

## **Manchester Law Society Committee's**

### **Summary 2019**

#### **Civil Litigation Committee**

The Civil Litigation Committee relaunched in 2019 when I took over as Chair from Ian McConkey. Ian had very ably chaired the committee for a number of years. I would personally like to thank Ian for his stewardship of the committee during that period.

We used the relaunch to bring on board younger members of the profession from a wider mix of firms.

In March we responded to the Justice Select Committee which sought feedback on access to justice and the impact of HMCTS's court modernisation programme.

In June we replied to a consultation paper on fixed recoverable costs.

In September we hosted:

A talk by Mr Justice Birss and HHJ Richard Pearce on an update on civil justice reform;  
A dinner for senior litigators with HHJ Nigel Bird which was followed by an informative discussion about the operation of the courts in Manchester and Nigel fielded queries from practitioners  
a joint training event with the employment law committee at which Tina Ranales-Cotos of Kings Chambers gave a training talk on the issues arising from the supreme Court decision in Tillman –v- Egon Zehnder

In October we hosted a meeting with the Vice Chancellor, Mr Justice Snowden, who wished to meet civil litigators to discuss the impact of various reforms and pilots and obtain feedback.

In November I spoke at a talk hosted by the Chamber of Commerce on the Capped Costs pilot on a panel with HHJ Richard Pearce, HHJ Mark Halliwell and Paul Jonson, mediator, Exchange chambers.

Plans for 2020 - We aim to continue to grow the size and diversity of the committee.

On 29 January we will host an event at TLT's offices which follows on from our meeting with the VC. The aim of the talk is to provide the judiciary with an oversight of the practical issues involved in dealing with e-disclosure which shall include a demonstration of how an e-disclosure platform works and will allow practitioners to discuss frankly and openly the issues which arise when dealing with e-disclosure.

**Jon Hainey, TLT, Chair of the Civil Litigation Committee**

#### **Crown and Magistrates Court Committee**

The Committee met on six occasions during the year, five of which had been planned but an extra meeting was added to allow further consultation on a paper to which the Committee contributed concerning potential listing changes in the North West Magistrates Court structure.

Many of the issues raised were particularly with the day to day functioning of practitioners involved in this type of work. Common complaints were in relation to RUI (released under investigation and DMU (digital marking up of files). These and new introductions to day to day life of criminal practitioners continue to cause concern.

High points of the year included His Honour Judge Potter, Recorder of Minshull Street presenting a well attended lecture on up to date developments in criminal law and the Committee were also very pleased to have received specific mention in the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee Report into the implications of court modernisation, for the contributions it had been able to make to this debate.

**Gwyn Lewis, Burton Copeland, Crown and Magistrates Court Committee**

### **Employment Law Committee**

1. The Employment Law Committee has met as a full committee on three occasions in the year with additional sub-committee meetings dealing with the October Conference. As in previous years the meetings have been hosted at offices of participating members.
2. Facilitated discussions have been led by speakers from King's Chambers and also members of the committee, which have been very successful and stimulating sessions.
3. We have responded to two consultations this year, the Law Commission consultation on hearing structures and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy consultation on Confidentiality clauses – consultation on measures to prevent misuse in situations of workplace harassment or discrimination. Altogether 10 different committee members participated in responding to these consultation papers and it was felt that the committee had made a valuable contribution to the issues at stake.
4. Members of the committee continue to attend Employment Tribunal user group meetings in the North West and report back to the rest of the committee on key issues, which provides valuable information to the rest of the committee.
5. The Committee also organised a joint training session with the civil litigation committee, which provided committee members with a good opportunity to meet each other and network.
6. The Committee held its Annual Conference for members on 2nd October 2019 at the Hilton Deansgate. The Conference was well received and approximately 20 delegates attended. We were able to field speakers from Doughty Street Chambers, King's Chambers, the EHRC and ACAS. It was noted that numbers were less than last year's conference and so a focus for the next year will be to build on existing efforts to further publicise the work of the committee and encourage participation and attendance.
7. The Committee acknowledges once more with many thanks the continued valued assistance of Fran Eccles Bech and her team in organising both the Conference and the support given throughout the year in connection with the administration of the meetings.
8. Phil Allen (Weightmans) was appointed to be a full time Employment Judge in April 2019 and therefore resigned from his position as co-chair of the Committee. Clare Armstrong (Slater and Gordon, shortly moving to take up a position with the Equality and Human Rights Commission) will remain as sole chair of the Committee for the next year.
9. Aims and objectives for the next year include the planning of the annual conference for October 2020. There will be a focus on seeking to improve attendance and participation at committee meetings and the conference, with increased usage of social media and other suitable means to seek to publicise the work of the committee. We will continue to hold facilitated discussions at our committee meetings and ensure members attend the Tribunal user group meetings. We will also consider any future government consultations that are announced and whether a response from the committee would be appropriate. The first committee meeting for the New Year is planned for 4 February 2020.

