

SUSSEX LAW SOCIETY

REPORT OF THE
GENERAL COMMITTEE
FOR 2016/17

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE 2016/17

President:

Mr. J. Grant, Crawley

Vice-President:

Ms E. Weir, Hassocks

Immediate Past President:

Mr. K.G. Smyth, Brighton

Honorary Treasurer:

Mr. D.J. Edwards, 30 Old Steyne, Brighton, BN1 1FZ

Honorary Secretary:

Ms. C. Sayer, 30 Old Steyne, Brighton, BN1 1FZ

General Committee:

Ms. V. Eunson-Hickey

Ms. J. Hardaway

Mr. O. Maxwell-Jones

Ms. A. Miller

Ms. J. Payne

Mr. P.W. Richards (Council Member)

The following were co-opted onto the Committee:

Mr. H. Hunt, Ms G.Tisshaw

**SUSSEX LAW SOCIETY
REPORT OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE FOR 2016/17**

PRESIDENT'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR

I have enjoyed my year as President, but look forward to handing the mantle to Emma Weir. The transition from me as a corporate lawyer to Emma as a private client lawyer, seems entirely appropriate for a Society intended to represent the local legal community.

My thanks to the Sussex Law Society Committee and to our COO, Jeanette Lacy Scott, for their energy and good humoured support this year, which has been invaluable.

I have enjoyed meeting lawyers from across the region this year and have been fortunate to attend a number of other local law society annual dinners, which has allowed me to see and talk to partners from a variety of practices in Sussex and Kent. Whilst it is clear that our profession faces a number of challenges, both economic and regulatory, I have been struck by the strength, resilience and quality of the legal community in Sussex.

In my newsletter comments this year, I have reflected on how partner skills of client care can be transitioned into contemporary legal practice, and how young lawyers can learn from the skills honed by those toward the later part of their careers. Twenty or more years ago, individual solicitors had broader practices and many have followed their clients through changes in their personal and professional lives; these days lawyers specialise on qualification.

While there are themes which remain consistent over the years, our profession faces significant challenge. New entrants to the market, including some large commercial operators, means a risk that our profession might appear old fashioned and out of date. Each of us need to work out how to effectively promote the professional values and experience we bring to clients, and must not wait for someone else to do that work for us. Law practices have always been entrepreneurial businesses at their heart, and now is a time we need to focus on how we each approach and address our chosen markets.

Merger and integration continues apace, but new smaller and more specialist firms are also emerging. Size is certainly not the key to success, but being the right size for the business model you have chosen and the market you address is essential.

So, given these challenges how can local law societies help?

Above all we can provide an opportunity for local solicitors and those joining the profession to mix together, network and learn from one another. The social and networking side of the Sussex Law Society has always been strong and we will work hard to continue that, along with our high quality technical training programmes. I am delighted that the Junior Lawyers Division is reborn this year and, with a new committee, will be arranging events.

Whilst encouraging networking within law society members, the Society can also help forge links with other professionals, which I have been keen to progress this year. I was particularly grateful for the support and sponsorship we received this year at our Annual Charity Dinner at the Grand in Brighton from local businesses, Kreston Reeves, EMC and Barclays. The annual dinner and dance remains at the centre of our years activity and was well supported this year. It offers an opportunity for local firms to promote themselves and to give a well earned night out to key staff.

JONATHAN GRANT

HON. SECRETARY'S REPORT

It has been a pleasure to be the Honorary Secretary of the Sussex Law Society (SLS) once again this year.

SLS continues to be a strong local law society which strives to serve and supports its members. A key aim being that SLS members feel connected, whether that is via SLS Continuing Professional Development courses, the

SLS website, the SLS Newsletter or through multiple SLS social events. All of which have been well attended and utilised throughout the year.

I have continued to attend the Combined Meetings for the South Eastern Law Societies. It proves to be an important biannual, providing an opportunity for SLS to strengthen links with other local law societies, to share ideas and even resources.

With all of this in mind I am confident that Sussex Law Society will continue to thrive in 2017/2018.

