

SRA BOARD
12 September 2023

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This paper will be published

SRA Business Plan for 1 November 2023 to 31 October 2024

Reason for paper	<p>This paper summarises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • our proposed final Business Plan for 2023-24 • the next steps and publication.
Recommendation	<p>The Board is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) approve the Business Plan 2023-24 for publication (subject to any final changes to reflect revisions to the Corporate Strategy for 2023-26).
Previous Board and committee consideration	<p>The Board approved a draft Business Plan and budget for consultation at its meeting on 25 April 2023.</p> <p>It considered feedback from the consultation process, and approved the SRA practising fee requirement, at its meeting on 27 June 2023.</p> <p>Board members have participated in roundtable events and other activities delivered as part of our joint engagement programme for our Corporate Strategy 2023-26 and our Business Plan for 2023-24.</p>
Next steps	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • publish our Business Plan in October 2023.

If you have any questions about this paper, please contact: Liz Rosser, Executive Director of Resources liz.rosser@sra.org.uk

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SRA Business Plan for 1 November 2023 to 31 October 2024

Summary

- 1 We considered all responses to our consultation and our engagement activity and have prepared an updated final Business Plan for 2023-24 for the Board to consider. This also reflects our finalisation of our new Corporate Strategy for 2023-26.
- 2 Once approved, the Business Plan will be published alongside:
 - our budget for 2023-24
 - our Corporate Strategy for 2023-26
 - a consultation feedback report
 - an equality impact assessment (EIA) combining our business plan activities and our Corporate Strategy.

Background

- 3 Our consultation process on our draft Business Plan and budget 2023-24 ran between 10 May to 21 June 2023. It included a programme of events and activities that also sought views on our draft Corporate Strategy for 2023-26, and that connected us with members of the public, legal service professionals, representative bodies, and other stakeholders. The engagement programme is described in detail in the separate paper on our final Corporate Strategy.
- 4 The Board considered consultation feedback on our Business Plan proposals at its meeting on 27 June 2023. A post-consultation version of the Business Plan has now been prepared, and that reflects:
 - our post-consultation Corporate Strategy for 2023-26
 - consultation feedback on our proposed workstreams.

Finalising the Business Plan

- 5 The Board reviewed a summary of consultation responses and initial feedback from our engagement programme about the draft Business Plan at its meeting on 27 June 2023. A summary report of responses and feedback will be published alongside the Business Plan, and this is attached at annex 1.
- 6 All feedback we received on our Business Plan is being communicated to our teams to inform the shape, direction and outcomes of our workstreams during 2023-24.

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- 7 Consultation feedback was generally supportive for our proposed workstreams, projects and commitments. The Law Society (TLS) and the Legal Services Consumer Panel (LSCP) both responded in detail and broadly welcomed our proposals, and in both cases made helpful suggestions around some of the detail – including offers to work collaboratively in specific areas. Members of the public taking part in our focus groups in both Wales and England were also largely supportive of, and encouraged by, our proposed work commitments.
- 8 Some of the feedback we received from our engagement programme was relevant to both our Business Plan proposals and our draft Corporate Strategy, with respondents cross-referencing their responses. The draft Business Plan explained how we aimed to work to deliver our draft strategic priorities, so in finalising both documents we have looked across to make sure our finalised versions work together.
- 9 There are a small number of amendments of particular note that we propose making in the final version of the Business Plan, and that are informed by stakeholder feedback.
- 10 The first relates to our commitments around equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). This area was flagged by the Legal Services Consumer Panel. It commented “*there is a distinct lack of strategy, leadership, guidance and interventions to improve diversity issues*”. Amendments to our Corporate Strategy will ensure EDI considerations are centralised, and can accordingly be reflected in our Business Plan. This makes certain our strategic ambitions for EDI are clear and articulated appropriately, and drive the practical steps we will take through our Business Plan activities – including our research and monitoring activities. We have also added a deliverable under priority two around publishing our improved firm diversity data, improving our diversity data about individuals and developing a framework for evaluating the impact of our EDI work.
- 11 Another amendment relates to data transparency. Our Business Plan confirms we will develop a new data strategy in 2023-24, and feedback from TLS and LSCP included suggestions for improved information transparency – in particular around the transparency of Compensation Fund claims data. Our development of the data strategy will support us in considering opportunities to enhance transparency in different areas of our regulatory framework, and we have included an amendment in the section on fees and the Compensation Fund requirement to confirm this.
- 12 We have made a small amendment to our commitments around improvements and potential additions to our transparency requirements to emphasise that they will be informed by evidence. We have also added explicit reference to our commitment to undertake work to support in-house lawyers, based on insights we have been building.
- 13 The post-consultation version of the Business Plan, showing all changes made, is attached at annex 2.

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Publication approach

- 14 Subject to the Board's approval we will finalise the Business Plan and prepare it for publication, alongside the budget, the consultation feedback report.

Recommendation: the Board is asked to:

- a) approve the Business Plan 2023-24 for publication (subject to any final changes to reflect revisions to the Corporate Strategy for 2023-26).**

Next steps

- 15 We will publish the Business Plan 2023-24 (if approved) alongside the budget, the consultation feedback report, and our EIA during October 2023.

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Supporting information

Links to the Corporate Strategy and/or Business Plan and impact on strategic and mid-tier risks

- 16 This paper describes our post-consultation position and approach for finalising and publishing our Business Plan 2023-24, and confirms its links to our Corporate Strategy.

How the issues support the regulatory objectives and best regulatory practice

- 17 The Business Plan confirms our workstreams and commitments, and they have been developed in ways that support us to meet the Legal Services Act 2007's regulatory objectives, and to achieve consistency with the Better Regulation principles.

Public/Consumer impact

- 18 Our Business Plan commitments aim to improve consumer experiences and assure strong protections in the legal services sector – including circumstances when members of the public are our customers.

What engagement approach has been used to inform the work and what further communication and engagement is needed?

- 19 A draft version of our Business Plan and budget was published for public consultation, and a feedback report is attached in the paper's annexes. We will continue to engage with stakeholders regarding feedback they provided during this process.

What equality and diversity considerations relate to this issue?

- 20 Equality, diversity and inclusion are central to our business activities. Following consultation we are updating our Business Plan to position EDI considerations, monitoring and responses appropriately across all our workplans for 2023-24.

How the work will be evaluated

- 21 Our Business Plan and the workstreams we commit to are subject to ongoing monitoring and evaluation activity. We will report our progress to the SRA Board regularly throughout the Business Plan's 12-month lifespan.

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Date 25 August 2023

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Annexes

Annex 1

Business Plan consultation and feedback

Annex 2

Business Plan 2023-24 post-consultation