Case No:

BEFORE THE SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974 (as amended)

AND IN THE MATTER OF:

SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY LIMITED

Applicant

and

ANDREW CANE SOLOMON

Respondent

STATEMENT PURSUANT TO RULE 12(2) OF THE SOLICITORS (DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS RULES) 2019

I, **TINA WHITMAN**, am a Solicitor and Legal Director at Blake Morgan LLP of One Central Square, Cardiff, CF10 1FS.

I make this Statement on behalf of the Applicant, the Solicitors Regulation Authority Limited ("**SRA**").

The Allegation

1. The allegation against the Respondent, Mr Andrew Cane Solomon, is that, while in practice as a solicitor at [redacted] ('**the Firm**'), [redacted] he

   When in a position of seniority in respect of Person A, acted towards her in a manner which was inappropriate in that:

   1.1 on 14 December 2023 and/or during the early hours of 15 December 2023 whilst at the Club [redacted], he repeatedly, and without consent:

      i. ran his hand up and down her side; and/or
      ii. touched her breasts and bottom; and/or
      iii. held her hand on his erect penis.

By doing so, the Respondent breached any or all of Principles 2, 5 and 6 of the SRA Principles 2019 ("**the Principles**") and failed to comply with paragraphs 1.2 and 1.5 of the SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs ("**the Code**").

The facts and matters relied upon in support of this allegation are set out in paragraphs 10-48 below.

Sexual Motivation

2. In addition, Allegation 1.1 is advanced on the basis that the Respondent's conduct was sexually motivated and/or sexual in nature. Sexual motivation and/or the conduct being sexual in nature is alleged as an aggravating feature of the Respondent's misconduct but is not an essential ingredient in proving the Allegations.

   The facts and matters relied upon in support of this allegation are set out in paragraphs 10-48 below.

Appendices and Documents

3. I attach to this Statement the following appendices:

   3.1. Appendix 1: Relevant Rules and Regulations

   3.2. Appendix 2: Anonymisation Schedule

4. I also attach to this statement a bundle of documents, marked "**Exhibit TW1**" to which I refer in this statement. Unless otherwise stated, page references in this statement relate to documents contained in that bundle.

5. The bundle is divided into the following sections:

   5.1. Section A: Referral and supporting documentation [**TW1, 1-32**]

   5.2. Section B: Statements [**TW1, 33-79**]

   5.3. Section C: SRA Investigation and Representations [**TW1, 80-102**]

Professional Details

6. The Respondent, who was born on 21 February 1982, is a solicitor, having been admitted to the Roll on 15 September 2010.

7. At the time of the alleged misconduct, the Respondent was a Legal Director and a designated trainee supervisor in the Firm's corporate and commercial practice area ('**the Practice Area'**). The Respondent had joined the Firm as a trainee. As at December 2023, the Respondent had been the designated trainee solicitor supervisor for the Practice Area for 7 years [**TW1, 2**].

8. The Respondent was dismissed by the Firm for gross misconduct on 10 January 2024 [**TW1, 31-32**].

9. In July 2024, the Respondent took up employment as a solicitor with the London Borough of Hackney.

The facts and matters relied upon in support of the allegations

Background

10. The conduct in this matter came to the attention of the SRA on 12 January 2024 when the Firm's General Counsel, [redacted], made a referral following an internal investigation [**TW1, 1-4**].

11. In summary, it is alleged that, whilst attending a work related social event, the Respondent engaged in non-consensual physical contact with Person A, which was sexualised and/or sexually motivated.

12. Person A had joined the Firm in January 2019 as a paralegal and had taken up a training contract in August 2022. In September 2023, Person A moved to the Practice Area to take up her third seat as a trainee solicitor. The Respondent became her trainee supervisor and held this position in respect of Person A at the material time [**TW1, 33-34**].

13. Person A was interviewed for the Firm's internal investigation [**TW1, 10-13**] and gave a statement to the SRA on 5 July 2024 [**TW1, 33-45**].

14. Person B is a witness. She joined the Firm as an Associate Solicitor in the Practice Area in October 2023 [**TW1, 59**]. Person B made contemporaneous notes of the events of 14-15 December 2023 [**TW, 74-79**], participated in an interview for the Firm's internal investigation [**TW1, 19-21**] and gave a statement to the SRA on 19 June 2024 [**TW1, 59-67**]

15. Person C was a partner in the Practice Area and was interviewed as part of the Firm's internal investigation [**TW1, 14-18**].

The facts and matters underpinning Allegations 1 and 2

16. A Christmas event for all employees of the Practice Area had been arranged for Thursday 14 December 2023. The programme was for lunch at [redacted] starting at 1 pm, an escape room activity at [redacted] between 5-6.30 pm and karaoke at [redacted] ('**the Club'**) between 6.30-9 pm. The event was funded by the Firm and no one outside the Practice Area attended [**TW1, 34-35, 49-51, 60-61**]

17. No issues arose during the lunch, escape room activity or the karaoke [**TW1, 35-37, 61-62**].

18. When the karaoke finished at around 9.30 pm, most employees remained at the Club for further drinks and socialising. Over the course of the evening, people gradually left the event. By approximately 2 am on Friday 15 December 2023, only the Respondent, Person A, Person B and Person C remained at the Club [**TW1, 14, 37-38, 62-63**].

