

## Leader's Update

June 2017

Kerim Fuad QC

### **The sorry state of some courts**

I am delighted that HHJ Taylor, Resident Judge at Southwark Crown Court, is striving to have the robing room cleared out of old papers and general debris. It is a really positive step that will hopefully be followed in other courts.

Of course advocates should not have to be subjected to such grim daily conditions whether in robing rooms or Bar Messes (often too aptly named).

The problem with the historic mass underinvestment in the general accommodation and decor of most of our courts has real consequences to morale and productivity.

If advocates have to work in a grubby and depressing environment, then they will hardly look kindly to helping respect the advocates' "facilities."

### **Can I please get a cup of coffee?**

You only have to look by way of example, to the fabulous Italian canteen run at Luton Crown Court to see that a court can offer proper refreshments at reasonable prices. I still haven't got over how lovely my bacon ciabatta was last week.

I know many Resident Judges are keen to restore restaurants/canteens in their court centres for everyone's sakes. Please let's get rid of the bureaucracy halting this and achieve this.

Of course this isn't just about lifting one's spirits by being able to buy decent food and drink during the court day.

How much court time is wasted through court staff, barristers and jurors having to leave the building and then go through security all over again. Not efficient or productive and pretty shameful.

What do members of the public using or visiting our courts think?

### **Split Shift pilot**

If this re-emerges post election, I am ready to address it in detail. Morning and afternoon shifts on the same day in the same discipline of law (eg crime) will not work for reasons that every single practitioner knows only too well. As it stands, it flies in the face of diversity. There must be proper judicial evaluation of any proposed scheme.

### **Chief Crown Prosecutors**

I had the first of what will be regular and productive meetings with the Chief Crown Prosecutors. Again, if the SEC are told what the specific problems are I can collate them and try to get them addressed.

### **Clerks**

I am grateful to Nicholas Hill, the Chairman of the Institute of Barristers' Clerks, who kindly invited me to their Annual Dinner at the Edward Lumley Hall at the Royal College of Surgeons on 8<sup>th</sup> June. I found it so useful hearing the perspective, views and ideas of clerks in all sets of chambers. They suffer many of the same frustrations that the Bar and Judiciary share.

### **Resident Judges**

The SEC Recorder and I are gradually getting round the Circuit meeting Resident Judges who have welcomed us most generously. I am determined to increase harmony between the Bench and the Bar. Understanding what we each do in the Criminal Justice System, and what the pressures are, is the first step. Communication, communication, communication.

### **Resident Judges' reception**

On 11<sup>th</sup> May, the SEC hosted a collegiate and hugely positive event for the Resident Judges on the Inner Temple terrace. I continue to learn of the challenges we all face and will try to solve as many as I can.

### **Old Bailey Judges**

I co-hosted and spoke at the Old Bailey Judges' retirement dinner at Vintners Hall on 19<sup>th</sup> May.

At a packed event, I paid tribute to those retiring and welcomed the new wave of Judges. The event was a resounding success. Mark Heywood QC Chair of their Mess gave a hilarious speech which went down superbly.

### **Sitting Hours' Protocol**

I started drafting a sitting hours protocol the day after I was elected your Leader. Many wonderful people have since contributed to it (including Rachel Spearing, Fiona Jackson, Val Charbit and Helena Duong), fine tuned it and some of you will now have seen it. It is long overdue and will in fact increase the productivity of all of us. I will report more on this in due course.

### **AGFS**

The Senior Leaders met the MOJ again on 5<sup>th</sup> June. Progress is being made but we await the effect of the General Election. A huge amount of work has

been, and continues to be, done to try and make it as good as it can be (within the financial 'cost neutral' straightjacket). I will report more when I am able to.

### **Vulnerable Witness Advocacy Training**

It is great to be able to report that the combined SEC/CBA roll-out of Vulnerable Witness Training has now started. The first session in May was a great success, with 27 new Facilitators now trained and able to cascade the training down through their own sets. The next training session takes place on 13 June.

Many people have given up their valuable time to provide this training – and all for free – so we really need to emphasise that dropping out at the last minute, or failing to complete the necessary preparation in time, is very frustrating for all involved. My enormous thanks go to all those who have trained as Lead Facilitators and are now training Facilitators, and to Val Charbit and Aaron Dolan for masterminding such a large training roll-out.

### **SEC/CBA Ball – Friday 23rd June, Saddlers Hall**

The event will be sold out. There are however still some tickets left so don't miss out. Our thanks as ever to Aaron Dolan for his mastery of events.

I know it is a departure from the norm but I think a joint event with the CBA of this type will encourage many more young barristers in particular, to attend as they will be able to circulate and meet many more people than they would stuck next to merely a few at a sit-down dinner.

Next year we will no doubt revert to tradition.

### **Temple Women's Forum Cross Profession Networking Garden Party - Monday 3rd July, 5.30pm to 8.30pm.**

Please sign up for this wonderful evening. I will be there.

### **"Good Form: How to demonstrate you are a STAR" – 18th July, Inner Temple Hall**

The SEC and CBA recognise the endless forms which our members must complete in order to apply successfully for positions, including, Silk applications, Recorder applications, Judicial applications, Legal assessor applications and CPS grading applications.

We are delighted to announce an hour-long lecture, provided by Tracy Ayling QC of 2 Bedford Row and Jessica Walker, Head of Advocacy, CPS, on precisely these matters, and particularly on how to project your skills in

written form. As is usually the case, first impressions are made from your application and we believe this lecture/training session will assist our members with ongoing career goals.

This very helpful lecture is free to attend but please, you must let Aaron Dolan know if you are coming.

### **Other events**

Do read the fortnightly SEC Updates and check the SEC website for other SEC events, Bar Mess drinks, etc, and please let Aaron Dolan know if you are organising something so that he can publicise it to all our members.

### **The meetings continue . . .**

They are of course essential to know exactly what is going on in the real (court) world with the troops.

I am especially pleased to now be having regular meetings with the new Senior Presiding Judge, LJ Julia Macur. I am also meeting with HHJ Sally Cahill QC, Hon. Sec. of the Council of Her Majesty's Judges. I have found both highly approachable and knowledgeable of the live issues.

We have regular SEC Committee meetings. I am so proud of my team (especially our Recorder, Valerie Charbit, and Administrator, Aaron Dolan) and how much time they routinely give up on all our behalves.

We are always looking for good people, so do not be shy – please volunteer to help make your Bar better!

Yours sincerely,

Kerim Fuad QC