisons and Probation Ombudsman;
 - Standing Advocate; and
 - Chair of the Criminal Cases Review Commission.

The tenth is an appointment by the Attorney General: HM Chief Inspector of HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate.

¹ Cabinet Office, [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#), February 2024, para 10.1

3. Pre-appointment scrutiny of the preferred candidate for Chair of the LSB was added to the Justice Committee’s remit in October 2024 following a formal request by the previous Chair, Sir Bob Neill MP.² This is the first pre-appointment hearing held by the Committee for this role. In her letter dated 24 October 2024, confirming the request, the then Minister for Courts and Legal Services, Heidi Alexander MP said having a pre-appointment hearing would “support public trust in the Legal Services Board” and “provide assurance that the preferred candidate for appointment as Chair will uphold the high standards and integrity expected”.³

The Legal Services Board

4. The LSB is an independent statutory body that oversees the regulation of the legal profession in England and Wales. It monitors the performance of the regulators for the different branches of the profession to ensure that they meet expected standards. When those standards are not met, regulators must provide the LSB with the necessary assurance, addressing any concerns about their performance. The LSB may also seek assurance by undertaking a targeted or thematic review of a regulator’s performance. In the most serious cases, it may take formal enforcement action.
5. In summary, the responsibilities of the LSB include:
- regulation of approved regulators and the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal;
 - oversight of the Office for Legal Complaints, responsible for administering the Legal Ombudsman scheme;
 - making recommendations to amend the list of reserved legal activities; and
 - setting up voluntary arrangements to improve standards (if required).⁴

The LSB may decide which tools to use to address the regulatory issues that they identify, based on the evidence available to them. The range of formal and informal tools available to the LSB include:

- advocacy and communications;
- publishing research findings, best practice recommendations and guidance;

2 Letter from Sir Bob Neill KC MP to the Lord Chancellor, Rt Hon Alex Chalk KC MP, [21 March 2024](#)

3 Letter from the Minister for Courts and Legal Services to the Chair, [24 October 2024](#)

4 [Legal Services Board - Who we are](#)

- making statutory decisions (for example, about proposed new rules and regulations, practising fees, or applications from regulators to regulate new areas) under powers conferred by the Legal Services Act 2007;
- assessing regulatory performance (in general and in relation to specific thematic issues);
- agreeing action plans and monitoring performance against them;
- using formal enforcement powers; and
- exercising other statutory powers – such as requiring the provision of information or reports by approved regulators or the Office for Legal Complaints.

6. Both the LSB and the approved regulators must have regard to how best to promote the “regulatory objectives” set out in the Legal Services Act 2007 when exercising their functions. They are as follows:

- protecting and promoting the public interest;
- supporting the constitutional principle of the rule of law;
- improving access to justice;
- protecting and promoting the interests of consumers;
- promoting competition in the provision of services;
- encouraging an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession;
- increasing public understanding of the citizen’s legal rights and duties;
- promoting and maintaining adherence to the professional principles; and
- promoting the prevention and detection of economic crime.⁵

7. The LSB is funded by a levy on the approved regulators which covers its full running costs. In 2024/25, the LSB’s levy income was £5.271m. The LSB’s Annual Report and Accounts 24/25 states that “if averaged across all those authorised to undertake reserved activities, our levy in 2024/25 corresponded to £26.09 per person (2023/24 £24.20). The average for the previous three years (2022/23 to 2024/25) was £24.36, down from over £34 at its peak in 2009/10”.⁶

5 Legal Services Act 2007, [Section 1](#)

6 Legal Services Board, [Annual Report and Accounts](#), July 2025

8. As of 31 March 2025, the LSB had 35 full-time employees and 12 part-time employees. There are ten Board members, including the Chair and Chief Executive. The LSB's offices are in central London.⁷

The role of Chair

9. The Chair plays a key role in ensuring that the LSB is focused on delivering its statutory remit to oversee a regulatory regime that supports and underpins the delivery of legal services in England and Wales with reference to the nine regulatory objectives defined in the Legal Services Act 2007. The Chair's responsibilities include engaging with the approved regulators to hold them accountable and ensuring action is taken when standards are not met; ensuring that the LSB continues to fulfil its statutory duties and obligations as defined in the Legal Services Act 2007; establishing good working relationships with key stakeholders; and working with the Chief Executive and non-executive Board members to ensure it adheres to the principles of good governance and to ensure proper accounts are kept. The Chair's responsibilities are set out in full in Appendix 2.

