Constitution of the Sussex Bar Mess

As adopted by the Mess, 27th April 2026

1. The Sussex Bar Mess shall be a constituent Bar Mess of the South Eastern Circuit as defined by paragraph 14 of the Circuit constitution.

2. The Constitution shall have effect from the date upon which it is adopted by the existing members of the Sussex Bar Mess in General Meeting held upon the Junior giving 21 days' notice of the Meeting to all such members.

3. The aims and objectives of the Sussex Bar Mess are:

3.1. to promote and represent the professional interests of its members

3.2. to assist with consultation undertaken in connection with the law and/or the legal profession

3.3. to provide information and/or assistance in matters of professional training, behaviour and continuing professional development

3.4. to promote and maintain the highest professional standards in the practice of law

3.5. to liaise with the judiciary in Sussex over matters of mutual concern and interest

3.6. to provide opportunities for social exchange involving members and others concerned with the practice of law.

4. MEMBERSHIP

4.1. A person shall not be eligible to join the Sussex Bar Mess unless he/she is:

4.1.1. A barrister in practice as defined by the Code of Conduct of the Bar of England and Wales and

4.1.2. A member of or intended member of the South Eastern Circuit.

4.2. Honorary membership of the Mess may be conferred on any former member of the Mess or on any person who holds or has held a full time judicial appointment at the discretion of the Mess Committee. Honorary members shall not have the right to stand for election to the Committee or to vote at a General Meeting or any other meeting of the Mess.

5. ELECTION TO MEMBERSHIP

5.1. Every candidate to applies for membership of the Mess shall be proposed in writing by a member of the Mess.

5.2. The proposer must be a person who has been a member of the Mess for at least 12 months at the date of the proposal.

5.3. Every candidate who applies for membership shall complete an application in writing in such form as is approved by the Committee from time to time.

5.4. Election to membership shall be by a Committee Meeting save that the Committee may in its discretion permit the Junior to admit candidates to membership of the Mess without a Committee Meeting being called. No candidate shall be refused membership of the Mess save at a Committee Meeting presided over by the Chair.

5.5. On election/admission to the Mess each new member shall, unless the Committee determines otherwise, forthwith pay the annual subscription and shall complete a banker's standing order providing for the future payments of the annual subscription on 1 January in each year.

6. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

6.1. Membership shall terminate:

6.1.1. Upon any appointment which, during its continuance, prevents practice at the Bar (except in the case of Honorary Membership as prescribed in rule 5.2); or

6.1.2. Upon disbarment; or

6.1.3. Upon a decision of no less than two thirds of the Mess Committee; or

6.1.4. Upon resignation, which must be made to the Junior in writing; or

6.1.5. Upon failure to pay Mess subscriptions in accordance with rule 15; or

6.1.6. Upon ceasing to practise or

6.1.7. Where it is considered by decision of not less than two thirds of the Mess Committee that 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 considers that the member's continued membership of the Mess would be incompatible with the objectives of the Mess.

6.2. The Mess shall refer suspected breaches of the policy on Harassment and Bullying to the South Eastern Circuit.

6.3. A member whose membership has been terminated due to non-payment of subscription fees shall not be eligible for membership again unless past outstanding membership subscription fees are settled to the satisfaction of the Treasurer.

7. OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

7.1. The officers of the Mess shall be:

7.1.1. The Mess Chair;

7.1.2. The Mess Secretary (who may be known as "the Junior");

7.1.3. Treasurer;

7.1.4. Two members who are to be elected by the Mess to serve on the Circuit Committee of the South Eastern Circuit (referred to hereafter as "the Circuit Representatives");

7.1.5. The Circuit Junior Representative (who shall be under 7 years call at the date of their election);

7.1.6. The Family Bar Representative; and

7.1.7. The Civil Bar Representative.

7.2. In addition to the officers, six members of the Mess, nor more than two of whom are to be King's Counsel, shall be elected to serve as members of the Committee.

7.3. The Mess Chair shall preferably hold the rank of King's Counsel and shall have been a member of the Mess for at least three years at the date of his/her election.

7.4. The Mess Secretary shall be a junior and shall have been a member of the Mess for at least two years at the date of his/her election. King's Counsel may not hold the office of Mess Secretary and shall forthwith vacate the same upon taking silk.

7.5. The Mess Treasurer may be King's Counsel or a junior. The same person may simultaneously hold the offices of Mess Secretary and Mess Treasurer.

7.6. The Circuit Representatives, not more than one of whom shall be King's Counsel, shall have been members of the Mess for at least two years at the date of their election.

7.7. The Committee may in its discretion co-opt up to two additional members, each of whom may serve for a period of one year.

7.8. The officers shall serve for a period of three years and the members of the Committee shall serve for a period of three years. The Chair, the Junior, the Treasurer and members of the Committee shall be eligible for re-election at the conclusion of their respective terms of office. The Circuit Representatives shall not be eligible for re-election to an immediately successive term.

7.9. Each set of chambers and annexe in Sussex out of which five or more barristers practise as their principal place of practice and from which a barrister has not been elected to the Committee shall be entitled to appoint a representative to be an additional member of the Committee by a letter of nomination to be received by the Junior within seven days of the elections next provided for.

8. RIGHTS OF MEMBERS

8.1. Members of all categories shall be entitled to attend Mess dinners and other social functions upon payment of such charges as may be determined by the Junior. Payment is due prior to the event.