CERYS SAYER

HON. TREASURER'S REPORT

The accounts for the year ending 31st August 2016 are included in this report. As with previous years, now that the AGM is held on a date between 1 September and 30 November, the accounts included in the Annual Report are a year behind. The Chartered Accountants who advise the Society merged during 2016. The Committee reviewed their position and new accountants have been administered. It is hoped that in future years they may be able to produce accounts on a current year basis.

Accounts to 31 August 2016

The accounts show a loss of £2804 compared to last year's profit of £4202. The increase in expenditure was largely the cost of our new website (£4024). Our income showed a slight fall in membership subscriptions (£608) and a smaller surplus on courses run by the society (a reduction of £2611). Despite this, the balance sheet shows a Capital account balance of £18472, which although down on last year is still better than in 2014.

The year to 31 Aug 2016

The committee remains of the firm view that the Society offers our members good value for money and worthwhile membership benefits. This is a considerable achievement and we are grateful to all of our sponsors who, in various ways, support our Annual Dinner, website, newsletter and individual social events. AON were our main sponsor during this year and others included PSG, STL, Searches UK, Indexp, Conveyancing Data Services and Wesleyan. Sadly, STL decided last year not to continue sponsoring our property courses after years of support for which we thank them. They continue to sponsor the website. PSG have stepped in as our property courses' sponsor and that is working very well. Wesleyan sponsored many of our other courses and, again, they are another great organization to work with. The new website has attracted sponsorship and it is hoped, as we attract more traffic, we will encourage more sponsors.

The support of the members of the Society is apparent in the accounts to 31 August 2016. The continuing support of members of the Society's courses and social programmes will further strengthen the Society.

DAVID EDWARDS

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

This last twelve months has been dominated by the departure of our Chief Executive and the drive to implement changes to The Law Society's governance and management structure, allowing it to coordinate and deliver the development of strategy and policy in a faster, far less complicated way. This process is expected to create an environment in which Council can have confidence in delegating the running of the business to the (Main) "Board", with support from Policy and Operations, and most importantly to the Executive. This has not necessarily been the case recently. Policy making and strategic direction have been confused and ineffective. A clear and consistent structure is overdue and it must set the pace.

The AGM of 6th July 2017 marked a particularly significant change of the guard at Council, with thirteen members stepping down, to be replaced by fresh and energetic new blood. This included two new Seats for the Junior Lawyers Division, the local Chapter of which is resurgent, being encouraged and featured on every Agenda of the Sussex Law Society general committee meetings. A summary of Council's discussions the day before the AGM can be found in The Gazette of 17th July.

A key debate has continued to be over the SRA's push for changes to the Handbook. The Law Society has responded very strongly, arguing that the SRA is ignoring its primary role of regulating for the protection of consumers, by opening the door to some Solicitors to work in unregulated entities, thereby sweeping away long-

standing rules on conflict of interest and PII. The question over the extent of information about legal services being offered and its usefulness and relevance to Clients, also needs to be clarified. There is now however a feeling of reconciliation and more general corroboration with the SRA. The problem has been the perception of the degree of “oversight” (undefined) which TLS should retain over the SRA without being seen to be interfering with its regulatory functions. The Legal Services Board to which the SRA lodged its complaint has a listening ear but little political will to become involved!

Lessons have been learned from the embarrassing CAT judgement in “Socrates” where I can assure you that The Law Society acted in good faith as it continues to maintain and promote CQS. By way of reminder, this was launched in 2010 following Lenders’ concerns over the quality of conveyancing services and threatening draconian panel culls. It was not intended to be a profit making venture but as it grew in popularity, ongoing training requirements were necessary. By 2015 it was deemed that The Law Society had gained a dominant, anti-competitive position. Settlement was offered but the Claimant persisted.

“Exit Strategy” forums are being oversubscribed and therefore repeated. Look out for these. Sign up to “My Law Society” (straightforwardly done with your SRA details to hand.). I am trying to get roadshows on our patch. The SRA monthly bulletins are also useful and informative, if only to judge the different stances yourself! For that of The Law Society on the future of the SIF, do refer to The Gazette 4th September 2017 “Solicitors Indemnity Fund-20120 Vision”.

