**Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland**

**Meeting: Monday 21 January 2019, Thistle House, Edinburgh**

**MINUTES**

**Present**

Mrs Nicola Gordon (Chairing Member)

Mr James McNeill, QC

Mr Alistair Morris

Mrs Liz Burnley, CBE

Mrs Alison Mitchell

Ms Neelam Bakshi

The Hon Lord Minginish, QC

The Hon Lady Wise, QC

Sheriff Principal Marysia Lewis

Mrs Deirdre Fulton

**Apologies**

Sheriff Michael O’Grady, QC

Professor Stephen Tierney

Mr John Craig (Chief Executive)

**In Attendance**

Mrs Angela Simpson, Head of BMU

Miss Ashleigh Meikle, Court Appointments Manager and Board Secretary

Ms Olga McPherson, Business Support Officer

Miss Katy Mitchell, Administrator

# Welcome and Apologies

## The Chairing Member welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that apologies had been received from Sheriff O’Grady, Professor Tierney and the Chief Executive. An extended welcome was offered to Mrs Simpson, who joins the Board as the newest member of the Business Management Unit (BMU).

# Minutes of the Previous Meeting (15 December 2018) and Matters Arising

## **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

### Subject to agreed amendments, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved by the Board.

## **Matters Arising**

### Ms Bakshi informed the Board that the risk workshop would likely be pushed back further into March due to a clash of dates with the upcoming annual competitions. With present plans, this workshop would likely be held within the Board Meeting on 18 March 2019.

## **Action Tracker Update**

### The Chairing Member noted that the Chief Executive had removed a number of operational tasks which would be actioned by the BMU, freeing up space on the tracker for Board level actions. Going forward, there will be a separate tracker for operational tasks handled by the BMU. A draft of this will be brought to the February Board Meeting.

### The Board agreed that action 4.5(4) was not complete as stated on the tracker. Although direction of travel had changed since the creation of the action, the BMU should still aim to create training videos for the Law Society to publish on their website.

***Action Point (1): BMU to re-open action 4.5(4) and work to create a bank of training videos for the Law Society website.***

# Oral Updates

## **Online Analytics**

### Mrs Fulton shared her contentment with how the new JABS website was working. In particular, it was good to see that the two top visited pages are the homepage and vacancies page, which together hold the website’s most important information.

### Going forward, it was agreed by the Board that the Online Analytics would be moved within the agenda from Oral Updates to an attached document for reference, which can be discussed in “Any Other Business” if/when required.

### The Board agreed to consult the Social Media Policy in due course to revaluate its workings.

## **Chairing Member’s Update**

### The Chairing Member informed the Board that the Law Society of Scotland would be celebrating their 70th Anniversary this month, and the Board had received an invitation for one member to attend. It was agreed that Mr Morris would attend on the Board’s behalf.

## **Chief Executive’s Update**

### In the absence of the Chief Executive, this update was provided by Mrs Simpson, Head of the BMU.

### The Chief Executive informed the Board of changes within the BMU. Alongside the addition of Mrs Simpson as the new Head of the BMU, the Board heard that Miss Meikle will be leaving the team on promotion at the start of February 2019. The Board congratulated Miss Meikle. The post will be filled, but cannot be advertised at the moment due to a recruitment freeze within Scottish Government. The advert has been prepared and the post will be advertised as soon as possible.

### The BMU recently met bilaterally with Scottish Government and Judicial Office to discuss upcoming work. Going forward, monthly meetings will be held to build trust and relationships between all three teams and strive for a more colligate appointment process.

### One Freedom of Information request had been received since the Board last met. After taking advice from the FOI unit within Scottish Government, the Chief Executive approved a standard response.

### The current BMU priorities with the Board will be recruitment rounds, writing the 2019/2020 business plan and managing the budget. The Board was reassured that by focusing on these priorities, the team would be able to sufficiently run on four members of staff until the B2 post is filled.

# Monthly Financial Update

## The Board noted the financial position and agreed that the newly formatted spreadsheet was a great improvement, and thanked Ms McPherson for her work on this.

