CASE NUMBER 12748-2025

BEFORE THE SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974

AND IN THE MATTER OF

SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY LIMITED

Applicant

- and -

DR MATTHEW THOMAS PARISH

Respondent

RESPONDENT'S ANSWER

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1. This Answer is filed pursuant to paragraph 2 of the Standard Directions of the Tribunal dated 3 April 2025, in response to the Rule 12 Statement made by the Applicant dated 27 March 2025.

2. The Respondent is unrepresented because he has no funds to represent himself and public funding for cases before this Honourable Tribunal is not available.

3. In summary, the Applicant says that the Respondent is guilty of professional misconduct for coordinating with the British security and intelligence services in a matter of national security relating to the Russian Federation; and for issuing press releases and writing legitimate communications to a firm of solicitors in the context of being sued for fraud by a notorious Kuwaiti criminal: fraud allegations which were later struck out as frivolous, vexatious and/or an abuse of process of the Court.

4. These accusations that this amounts to professional misconduct are all obviously misconceived. The Respondent throughout acted with integrity; in the national interest; and with the principles of honour and decency that he was taught to value while at law school. By acting with integrity, the Respondent paid an egregious financial penalty and lost his business. He does not deserve to have his reputation besmirched by a finding of regulatory fault as well.

INTRODUCTORY

5. The background to this matter is that in April 2018, the Respondent, while the Managing Partner of a Swiss law firm called Gentium Law Group Sàrl, wrote to HM Security Service (also known as MI5), reporting certain concerns about two Russian criminals who, as agents of the Russian government, were deploying so-called "shadow fleet" vessels using an array of shell companies, flags of convenience and dubious ports in Russia, Turkmenistan and Russia-occupied Crimea, to export sanctioned hydrocarbon products and engage in other grave violations of international law. While doing this, these Russian criminals were seeking to use the Respondent's and his firm's legal services as a tool to perpetuate their felonies, something which needed by all justice to be reported.

6. In October 2018, the Respondent attended HM British Embassy in Bern at the invitation of HM Government, to present his client files to the British government at which meeting were present a Mr Enno Van Der Graaf of the Embassy and a member of HM Security Service (whose name is not currently known). Those client files were retained by the British Government.

7. Already it is respectfully hoped that this Honourable Tribunal appreciates that this affair is entirely outside its remit. The actions of an English solicitor in cooperating with the British security and intelligence services for reasons of national security are not something upon which the Tribunal should be adjudicating in a public forum. Nevertheless because the Respondent has been ordered to file an Answer to the Rule 12 statement, he is doing so.

8. As a result of the Respondent's writing to HM Security Service, a wholly bogus criminal prosecution of the Respondent took place in Geneva, engineered by a corrupt Geneva prosecutor, for criminal defamation *inter alia* (not a crime in England at all), in which the Respondent was convicted. The Respondent was convicted in a procedure that lacked all due process (the Respondent was not allowed to present any evidence in his defence, call any witnesses, and had his own testimony cut off by the President of the Court) and received a suspended sentence. That was in early 2020. The Respondent then self-reported the matter to the Applicant, as is his duty, explaining the extraordinary circumstances in which this conviction had come about.

9. The Applicant then undertook a most dilatory investigation into the matter that was highly unfair to the Respondent, and then wrote a report essentially copying the conclusions of the Geneva court that had acted without due process. The course of events is approximately as follows.

10. In the summer of 2022, after a delay from self-reporting of over two years, the Applicant asked the Respondent for various documents to investigate what had happened in Geneva. After the Respondent gave the Applicant the only documents he had - the Court file in Geneva which was provided to the Respondent by his state-appointed Geneva lawyer on request - there was a delay of approximately a year. The Respondent heard nothing more until 31 August 2023.

11. The bulk of what ought to have been an extremely complicated investigation took place between 31 August 2023 and late November 2023, during which period the Respondent was serving as an international civilian volunteer in Ukraine and had no access to any documents, scant access to internet or email, and no reasonable access to legal research materials or prospective witnesses. The Respondent offered to attend the Applicant's offices for an interview, to explain what had been going on and to talk them through the Court files at a propitious moment; that offer was ignored.

12. A recommendation came from the investigating officer Dr Sam Jones to refer the Respondent to this Honourable Tribunal on the Russian affair at some point in mid-November 2023 (to the best of the Respondent's recollection).

13. Then, immediately afterwards and out of the blue, Dr Jones wrote with a whole new series of accusations (which we might call the Kuwaiti affair), with just 14 days to reply. The Applicant refused to extend the deadline even though the Respondent was still undertaking voluntary work in Ukraine at the time. After the 14-day period expired (and it was impossible for the Applicant to read or respond meaningfully in that time period to the hundreds of pages of documents sent to him, or even download them, given his location), Dr Jones made another recommendation that the Applicant refer that matter to this Honourable Tribunal too.

