



The Bar Council

Bar Council member: overview and role profile

Overview

The Bar Council is the professional body for all practising barristers in England and Wales, representing around 18,000 members.

The Council itself is made up of approximately 115 practising barristers from across the Bar. The Council is established by the [Constitution of the General Council of the Bar](#).

Being a member of the Bar Council presents an opportunity to make your voice heard on issues relevant to the profession, and the constituency you represent. Being a Bar Council member also enables you to get involved in the important work of the Bar Council's committees in leading, representing and supporting the Bar in the public interest, and in championing the rule of law and access to justice for all. All representational work of the Bar Council is undertaken by committees, overseen by the General Management Committee and reporting to the Bar Council.

The Bar Council's strategic plan '[Standing for justice: 2024-2029](#)' sets out the following aims for the Bar:

- Leading, representing and upholding the independence of the Bar
- Championing, protecting and promoting the rule of law
- Supporting a sustainable, inclusive and resilient profession

The processes for electing and appointing Bar Council members is set out in the [Bar Council Constitution](#).

What is the Bar Council?

The Bar Council is established under the Constitution to discharge the following functions:

- (a) To be the governing body of the Bar.
- (b) To consider, lay down and implement general policy with regard to all matters affecting the Bar.
- (c) To maintain the standards, honour and independence of the Bar, to promote, preserve and improve the services and functions of the Bar, and to represent and act for the Bar generally.

- (d) As the Approved Regulator, to create a board, to be known as the Bar Standards Board, to which it delegates the discharge of its regulatory functions in compliance with Section 28 of the Legal Services Act 2007.

The Annual General Meeting of subscribers is usually held in September each year, and at this meeting members are asked to adopt the Bar Council's annual report and accounts.

In general terms, Bar Council meetings are a forum to discuss the important issues of the day and, where necessary, to ratify decisions or proposals from Bar Council committees. Each representative committee reports to the Bar Council at least once a year; the Chair, Chief Executive and Treasurer, and the Chair of the BSB Board report to every meeting of the Bar Council.

The Council meets, as a whole, a minimum of five times a year, including evenings and Saturday mornings with at least one meeting a year held 'on circuit' (ie outside of London).

Who are the members of the Bar Council?

The Bar Council comprises members who represent the main sections of the profession. Council membership includes a mix of junior counsel and King's Counsel, self-employed and employed.

54 Council members are directly elected for three-year terms, with a third retiring each year. The remaining members represent the circuits, specialist Bar associations (SBAs) and the Inns of Court. The Attorney General and Director of Public Prosecutions are ex-officio members. See the website for more information about the [composition of the Bar Council](#).

The Council elects a Chair and a Vice Chair who each serve for one year. The Treasurer is elected annually but may serve for up to four years.

A [full list of Bar Council members](#) is available on the Bar Council website.

The role of Bar Council members

Whatever your route to the Bar Council (whether elected, ex-officio or co-opted), your role is to represent your 'constituency' by collating and relaying their views at

Bar Council meetings and/or disseminating relevant non-confidential Bar Council information to them.

The main elements of the role are:

- Acting as an ambassador for the Bar Council; promoting its aims and working to achieve its objectives
- Working as part of a team with the others in your constituency; whilst bringing your ideas, perspectives and experiences to the Bar Council
- Regularly attending meetings and contributing to the discussions
- Joining and participating in one or more Bar Council committee, panel and/or working group (see Committees below)
- Reading meeting minutes and papers and contributing to the discussions and decision-making process of the Bar Council
- Encouraging others to stand for the Bar Council (either in elections or through the circuits/SBAs/Inns)
- Explaining the importance of the Bar Representation Fee (BRF) to others and encouraging them to subscribe
- Attending the annual Bar Conference and contributing to discussions and sessions

Members who represent bodies with multiple attendees (such as circuits, SBAs and Inns) may wish to coordinate with colleagues to collect views and disseminate information.

Committees

Bar Council members are expected to join one or more [Bar Council committee, panel or working group](#). Members are placed on committees based on their skills and experience, and their preferences, where possible.

Elected juniors under seven years in practice (self-employed and employed) are normally expected to join the [Young Barristers' Committee](#).

Attendance, proxies and alternates

There is an expectation that all members will attend meetings as often as practicably possible. Poor attendance may be referred to the General Management Committee for a decision as to whether Bar Council membership should be revoked.

We encourage Bar Council members to attend meetings in person, however an MSTeams link is usually available for those who need to dial in.

Meeting agendas and papers are usually sent out a week in advance of the meeting and apologies should be sent to the secretariat to be recorded.

Bar Council members can request a proxy vote and delegate their voting power to another Bar Council member via the secretariat. Circuit leaders and SBA chairs may nominate an alternate to attend in their place - the alternate must be a Bar Council subscriber and member of the relevant circuit or SBA and not a member of the BSB.

Timing of meetings

- Saturday Bar Council meetings usually start at 10.00 and are scheduled to finish between 12.00 and 13.00.
- Meetings on circuit may start later at 11.00.
- Weekday Bar Council meetings usually start at 17:00 and are scheduled to finish between 18.30 and 19.00.

Conduct

In performing their duties, Bar Council members should observe the seven principles of public life, known as the 'Nolan Principles':

- **Selflessness:** holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friend.
- **Integrity:** holders of public office should avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefit for themselves, their family or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- **Objectivity:** holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- **Accountability:** holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- **Openness:** holders of public office should be as open and transparent as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give

reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

- **Honesty:** holders of public office should be truthful.
- **Leadership:** holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

More information

If you have any questions, please contact governance@barcouncil.org.uk

www.barcouncil.org.uk

Last updated: July 2024