

**Minutes of the 205<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting  
of the Birmingham Law Society**

**Date/Time:** 26 September 2024 at 5.15pm  
**Location:** No5 Barristers Chamber, 103 Colmore Row, Birmingham

**Attendees: In-Person**  
 The President Alice Kinder, Richard Port MBE, Matt O'Brien, Guy Barnett, Nigel Hollett, Wah Au, Mark Brooks OBE, Gurjant Buttar, Celia Butterfield, Maxine Chamberlain, Charlotte Clode, Patrice Coughlin, James Cruse, Marc Forrest-Thomas, Ryan Gardner, David Graham, Victoria Grimshaw, Ben Henry, Andrew Hill, Rubeca Hussain, Samantha Ingram, Samir Iqbal, Wayne Lok Jian Han, Sadie Jones, Iram Kassam, Sabina Kauser, John Kay, Mary Kaye, Joe Kerrigan, Chris Langford-Hill, Will Lodder, David Lodder, David Lukic, Rebecca Lynch, Shona Matson-Betts, Roberta McDonald, Pauline O'Rourke, Stephanie Perraton, Clive Read, Graham R Ritchie, Jonathan E Ritchie, Sana Saddique, Eileen Schofield, Bernard Shepherd, Dee Smythe, Samuel Till, Ashlee Traill, Jessica Uppal, Megan Walsh, Jane Walsh, Alexander Walsh Atkins, Joe Wilson, Peter Wiseman, Victoria Zinzan

**Attendees: In-Person – Observers**  
 Maureen Kinder, Tracey Secker, Trystan Shaw

**Apologies:** Catherine Edwards, Ian Jones, James Farmer, Lubna Shuja, Peter Brewer, Samantha Ross, Steven Jonas, Tony McDaid, Zoe Tranter, Martin Allsopp, Tracey Allsopp, Kikun Alo, Baljinder Singh Atwal, Meera Chauhan, Alexandra Hastings-Smith, Richard Lodder, Juliette Print, Katarzyna Jolanta Raciborska, Azam Shafa, Kirti Singh

**Minutes:** Mel Bates (MB)

**Notes:** All written reports circulated prior to the meeting to be noted and taken as read

<b>Agenda Item &amp; Minutes</b>		<b>Lead</b>
<b>1.</b>	<p><b><u>President to Declare Meeting Open</u></b></p> <p>The President, Alice Kinder, declared the 205th Annual General Meeting open and welcomed those present.</p> <p>The President read out the list of apologies.</p> <p>The President requested that the notice convening the AGM and minutes of the 204<sup>th</sup> AGM be taken as read. On a show of hands, the resolution was carried unanimously and the President was authorised to sign the minutes.</p>	<b>AK</b>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b><u>Report of the Council and Accounts</u></b></p> <p>Copies of the Annual Report and Accounts, including the independent auditor's report, had been circulated.</p> <p>The President introduced James Cruse from JW Hinks, the Society's auditors, who opened the floor for questions. In the absence of any questions, the President requested that the Report and Accounts be taken as read. The resolution was carried unanimously.</p>	<b>AK</b>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b><u>50 Years in Legal Practice Presentation</u></b></p> <p>The President congratulated the following members in achieving this milestone and presented awards to:</p> <p>Graham Richie (admitted 15 December 1973)          Andrew Hill (admitted 1 December 1973)          Roberta McDonald (admitted 1 December 1973)</p>	<b>AK</b>

	David Lodder (admitted 1 November 1973)											
<b>4.</b>	<p><b><u>Award of Trainee Prizes Presentation</u></b></p> <p>The Society's prizes were awarded to the following recipients and presented to them by the President:</p> <table> <tr> <td>Gold Prize:</td> <td>Megan Walsh, Shakespeare Martineau</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Silver Prize:</td> <td>Ryan Garden, Wilkes Partnership</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bronze Prize:</td> <td>Gurjant Buttar, Squire Patton Boggs</td> </tr> <tr> <td>David Hirsch QC Memorial Award:</td> <td>Chantelle Elliott, Mills &amp; Reeve</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SQE 1&amp;2 Results, Trainee Prize:</td> <td>Celia Gould, Gaddu and Hall</td> </tr> </table>	Gold Prize:	Megan Walsh, Shakespeare Martineau	Silver Prize:	Ryan Garden, Wilkes Partnership	Bronze Prize:	Gurjant Buttar, Squire Patton Boggs	David Hirsch QC Memorial Award:	Chantelle Elliott, Mills & Reeve	SQE 1&2 Results, Trainee Prize:	Celia Gould, Gaddu and Hall	<b>AK</b>
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<b>5.</b>	<p><b><u>The Election of Council Members</u></b></p> <p>The President announced that there was only one vacancy on Council, with ordinary member, Harriet Muffett, retiring.</p> <p>The President invited the two nominees, Anthony Miller (Dee Smyth speaking on his behalf) and Victoria Zinzan to present.</p> <p>Victoria Zinzan and Dee Smyth, speaking on behalf of Anthony Miller, addressed members to provide some background on their career so far and experience, how they have engaged with the Society and how they propose to support Council, should they be appointed.</p> <p>The President gave thanks to both Victoria and Dee (speaking on behalf of Anthony) for putting themselves forward and requested all full members to proceed to vote.</p>	<b>AK</b>										
<b>6.</b>	<p><b><u>Vote of Thanks to Retiring Council and Board Members</u></b></p> <p>The President gave a vote of thanks to the retiring members of Council and to the retiring members of Board:</p> <p>Harriet Muffett Tony McDaid James Farmer Samantha Ross Steven Jonas</p> <p>The President also gave a special mention of Past President Denys Fordham, who sadly passed away earlier this year. Members from the meeting shared memories and gave thanks to Dennis for his many years of service to Birmingham Law Society and the legal profession.</p>	<b>AK</b>										
<b>7.</b>	<p><b><u>Vote of Thanks More Widely</u></b></p> <p>The President extended the Society's thanks more widely to Steven Jonas, who joined Birmingham Law Society in 1990. Steven was President in 1994 and has served on both Council and Board for many years, as well as being a recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award.</p>	<b>AK</b>										
<b>8.</b>	<p><b><u>Presidential Address</u></b></p> <p>In opening, the President acknowledged the privilege she felt being the youngest President in the Society's history and that she never expected this when starting out in her career, having grown up in a family without access to education.</p> <p>The President highlighted the difficulties faced in the early days of her legal career and that she now supports clients as an employment lawyer and feels she has given back to legal industry, community and profession through her year as President.</p>	<b>AK</b>										