14. In early December 2023, after some brief internal deliberations, in the context of which the Respondent affirmed to the "authorised decision maker" within the Applicant's bureaucratic structure the unfairness of the investigatory procedures to which he had been subject, the Applicant decided to act affirmatively upon the two recommendations of Dr Jones to refer the matter to this Honourable Tribunal; but the Applicant did not actually do so until 27 March 2025.

15. One of the main problems for a fair and just adjudication of this case is that the passage of time (some eight years) has caused memories of the precise chain of events to fade. The responsibility for this lies with the Applicant, which has engaged in egregious delay that renders a fair evaluation of this matter by this Honourable Tribunal virtually impossible.

16. The Respondent lacks access to the preponderance of the relevant documents, which remain with the British government; and therefore he is unable to prepare an effective defence.

17. However in response to the Applicant's investigation, the Respondent wrote a witness statement dated 16 September 2023 ("the Witness Statement"), attached, which set out what happened as best as he could recall at that time without access to the documents, and which forms an integral part of this Answer. The Respondent respectfully urges the Tribunal to read the Witness Statement as a preliminary, to understand the context of this action, before proceeding any further with a review of this Answer.

18. There is also a question as to whether the Respondent acted in any way improperly in his dealings with another former client, a Person A of Kuwait. The Respondent had been engaged in a retainer involving a bitter dispute between members of the Kuwaiti Royal Family relating to the succession to the Kuwaiti Emiracy, in 2014 - that is to say, eleven years ago. After the termination of that retainer, Person A, an agent of a senior member of the Kuwaiti Royal Family called Sheikh Ahmed Al-Fahad Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah (now disgraced but at one time a senior member of the International Olympic Committee and Kuwaiti Minister of Oil), sued the Respondent and other group of fellow professionals for fraud before the High Court in London. As a result of the Respondent's work, that case was struck out as been frivolous, vexatious or an abuse of the process of the Court (CPR Part 3) with costs in favour of the defendants. The Applicant now says that there was something professionally improper in the way the Respondent managed his relations with Person A or his solicitors at this time. The Respondent says that this is an entirely bogus assertion with no legal grounds whatsoever.

RESPONSES TO THE PARAGRAPHS IN THE RULE 12 STATEMENT

The report to HM Security Service

19. Paragraph 1.1 is admitted but these offers were made in the context of a mediation or negotiation between the Respondent and his former client representatives Person B and Person C ("the Russians") which mediation or negotiation was initiated by those individuals and the offers made were in the context of a request by the Russians that the Respondent withdraw the accusations in question. In the circumstances, this was a legitimate negotiation (at least as regards the Respondent) and betrayed no elements of professional misconduct. The Russians had asked the Respondent to retract his allegations and they owed him (or his firm) a lot of money. So a commercial negotiation ensued at their instigation. However that does not entail that the Respondent did not believe the allegations he had made, either when making them or at any other time. Indeed the Respondent still believes the accusations he had made to the present day. For these reasons the Respondent denies that he breached any of the Principles referred to in paragraph 1.1.

20. Paragraph 1.2 is admitted to the extent that the Respondent published the press releases in question but denies that doing this was in breach of any Court order. In the circumstances there was no breach of the cited Principles or Rules.

21. Paragraph 1.3 is denied. The decision of the FTT was published but not in such a way that breached the anonymity granted by the FTT - rather it complied precisely with the terms of the anonymity order in the FTT. When the Upper Tribunal made an order that the Respondent remove the FTT decision from his website, he complied with it promptly. In the circumstances there was no breach of the cited Principles or Rules.

22. Paragraph 4 is admitted to the extent that the Respondent wrote to Charles Douglas solicitors informing them of a defamation claim against them for raising bogus matters with the Applicant against his interests; but it is denied that in doing this any of the cited paragraphs or principles were thereby breached. Charles Douglas was acting most improperly, threatening to make reports to the Applicant as a tool of leverage in the context of background litigation, something which they should not have done; and the Respondent acted reasonably and proportionately in reaction to that conduct.

23. Paragraphs 2 to 4 are noted.

24. Paragraphs 5 and 6 are admitted.

25. Paragraph 7 is noted.

26. Paragraphs 8 to 11 are admitted but are irrelevant by reason of the gross failures of due process involved in the Geneva court proceedings, as explained in the Witness Statement; the convictions were the result of unlawful coercion. The Geneva Prosecutor in question threw him into a maximum security prison in Geneva with an atrocious human rights record, and refused to release him until he made a confession that the allegations were false and he made the report he did because he was an alcoholic (something which is not true).

