

Central Support Division
Department of Finance and Personnel
Room P8
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
BANGOR BT19 7NA

Ref : OA/FN/8

eb134

4 January 2006

Dear Madam/ Sir

Regulation of Legal Services in Northern Ireland

I write to advise that the Council recently considered the consultative document 'Regulation of Legal Services in Northern Ireland' and agreed to make the following points.

In general the Council welcomes the document and the need expressed to move away from self regulation and to improve how complaints are handled.

The Council supports the five principles of the Better Regulation Task Force viz proportionality, accountability, consistency, transparency and targeting.

The Council does not believe that self regulation has wide spread public support.

The Council supports the five commonly recognised professional regulatory core functions and does not disagree with the Clementi specific objectives.

The Council would welcome any measures which would improve public understanding of their rights, options and knowledge of the commonly used parts of the law.

The Council believes that there is a need to have the role of a Lay Observer strengthened to include ordering, compensation and enforcing recommendations.

While supporting the Solicitors' Disciplinary Tribunal, the Council considers there would be merit in giving it the power to order a solicitor to pay compensation.

The Council supports the Clementi solutions in paragraph 4.15 and would also support changes to the complaints system to make it more transparent and less the appearance of self interest.

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Finally the Council supports the view that there should be a single complaints body and can see no reason not to have Licensed Conveyancers.

Should you need any further information please do not hesitate to contact me on 9034 0099 (direct line) or by email on aclements@newtownabbey.gov.uk.

Yours faithfully

J ALAN CLEMENTS
Council Business Manager