7 Legal Services Board, [Annual Report and Accounts](#), July 2025

2 The recruitment process

10. On 4 September 2025, the Minister for Courts and Legal Services, Sarah Sackman KC MP, wrote to the Chair to advise of the planned recruitment campaign for the role of Chair of the LSB, enclosing a job description, role criteria and indicative recruitment timetable.⁸ She also confirmed that, following the resignation of the previous Chair, Alan Kershaw, in February 2025 and consultation with the Lady Chief Justice and the Commissioner for Public Appointments, she had appointed Catherine Brown as interim Chair until 31 March 2026.
11. In that letter the Minister for Courts and Legal Services enclosed the job description and role criteria for Chair of the LSB as well as an indicative recruitment timetable. She advised that interviews were likely to take place in November 2025 and that she expected to identify her preferred candidate that month with a view to the pre-appointment hearing taking place in January 2026. The information provided to the Committee about the recruitment campaign is summarised in Appendix 2.
12. The role was advertised from 11 September to 5 October 2025⁹ on the Cabinet Office public appointments website and via regular social media channels, such as Women on Boards and NEDs on Boards. There were 36 applicants. Six were invited to interview.
13. Interviews took place on 22 and 23 January 2026. The interview panel was chaired by Sally Parkinson, MoJ Director for Judicial and Legal Services, and its members were Mr Justice Fancourt, the Lady Chief Justice's representative, and Malcolm John, Independent Panel Member. Three applicants were found appointable.
14. In a letter dated 5 March 2026 regarding the appointment of the Chair of the LSB, the Minister said that she had selected Monisha Shah as her preferred candidate.¹⁰ We accordingly invited Ms Shah to attend a pre-appointment hearing.

8 [Letter from the Minister for Courts and Legal Services to the Chair](#), 4 September 2025

9 Gov.uk, [Lay Chair of the Legal Services Board](#)

10 [Letter from the Minister for Courts and Legal Services to the Chair](#), 5 March 2026

15. On 10 March 2026, as encouraged by the Liaison Committee, the Secretariat sent Monisha Shah a questionnaire requesting, among other things, information on conflicts of interest, motivation for applying, experience and expertise and priorities once in post. Ms Shah's response was received on 18 March and is set out in Appendix 4.

3 Appointment of Monisha Shah as Chair of the Legal Services Board

The Government's preferred candidate: Monisha Shah

16. In her letter dated 5 March 2026, the Minister for Courts and Legal Services informed the Committee that Monisha Shah was the Government's preferred candidate. She said:

At interview, the assessment panel found Ms Shah delivered a strong and credible exposition of the issues facing the LSB both in terms of current enforcement action and live cases but also the wider systemic issues facing the sector. These include access to justice, growth, inclusion and consumer confidence. Throughout, she gave the panel a clear sense of what action she would seek to take as Chair to address each challenge she identified.

Ms Shah demonstrated a strong understanding of the specific challenges of the LSB being an oversight regulator and the implications for the Chair. The panel were confident that she would draw on LSB Board members' expertise to make progress on live and systemic challenges. The panel also concluded that Ms Shah would build effective stakeholder relationships and support the new Chief Executive [...]

I consider that Monisha Shah possesses the skills, experience and qualities to be an effective LSB Chair [...]¹¹

The Ministry of Justice then published a press release on 12 March 2026 announcing the Government's preferred candidate as Monisha Shah.¹²

¹¹ [Letter from the Minister for Courts and Legal Services to the Chair](#), dated 5 March 2026

¹² Ministry of Justice, [Preferred candidate for Chair of the Legal Services Board](#), 12 March 2026

17. Monisha Shah's curriculum vitae is set out at Appendix 3 of this Report. She has declared that she has no relevant interests and has not conducted any relevant political activity in the last five years.
18. The appointment has a tenure of four years with remuneration of £63,000 per annum. The time commitment is 70 days per annum.

The Committee's views on the suitability of the candidate

19. The pre-appointment hearing with the Government's preferred candidate, Monisha Shah, took place on Wednesday 25 March.
20. During the pre-appointment hearing, we tested Monisha Shah's suitability for the position by asking her questions about various aspects of the LSB's role and that of its Chair. We asked her whether, if appointed, there would be a potential conflict of interest between her LSB Chair role and other roles she is currently undertaking. We asked her about the functions of the LSB and what specific challenges it faces as an oversight regulator. We asked about her relevant experience and expertise, and about her understanding of the professional regulation and how she would approach engagement with key stakeholders, some of whom are critical of the LSB. We also asked how she thought the ongoing Government Review of the LSB would affect the LSB's work and whether she has any experience of implementing recommendations arising from a review. We also asked how she would work with the LSB's Chief Executive and about the sufficiency of the resources available to the organisation. We then turned to the rigour of the approach taken by the LSB to assessing the performance of regulators and whether the organisation has the tools it needs to ensure regulators improve. We also asked about the effectiveness of the LSB's enforcement functions and the learning for the organisation from the regulatory response to recent high-profile collapses of law firms. We then asked Ms Shah about the LSB's role in promoting the regulatory objectives and about the balance it achieves between regulatory oversight and setting policy for legal services. Finally, we asked her about diversity and her duties as Chair to promote it under the Legal Services Act 2007.

21. **CONCLUSION**

The Committee endorses the appointment of Monisha Shah as Chair of the Legal Services Board.

Appendix 1: Correspondence from the Minister for Courts and Legal Services relating to the appointment

Letter from Sarah Sackman KC MP, Minister for Courts and Legal Services, to Andy Slaughter MP, Chair, Justice Committee, dated 4 September 2025

Legal Services Board - Recruitment of Chair

I am writing to you about the forthcoming campaign to recruit a new Chair of the Legal Services Board (LSB) and to let you know of the interim arrangements made.

The LSB, established under the Legal Services Act 2007, is the independent oversight regulator for legal services in England and Wales. The LSB supervises the performance of legal regulators such as the Solicitors Regulation Authority and the Bar Standards Board, ensuring they meet regulatory objectives and ensures that the interests of consumers are central to legal services regulation.