27. The Respondent contests the justice of those convictions to this day. No attempts were made by the Geneva authorities to enforce the fine or the course of psychiatry referred to. These were trumped up proceedings, as two of the Respondent's witnesses who were present in the Court in Geneva at the trial will attest. At the trial and appeal, the Respondent was not allowed to call witnesses or present evidence in his defence, and the testimony he tried to give about the circumstances of the case (in particular the unlawful coercion) was cut off by the Presiding Judge. The appeal was on the papers only without any input on the part of Respondent (his state-appointed lawyers asked him for no instructions and did not raise the issue of unlawful coercion) and amounted to a re-trial of the issues without his physical participation or the

physical participation of his lawyers - or with any evidence or witnesses allowed to appear for the Respondent. The entire process was an abysmal sham.

28. Paragraphs 12 to 38 are all admitted. However the context in which these assertions are made gives a wholly misleading impression as to the course of events. The true course of events is that the Russians' shell companies had been refusing to pay their significant bills to Gentium Law Group Sàrl as part of a strategy to force the law firm and the Respondent into complying with their illegal instructions, which involved falsification of documents for the purposes of committing international crimes relating to Russia's "shadow fleet" of vessels. The Respondent therefore resigned representation and reported the matter to HM Security Service. There was then (predictably) a refusal by the Russians to pay the invoices after the Respondent resigned representation in such circumstances.

29. The assertion that on one day the firm had billed 26 hours is true but it was in the context of a two-week arbitration in Stockholm with a Russian ship-owning company, in which five fee-earners were involved at various times, often working over twelve hours a day each (the hearings alone tended to last 10 hours each day, and involved difficult cross-examination in English and Russian together with a team of two translators who worked on and off and charged hourly rates).

30. The report to HM Security Service was not motivated by a desire for leverage over the Russians (which Russians who have since disappeared from Geneva, apparently with huge debts owed to banks, law firms etcetera) and whose current whereabouts are unknown) but because a Swiss intelligence agent had informed the Respondent that the Swiss authorities would do nothing about this even if the Respondent reported it to them, so as to avoid scandal associated with the Geneva financial system.

31. The proposal to withdraw the accusations was in response to a proposal from the Russian criminals made via an intermediary, as discussed in the Witness Statement. Because the Respondent's law firm needed this money to avoid insolvency, the Respondent was effectively coerced into offering to withdraw the accusations that he had made. However he never actually withdrew them and maintains them to this day; in the event the Respondent acted with the maximum possible integrity in virtually impossible circumstances.

32. Paragraphs 39 to 48 are noted insofar as they contain assertions of the contents of the law but they are denied insofar as they consist of allegations of professional misconduct against the Respondent, by reason of the foregoing assertions contained in this Answer and the contents of the Witness Statement.

The alleged breach of the Swiss court order

33. Paragraph 49 is noted.

34. Paragraph 50 is admitted.

35. Paragraph 51 to 58 are all admitted save that it is denied that there was any breach of a Swiss court order; the order referred to in paragraph 51 was complied with.

36. As to paragraph 58, no fine or costs were ever paid, nor was any attempt at enforcement of them made. The Court made that order without the participation of the Respondent or his law firm in any way. The Court acted in fundamental breach of the principles of natural justice; this Honourable Tribunal should give no credence to the activities of the Geneva court in this instance, in particular because there is evidence that the pertinent Geneva prosecutor involved had received a CHF1,000,000 bribe or "facilitation payment" via his university in connection with another case (relating to the Kuwaiti affair) in which the Respondent was involved.

37. The Geneva legal system served as a mockery of justice, and the actions of the Respondent in struggling with a corrupt foreign court system that failed to apply elementary principles of due process should not cause this Honourable Tribunal to make a finding of professional misconduct against him.

38. Paragraphs 59 to 62 are noted insofar as they consist of assertions of English law but are denied insofar as they amount to allegations of professional misconduct against the Respondent, for the reasons provided above.

39. It is further asserted that there is no duty on the part of an English solicitor to act in the best interests of a former client, or a former client's representative. The consequences of the existence of such a duty, taken to its logical conclusion, would be that a solicitor could not sue a former client on an unpaid bill. It should also be noted that the Applicant is not and never has made an accusation that the Respondent breached any duty of solicitor-client confidentiality.

