

SUSSEX LAW SOCIETY

REPORT OF THE
GENERAL COMMITTEE
FOR 2020/21

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE 2020/21

President:

Ms L Tarrant, Brighton

Vice-President:

Ms M Nagra, Hove

Immediate Past President:

Ms J. Hardaway, Uckfield

Honorary Treasurer:

Mr. O. Maxwell-Jones, 15 Prince Albert Street, Brighton, BN1 1HY

Honorary Secretary:

Ms. E Richards, Brighton

Council Member:

Mr O Maxwell-Jones, Brighton

General Committee:

Mr J. Bradshaw

Ms G Collins

Mr. D. Dickson

Ms C Rents

Mr S. Rozzier

Ms E Weir

The following were co-opted onto the Committee:

Ms. G.Tisshaw, Mr P W Richards

**SUSSEX LAW SOCIETY
REPORT OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE FOR 2020/21**

PRESIDENT'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR

It was difficult to know quite where to begin my review of the last 12 months, as I feel like they have only just started. So, for inspiration, I looked at what my predecessor, Jacqueline Hardaway, wrote in October 2020 in her review of the year before; and I was not surprised that she opened it with “To say this last year has been a challenging one, is an understatement!”. Jacqueline went on to say, “I really look forward to being able to get together once again and enjoy the collaboration and community spirit of our profession – fingers crossed that this can be by our next Annual Charity Ball in May 2021, if not before.” Little did I know, when I took over from Jacqueline as President of the Sussex Law Society in October 2020, that our Annual Charity Ball would be postponed again until May 2022; or that I would not attend any event in person until September 2021, and at which I would still be wearing a mask.

It feels to me like nothing has changed, yet everything has changed. We have all adapted to virtual methods of meeting, learning, and socialising. The Law Society’s annual Presidents’ and Secretaries’ Conference took place on-line this year, the Sussex Law Society’s General Committee still has not met in person since the beginning of the pandemic, and the training that we deliver to members is on-line. I am never underwhelmed by or ungrateful for the resilience of human nature, and how massive changes to our ways of life are assimilated over short periods of time.

It has been an absolute pleasure and an honour to hold the role of President of the Sussex Law Society over the last 12 months, and to watch us all adapt to our new lives. My fellow committee members have been a privilege to work with and have never failed to attend each meeting with a smile on their faces. More importantly, our members remain as committed and supportive as they always have. The forthcoming Quiz night following the 2021 AGM is over-subscribed with members looking forward to pitching their wits against each other, but more importantly re-establishing the wonderfully collegiate relationships we have with each other, in person.

My review of the last year therefore seems to be congratulatory in the face of adversity, positivity for the future, and gratitude for all the support that surrounds us.

With all my fingers and toes crossed, I hope that the Quiz night will be the first of many events that we can all attend in person, and that we remain resilient as a local Law Society whatever the future may bring.

To that end I thank you all for allowing me to serve as the President over the last year, and I look forward to seeing you all (in real life) very soon.

LUCY TARRANT

HON SECRETARY’S REPORT

During the last year we have all continued to meet the challenges presented to us by remote working. Whilst my familiarity with MS Teams calls and my proficiency in matters IT related, has increased over the last year, I am delighted that I will now be conducting some meetings in person. We are all familiar with the stress caused by the home internet signal failing in the middle of an important meeting or worse still – court hearing.

The SLS Committee has continued to meet monthly, via Zoom and discuss the issues affecting our members and we are now looking forward to some ‘live’ events such as the Quiz evening and AGM on 3rd November.

I was delighted to be able to meet Lubna Shuja, Vice President of the Law Society (together with our long-standing committee member Pat Richards) during Lubna’s visit to Brighton for the Labour Party Conference in September. Lubna was engaging and very receptive to our representations and she was keen to deal with the issues which we raised as affecting our members. In particular, I spoke to her about members’ concerns about the delay and poor service at the County Court and we discussed steps that might be taken to address this issue. She assured me that the Law Society is liaising with the MOJ and HMCTS to deal with these problems and she is also meeting with politicians. She urged practitioners to get their clients to write to their MPs to complain about problems with the courts as she thought that constituent’s letters held a lot of weight.

She also urged us to ask our members to register their specialisms on My Law Society [“My LS”] and to connect with one another online.

I will intend to keep up the dialogue with Lubna over the course of the next year and I will invite her to our annual Ball in May 2022.

I very much look forward to meeting more of our members next year at our events and representing them in connection with the issues which cause them concern and frustration.

