

News from the Board

Reflections on our April Board meeting - Anna Bradley

28 April 2023

The Board met in Leeds this week and took the opportunity to hear from a variety of local consumer groups, solicitors and firms over dinner in the Royal Armouries Museum. Thanks to all those who gave us their time.

Some of the key messages we took into our meetings on the next day were the difficulties for vulnerable people accessing legal help, with some useful thinking about larger firms funding smaller firms to provide pro-bono advice.

There was also lots of support for our approach to Qualifying Work Experience and solicitor apprenticeships, while some universities are still cautious about the Solicitors Qualifying Examination. Finally, for law firms, workplace culture, ethics, recruitment and retention and the impact of AI were all very much top of mind.

All this in turn informed the final discussion on our future Corporate Strategy covering 2023-26. The new strategy will build on the current one but be bolder. We will set out what we see as our mission to deepen our work on tech and innovation, and put more emphasis on building and using data and insight to help focus our activity and inform wider policy debates.

We will be consulting on the strategy, as well as our business plan and budget for 2023-2024, from mid-May onwards, so please make sure you let us know what you think.

We had to evacuate our meeting room because there was a fire practice in our host building, so we took the opportunity to work in nearby coffee shops in break out groups on a new strategic risk register to sit alongside the new strategy. Everyone loved the change of scene, so maybe something to repeat – without the alarm!

Earlier in the year we published an [action plan](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/ongoing-competence-lsb/) on continuing competence, which included a commitment to publishing an annual report. It's hugely important that solicitors stay up to date and competent throughout their careers. In our workshop we were briefed on the way our proactive work is shaping up and the sorts of things we will be focusing on when we publish the first report.

The report will draw together findings from thematic reviews and some new data analysis to identify potential areas of risk – whether that is in areas of practice or different types of firm. But this is just the beginning, and the most exciting thing is what we will be able to find out in the future when we bring together much bigger data sets from past investigation and enforcement activity.

In the formal meeting we received an annual report on how we respond to complaints about us and our work. We have a three stage process with the final, third stage being recourse to our independent reviewer. All of this will inform the work we already have in hand to improve delays in our enforcement work and improve the quality of communication to all those involved.

In conclusion, please do get involved in the consultation on our strategy, plan and budget. It's an opportunity to influence the shape of our work for the next three years.