The anonymity order in the FTT decision

40. Paragraphs 66 to 82 are admitted.

41. The FTT decision in question had been given to the Respondent by Person A. The FTT was manifestly a gross miscarriage of justice; Person A is a notorious Kuwaiti fugitive wanted in multiple jurisdictions for serious crimes of fraud and forgery, including Jordan,

Kuwait and Qatar, now understood to be enjoying entirely unjustified residence in London when he should be in prison in one of the above countries on account of his crimes.

42. There was no breach of the FTT anonymity order in publishing the FTT decision given to the Respondent by Person A, because as published the FTT decision had been suitably redacted to reduce Person A's name to his initials, which is what the FTT anonymity order required and what the Respondent did. The Respondent complied with the FTT's anonymity order. Nobody applied for an order that the Respondent be held in contempt of court and there is a reason for that: the Respondent was not in contempt of court.

43. There was nothing improper in the correspondence between the Respondent and the Upper Tier Tribunal, whose ultimate order was complied with promptly. The Upper Tier Tribunal never held the Respondent in contempt of court.

44. Paragraphs 83 to 91 are noted insofar as they consist in statements of the law but denied insofar as they amount to allegations of professional misconduct against the Respondent. The Respondent breached no order of an English court or Tribunal and indeed complied with an order promptly issued by the Upper Tier Tribunal.

Threatening legal action against Charles Douglas solicitors

45. Paragraphs 92 to 97 are admitted or noted as appropriate.

46. Paragraph 98 is denied. There is no professional misconduct in a solicitor placing a law firm on notice of a potential libel or other media law action for filing a groundless professional misconduct complaint. It is denied that the litigation referred to had no proper basis; nor that the correspondence sent was intimidating, abusive or aggressive in any degree so as to amount to professional misconduct, given the circumstances in which Messrs Charles Douglas's client was busy suing the Respondent for fraud (vexatiously, as it turned out; the matter was struck out).

47. Paragraphs 100 to 105 are noted insofar as they represent assertions of law but denied insofar as they constitute allegations of professional misconduct against the Claimant, for the reasons set out above.

Miscellaneous final provisions of the Rule 12 statement

48. Paragraphs 106 to 108 are admitted.

49. Paragraphs 109 to 111 are noted.

50. In the Statement of Truth the identity of the signatory, Lyndsey Farrell, appears to be a solicitor in the employ of the Applicant's solicitors. Nevertheless she asserts herself that it is her personal belief that the facts contained in the Rule 12(2) Statement are true, when in truth, as a solicitor recently instructed in a long-running matter, she can, with all respect, know nothing about the affair. Instead the Statement of Truth should be modified such that the signatory asserts that the Applicant believes that the facts contained in the Statement of Truth are true, rather than Ms Farrell herself; or she should have an appropriate representative of her client, for example the pertinent investigator within the Applicant's organisation, Dr Sam Jones, to sign the document. Thereupon Dr Jones can be called as a witness to the document she has attested to.

51. In addition, the Statement of Truth is not in the contemporary prescribed form (CP PD 22 2(1)).

52. The Respondent asks for both the foregoing matters relating to the Statement of Truth to be rectified.

Final observations regarding the Respondent's integrity

53. In recent years the Respondent has moved to Ukraine, where he has established an NGO, the Ukraine Development Trust, www.development-foundation.org, to promote reconstruction and NGO funding in Ukraine.

54. The Respondent has also established and Anglo-Ukrainian magazine, the Lviv Herald, www.lvivherald.com, to convey the realities of the war in Ukraine to the diplomatic and political communities in the West.

55. The Respondent has also played a central role in the bringing to justice of a notorious convicted British paedophile called Jack Morgan who escaped his parole conditions including a 10-year sexual harm prevention order, after release from prison in the United Kingdom, by changing his name by "deed poll" and then applying for a new passport and moving to Ukraine where the Respondent is now resident.

56. The Tribunal is invited to consider the following two articles, the first of which was written by the Respondent and which prompted the second; he did this work without remuneration or the expectation thereof:

https://www.lvivherald.com/post/uncovering-fraudsters-in-ukraine-2-jack-morgan

https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/04/05/british-charity-children-ukraine-hired-convicted-paedophile/

57. In the circumstances, it is respectfully submitted that the Respondent harbours the highest levels of integrity and is admirably suited to continue to serve as a solicitor of the Superior Courts of England and Wales, with an active practising certificate in the future, should he so request and pay the due fee and comply with all associated regulatory obligations.

58. Since the principal accusation against the Respondent is a lack of integrity (not a lack of honesty - the Respondent put it to Dr Jones more than once that he was not being accused of dishonesty and Dr Jones did not demur), the Respondent will be calling character witnesses as to his integrity.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I believe that the facts stated in this Answer are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

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Dr Matthew Thomas Parish

DATED 6 April 2025