In October 2024, we agreed that the role of the LSB Chair should be subject to pre-appointment scrutiny. Following Alan Kershaw's resignation in February 2025, I have appointed Catherine Brown as interim Chair until 31 March 2026; extended from an original end date of 31 December 2025 to allow time to complete the recruitment campaign. The interim appointment was made after consulting the Lady Chief Justice (LCJ) and the Commissioner for Public Appointments (CPA).

I am seeking to recruit a LSB Chair who possesses exceptional leadership, communication and advocacy skills as well as the ability to scrutinise and challenge information and evidence to support the delivery of the LSB's objectives.

The job description and role criteria are attached together with the indicative timetable, which includes a pre-appointment hearing. Sifting is set for 21 October; interviews will take place on 19 November. We will advertise the role on the Cabinet Office Public Appointments website, via social media channels and relevant on-line platforms.

Please let me have any views you may have on the campaign proposals. My officials will be in touch to agree a suitable date for the pre-appointment hearing, but we are hoping that the hearing might take place in January.

I would welcome a prompt response which will enable the campaign to be launched.

Sarah Sackman KC MP

Letter from Sarah Sackman KC MP, Minister for Courts and Legal Services, to Andy Slaughter MP, Chair, Justice Committee, dated 5 March 2026

Legal Services Board – Appointment of Chair

I am writing to confirm that I have selected Monisha Shah as my preferred candidate for appointment as Chair of the Legal Services Board (LSB).

Ms Shah is currently Chair of the Publishers' Licensing Services and Co-Chair of the Copyright Licensing Agency since 2025. Since 2024, she has been Board Director and Council Member at the Advertising Standards Authority and, since 2022, Chair of King's Counsel Appointments Panel.

The appointment process has been run in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments and the role is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

At interview, the assessment panel found Ms Shah delivered a strong and credible exposition of the issues facing the LSB both in terms of current enforcement action and live cases but also the wider systemic issues facing the sector. These include access to justice, growth, inclusion and consumer confidence. Throughout, she gave the panel a clear sense of what action she would seek to take as Chair to address each challenge she identified.

Ms Shah demonstrated a strong understanding of the specific challenges of the LSB being an oversight regulator and the implications for the Chair. The panel were confident that she would draw on LSB Board members' expertise to make progress on live and systemic challenges. The panel also concluded that Ms Shah would build effective stakeholder relationships and support the new Chief Executive.

The new Chair will be responsible for implementing recommendations arising from the review of the LSB as a public body. The review launched on 10 February 2026 and is due to conclude in Summer 2026. This review provides an opportunity to consider the LSB's statutory remit, its strategic clarity, governance and accountability arrangements, and the LSB's current capabilities.

I consider that Monisha Shah possesses the skills, experience and qualities to be an effective LSB Chair including being able to implement recommendations arising from the review.

Ms Shah has not declared any interests or political activity. Confirmation of this, and information about the campaign, including the role criteria, tenure, remuneration, panel membership and campaign timeline, are set out in Annex A. A copy of Ms Shah's CV is at Annex B.

I understand that a pre-appointment scrutiny hearing is scheduled for week commencing 23 March. I will carefully consider the Committee's report before deciding whether to appoint Ms Shah.

Sarah Sackman KC MP

Appendix 2: Information provided by the Ministry of Justice about the recruitment campaign

Table 1: Information about the preferred candidate

Name of the preferred candidate	Monisha Shah
Candidate's current CV (redacted for publication)	Appendix 3 of this report
Declaration of relevant interests made by the candidate	None
Declaration of relevant political activity in the last five years made by the candidate required under paragraph 9.2 of the Governance Code on Public Appointments	None
Proposed terms of appointment and remuneration (if any)	• Tenure: Four years • Time Commitment: 70 days per annum • Remuneration: £63,000 per annum

Table 2: Campaign information

Campaign launch date	11 September 2025
Campaign closing date	5 October 2025
Sift	4 December
Reason for any changes in timetable to that originally published	Sifting was delayed due to panel availability.
Advertising strategy	The role was open to applications between 11 September and 5 October. The role was advertised on the Cabinet Office public appointments website and via our regular social media channels such as Women on Boards and NEDs on Boards.
Advisory Assessment Panel	• Sally Parkinson, MoJ Director for Judicial and Legal Services (Panel Chair). • Mr Justice Fancourt, Lady Chief Justice's representative. • Malcolm John, Independent Panel Member.
Number of applicants	36
Number of candidates invited to interview	6
Number of candidates found appointable	3