**Clare Armstrong, Slater and Gordon UK Limited, Chair of Employment Law Committee**

### **Legal Education Committee**

As the Chair of the Legal Education Committee I am pleased to report another excellent year of conferences, seminars and joint ventures with private companies and the Local Authority.

Each year the Committee has concerns with the emergence of yet more private providers of training that the role of MLS will diminish but once again as a result of the quality of the training provided by

the Society this has not occurred and indeed the Committee is delighted to confirm that we have achieved our target for income.

Some of the highlights from this year include the well attended up date on Criminal Law, once again given by HHJ Potter to whom we are very grateful for his thoughts, comments and wit.

The PA and Secretaries Conference has been described as one of the best ever with the most delegates ever to attend. The positive feedback was very pleasing especially on LinkedIn.

Feedback is one thing that we would like to receive more of; good or bad. The facility to leave feedback is now on line and we would encourage everyone who attends any of the events to take a moment to complete the form.

Moving forwards the Committee is always keen to receive ideas for events and you as the members are the people who know what areas are current so please email either Victoria or Carla (or any member of the committee) with ideas.

If anyone can bear the B word it is likely that all of the events over the next few months will have some reference to Brexit one way or another. This may be enough to put everyone off attending but hopefully not!

May I as Chair of the Committee thank all the members old and new for their attendance over the year at the quarterly meetings; last but most certainly not least my thanks on behalf of the Committee to Vicky and Carla for their hard work and enthusiasm in putting together the program and ensuring that all goes well at the events.

Finally as always my thanks go to Fran for her tireless commitment not only to the Legal Education Committee but to each and every Committee and the Society as a whole.

**Louise Straw, Burton Copeland, Chair of Legal Education Committee**

### **Membership Committee**

The Members' Committee is a newly established Committee this year and has met on 2 occasions since its inception. It's aims are to understand more about our membership and its needs, what MLS does well, what we can do more of and to raise awareness among the membership of the many benefits that being a member of our organisation brings.

We plan to invite senior and managing partners to short coffee meetings at our Bridge Street office to discuss our corporate membership and to invite nominations for "ambassadors" in each member firm to act as our main MLS contact and who will be able to promote our events/legal education programme and other benefits amongst their teams and ensure membership details are up to date. Our members are the lifeblood of our organisation and we welcome any feedback and ideas from you.

**Michelle Garlick, Weightmans LLP, Chair of the Membership Committee**

### **Messenger Editorial Committee**

It is now two years since the Messenger changed to an online publication and our readership continues to grow, now reaching over 3000 views per month. We also use social media, particularly Twitter, to promote the Messenger and on an average month we can reach 150k through retweets.

In 2019 we welcomed two new members to the Editorial Committee; Kid Hardwood of Wildings Solicitors and Shez Anjum, Chair of the MTSG. Kid has become the Editor of a new section of the Messenger "Technology Matters" which has proved to be popular and generating interest on social media. Shez brings a valued viewpoint from younger members of the profession.

In 2019 we introduced a regular mental health column from Team Mental Health and in March the magazine was dedicated to mental health issues. We have also introduced ‘Manchester Monuments’ taking a look at the history behind the city of Manchester.

The profession celebrated 100 Years of Women in the Law in 2019 and we featured a series of articles that celebrated women lawyers in Manchester and the contributions they have made.

Movers & Shakers continues to grow, with firms of all sizes making contributions and the publication continues to grow, with some editions reaching 60 pages.

Looking ahead to 2020, the editorial committee may carry out some form of survey to establish what members want to read about and also may look at restructuring the Messenger, so that readers can better navigate the pages.

