

SOCIETY OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED LAWYERS

CONSTITUTION

(Revised at AGM, 10.5.2008)

1. Name

The name of the society is The Society of Visually Impaired Lawyers.

(Note. The original name was 'The Society of Blind Lawyers', but by Resolution dated 22 November 1997 that name was changed to 'The Society of Visually-Impaired Lawyers').

2. Objects

The objects of the Society are:

- (a) Generally to promote the interests of visually impaired Lawyers and to take all appropriate steps to counteract any prejudice against and misconceptions concerning visually impaired Lawyers in the legal profession or elsewhere.
- (b) To represent visually impaired Lawyers in discussion, consultations or negotiations with the Law Society, the Bar Council, any Government Department, University, College or other educational institution, the RNIB and any other Body concerned with blind welfare or with whom discussions, consultations or negotiations about the interests of visually impaired Lawyers are taking or are about to take place.
- (c) To seek to improve facilities for visually impaired Lawyers.
- (d) To seek to widen the employment opportunities of visually impaired Lawyers and visually impaired people wishing to enter the legal profession.
- (e) To disseminate information amongst visually impaired Lawyers to assist them with the carrying out of their professional duties and in particular to

promote and improve library services, the distribution of legal periodicals and literature in braille or on tape or through any other medium accessible to visually impaired people.

(f) To publish or cause to be published reports of the proceedings of its Annual General Meetings and Committee Meetings, newsletters, magazines or periodicals as may be appropriate.

(g) To develop links with Associations of individuals having interests similar to those of the Association.

(h) To do all such things as will further the objects specified above.

3. Ordinary Membership

Ordinary membership shall be open to any person entitled to be registered blind or partially sighted

(a) Whose name appears on the Roll of Solicitors.

(b) Who is a Barrister-at-Law.

(c) Who is qualified or is seeking qualifications to practise in Law in Scotland.

(d) Who is a Legal Executive.

(e) Who is or has within the last two years been a Trainee Solicitor.

(f) Who is a teacher of legal subjects at a University, College or other educational institution.

(g) Who is a licensed conveyancer.

(h) Who is a patent attorney.

(j) who is a trademark attorney.

(k) who is a person employed by a law firm in a fee earning capacity

(l) Who is a bona fide law student.

4. Associate Membership

Associate Membership shall be open to any person who is not entitled to be registered blind or partially sighted but who would otherwise be eligible for ordinary membership.

5. Application for Membership

(a) Any applicant for membership shall supply to the Secretary of the Society such information and evidence as may be reasonably required to show that the applicant is eligible for membership.

(b) The Secretary shall have a duty to accept as members all applicants whose applications qualify under the provisions of clauses iii and iv above. However, where the Secretary is not satisfied as to an applicant's eligibility for membership the Secretary shall put the matter before the Committee.

(c) Only the Committee and not the Secretary shall have the power to reject an application for membership and where it does so the Committee shall give reasons for its decision in writing sent to the applicant.

(d) A person shall become a member from the date on which a decision to admit is notified to him by the Secretary.

(e) If an applicant objects to a decision of the Committee rejecting his application for membership he may require his application to be placed before the next following Annual General Meeting.

6. Subscription

(a) Every member of the Society shall pay an annual subscription of such amount as may be decided from time to time by the Annual General Meeting. The Annual General Meeting may not increase the subscription retrospectively.

(b) The subscription shall be payable in advance on the 1st day of April or on joining the Society.

(c) Different rates of subscriptions may be fixed for different classes of membership and the subscription payable by a member shall be determined by his status on the 1st April or on joining the Society regardless of any changes in status which may take place before the next subscription becomes payable.

7. Officers

At each Annual General Meeting of the Society the following Officers shall be elected:

(a) Chairman

(b) Secretary

(c) Treasurer

Such Officers shall hold office until the end of the Annual General Meeting following their election and shall be eligible for re-election.

8. Committee

(a) The Committee shall consist of the Officers elected under clause 7 above together with such persons (if any) as may be elected as Committee members by the Annual General Meeting. Such persons shall be members of the Committee until the end of the next Annual General Meeting following their election and shall be eligible for re-election.

(b) The Committee shall meet at least twice a year at such time and place as the Secretary shall reasonably appoint.

(c) The Committee shall be responsible for the running of the Society but shall always act in accordance with the objects of the Society and the policy laid down from time to time by the Annual General Meeting.

(d) In the event of disagreement between members of the Committee the decision of the majority shall be the decision of the Committee. In the event of an equality of votes, the Chairman shall have a second or casting vote.

(e) The Committee shall have the power to co-opt as a non-voting member of the Committee any person from within the Society or to seek advice from any person from inside or outside the Society whenever it feels that this would add to its competence in taking decisions in any given matter.

(f) The quorum of the committee shall be one-half of its members.

9. Annual General Meeting

(a) The Annual General Meeting of the Society shall be held in each calendar year at such time and place as the Committee may reasonably appoint. The Secretary shall give at least one month's notice in writing of the time and place of the Annual General Meeting to every member of the Society such notice to be sent to the address of the member last known to the Secretary.

(b) An agenda shall be circulated before the meeting. Any member may submit an item for inclusion in the agenda and it shall be the duty of the Secretary to include on the agenda all such items received by him within two weeks of notice of the Annual General Meeting being given.

(c) All members of the Society are entitled to attend and speak at the Annual General meeting but only ordinary members shall have the right to vote at it.

(d) The business of the Annual General Meeting shall include:

(I) A report by the Secretary on action taken by the Committee since the previous Annual General Meeting

(ii) A report by the Treasurer on the financial affairs of the Society

(e) Voting shall take place by show of hands or in any other manner agreed by the Annual General Meeting. In the event of an equality of votes in any resolution the Chairman shall have a second or casting vote. In the event of an equality of votes for two or more candidates for an office or place on the Committee the successful candidate shall be chosen by Lot. Except as otherwise expressly provided a resolution is carried if the majority of ordinary members present and voting at the meeting vote for it.

(f) A Special General Meeting may be called by any six ordinary members or by the Committee. In the event of such a meeting being called it shall be the duty of the Secretary to give as much advance notice of the meeting to every member of the Society as is feasible in the circumstances and to circulate an agenda accordingly.

(g) The quorum for an annual or special general meeting shall be eight ordinary members.

10. Finances

(a) Subscriptions shall be paid to the Treasurer who shall pay the same into a bank account in the name of the Society. The Treasurer shall pay out of the account the just debts of the Society and reasonable expenses of the Committee in carrying out its duties.

(b) In his report to the Annual General Meeting the Treasurer shall give details of income and expenditure and shall give the Committee such evidence as they may reasonably require to verify such details.

11. Termination of Membership

Membership shall terminate:

(a) on death;

(b) on written notice of resignation sent by a member to the Secretary;

(c) on a decision by the Committee notified to the member if his subscription for any year has not been paid by 30th September;

(d) on a decision by the Annual General Meeting on the grounds that a person has been guilty of conduct detrimental to the interests of the Society.

12. Alteration of the Constitution

This Constitution may be altered only with the express approval of a majority consisting of two-thirds of the ordinary members present and voting at a General meeting. Notice of constitutional amendments to be discussed at such a meeting shall be circulated with the agenda.

13. Dissolution

The Society may be dissolved by a resolution supported by two-thirds of the ordinary members at an Annual General Meeting. Any surplus assets shall be disposed of as shall be decided in any such resolution.