Job description	• Ensure that the LSB is focused on delivering its statutory remit to oversee a regulatory regime that supports and underpins the delivery of legal services in England and Wales, particularly taking into account the international position of those services and the nine regulatory objectives defined in the Legal Services Act 2007. • Engage constructively with the approved regulators to hold them accountable, including against the LSB's Internal Governance Rules, and ensure action is taken when standards are not met. • Ensure the LSB adheres to the principles of better regulation and continues to fulfil its statutory duties and obligations as defined in the Legal Services Act 2007, whilst ensuring the LSB supports efforts to pursue greater diversity in the legal profession. Provide direction to the LSB and ensure that it has the resources needed and uses them properly. • Work effectively with the Chief Executive and non-executive Board members to provide strong leadership to the LSB to ensure it adheres to the principles of good governance and to ensure proper accounts are kept. • Ensure that there is a collaborative working relationship with the Ministry of Justice – as the sponsoring department – and the judiciary, and that good working relationships are established with other key stakeholders. • Ensure compliance with the general guidelines laid down by government relating to public bodies and ensure that the LSB fulfils any statutory or administrative requirements relating to financial accountability.
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Role criteria	<i>Essential criteria</i> • A lay person, who has never been an authorised person in relation to an activity which is a reserved legal activity; • A clear understanding of the work, priorities and challenges of the Legal Services Board and the regulatory context within which it operates including an appreciation and understanding of the role played by regulation in protecting consumers and facilitating economic growth; • Ability to build strong relationships with stakeholders such as regulators, the Legal Ombudsman, Ministers and senior government officials and the legal sector; • Strong communication and interpersonal skills with the ability to listen, accept challenge and constructively challenge others in discussions with clarity and respect; • Effective decision-making skills with the ability to critically analyse a wide range of information to make clear and evidence-based decisions to support the delivery of the Legal Service Board's objectives. <i>Desirable criteria</i> Experience of one or more of the following: • Regulation in a professional environment; • Consumer affairs or competition; • An appreciation of the role of data and technology in delivering change; • Senior strategic management and leadership; • Experience of financial, public policy, communications; • Chairing a Board in either the private, public or voluntary sector.
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Diversity data

Of the 36 applications received, some preferred not to state their full diversity details as shown in table below.

Table A: Gender

	Male (per cent)	Female (per cent)	Identified another way (per cent)	Not declared or preferred not to say (per cent)
Applicants	72	25	N/A	3
Shortlist (applicants invited to interview)	33	67	N/A	0

Table B: Ethnicity

	White (per cent)	Ethnic Minority (%)	Not declared or preferred not to say (%)
Applicants	53	42	5
Shortlist (applicants invited to interview)	33	67	0

Table C: Disability

	Disabled (per cent)	Non-disabled (%)	Not declared or preferred not to say (%)
Applicants	6	86	8
Shortlist (applicants invited to interview)	17	83	0

Appendix 3: Curriculum vitae for Monisha Shah

CURRENT ROLES

(V = roles in a voluntary capacity)

- June 2025 to present: Chair, Publishers' Licensing Services and Co-Chair, Copyright Licensing Agency
- April 2024 to present: Board Director and Council Member, Advertising Standards Authority
- April 2022 to present: Trustee, Royal Collection Trust (V)
- Jan 2022 to present: Chair, King's Counsel (KC) Appointments Selection Panel (previously Lay member, Queen's Counsel Appointments Selection Panel from January 2018)
- Sep 2017 to present: Trustee, Art Fund (V)
- Jan 2019 to present: Board Chair, Caterham School (V)

PREVIOUS ROLES

- 2021–2025: Chair, Wikimedia UK (V)
- 2021–2025: Council Chair, Arts and Humanities Research Council
- 2018–2022: Board Member, Office for Students
- 2018–2019: Board Member, Donmar Warehouse (V)
- 2017–2023: Board Member, Ofcom Content Board
- 2015–2018: Imagen Limited, Non-Executive Director
- 2015–2021: Independent Member, Committee on Standards in Public Life
- 2015–2021: Board Chair, Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance (V)
- 2014–2016: Trustee, Foundling Museum (V)

- 2013–2015: Trustee, National Gallery, London (V)
- 2012–2019: Independent Director, Next Mediaworks Plc, India
- 2007–2015: Trustee, Tate (V)

EXECUTIVE ROLES

- 2016–2017: Interim CEO, Imagen Limited
- 1999–2010: Director of Sales for Emerging Markets, EMEA, BBC Worldwide (now Studios)

EDUCATION

MBA, London Business School, Executive MBA, September 2000-September 2002

MSc, Politics and Economy of Asia and Africa, SOAS, University of London, September 1990-September 1991

BA, Political Science, University of Mumbai, India, July 1986- July 1989

Appendix 4: Questionnaire response

Questionnaire from the Justice Committee for Monisha Shah, the Government's preferred candidate for Chair of the Legal Services Board

Ahead of your Pre-Appointment Hearing before the Justice Committee, please complete and return the following questionnaire. There is no specific word count. The Committee will publish your answers to this questionnaire in an appendix to the final report. All documents should be provided in PDF format.

Please provide return the document by close of play on Wednesday 18 March 2026 to JUSTICECOM@parliament.uk.

Personal questions

1. Do you have any business or financial connections, or other commitments, that potentially give rise to a conflict or perceived conflict of interest in carrying out your duties as the Chair of the Legal Services Board ("LSB")?

I. Business and Financial connections

I do not have any business or financial connections that potentially give rise to a conflict or perceived conflict of interest in carrying out my duties as the Chair of the Legal Services Board.

II. Other Commitments

I have a strong and enduring commitment to the Nolan Principles. I was privileged to serve on the Committee on Standards in Public Life. I am particularly guided by selflessness and integrity in the context of conflicts of interest.

My current roles include serving as a council Member for the Advertising Standards Authority, chairing the Publishers' Licensing Services and co-chairing the Copyright Licensing Agency (they are connected companies) and chairing the King's Counsel Selection Panel.