	<p>Birmingham Law Society is not defined by gender, age or background. It is defined by commitment, passion, dedication and a desire to make a difference.</p> <p>Reflecting on her objectives, the President believed her theme of community allowed her to foster connections and provide opportunities, which would allow everyone to achieve their aspirations in the legal sector and society and that although the role of President was at times demanding, it had also been one of the most rewarding experiences.</p> <p>Throughout the year, many events have been hosted, including various socials, Pathway to Partnership and Beyond session, Legal Leaders, 2nd Social Mobility Conference as well as walking in the Birmingham Pride and St Patrick's Day parades and the relaunch of Lunch Clubs. The President successfully implemented a number of new events including Sports Day, networking lunches and the Society's first mayoral hustings. All these events have brought together new and longstanding members and taken the Society to the suburbs to allow those non city-based to get involved. Several new categories were also launched at the Legal Awards 2025.</p> <p>Local relationships with the Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, Asian Chamber of Commerce and Future Young Faces have been nurtured and the Society has continued to build its international relationships with the Bars of Paris and Lyon and, through the efforts of the President, a new relationship has been solidified with the Bar of Luxembourg.</p> <p>A personal highlight was the President's Dinner held at the University of Birmingham's Great Hall, having graduated from there just a decade prior, along with Jess Phillips MP's inspiring speech.</p> <p>The President's theme of opportunity inspired many initiatives including the launch of the Society's Social Mobility Pledge and the Vacation Scheme in partnership with Higgs and Brown Jacobson.</p> <p>A new project was launched and presented to Council relating to AI, which will contribute to the Society's future direction, and it is hoped those individuals will take up opportunities within the Society in the future.</p> <p>The President announced that £9,479.44 had been raised during her presidential year for her chosen charity, the Social Mobility Foundation and she hopes the work done this year will help organisations understand the barriers that some face accessing a legal career. A further highlight was running a marathon in support of her charity and completing it in under 4 hours.</p> <p>The President thanked everyone for their support, including her partner, Trystan, who was at her side at over 20 events, and mother, Maureen, and for the dedication of Board, Council, the Officers and Operational Team. A special thanks was given to Ian Shovlin, Tony McDaid and Stephanie Perraton for their wisdom and advice and that the Society's achievements would not be possible without everyone who attended, sponsors, Board and Council members.</p> <p>In closing, the President asked everyone to remember that they have the power to make a difference, create their own legacy and to take forward the BLS baton with courage and integrity. The future is full of promise, prosperity and possibility. Finally, the President expressed that leadership is not defined by title but the legacy left behind and that the legal landscape we create should be reflective of who we are and what we believe in.</p> <p>The President invited representatives from the Social Mobility Foundation to accept the contribution raised by the Society.</p>	
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b><u>Installation of Officers 2024/2025</u></b></p> <p>The President announced that Richard Port MBE had been appointed by the Council as President of the Society for the coming year and installed him in office by transferring the chain of office to him. Richard Port then presented Alice Kinder with the Past President's badge.</p>	<p><b>AK / RP / MOB / GB</b></p>

The President, Richard Port MBE, expressed his honour in being appointed as President and that his most interesting topic will be the Society's members and how he will use events and committees to continue to shape the Society and ensure the next generation of students and lawyers thrive in the legal sector.

The President also spoke about the main theme of his Presidential year of "Voices", which will see him support and encourage the voices of unknown members and those from within the wider community to be heard. The President expressed his belief that actions speak louder than words. The President hopes that the Society's Bulletin will provide an additional platform for "Voices".