# Parallel Competitions (JABS 2019 02)

## **QAG Recommendations**

### The Board discussed recommendations made by the Quality Assurance Group. After some discussion surrounding the pre-sift, the Board reviewed the draft papers which would be used in the trial scheduled for Monday 28 January. The following amendments were agreed:

* A checkbox is to be added to appendix C, allowing panel members to easily mark which score an applicant has been given and the possible reasoning behind their decision.
* Appendix D will be confined into a one page document, with combined scores and explanations over all fields (judicial, personal, legal).
* Appendices C and E will be merged together to show example answers from scores one through to six.

***Action Point (2): BMU to make agreed amendments to the pre-sift papers by Monday 28 January.***

### The Board discussed the “Am I Ready?” approach including the proposed questions for Judicial & Personal Qualities. It was agreed that these would be more suitable as interview questions, and a new set of J&P pre-sift questions would be created. Lord Minginish will circulate these to the BMU as soon as possible, to be formatted and shared with the rest of the Board.

***Action Point (3): Lord Minginish to share “Am I Ready?” questions with the BMU to be formatted and recirculated to the Board.***

### The Board discussed QAG’s recommendation of a moderator at sift stage. It was agreed that due to the number of newly appointed Board Members, a moderator would be provided for each panel during the panel sift meetings. Moderators will not score individual applications or see any applications before the meeting, but will work to ensure robustness in a panel’s decisions. The Chairing Member will choose a moderator for each panel and share findings once a decision had been reached.

### ***Action Point (4): Chairing Member to inform the Board of who will moderate the sift panels for the annual competitions.***

## **Launch Plan**

### After reviewing the draft launch plan for the annual competitions, the Board agreed that they would be advertised as “Annual Competitions” instead of “Parallel Competitions”, as this is the key change for potential applicants.

### The Board discussed plans from the Judicial Office to host a roadshow in Glasgow and Dundee. Although planning was still underway, it was agreed that the Chairing Member would attend the Glasgow event, whilst Lord Minginish do the same in Dundee.

## **Judicial Office Updated Role Profiles**

### After much discussion, the Board agreed that the amendment to the Sheriff role profile could be worked on further to increase its robustness. The Chairing Member will talk to the Lord President about this and report back to the Board at the February Board Meeting.

### The Board discussed the redrafted timetable for the upcoming Annual Competitions. It was agreed that Sheriff Principal Lewis would talk with the Sheriffs Principal regarding the internal transfers process and feedback to the Board.

***Action Point (5): Sheriff Principal Lewis to discuss the internal transfers process with the Sheriffs Principal and report findings back to the Board.***

### Due to Board Member unavailability, the Board agreed to reschedule the June Board Meeting to 17 June 2019.

# Diversity Policy Refresh (JABS 2019 03)

## The Board discussed the redrafted diversity policy and agreed a number of amendments. It was agreed that Lady Wise would make the agreed amendments and bring this back to the Board for approval in February.

***Action Point (6): Lady Wise to make agreed amendments to the diversity policy and bring to the Board for approval in February.***

# General Regulatory Chamber President – Oral Update

## Mrs Mitchell provided the Board with an oral update on the ongoing recruitment for a President of the General Regulatory Chamber. The round is currently on target for an April recommendation, with sifting starting on Monday 28 January and a mock interview scheduled for 5 February.

# Forward Look/AOB

## The Chairing Member informed the Board of upcoming meetings and events, as follows:

* The Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission (NIJAC) will be visiting JABS offices on 21 February to share information between teams and build relationships.
* The Chairing Member on behalf of the Board thanked retiring Board members Alistair Morris and James McNeill for their significant contribution to the work of the Board. Two new members will be joining the Board as of next month – Ms Morag Ross QC (advocate member) and Ms Eilidh Wiseman (solicitor member)
* Mrs Fulton and Professor Tierney’s re-appointments to the Board will be announced in February for a further four years until February 2023.

# Meeting closed – 12:45