MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SOCIETY’S LAW TECH GROUP HELD ON 22 JUNE 2022 AT 11AM IN PERSON AND BY VIDEOCONFERENCE

PRESENT: Ruaidhrí Austin, Tracy Ann Collins, Jamie Donnelly, Amira Graham, Amy Jackson, Catherine McQuade, Ian McFarland and Ciarán O'Kelly

APOLOGIES: Kerry McCloy, Angela Brady, Anna Gray, Aine Hughes and Jane Hollway

IN ATTENDANCE: Jamie Warnock (Head of Policy and Engagement), Darren Patterson (Head of CPD) and Damien McCann (Policy & Research Intern)

1. Welcomes and Apologies:
   
   Apologies were noted. In Kerry’s absence, Jamie Warnock assumed the role of Chair and welcomed attendees to the meeting.

2. Minutes of last meeting and actions arising:
   
   Attendance aside the previous meeting’s minutes were approved.

   It was noted that the Head of Digital Modernisation and Design for the Courts Service will attend the next meeting in July and Matt McKee from Grant Thornton is scheduled to speak with the Group in September.

3. CPD Programme:

   CPD has been consistently identified as priority for this Group and accordingly the Law Society’s head of professional development, Darren Patterson, attended this meeting to present on the Society’s vision of Law Tech CPD. Darren spoke of his appetite to broaden out the current CPD offering and Law Tech is near the top of the wish list. He is intending to affect a shift in the mentality of solicitors so that CPD is not merely a tick-box exercise but is rather the means of bettering one’s practice.

   The pandemic has driven up the popularity of online webinars and this may allow the Society to produce more flexible online content and potentially include a wider range of engaging speakers – those from Dublin and London law firms were mentioned. The CPD Department will not be proscriptive and is open to the suggestions of this Group.

   The Group agreed with the intention to make the Society’s CPD offering more targeted and appealing to as much of the membership as possible. This latter point is complicated slightly by the tech literacy gap between firms and members. Granted this disparity, there needs to be a spread of events capable of catering to complete beginners, those on the cutting edge of law
tech and everyone in between. As it is impossible to cover everything immediately, the Group agrees that it is better to pick out priorities. The entire legal services sector should also be recognised and any CPD ought to invite in-house lawyers without practicing certificates.

The Group agrees with the direction Darren is taking CPD. To further this end the formation of a CPD sub-group is agreed.

Ruaidhri and Amy both volunteered – an email will follow to round out membership of the sub-group.

Action: Secretariat to write separately to the Group seeking members of CPD sub-group.

4. Development of Resources:

The consensus among the Group is that the LSNI should develop a law tech resource on its website which would serve to communicate the activities of this group and gather a “knowledge bank” on issues relevant and helpful to the profession.

Ideally the Society’s law tech webspace should serve as a starting point, setting solicitors on the right path. Moreover, this webpage could also allow the Society to declare what it is aware of and actively investigating, this will demonstrate the attentiveness of the LSNI.

To advance the development of online resources the Group agrees to arranging a sub-group dedicated to this issue specifically. Ian volunteered to support this sub-group and, as with the CPD group, the Secretariat will email all members to round out the group.

Action: Secretariat to write separately to the Group seeking members of Resources sub-group.

5. QUB Research:

Ciarán O’Kelly informs the Group that there is no update here at the moment and he will ask for help when he needs it. Though he remarks upon a course the IPLS held on AI. Artificial Intelligence is something solicitors will likely encounter and need to know about going forward.

Connecting with the Institute and linking our thinking with theirs could prove to be beneficial. It is still early days for this Group and building this network now will be good.

6. AOB:
The issue of e-signatures was raised during the meeting and Jamie updated the Group on the Society’s activities thereon. E-signatures have been handled by the Society’s Conveyancing & Property and Non-Contentious Business Committees, with limited progress on this complicated topic. A new group, the Corporate Practices Group (CPG), has been established and is animated by this issue. The CPG’s activity is something the Law Tech Group should get informed on and potentially get involved with.

The activity of the Land Registry’s Nova Programme regarding e-signatures is noted.

7. Date of next meetings

The dates of the next two meetings are tentatively set for 28 July 2022 and 1st September 2022.

APPROVED ………………………