In a voluntary capacity, I also serve as a Trustee of three charities, Caterham School, where I am a parent, Royal Collection Trust and the ArtFund.

I do not believe that there is a conflict between my existing commitments and my ability to carry out my duties as Chair of the LSB, if appointed to the role. As per due process, I would be declaring all real/ perceived conflicts of interests in each organisations' risk register and updating these as required.

II. King's Counsel Appointments (KCA)

It may be helpful to the Committee for me to expand on why I believe there is no conflict of interest between my role as Chair of the Selection Panel, and the proposed role as Chair of the LSB.

1. The KC Selection Panel makes recommendations for the award of King's Counsel. The Selection Panel is supported by the KCA Secretariat.
2. The KC Selection Panel deals with individual applicants, whereas the LSB does not have the jurisdiction to review or intervene in the decisions made by frontline legal services regulators in relation to individual cases. The Legal Services Act 2007 expressly prohibits the LSB from asking a regulator to decide a case in a certain way or to review decisions they have already made. The LSB is concerned with systemic issues in the legal services market and the role of regulation in protecting consumers as a whole, rather than decisions at an individual level.
3. The KC Selection Panel is independent of the Bar Council, the Law Society and of the Government.
4. I chair the KC Selection Panel, not the Board of the KCA.
5. The framework for the award of KC was agreed by the profession in 2004 and modified in 2006. The award serves the public interest by offering a fair and transparent means of identifying excellence in advocacy in the higher courts of England and Wales. The Selection Panel has no remit to change the framework or the process.
6. The award relies predominantly on assessments from the applicant's assessors who have seen the applicant's work in their most recent cases. The competency framework relies on evidence-based assessments. The role of the Selection Panel is to apply the framework fairly and consistently, focussing on the evidence, not on opinion.
7. There are robust processes and protocols in place to ensure that conflicts of interest are managed appropriately, and these are rigorously implemented for each annual KC competition.

8. Panel members are asked to flag all potential/real/perceived conflicts of interest with regard to each applicant in every KC competition. Applicants may also flag a conflict of interest to the CEO/secretariat with regard to individual Panel members. The CEO does not share the reasons flagged by applicants to the individual panel member, in order to maintain impartiality, but ensures that the Panel member is recused from considering that application.
9. Should there be a conflict of interest, real or perceived, with regard to any individual applicant, I would recuse myself, or be recused by the secretariat, from the consideration of that application, as per due process.

It may be useful to the Committee for me to clarify how the KCA deals with issues of character or conduct relating to any individual applicant.

Character Issues with regard to Individual applicants

1. Character is a formal component of the King's Counsel (KC) appointment process, evaluated to ensure candidates meet the professional and ethical standards required of senior advocates.
2. The KCA has rigorous, detailed and published processes with regard to handling issues of character and conduct of individual applicants. All applicants have an opportunity to self-declare any issues relating to character in their application form.
3. The KCA secretariat, led by the CEO, sends lists of all applicants to the Lady Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals, who are asked to let KCA know if they are aware of any applicant in respect of whom a judge may have a concern from the perspective of the integrity competency. The lists are also sent to the relevant professional body with responsibility for professional conduct.
4. If, as a result of these inquiries, a judge or a professional regulator raises any matter of concern touching on the integrity or professional conduct of an individual applicant, the applicant is given an opportunity to provide an explanation to the KCA before information is put forward for consideration by the Character Issues Sub Panel (CISP).
5. To ensure impartiality, the KCA secretariat anonymises the identities of the applicants before putting the information to the CISP for consideration.
6. The CISP is drawn from members of the Selection Panel. As Chair of the Selection Panel, I do not participate in the deliberations of the sub-panel.
7. The CISP then reports to the full Selection Panel on the issues, where the applicant continues to be considered anonymously. There is a very clear process of recusal managed by the KCA for the very rare instances where

an applicant receives an interview and the CISP recommends that specific questions in relation to the issue of concern be raised with the applicant at the interview. This has happened only once.

To summarise:

1. The LSB does not review or intervene in individual cases
2. The KCA has published processes and protocols in place for dealing with issues of individual applicants' character and conduct
3. Any potential issues raised by the applicant, the judges, the assessors or the professional bodies are considered anonymously by the Panel
4. Each applicant can request that a Panel member recuse themselves from the consideration of their application for any reason
5. Each panel member, including the Chair of the Panel, can recuse themselves, should they become aware of any real or perceived conflict of interest.

As the LSB does not have the jurisdiction to review or intervene in individual cases or decisions of the bodies it oversees, and, given the detailed processes and protocols in place with regard to KC applications, I do not believe that there is a credible basis for apparent bias in my ability to fulfil both roles to the highest standards of ethical integrity.

• **Is there any risk of a conflict of interest emerging in the future?**

I acknowledge that new conflicts could arise in the future and I would be alert to such eventualities. I would proactively declare any emerging interests to the Board and MoJ sponsor team, in line with public appointments guidance and LSB's own Conflict of Interest Policy.

If I believed that the conflict of risks was unmanageable, I would act with integrity and resign from my responsibilities.

