Constitution of the Central London Bar Mess

Draft, November 2026

MEMBERSHIP

1. Any practising member of the Bar of England and Wales shall be eligible as a candidate for admission to the Mess.

2. A candidate for admission shall send to the Membership Secretary an application form (copies of which shall be kept by the Membership Secretary) specifying his/her eligibility within Rule 1 and containing his/her name, address (including email address) and date of Call to the Bar and such application form shall be signed by the candidate. The candidate shall include with the application form a duly completed standing order form made in favour of the Mess. Once received, the candidate automatically becomes a member of the Mess.

3. The membership year of the Mess runs from 1st January. Members of the Mess shall pay the annual subscription. Candidates who become members during the membership year shall forthwith pay for the current year. All subscriptions shall be paid by standing order.

TERMINATION

4. Any member who ceases to be a practising member of the Bar shall cease to be a member of the Mess.

5. Any member shall cease to be a member of the Mess upon resignation by written notice to the Mess Secretary.

6. Any member who is appointed a Judge or who accepts any appointment which precludes his/her practising at the Bar shall, upon such appointment, cease to be a barrister member. All members disqualified under this Rule may be honorary members.

7. Whosoever by virtue of these Rules or otherwise ceases to be a member of the Mess shall have no claim for the return of any money paid by him/her to the Mess Fund.

8. Membership may be terminated by simple majority resolution of the Committee (the Senior not having a vote) where it is considered that:

a. A member has breached the Bar Standards Board Code of Conduct or the Mess' own policies in respect of expected conduct, including but not limited to the policy on Harassment and Bullying; and

b. The member's continued membership would be incompatible with the Mess' objectives.

10. The Committee shall, in considering termination of membership under paragraph 8 above, invite representations from the member concerned, and, where applicable, act upon advice of the Panel described in paragraph 11 below.

11. The Senior shall refer suspected breaches of Mess policy on Harassment and Bullying to a Panel comprising the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Officer, the Secretary and the Treasurer. The Panel shall invite representations from the member concerned and consider such evidence and written representations as it considers necessary for the fair and proportionate assessment of the referral.

12. An appeal from the advisory conclusion reached by the Panel lies to the Senior, which will not be a re-hearing but to ensure the processes were followed correctly.

GENERAL MEETINGS

13. The Mess shall annually hold a General Meeting which, in the ordinary course, should be on a weekday in the month of October. In addition, at the written request of twenty or more members of the Mess an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Mess shall be called by the Secretary. The date and place of any such meeting shall be fixed by the Secretary who, subject to the paragraphs below, shall give at least twenty-one days' notice to all members of the Mess, which members shall be entitled

to be present and to vote. Notice in respect of any general meeting shall be in writing and given by email to the address on the membership list.

14. In the case of an Extraordinary General Meeting the Senior may (after consultation with the Secretary) direct that the period of notice be abridged to such an extent that the Senior determines, and such shortened period shall be regarded as good and proper notice of that meeting.

15. An inadvertent failure to notify any member of a Meeting shall not invalidate such Meeting nor shall it invalidate any business conducted therein.

16. All matters upon which the decision or opinion of the Mess is to be taken shall be brought before a Meeting by way of motion which shall be proposed by one member and seconded by another. Except in the case of business accepted by the Senior of the meeting to be urgent, such motion shall be notified to the Secretary not less than 7 days before the date of the meeting.

17. Except where otherwise provided herein, the decision or opinion of the Mess shall be taken by ballot of the ordinary members present or voting by proxy which must be duly notified to the Secretary in advance of the meeting. A simple majority of the votes shall decide.