One very interesting Consultation coming up is the SDT’s proposed review of its Rules and within it, the standard of proof it uses. Please consider the Law Society’s position (that the criminal standard be maintained) as it invites the views of members. The SRA offers the balance of probability test. The LSB will ultimately need to approve any Rule changes.

PATRICK RICHARDS

REPORT OF THE CONTINUING EDUCATION COMMITTEE

So far, despite the new SRA regulations on continuing professional development for solicitors which came into effect from 1 November 2016, numbers attending Sussex Law Society courses have remained stable. The fear was that, because solicitors no longer had to attend accredited courses for a percentage of their required CPD hours, numbers would drop dramatically. Of course it is still early days, but solicitors still need to continuously identify their training needs and address and record their learning and development activities and we believe that our courses will continue to be an invaluable part of this process for many members. In fact, many I have spoken to have said that attending a course is still one of the best ways of accessing training and provides an invaluable opportunity for interaction with the speaker (the ‘expert’) and other participants as well as networking opportunities with fellow professionals. A forum to share common experiences is also a benefit to many.

In the training year 1st September, 2016 to 31st August, 2017 we ran 20 courses and the average attendance was 20 participants at each. In order to break even we need at least 15 people on every course we run (on some courses where the speaker’s fee is very high we need more). It is a difficult balance always trying to keep course fees low for members but not compromising on speaker and venue quality. Although the Society does not solely depend on the income from profit from courses, it does play a large part in funding our operation and so obviously we cannot run courses which we have to subsidise. Unfortunately, this means that sometimes very interesting courses on topics relating to some of the smaller practice areas which we have organised have had to be cancelled due to insufficient numbers. We continue to look at ways in which we can attract higher numbers and plan to make much more use of social media to this end in the forthcoming year.

We are proud of our local, high quality, extremely good value courses which continue to receive excellent feedback from those who attend. Here are just a few comments from a recent course “As always an excellent training session both timely and all very relevant”, “Fantastic speaker”, “Very informative”. So please continue to support our continuing education programme and visit the website <http://www.sussex-law.co.uk/courses/> regularly to see what is coming up (as new courses are added throughout the year) and encourage others in your firm/organisation to do so as well. If what you are looking for isn’t there – then tell us and we can see what we can do.

JEANETTE LACY SCOTT

REPORT OF THE SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Following the AGM in October a group of 25 took a flight in the British Airways i360. Seeing Brighton lit up on a lovely clear evening (with a glass in hand) was a fantastic experience and so interesting to see our wonderful city from this new perspective. The flight was followed by dinner at the Bellevue Restaurant below. It was a memorable evening and, as with all Sussex Law Society events, a great chance to meet up with old friends and colleagues and an opportunity to meet new people in the local legal community.

The Griffith Smith Farrington Webb Team 'Top Chumps' won the (particularly difficult!) Sussex Law Society Quiz on Wednesday 9th November at Al Duomo in Brighton. The event was part of the national Great Legal Quiz to raise funds to support the work of regional Legal Support Trusts who are supported by the Access to Justice Foundation. 14 teams from local firms and chambers took part. On the day following the US Presidential election our teams didn't need to look far for inspiration for their names which included, 'Donald's Dunces', 'Trump's Hairpiece', 'Trump Card and the 'Mother Trumpers'. But sadly, using the Trump name didn't help any of these teams to the kind of victory their namesake had enjoyed the day before! We are looking forward to the next quiz on 2nd November which will have (by popular demand) much easier questions!

There is a wonderful tradition in our Society where every year the Past Presidents meet for dinner to welcome the incoming President. This year I was honoured to be invited along to the Grand to mark my 25 years working for the Society as its Administrative Officer. I was delighted to have the opportunity to catch up with so many of the Presidents I have worked for over the years and a couple who were in office before I started in 1991! It was a fun evening, full of the sort of wonderful stories and anecdotes one would expect from such a gathering! Long may it last!