2. Have you ever held any post or undertaken any activity that might cast doubt on your political impartiality? If so, how will you demonstrate your political impartiality in the role if appointed?

I do not have, nor have I ever had, any political affiliation with, or held any membership of, any political party. I have also not made any donations to any political parties or politicians.

In the 2015 General Election, I canvassed for and attended one hustling for an artist friend who was standing as an independent from the Surrey Heath constituency. He lost.

• **Do you have any plans to engage in political activity in the future?**

I would not engage in partisan political activity while serving as Chair of the LSB as this would be incompatible with the independence that the role requires.

3. How were you recruited? Were you encouraged to apply, and if so, by whom?

I was recruited through the public appointments process.

I have given permission, via the website, for the Public Appointments team to contact me regarding new vacancies. I received an email from a NoReply HM Governments Public Appointment email address drawing my attention to the Chair vacancy, asking if I might be interested to apply, or else to forward it to anyone who I thought might be interested.

That was the only communication I have had from anyone about this role.

4. If you are appointed, do you have any plans to continue, or take on, any professional or voluntary work commitments alongside the role of Chair of the LSB?

As I have a portfolio career, my work commitments are term specific. The current roles I serve in are listed above. I do not have a full-time job.

Of my present commitments, I step down as Trustee of the ArtFund on July 15, 2026.

My term as Chair of the KC Selection Panel ends in December 2027.

My term as Chair of Caterham School ends in December 2027.

• **[If relevant] How will you manage these in conjunction with your role?**

I have nearly 20 years of experience of managing a portfolio of roles in a non-executive capacity and a strong track record of working with complex organisations in a range of sectors.

I prioritise my commitments, plan ahead as far as possible and prepare methodically so that I am able to fulfil my responsibilities to the highest standard.

I have thought carefully about the time commitment needed for this role in the context of my other roles which currently take up an average of 2.5 to 3 days a week.

This job description says 70 days per annum. My experience is that the time commitment can vary, particularly in the early months of a Chair's tenure, or during periods of significant organisational activity.

I have had conversations with the incumbent Interim Chair and the CEO about workflow patterns, schedules of Board meetings and other stakeholder events of the LSB. I have also had conversations with the other organisations I work with about how I will balance the roles. As described above, I will step off one of my roles this year and a further two at the end of next year.

I am confident that I can commit the time needed to fulfil this role for the duration of the term.

5. If you are appointed, how often will you attend the LSB's office?

I plan to attend the LSB office in person on a regular basis, at a minimum of 1.5 days a week. I would also expect to spend additional time meeting stakeholders, attending events either at the office, in person, at stakeholders' offices or events – in a way that best serves the LSB.

6. Do you intend to serve the full term for which you have been appointed?

Yes.

It is an honour to be considered for the role of Chair of the LSB. It is a commitment I take incredibly seriously; I have structured my other activities to accommodate it. I expect to serve the full term for which I am appointed.

7. With reference to specific examples, how will your career and experience to date inform your approach to, and suitability for, the role of Chair of the LSB?

An understanding of the role of regulation and of the LSB; regulatory experience

I have regulatory experience, having served on the boards of the Office for Students (the regulator for Higher Education in England), the Ofcom Content Board (a statutory committee of the main Board with delegated and advisory responsibilities to set and enforce quality and standards for television and radio) and currently, the Advertising Standards Authority.

I have also served on the Kings Counsel Selection Panel since 2018 and have been its chair for 4 years. In that context, I have an understanding of the landscape within which the LSB operates.

Track record of delivery on significant policy/regulatory issues at board level

I have held a range of chair and non-executive roles where public interest has been at the heart of the work alongside supporting the profession and a commitment to diversity and inclusion. Each of these roles have required a focus on delivery to their respective institutional stakeholders.

The strategic focus of the Office for Students in 2018 was to set the tone and direction reflective of its new regulatory role and ambition. During my term as a founding board member, we published the regulatory and governance framework, registered higher education providers and implemented a radical new approach to fair access and improved outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

During my term at the Ofcom Content Board, Ofcom became the BBC's first external regulator of the BBC. It took over from the BBC Trust to oversee content standards, performance and competition. Other significant policy/regulatory work included Online Safety, regulating Video sharing platforms, work on Diversity in the broadcast workforce and re-licensing TV Channels. As part of the Standards and Audience protection work, I participated in standards investigation cases and chairing sanction panels. We also engaged with a range of Editorial Standards issues including diverging approaches to content standards regulations on different platforms and public expectations of Ofcom's complaints framework.

Ability to build strong relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders

I have served as a non-executive board member and a Trustee on the boards of charities, not-for-profit organisations, regulators and standards committees. I have also been fortunate to serve across a range of sectors, including media, arts, education and the legal sectors, as my CV demonstrates. In the course of my work, I have had the opportunity to build effective relationships with a range of stakeholders including ministers, senior government officials, regulators, the legal sector and consumers.

An appreciation of the role of data and technology in delivering change

At the Advertising Standards Authority, data technology and AI is central to our role as a preventative and proactive regulator. 94% of the 33,903 ads which the ASA had amended or withdrawn in 2024 came from its proactive work using AI based active ad monitoring systems.

