

The Law Society of Scotland Annual General Meeting – 30 May 2019

Report by Graeme McWilliams, Convener, In-house Lawyers Committee

The In-house Lawyers Committee (**ILC**) was set up in 2015 to represent, support and promote the interests of Law Society members working in-house in Scotland and beyond. It continues the work of the In-house Lawyers Group Committee, which was established in 1973 and was independent from but financially supported by the Society.

The Law Society published its strategy 'Leading Legal Excellence' in 2015. This includes an objective to serve members through a detailed understanding of their needs. In line with this objective, the ILC's main aims are:

- To engage with in-house solicitors and trainees, ensuring the Law Society understands and serves their professional needs.
- To promote the interests and status of in-house solicitors and trainees.
- To encourage and assist in the development of better training of solicitors and trainees working in-house.
- To promote the value of employing in-house solicitors and trainees to organisations who do not currently employ solicitors or trainees.

We have continued to identify and recruit further new ILC members representing the public and private in-house sectors. We want to ensure that the ILC is as representative of our diverse in-house legal community as we can, which continues to grow and around 30% of the profession now works in-house. We will continue to recruit as the need arises during 2019 to strengthen our ability to deliver for our members.

Serving the various facets of our membership by providing accessible and relevant CPD remains a high priority. The Law Society of Scotland's CPD & Training team has continued to run the very well received full day In-House Best Practice course, which was designed as an equivalent to the Practice Management course delivered to private practice solicitors. This ran for its fourth time in April 2019 with good attendance and feedback. The ILC is supportive of the Society's CPD & Training team continuing to deliver this event on a bi-annual basis.

We continue to offer a limited number of free seminars in Edinburgh and, where possible, by video conference to various locations across Scotland or an individual's computer. In doing this we are ensuring we make high quality CPD accessible and available to all our members. Our CPD seminars have included sessions on privilege, the impact of Brexit on employers and design thinking. We will be running a commercial awareness seminar for in-house lawyers in Aberdeen in May. We welcomed the return of the Faculty's 21st Century Bar conference in December 2018, which is always popular with the in-house sector.

The annual in-house conference is scheduled for 13 June, returning to Edinburgh this year following a successful and fully subscribed conference in Glasgow in 2018. We are delighted to be supported again by DLA Piper, CMS and Pinsent Masons as sponsors. We are all looking forward to a range of sessions, which this year deliver on key themes of 'collaborate, respond and innovate'. The programme includes black letter law updates on contracts, employment and data protection. We will also hear from in-house peers at panel sessions

focusing on legal technology and demonstrating value as in-house counsel. The closing keynote will be delivered by the Legal Business Rising Star In-house Counsel of 2019, Frances Coats.

Once again, the Society's In-house Rising Star Award will be presented at the close of the conference; this Annual Award (now in its seventh year), celebrates emerging talent among the in-house community. Last year, Sarah Haig of Glasgow City Council was awarded the accolade from a competitive shortlist. All members of the profession are invited to nominate in-house trainees or lawyers with up to five years PQE whose contributions and achievements deserve to be recognised. It really is tremendous to see the wealth of talent among the next generation of the profession and a pleasure and privilege to celebrate it.

In-house traineeships and promoting their value amongst the in-house community remains a hot topic, as while almost 30% of the profession works across a range of organisations, only 12% of traineeships are in-house. The ILC has supported the Society's research into this area. The results of the survey conducted in March 2019 will allow us to convert the anecdotal evidence we pick up from our networks into concrete data that we can work with in future. This project is very much aligned with the ILC's key aims, so we look forward to taking it forward as the survey results are collated and analysed. We have also reviewed the relevance of the Society's TCPD course to in-house trainees and are feeding back to the CPD & Training team on possible improvements.

We supported the SYLA's 'So you want to be an in-house lawyer?' event in Aberdeen in March 2019, ensuring a diverse line up of in-house panelists from COPFS, a local authority and the oil & gas sector.

Moving on from the successful launch of the "Who is your client?" supplementary guidelines for in-house lawyers in 2017, we continue to encourage the creation and sharing of relevant in-house 'best practice' and knowledge through increased use of articles, blogs and social media as critical to engaging with our in-house colleagues. Our regular Journal interviews with in-house solicitors continue to prove very popular. It is also good to see the numbers following and engaging with us on Twitter and LinkedIn continuing to grow.

We have run three roundtable discussions, themed around innovation; the position of sole in-house counsel; and maintaining the position of trusted advisor. Summaries of these roundtables have been reported in the Journal, with great feedback received.

In conclusion, the Committee is dedicated to ensuring our in-house members are represented and receive tailored support. We are guided by the Society's priorities, consult our members on what they want and take cognisance of the Society's annual survey of members. We listen to our members and aim to continue to identify new opportunities for us to build on the work we do already.

Graeme McWilliams
In-house Lawyers' Committee Convener
2 May 2019