Thank you to everyone who came to this year's Ball and made it such a fantastic night! We had over 220 attending and raised over £1200 for the Rockinghorse Appeal. It was great to see a lot of firms attending for the first time alongside our faithful annual followers and we know from the feedback that the general feeling was that everyone had a great time! The Grand delivered once again with superb food and service and we were entertained by a great band 'Happy Hour' who ensured that the dance floor was never empty. We are grateful to our main sponsors JLT. Their support means that we are able to subsidise ticket prices which really helps to keep the numbers as good as they are. PSG were also extremely generous in their sponsorship of the photo booth and Barclays, EMC Ltd and Skerrits Chartered Financial Planners jointly sponsored the Band. Crown Office Row, the Grand Hotel and JLT donated generous game prizes to help raise funds for this year's worthwhile local charity.

We have already begun planning next year's event – again at the Grand on Friday, 11th May – save the date.

Following the responses to the President's questionnaire last year the committee took on board the expressed desire for the Society to hold more networking events between members and also with other local professional bodies. One idea which arose from this was to set up a local network of Practice Managers, or people in similar roles, and we are grateful to Wesleyan who sponsored the first 'lunch and learn' event on 25th July at Hotel du Vin in Brighton. 24 people attended and the feedback was very good - we are looking to organise the next event in early 2018. Sadly, there was insufficient support for a training and networking event we put together with the South Eastern Society of Chartered Accountants on the subject of tax avoidance schemes. We are still trying to persuade the Law Society to bring some of the events they are planning to initiate/regenerate local groups of lawyers, e.g. in house lawyers, small firms and young lawyers to the Sussex area and we are also looking at setting up some informal 'meet' ups for solicitors in specific practice areas.

Please keep a look out for the Society's social and networking events in our monthly Newsletter and let us have any ideas you may have for new events.

JEANETTE LACY SCOTT

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SUSSEX LAW SOCIETY HELD AT
THE OLD SHIP HOTEL, KING'S ROAD, BRIGHTON, BN1 1NR, ON THURSDAY, 27th OCTOBER,
2016 AT 6.00 PM**

Present:

The President, Hon. Treasurer and 17 members.

1. Apologies were received from 4 members whose names were read at the meeting.
2. The minutes of the AGM held on 17th September, 2014 were accepted as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

None.

4. Report of the General Committee for 2015/16 and Annual Accounts

It was proposed that the report and accounts be accepted. Proposer: Ms V Eunson-Hickey. Seconded by: Ms G Tisshaw with all present in favour.

5. Election of Officers

Mr Smyth thanked the General Committee and Mrs Lacy Scott for their help and support during his year in office for which he was very grateful. He said he was delighted to propose Mr J Grant to be elected as the Society's next President and this was seconded by Mr P Richards with all present in favour. The following office holders and general committee members were then elected:

Vice-President: **TBC.** As no nominations for the office were received by the deadline it was proposed that Rule 9 (e) be applied, whereby the General Committee have the power to appoint a Vice President. Proposed by Mr J Grant and seconded by Mr K Smyth with all present in favour.

Hon. Secretary: **Ms C Sayer** (proposed by Mr H Hunt & seconded by Ms J Paine with all present in favour)

Hon. Treasurer: **Mr D Edwards** (proposed by Mr H Hunt & seconded by Ms A Miller with all present in favour)

General Committee Members:

Ms J Hardaway (proposed by Mr K Smyth & seconded by Ms C Sayer with all present in favour).

6. Resolution to Amend the Rules & Regulations of the Sussex Law Society (2012)

The proposed amendments to the Rules and Regulations of the Sussex Law Society (2012) had been circulated to all members with the AGM agenda in advance of the AGM in accordance with the Rules. The resolution was proposed by Mr K Smyth and seconded by Mr P Richards with all those present in favour.

7. Any Other Business

Affiliated Membership

Council Member, Mr Richards, raised the question of affiliated membership of the Law Society and requested members' feedback on the subject for him to take back to the Law Society to contribute to the ongoing discussion.