Effective decision-making skills to make evidence-based decisions

Evidence-based decision making ensures that decisions are well-informed, constructed fairly and have validity. In the course of my career, I have been able to demonstrate my ability to make evidence-based decisions in a wide

range of contexts and time-frames, from investigations cases for regulatory work, and the annual KC applications process to leading a school through the challenges of the pandemic and overseeing transformational change through organisational restructures.

Role specific questions

8. What motivated you to apply for the role of Chair of the LSB?

I have a long-standing commitment to serving in the public interest and building trust through upholding standards. This has underpinned my career choices over the last 20 years – committing significant time to voluntary work for charities in media, arts and education but also standards related work, for example the Committee on Standards in Public Life, and the KC Selection Panel.

A strong legal system is critical for the effective functioning of a democratic government, and I believe that public confidence is at the heart of any credible legal system. This is a role of significant public importance. The LSB oversees a sector which enjoys global respect (as I know from my role as Chair of the KC Selection Panel), generated £52.3billion in 2024 for the UK economy, and is the mechanism by which millions access justice. It also faces significant challenges in an environment of significant sociopolitical and technological change – some of which are, in my view, amenable to regulatory solutions.

In my view, the role of regulation is to ensure better outcomes for consumers while also supporting economic growth by encouraging businesses to innovate and invest.

I was motivated to apply because I thought I could add value to the work of the Legal Services Board to maintain public confidence in our legal services and narrow the gap between providers and consumers.

9. If appointed, what will your priorities be?

I am aware of the LSB's priorities –ensuring regulation improves access to justice, strengthening professional ethics, improving diversity across the profession, and holding the SRA and BSB accountable following enforcement action.

I know that there is a Public Bodies Review of the LSB already underway. It will be a priority for me, along with the LSB Board, to take forward the recommendations of the Review.

My own initial priority, alongside those mentioned above, will be to keep an open-mind and to really focus on a period of discovery. I would like to build my own understanding of the concerns of consumers, the issues and challenges facing the regulated bodies and the expectations of government and other key stakeholders.

10. What is your assessment of the LSB's performance in recent years and its public profile and reputation?

Over the last five years, the LSB has introduced new statutory policies to empower consumers, ensure the ongoing competence of legal professionals, and improve first-tier complaints handling. It is also consulting on proposals to strengthen lawyers' ethical standards, and to help ensure the profession is as diverse as the society it serves. The LSB has shown leadership in several areas and provided clarity to the regulators. The challenge now is for the LSB to hold regulators accountable to the standards it has set and take action if standards are not met.

The LSB's own State of Legal Services 2025 is candid that progress on fairer outcomes has "at best stalled" and in some areas regressed. Some of the submissions from the regulated bodies to the Justice Committee have raised questions about the LSB's role and remit.

However, it is my understanding that there is widespread support for the view that the LSB has important work to do in pursuing better outcomes for the public through targeted and effective regulation. There is clearly acknowledgement that it should and must use its enforcement powers when there are catastrophic provider failures or failures in the organisational performance of regulators.

There is more to be done – including focusing more precisely on demonstrating the LSB's impact and measurement, demonstrating how it is delivering public value to consumers, conspicuously building public trust in the legal system and ensuring that regulation supports sustainable growth, in the consumer and public interest.

11. What risks do you think the LSB will face during your term of office? How do you intend to manage them?

The question of legislative reform is probably the most significant structural risk. There is a growing sense that the Legal Services Act 2007 needs updating. I understand this is a matter for government, but clearly the LSB should stand ready to contribute.

AI and technology present both an opportunity and a risk. Lawtech investment has increased significantly and 60% of providers say clients expect them to use technology.

But consumer trust in AI tools remains fragile, cybersecurity threats are rising sharply, and the regulatory framework was not designed with these tools in mind. The LSB's current research into AI risks for consumers is the right response, but this will need sustained focus, and I suspect, considerable investment in training, up-skilling and technology.

Regulatory failures and consumer harm events are an ongoing risk. The Axiom Ince and SSB Group cases showed how quickly consumer confidence can be damaged and how significant the financial consequences can be (the SRA Compensation Fund faces serious strain).

As the Chair, one of my roles along with the LSB Board, will be to ensure the LSB's oversight is genuinely proactive, not reactive. Market understanding and surveillance is likely to be a priority.

For any regulator, the relationship with the government requires careful management. I am mindful that the government's current emphasis is on ensuring that regulation is proportionate, growth-enabling and non-duplicative. Equally, LSB's independence is a statutory requirement and critical in order to maintain public confidence. The LSB must find the right balance between supporting a strong profession and ensuring that regulation protects the public from harm. I would seek to do this by ensuring close and continuous engagement with the MOJ sponsor department.

12. The Chair of the LSB is required to engage closely with stakeholders within and beyond the sector. How do you plan to approach this?

I believe that a useful way to think about this is to distinguish between those the LSB can direct through regulatory levers, those it can influence through evidence and advocacy, and those it must persuade. Operating effectively across all three requires different skills and approaches

Some examples are as below:

The oversight relationship with frontline regulators

The relationship with the regulators is one of accountability, not simply partnership. The LSB must be capable of being firm when standards are not met.

The LSB's recent enforcement action against the SRA over Axiom Ince and SSB Group, and escalated action against the Bar Standards Board, demonstrates that the oversight relationship must carry real consequences when necessary.