ELEANOR RICHARDS

HON. TREASURER'S REPORT

The draft accounts for the year ending 31st August 2021 are included with this report.

Regrettably, sponsorship income has fallen again (by nearly 60%) as sponsors refocusing where their money is spent. Other sources of income, fees and seminar, remained steady or increased on the previous year. Both of which are a testament to the constant hard work of the Society’s COO, Jeanette.

Like last year, the inability to hold social events and the annual dinner whilst disappointing and is reflected in both income and expenditure. Largely, expenditure remained unchanged resulting in a larger shortfall than last year of £1,325.00 which is primarily due to the drop in sponsorship income.

As always, this is your Society and with your continuing support of its courses, events, and this committee, it will continue to succeed in supporting you, its members.

OLIVER MAXWELL-JONES

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

As my time as your Council Member draws to a close, so too does the constituency itself. We have all gotten used to saying that the past 12 months have been interesting times, and I can certainly say that of being your Council Member. The Law Society is an organisation of its members, for its members and it has been my experience that those who give up their time to represent us all truly care about this profession, it’s future and the future of the rule of law. My only regret is not actually being able to attend a meeting at Chancery Lane due to the pandemic. Though, of course, distance, the day job, and the constraints of time do make video meetings far more economic. I am thankful for the support given to me by the Sussex Law Society committee and my predecessor, Patrick Richards, who served this constituency for virtually 20 years. In doing so, I hand over to Holly Goacher who is already Council Member for Outer Sussex and takes the reins of the new constituency of Sussex for the remainder of her term.

OLIVER MAXWELL JONES

I am hugely proud to be stepping into Oliver’s shoes, and Patrick’s before him, in serving what The Law Society has historically called the Inner Sussex constituency. I thought it would be useful to explain how you are now to be represented in light of the changes to the structure of The Law Society Council, which brings me into this role. The Law Society Council previously had an individual representing Outer Sussex, being the members within the catchment of Chichester, Worthing, Hastings and Eastbourne Law Societies, and an individual representing Inner Sussex, being the members within the catchment of Sussex Law Society. While the restructure doesn’t affect these local Law Societies, which will continue their fantastic work as before with the assistance of a new and improved membership engagement team at Chancery Lane, it has merged the two seats on Council into one, meaning it is now me representing all the members across Sussex. I was elected in 2019 so my time on Council will run to June 2023, which is why I have automatically taken on the new role of Sussex Council Member. My commitment and enthusiasm for my role on Council representing Outer Sussex will only be enhanced with this increased responsibility, and I am super keen to show all our members across Sussex that I am here to hear your voices either directly or through the local Law Societies, to ensure the decisions being made at Chancery Lane are truly reflective of what matters to us in Sussex

HOLLY GOACHER

REPORT OF THE CONTINUING EDUCATION COMMITTEE

When I was writing this report last year I hoped that, a year on, I would be reporting that our face to face courses programme had for the most part resumed, with webinars offered from time to time when it felt appropriate. But we all know that lockdowns returned at the end of 2021 and, even when they were lifted in 2021 and venues opened up, social distancing rules made it difficult and not cost effective to run them this way. The committee have kept this under review at every meeting and we hope to start introducing face to face courses again in 2022.

It must be said that webinars have been a brilliant way to keep the education programme up and running and for some members they have enabled participation in training sessions without the cost and time of travelling to and from a venue. But there are of course downsides – some people don't have cameras on their PCs and so can't fully participate and there generally seems to be less interaction between the speakers and the audiences without the more spontaneous opportunities to grab the speaker over coffee or informally chat to colleagues. Also, from the Society's viewpoint, there are financial implications. Sponsorship of webinars has virtually dried up as sponsors mostly get involved to get the opportunity to speak to delegates in person. There has also been a trend for some companies (particularly but not exclusively involved in the private client sector) to pay speakers a generous fee to record webinars which the company then offers out at no cost as part of their marketing effort to connect with solicitors. Obviously the Society does not have the large resources to compete with that as we are still paying speakers pre pandemic rates and need to recoup that cost by charging delegates to attend. Consequently we sadly have occasionally had to cancel some previously popular courses as the take up has been low because the webinar is being offered free elsewhere by the same speaker. But overall we have managed to keep going and our speakers have often been very accommodating, agreeing to speak for a lower fee if numbers are small so that the course can go ahead.

Going forward I expect we will end up with a hybrid arrangement where we will put on the longer and more popular courses face to face and keep offering the shorter or less popular ones on line. In any event thanks to all our members who continue to support our education programme and please do not hesitate to let us know if you have any suggestions for topics we could include in the 2022 programme.