8. President's Address

Mr Grant introduced himself as a corporate lawyer and partner in DMH Stallard LLP, working from their Gatwick office. He qualified in 1989, starting his career at Fitzhugh Gates and had subsequently worked in private practice in Brighton, Kent and in the north of Sussex.

He said that during his year he was keen to increase membership and involvement from solicitors living and working in the north of the constituency as, over the years, the balance had changed and there were now a significant number of firms in the north of Sussex. He also felt that the Society should be looking at more ways of trying to help younger members of the profession develop and providing more support to people who wanted to get into the profession.

Mr Grant reflected on the uncertain times ahead, particularly post Brexit, and said that many law firms were facing new difficulties and challenges. He felt that the Society had an important role in bringing members together to help each other and also, by encouraging more networking with other local professions, to open up more business opportunities.

Mr Grant concluded by saying that the General Committee would be discussing the plan for the year at their annual strategy meeting in November where some plans to action the above would be discussed.

After the meeting some members went on to a flight on the new i360 in Brighton followed by dinner.

SUSSEX LAW SOCIETY

**PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2016**

	2016		2015	
	£	£	£	£
Income				
Other income				
Sponsorship income	7,900		7,400	
Membership subscriptions	9,989		10,657	
Surplus on seminars	9,407		12,018	
Surplus/(deficit) on society events	(384)		(698)	
Surplus/(deficit) on annual dinner	<u>(748)</u>		<u>(388)</u>	
		<u>26,164</u>		<u>28,989</u>
		26,164		28,989
Expenditure				
Telephone	728		568	
General printing, postage and stationery	758		1,156	
Courses events printing & copying	2,031		1,151	
Newsletter costs	-		1,121	
Insurance	769		680	
Website & computer expenses	4,024		475	
Clerical assistance	18,000		18,000	
Accountancy fees	715		700	
Bookkeeping	<u>605</u>		<u>480</u>	
		<u>28,582</u>		<u>24,331</u>
		(2,418)		4,658
Finance costs				
Bank charges		<u>308</u>		<u>364</u>
		(2,726)		4,294
Depreciation				
Computer equipment		<u>78</u>		<u>92</u>
NET PROFIT		(2,804)		<u>4,202</u>

SUSSEX LAW SOCIETY

BALANCE SHEET
31 AUGUST 2016

	Notes	£	2016	£	£	2015	£
FIXED ASSETS							
Tangible assets	2			443			521
CURRENT ASSETS							
Trade debtors		70				82	
Prepayments		334				301	
Bank balances		23,681				24,413	
Cash in hand		<u>214</u>				<u>200</u>	
		<u>24,299</u>				<u>24,996</u>	
CURRENT LIABILITIES							
VAT		3,257				2,148	
Trade creditors		224				708	
Deferred income		689				-	
Accrued expenses		<u>2,100</u>				<u>1,385</u>	
		<u>6,270</u>				<u>4,241</u>	
NET ASSETS							
				<u>18,029</u>		<u>20,755</u>	
				<u>18,472</u>		<u>21,276</u>	
CAPITAL ACCOUNT							
	3			<u>18,472</u>		<u>21,276</u>	

SUSSEX LAW SOCIETY

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2016

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing financial statements

The financial statements have been compiled on a basis which enables profits to be calculated in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice and which provides sufficient and relevant information to enable the completion of a tax return.

2. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Plant and Machinery £	Computer equipment £	Totals £
COST			
At 1 September 2015 And 31 August 2016	7,307 _____	6,244 _____	13,551 _____
DEPRECIATION			
At 1 September 2015 Charge for year	7,307 _____	5,723 78 _____	13,030 78 _____
At 31 August 2016	7,307	5,801	13,108
NET BOOK VALUE			
At 31 August 2016	_____	<u>443</u>	<u>443</u>
At 31 August 2015	_____	<u>521</u>	<u>521</u>

3. CAPITAL ACCOUNT

	2016 £	2015 £
Brought forward	21,276	17,074
Add Net profit	-	4,202
	<u>21,276</u>	<u>21,276</u>
Less Net loss	2,804	-
	<u>18,472</u>	<u>21,276</u>
	<u>18,472</u>	<u>21,276</u>