The tone should be clear and evidence-based; public interest must take precedence in terms of transparency of approach and consistency of action.

One of my early priorities would be to establish direct working relationships with the chairs of the regulators, particularly the SRA and BSB.

The convening and collaborative role

The challenges the LSB has identified (ensuring high standards of professional ethics, reducing unmet legal need, improving diversity and access to justice, technology) cannot be solved by the LSB or any single regulator alone. They require coordinated action across the whole sector.

The LSB's convening power could be useful on cross-cutting issues such as AI governance. Information, advice and guidance are a key function for any regulator.

Sharing best practice, encouraging the adoption of digital and other tools to improve the effectiveness of regulation could be an important catalyst for change in the public interest.

The LSB's evidence base, including the State of Legal Services 2025, provides a legitimate, publicly available basis for pushing regulators and other sector actors to do more where progress has stalled.

The wider stakeholder landscape

The stakeholder map extends well beyond the approved regulators: the Legal Ombudsman and the Office for Legal Complaints; the Legal Services Consumer Panel; the MoJ as sponsoring department; the legal professional bodies; civil society and consumer organisations; and technology developers and investors active in lawtech.

Each of these requires a different kind of engagement - necessarily agile, responsive, varied and pragmatic.

In summary, my approach, across all the various stakeholders, would be to act according to the standards expected of public office holders, upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life.

13. The LSB operates in a complex regulatory environment. What is your understanding of the current model of legal services regulation?

Structure of the model

The LSB operates as an oversight regulator, not a frontline regulator. It holds the regulators to account for meeting the nine regulatory objectives, rather than regulating individual practitioners directly.

The eight regulatory objectives in the original 2007 Act span public interest, rule of law, access to justice, consumer protection, competition, professional diversity, public legal understanding, and professional

principles and are set out in the Legal Services Act. A ninth – promoting the prevention and detection of economic crime - was added more recently. These objectives guide the LSB, and the bodies it oversees, in everything they do.

Funding flows from legal services practitioners to approved regulators via practising certificate fees, then to the LSB via a statutory levy. The LSB is therefore independent of both government and the profession.

Only six “reserved legal activities” (such as the exercise of a right of audience and conducting litigation) must be done by an authorised person. All other legal services, including general legal advice and will-writing, can be offered by unregulated providers.

Strengths of the current model

The permissive, principles-based framework has enabled a wider range of business models than most comparable jurisdictions, including alternative business structures and external investment, supporting competition and innovation.

England and Wales are internationally recognised as a leading dispute resolution centre, partly due to the regulatory model’s flexibility.

The LSB’s evidence-based approach, through legal needs surveys, the regulatory performance framework, and the State of Legal Services reports, arguably provides a strong foundation for driving systemic change.

Weaknesses and limitations

The Legal Services Act 2007 was designed before AI, online legal services, and major firm consolidation became defining features of the market. There are questions about how well aligned the Act is with how legal services are actually delivered in today’s world.

The reserved/unreserved distinction leaves a growing unregulated market, particularly online, without consumer protections beyond those provided by consumer law. While some unregulated providers can offer lower cost services which help people access justice, there are clearly risks to consumers from such expansion outside of the regulatory purview.

Enforcement action against the SRA (over Axiom Ince and SSB Group) and the BSB demonstrates that even within the regulated sector, frontline regulators have failed to identify and respond to emerging risks, with serious consequences for consumers and compensation funds.

32% of legal needs currently go unmet, a challenge that regulation alone cannot solve, given its dependency on legal aid funding and court capacity, both matters of Government policy rather than regulatory design.

Declaration

I confirm that the information given in this application is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed.....Monisha Shah..... Date ...18....../...3....../...2026...

Formal minutes

Wednesday 25 March 2026

Members present

Andy Slaughter, in the Chair

Pam Cox

Warinder Juss

Tessa Munt

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst

Tony Vaughan KC

Appointment of Monisha Shah as Chair of the Legal Services Board

Draft Report (*Appointment of Monisha Shah as Chair of the Legal Services Board*) proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 21 read and agreed to.

Appendices agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Ninth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Adjournment

Adjourned till Tuesday 14 April 2026 at 2pm.

Witness

The following witness gave evidence. Transcript can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 25 March 2026

Monisha Shah, Government's preferred candidate for Chair, The Legal Services Board (LSB)

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Session 2024–26

Number	Title	Reference
8th	Appointment of the Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints	HC 1748
7th	Ending the cycle of reoffending – part one: rehabilitation in prisons	HC 469
6th	Tackling the drugs crisis in our prisons	HC 557
5th	Appointment of the Standing Advocate	HC 1196
4th	Work of the County Court	HC 677
3rd	Leadership of the Criminal Cases Review Commission	HC 749
2nd	Appointment of the Chief Inspector of HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate	HC 578
1st	Appointment of the Chair of the Independent Monitoring Authority for the Citizens' Rights Agreements	HC 485
4th Special	Ending the cycle of reoffending – part one: rehabilitation in prisons: Government Response	HC 1639
3rd Special	Tackling the drugs crisis in our prisons: Government Response	HC 1599
2nd Special	Work of the County Court: Government Response	HC 1387
1st Special	The constitutional relationship with the Crown Dependencies: Government Response	HC 582