JEANETTE LACY SCOTT

REPORT OF THE SOCIAL & NETWORKING EVENTS COMMITTEE

A short report this year as we have been unable to hold any events because of the Pandemic!

But hope is on the horizon! We are holding a quiz with a fish and chip supper following the 2021 AGM in the Palm Court Restaurant on Brighton Pier and, as I write, we have 150 attending and a waiting list! The response to our first physical social event since November 2019 has been incredible and so we look forward both to a good evening and many more opportunities in the near future to get together and have some fun.

And last but certainly not least our Annual Charity Ball is booked at the Grand in Brighton on Friday, 6th May, 2022 so please save the date, come along and make it one to remember!

JEANETTE LACY SCOTT

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SUSSEX LAW SOCIETY HELD
VIRTUALLY BY ZOOM ON THURSDAY, 15TH OCTOBER, 2020 AT 5.30 PM**

Present: The President, Vice President, Hon. Treasurer Hon. Secretary and 12 members.

1. Apologies were received from 3 members whose names were read at the meeting.
2. The minutes of the AGM held on 17th October, 2019 were accepted as a true record. Proposed by Mr P Richards and seconded by Ms E Weir with all present in favour.

3. Matters Arising

None.

4. Report of the General Committee for 2019/20 and Annual Accounts for the year ending 31/08/2020

It was proposed that the above report and accounts be accepted. Proposer: Ms G Tisshaw. Seconded by: Ms L Tarrant with all present in favour.

5. Outgoing President's Address

Ms Hardaway said that she had enjoyed her 18 months as President which had been an amazing experience, even including the past six months with the challenges of the Coronavirus Pandemic! Prior to that she had attended incredible functions and it had been a lovely way to meet fellow lawyers. She said she would thoroughly recommend it.

She thanked the committee and Mrs Lacy Scott for their hard work and support. She then gave thanks to Mr Richards who had just stepped down as the Law Society Council Member for Inner Sussex after loyally serving for over 20 years. She said that he had undertaken the role with incredible passion, intellect and eloquence and had been an incredibly valuable member of the Committee serving as the link between the National Law Society and the Sussex Law Society. She said that Mr Maxwell-Jones had been elected as the new Council Member for Inner Sussex the day before and would be replacing Mr Richard's as the Committee's Law Society 'link' but that Mr Richards would be most welcome to stay on as a co-opted member to continue to share his experience and wisdom.

She concluded by wishing her successor, Ms Tarrant, the very best of luck in the coming year.

6. Election of Officers

Formal elections then took place as follows:

President: **Ms L Tarrant** (proposed by Ms J Hardaway and seconded by Ms E Richards with all present in favour)

Vice-President: As no nominations had been received in time for the AGM, Ms Tarrant asked that Rule 11 (e) be applied whereby the General Committee have the power to appoint a Vice President during the year. Proposed by Mr E Maxwell-Jones and seconded by Ms J Hardaway with all present in favour

Hon. Secretary: **Ms E Richards** (proposed by Mr O Maxwell-Jones and seconded by Mr D Dickson with all present in favour)

Hon. Treasurer: **Mr O Maxwell-Jones** (proposed by Ms E Weir and seconded by Mr P Richards with all present in favour)

7. Election of General Committee Members:

Ms G Collins (proposed by Mr M Barker and seconded by Mr O Kenning with all present in favour).

Ms C Rents (proposed by Ms J Hardaway and seconded by Mr O Maxwell-Jones with all present in favour)

Ms E Weir (proposed by Mr P Richards and seconded by Ms L Tarrant with all present in favour)

8. President's Address

Ms Tarrant thanked Ms Hardaway for handing over 'so beautifully' and making her feel so comfortable stepping into the role. She said that she had found the Annual Report really upbeat in these challenging times and was encouraged by the fact that subscription renewals had not fallen indicating that members valued their membership. She said that she had been impressed by the resilience shown by members since the start of the pandemic and wanted to both draw on that going forward and provide and encourage support for each other's wellbeing, particularly for Junior Lawyers. She said that her passion, flexible working, was another area she wanted to focus on.

Her other plans for the year were to continue building on the networking events for managing partners and practice managers and to try to follow up some of the concerns raised by members about their experiences with the courts. Access to Justice and Pro Bono were topics which had been raised in committee meetings and it was hoped that some sort of database of local resources could be put together to answer the many public enquiries about where to go for legal help.

Finally, she said that she was hoping the Past Presidents Dinner on 20th November and the Annual Charity Ball on 21st May would be able to go ahead.

9. Any Other Business

None.