I would like to take this opportunity thank the members of the Editorial Committee for their ideas and enthusiasm during 2019 and hope that we can continue to evolve the Messenger into 2020.

**Chair of the Messenger Editorial Committee, Julia Baskerville, Baskerville Publications**

### **Property Committee**

The Property Committee organised its third annual conference in 2019. This year, we moved the event to the Hilton, which proved to be a popular choice of venue.

As always, the Committee tried to ensure that the conference provided legal updates to our delegates, alongside practical advice from key professionals in the property industry.

Tax has always been popular with our delegates and, once again, our conference included a useful session led by Cowgills, which included case studies and an update on VAT, capital allowances and other taxes.

It is also important that property lawyers understand how title insurance works, how policies are taken out, the different types of cover available for various risks and how claims are managed. Trevor Barnett of Dual took us through various case studies, before surveyor, James Batey, talked about the commercial reality of dilapidations. Case studies were again used to highlight the practical issues which lawyers need to consider when drafting leases and how these clauses would be interpreted when a claim is made.

Counsel. Richard Price, gave delegates an update on recent developments in property law, including grounds of opposition under section 30 of the Landlord & Tenant Act 1954, recent cases on restrictive covenants, building schemes, easements and the difficult issues of estoppel and serving notices

The conference closed with a session led by Toni Longman of Loctons, which analysed insurance risk in various property transactions, before delegates had a further opportunity for discussion and networking.

My thanks go to the speakers, to the Committee members who worked so hard to put the conference together and to Victoria and Carla at Manchester Law Society for their help in supporting something which is now becoming an established event in the calendar for property lawyers.

We are now looking forward to arranging next year's conference and have ideas for other events, with some new members joining the committee for 2020.

**Chair of the Property Committee, Stephen Lintott, BLM Law**

### **Regulatory Affairs Committee and COLP/COFA Forum**

The Regulatory Affairs Committee is one of the smaller Committees of the Council but it is an essential one to ensure that your voice is heard in relation to proposed changes by the SRA. Whilst the Committee has not needed to meet as there have been no consultations issued which required a response, it has been responsible for arranging its hugely successful annual regulatory conference, held this year on 25 June, at which speakers from the SRA and others shared their knowledge and experiences on a wide range of risk and thought-provoking topics, including mental health and wellbeing, a theme of our President for 2019.

25 November 2019 sees the introduction of the SRA's new Standards and Regulations which could have a significant impact on many members of MLS and in particular, where and how solicitors are able to practise and how the SRA will implement its new enforcement strategy. The SDT has also agreed to change the burden of proof from the criminal standard to the civil standard and it remains to be seen what impact this may have on the SRA's approach to discipline. The Regulatory Affairs committee, in conjunction with the COLP and COFA Forum, will be providing feedback to the SRA on issues where further guidance is needed to help clarify the SRA's interpretation of the new Standards.

The COLP and COFA forum meets every couple of months and/or whenever there is a need to discuss a consultation. It is an opportunity for those responsible for managing risk in their firms to meet and share experiences and ideas under Chatham House Rules. Occasionally, we invite speakers to talk about particular risk topics and in 2019, we invited Keri pay of Crowe Accounting to talk about the treatment of VAT on disbursements. We also covered a number of other topics including pricing and transparency, Law Society Practice notes, whistleblowing, AML and GDPR, PII and thematic reviews.

We look forward to welcoming new members at our meetings. Anyone interested should contact either Fran Eccles-Bech or Michelle Garlick at [michelle.garlick@weightmans.com](mailto:michelle.garlick@weightmans.com)

**Michelle Garlick, Weightmans LLP, Chair of the Regulatory Affairs Committee and COLP/COFA Forum**

### **Social Committee**

A summary of the committee and what it has achieved throughout 2019

During 2019, we have successfully continued with the Professionals Dinner Clubs, which have proved still after many years to be very popular. There was a Quiz Night at Manchester Hall in early 2019, with another event pencilled in for early 2020.

Also, the Newly Qualified event returned this year and was a great success with both solicitors and barristers across the profession.

What the aims and objectives are for 2020?

I will be passing on the baton as Chair to new blood who I am sure will be able to continue the good work done in 2019 and come up with some great new ideas for social events.

**Michael Hardacre, Slater & Gordon Lawyers, Chair of the Social Committee**