The President then touched upon the domestic abuse work he is known for and how this work has helped him to understand that we must help those who do not have a voice or platform to speak from. The President's explained how his mission is to ensure that domestic abuse stops being a taboo subject, as ignoring it empowers the perpetrators.

The President confirmed his chosen charities as Shebeest, which helps empower female victims of domestic abuse, and ManKind, which helps support male victims of domestic abuse, and the President will also be participating in Tough Mudder in an aim to raise further funds for these charities.

The President expressed his pride at now calling the West Midlands and Birmingham his home and the importance of remembering the voices of past, present and future. An event will be arranged for everyone to attend to celebrate the West Midlands and Birmingham legal sector, which he is passionate and excited about.

The President expressed his thanks to all the Society's Committee chairs and members, as well as Matthew O'Brien for his ongoing work with these committees, as they are essential in supporting our members and how the justice system is shaped.

The President has plans to promote the Society on a national and international scale and better highlighting the achievements of the Society.

The President proceeded to report that Matt O'Brien had been appointed as Vice President for the ensuing year and presented him with the chain of office. The Vice President gave a short address.

The Vice President, Matt O'Brien, expressed his honour in standing before the Society's members as its new Vice President, noting the privilege he had experienced in the previous year serving as Deputy Vice President. The Vice President will continue to attend both the Society's events as well as representing it around the country and that his focus, aside from supporting the President, will be to build relationships with existing and new sponsors and then to consider and prepare for his own Presidential year.

The Vice President expressed his thanks to the Immediate Past President for her unfailing support and guidance, the Operational Team who the Society could not be without and his own firm, especially Ben Henry and Steven Jonas.

The President reported that Guy Barnett had been appointed as Deputy Vice President for the ensuing year and presented him with the chain of office. The Deputy Vice President gave a short address.

The Deputy Vice President, Guy Barnett, thanked the President and congratulated the Immediate Past President for her tireless efforts and achievements as President over the previous year and how she is a shining example of the quality of lawyer Birmingham can produce.

The Deputy Vice President expressed how honoured and humbled he felt to be appointed and gave thanks to members of the Board, having sat on Board for the last 2 years, as well as Steven Jonas for his balance and support on Board and Tony McDaid, Stephanie Perraton and Joe Wilson for their encouragement.

	<p>The Deputy Vice President explained how he plans to support the President and Vice President, as well as overseeing various committees to understand the work they are doing and to identify what support they require and engaging with members</p>	
<b>10.</b>	<p><b><u>Appointment of Board of Directors</u></b></p> <p>The President announced that Steven Jonas would be retiring and thanked him for his time and contribution to the Society.</p> <p>The following ex officio member was retiring: Alice Kinder</p> <p>The President explained the following people were seeking appointment as Board Directors for which approval was given: Ian Jones Sana Saddique Will Lodder Peter Brewer</p> <p>The President confirmed that Nigel Hollett will continue as paid CEO and that Andrew Beedham had agreed to join the Society as Company Secretary.</p> <p>Alice Kinder expressed an interest to remain on Board as a Director for a term of 3 years. The resolution was carried unanimously.</p>	<b>RP</b>
<b>11.</b>	<p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b></p> <p>The President invited Sadie Jones of Shebeest and Mark Brooks OBE of ManKind to present their charities to the members in attendance.</p> <p>Sadie Jones, Founder, explained that Shebeest is a female led organisation which is driven from her own experience and background, having been a witness of domestic abuse. Sadie used fitness and sport to get through her challenges and now delivers training to victims through workshops. Sadie also setup She Cares, an initiative where people can donate gym kit to support female victims move forward and she also hopes to start a safe housing programme. Sadie's main aim is to ensure that in 20 years' time, there will be less females experiencing domestic violence.</p> <p>Mark Brooks OBE, Chairman, thanked the President for selecting ManKind as one of his charities for his presidential year. Mark explained that ManKind was setup 20 years ago in Somerset to support male victims of domestic abuse and was founded by a group of males and females who had experienced domestic violence in some way. Mark explained that ManKind setup a helpline for "any man, anywhere" and that domestic violence does not discriminate when it comes to job role either, having seen men from across the legal profession, barristers, Crown Prosecution Service and Police. Mark also highlighted that ManKind worked in partnership with female domestic violence charities which saw the success of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and hope to continue to support in bringing in new legislation in the future.</p>	<b>RP</b>
<b>12.</b>	<p><b><u>Q and A Session</u></b></p> <p>There were no questions.</p>	<b>RP</b>
<b>13.</b>	<p><b><u>Result of the Election</u></b></p> <p>The President announced Victoria Zinzan had been elected as the newest Council Member.</p>	<b>RP</b>

<p><b>14.</b></p>	<p><b><u>Closure of the AGM</u></b></p> <p>The President thanked No5 Chambers for hosting the meeting at their new offices and thanked everyone for their attendance.</p> <p>The President thanked and presented gifts to Nigel Hollett, Becky Lynch, Shona Matson-Betts, Ashlee Traill and Jessica Uppal, without whom all events and business operations would not be possible.</p> <p>The President declared the 205<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting closed.</p>	<p><b>RP</b></p>
<p><b>Meeting concluded at 6.54pm</b></p>		