8.2. Members shall be entitled to attend meetings other than Committee meetings, to speak and vote upon any business transacted there, to vote in the election of officers and the Committee and to hold office if eligible.

8.3. Honorary members shall be entitled to attend meetings other than Committee meetings and to give the meeting the benefit of their opinions upon any question arising at the meeting but hall have no vote at meetings or in elections and shall not be eligible to hold Mess office.

9. COMPLAINTS

9.1. Any complaint about the conduct of any Member of the Mess shall be submitted in writing to the Junior who shall report the same to the Chair.

9.2. The Chair shall enquire into any complaints received and shall decide whether the complaint should be referred to the Committee or to a panel of the Committee, made up of not less than three members. The decision of the Chair whether to refer the complaint to the Committee is not open to appeal.

9.3. If referred to the Committee, or a panel of the Committee, that Committee will decide on the action to be taken. The Committee's decision in respect of the complaint is not open to appeal, save as set out within the Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment policy.

9.4. A recommendation by the Committee, or panel thereof, to terminate membership must be decided in accordance with rule 6.

10. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

10.1. The officers and members of the Committee shall be elected or re-elected at the next Annual General Meeting of the Mess to be held after the conclusion of their respective terms of office. The elections shall take place at the Annual General Meeting on a show of hands, but any member unable to be present for personal or professional reasons may cast a vote for any candidate by writing a letter or email to the Junior. The letter or email must reach the Junior before the start of the meeting and give the reason for the absence of the voter.

10.2. Nominations for officers and members of the Committee must be received by the Junior not later than seven days in advance of the date fixed for the Annual General

Meeting. Nominations received after this date shall be invalid. Nomination papers shall be sent by the Junior to all members of the Mess together with the notice of the Annual General Meeting.

10.3. Nominations shall be accompanied by the consent in writing of the candidate to his/her nomination.

11. MEETINGS

11.1. Save as otherwise expressly provided in this Constitution, the business of the Mess shall be transacted by the Committee.

11.2. No business shall be transacted by the Committee unless at least two officers and two members are present.

11.3. The Annual General Meeting of the Mess shall be held in the Easter Term of each year and on a date to be fixed by the Committee upon the giving of 28 days' notice to the members.

11.4. The Annual General Meeting shall be held at Lewes or Brighton at a time and place to be determined by the Committee in its discretion. The Annual General Meeting may be held virtually.

11.5. All members of the Mess shall be entitled to propose resolutions at the Annual General Meeting. Notice in writing of all such resolutions is to be given to the Junior no later than 14 days before the date fixed for the Annual General Meeting.

11.6. The Chair, or in his/her absence the Junior, shall report on behalf of the Committee to the members on the activities of the Mess during the year.

11.7. An Extraordinary General Meeting of the Mess shall be summoned by the Junior giving 21 days' notice in writing, at the request in writing of any member of the Mess provided that that member is supported in his/her request by at least nine other members of the Mess.

11.8. No business shall be transacted at a General Meeting unless at least 10 (which may include officers, Committee members or other members) are present.

11.9. All resolutions put at any General Meeting shall be determined by a simple majority of those members present on a show of hands unless at least five members present request a ballot in which event the Junior shall forthwith make arrangements for such a ballot of the meeting and a count of the votes cast in the ballot. In the event of a tie the Chair shall have a casting vote.

11.10. Presence at any General Meeting can be in person, by telephone, or by videolink.

11.11. If at any General Meeting a simple majority of those present request that an issue be determined by a ballot of the membership the Junior shall make arrangements for the holding of such a ballot within 21 days of the date of the meeting and count the votes. In the event of a ballot the question shall be decided on a simple majority. In the event of a tie the Chair shall have a casting vote.

12. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

12.1. No amendment shall be made to this Constitution except at a General Meeting and not unless at least 28 days' notice in writing has been given to the members and at least two-thirds of those present at the General Meeting vote in favour of any such amendment.

12.2. This Constitution shall take effect upon its adoption at a General Meeting and will replace all previous versions.

12.3. For the avoidance of doubt all appointments, memberships and other arrangements existing under previous versions of this Constitution shall continue upon commencement of this Constitution unless expressly indicated otherwise.

12.4. All existing liabilities to pay subscriptions at the date on which this Consitution is amended or comes into force shall continue.

13. ADMINISTRATION

13.1. The Junior shall keep the minutes of all General Meetings but may delegate this task to another on a permanent or a temporary basis.

13.2. The Committee may in its discretion elect one of its members to the post of Treasurer and another of its members to the post of Assistant Junior.

13.3. A list of the current members of the Mess shall be kept by the Junior and a copy of the list shall be published on the notice board at the Lewes Crown Court. The published list shall be amended annually in January of each year.

14. SUBSCRIPTIONS

14.1. The annual subscription shall be £35 or such other amount as the Mess shall determine from time to time in General Meeting.

14.2. The subscription shall be payable by banker's order on 1 January in each year.

14.3. If any member fails to pay his/her subscription the Junior shall send him/her a written reminder. If the member then fails to pay by 1 June of the year in question he/she shall forthwith cease to be a member of the Mess. The Junior shall send such a person a notice to this effect and inform the Committee of such action.

14.4. Honorary members shall pay a reduced annual subscription of £5 or no subscription as determined at the discretion of the Committee.

15. HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

15.1. All members of the Mess shall adhere to the Mess' Harassment and Bullying Policy.