THE COMMITTEE

18. The Mess shall, at the Annual General Meeting, elect from the ordinary members specific members to hold the posts of the Senior, the Treasurer and the Secretary and a sufficient number of members to fill the other named Offices and posts set out in this paragraph. Those elected shall form the Committee which at its first meeting after the Annual General Meeting shall allocate offices to the elected members. All members of the Committee shall hold office until the Annual General Meeting next held after their election. They shall be eligible for re-election. The officers and posts are:

a. A SENIOR: (who will be known as the Chairperson) who shall be of the rank of King's Counsel. He or she shall chair the Meetings of the Mess but may on any occasion delegate such duty to the Treasurer or Junior.

b. A TREASURER: in whose name, jointly with that of the Secretary, shall stand the Mess Fund Account at such bank as the Mess may from time to time select and whose duty it shall be, jointly with the Secretary, to make the payments authorised by these Rules. It shall be the Treasurer's duty to check that members are up to date with their subscriptions.

c. A SECRETARY: (who may be known as the Junior) whose duty it shall be to conduct the correspondence of the Mess, to minute the meetings, to superintend all matters in relation to the election of officers, to keep an accurate and current list of the members (with the Membership Secretary) and a copy of the Constitution and, jointly with the Treasurer, to make the payments authorised by the Constitution. The Secretary shall nominate another member to act for him/her at meetings in his/her absence.

d. A MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY who shall be responsible under the guidance of the committee for the organisation of membership.

e. A SOCIAL SECRETARY who shall be responsible under the guidance of the committee for the organisation of such Mess functions as the committee may decide to hold.

f. A COURT REPRESENTATIVE for each of the Crown Courts covered by the Mess, namely Inner London, Southwark and Woolwich and the Central London County Court. Following election each representative shall be entitled to nominate a deputy to assist him/her as the Mess Representative at that court, such nomination to be the subject of approval by the Committee. Such approved deputy shall be entitled to attend the meetings of the Committee but shall not be entitled to vote.

g. AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY OFFICER

h. A FAMILY COURT REPRESENTATIVE

i. THREE FURTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE WITHOUT PORTFOLIO

19. The Committee may, in addition from time to time at the request of the Secretary, appoint an Assistant Secretary whose duty it shall be to assist the Secretary in the discharge of his or her duties.

In addition, the Senior and/or Committee may, at their discretion, co-opt additional members to the Committee. If at the time of co-option there shall be fewer than three members of the Committee without portfolio, the co-opted member or members shall take the vacant place or places in order of co-option and serve in that capacity until the next Annual General Meeting.

20. The quorum for the Committee shall be no fewer than seven persons who are entitled to vote attending either in person, remotely, by telephone or by any other method of effective communication.

21. Sub-committees of members may be appointed by the Committee for specific purposes, consisting of such members and with such powers as occasion may require. The quorum of every such sub-committee shall, unless otherwise provided, be one half of the members of such sub-committee.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

22. All members both ordinary and honorary shall pay an annual subscription, the amount of which shall be fixed at the Annual General Meeting and become due and payable on the 1st January next following. Any member who shall have failed, after due demand, to pay such subscription by the 31st March shall thereupon cease to be a member of the Mess. Provided that the Committee may reinstate such person upon such terms as they may think fit.

THE MESS FUND

23. The Mess Fund shall be applied as follows:

a. To the payment of the usual running expenses of the Mess.

b. To the payment for such Dinners, Luncheons and Drinks Parties as may from time to time be determined.

c. To such other purposes as may be determined by the Committee or by a General Meeting of the Mess.

24. The Committee may appoint other members in addition to the Treasurer and the Secretary to be co-signatories of the Mess Fund Account jointly with either the Treasurer or the Secretary.

GENERAL

25. No alteration or addition to these Rules shall be made except by a majority of two thirds of Members at a General Meeting.

26. A quorum of a General Meeting of the Mess shall be no fewer than fifteen members of the Mess present in person or by proxy filed with the Secretary not less than one hour in advance of the meeting.

27. All Rules of the Mess heretofore existing are hereby repealed and these Rules shall bind all present and future members and officers until represented at the first Annual General Meeting hereafter.

HARASSMENT, GRIEVANCES AND CONDUCT

28. All members, Officers, and Committee members shall adhere to the Mess' Harassment and Bulling Complaints Policy.

29. Complaints of harassment or bullying shall, in accordance with the written policy, be addressed to the Committee. [See rule 11 above as to referral of complaints to a Panel for assessment].