19. At or around 2 am on 15 December 2023, Person A will say that she was stood alone in the bar area of the Club, facing the booths between the VIP area and the stairs. The bar was behind her and to the left [**TW1, 38**].

20. Person A will say that the Respondent '*approached me on my left side, he came up to me and put his right hand around my waist and pulled me into him. His right arm was around my back. That's when he said in my left ear, "I've never had a trainee like you"…*' [**TW1, 38**]. Person A will say that the Respondent placed his mouth very close to her ear so she could hear him [**TW1, 38**].

21. Person A goes onto say in her statement that when the Respondent was touching her '*the front of his body was touching the left side of my body…We were both standing'* [**TW1, 39**].

22. Person A states that it felt like the Respondent '*was touching me for a long time but I think it was only around 20-30 seconds. Andy did not ask for permission to touch me and I did not give him permission…I thought maybe he was drunk and didn't realise how close he was or that it wasn't appropriate. [The Respondent's] actions made me feel uncomfortable…I was confused by his comment*…' [**TW1, 38**].

23. Person A describes trying to move away from the Respondent who was holding her '*quite firmly'* and would '*tighten his grip'* when she tried to move away, '*…[the*

Respondent's] speech was slurred and he seemed quite animated…gave me the impression he was drunk' [**TW1, 38-39**].

24. Person A states *'A few seconds after [the Respondent] said, "I've never had a trainee like you" he proceeded to say in my left ear, "You know I have a say in whether you get a job or not". It was just as [the Respondent] made that comment that he started running his hand up and down my side. He ran his hand up to my right breast, he cupped my right breast for a second or two and then ran the same hand back down my side onto my right buttock and held it. He repeated this motion up and down around 5-6 times. His hand was over my dress whilst he was doing this'* [**TW1, 39**]

25. Person A states that she interpreted the Respondent's comments as '*suggestive'* and his touch panicked her. She tried to move away and felt '*quite distressed because I couldn't get away from him'* [**TW1, 39**].

26. At this time, Person B was stood a '*couple of metres'* in front of Person A and slightly to her left. Person B went to walk past the Respondent and Person A towards the bar, and Person A reached over and will say that she said '*"Help, Andy is being really touchy feely and I feel uncomfortable".* Person A describes it taking Person B '*two or three pulls to get me away…*' from the Respondent and they moved towards one of the booths on the right side of the room [**TW1, 39-40**].

27. Person B's statement confirms that she had been speaking to Person C and had had her back to Person A and the Respondent. Person A then attracted Person B's attention and '*as soon as I turned [Person A] whispered that [the Respondent] was getting quite handsy and he had said something about having control over her job. [Person A] then leaned back and I could see [the Respondent's] right hand around her waist and his arm behind her…[Person A] looked distressed…I tried to pull [Person A] away by grabbing her arm…*' [**TW1, 63**].

28. Person B's notes made at 03.09 on 15 December 2023 state that Person A leaned over to say that the Respondent was '*getting quite handsy and mentioned him saying something about having control over her job…I [wanted to] move her away from him but could not. I noticed that [the Respondent] was putting his arm around [Person A's waist]*' [**TW1, 74**].

29. When interviewed by the Firm on 21 December 2023, Person B stated that when she took Person A's arm and tried to pull her away, she noticed the Respondent's arm around Person A's waist but did not see any movement of the Respondent's arm [**TW1, 19**].

30. Person C does not comment on these events.

31. Person A states that she and Person B sat in a booth with a table in front of them and chairs on the other side. Person A explained to Person B how the Respondent had touched her and the comments he had made. As they were speaking, they were joined by the Respondent and Person C, who took the chairs [**TW1, 40**].

32. Person B describes sitting on a sofa with Person A on her left. The Respondent was sat on a chair to Person B's left and Person C was sat to the right of Person A. Person B '*purposely tried to sit between [Person A] and [the Respondent]*'. She states that the Respondent '*made some comments which made me uncomfortable…I wanted to leave but did not want to leave [Person A] alone*…' [**TW1, 63**].

33. Person B got up to go to the bathroom and was gone for around five minutes [**TW1, 64**]. Person A will say that she remembers the Respondent '*launched forward into the booth and twisted himself around the table to sit down'* [**TW1, 40**]. Person B confirms that she returned from the bathroom to find the Respondent sat next to Person A [**TW1, 64**].

34. In her statement, Person A describes the Respondent starting to touch her as soon as he moved next to her: '*he put his right hand around my back and was running his right hand up to my right breast and back down my waist. He also started touching my left breast with his left hand. He was touching me over my clothes…He would hold my hand for a few seconds, then he would use his hand to move my hand around. He also kept putting both of our hands behind my back. He did this two or three times. I remember thinking he was moving our hands behind my back to hide what he was doing…I felt like a ragdoll being pulled around…'* [**TW1, 40-41**].

35. Person A goes on to state: '*… [the Respondent] got his right hand and put it over the top of my left hand…[the Respondent] locked his fingers over the top of my fingers quite tightly. I tried to pull my hand back but I couldn't take it out. He then put my hand on his right knee over his jeans and pulled it up along his right leg towards his crotch area. [The Respondent] placed my hand on his penis. I snatched my hand away from that area but [the Respondent] was still gripping my hand so he just placed it back on his leg and did the same thing again. He did this two or three times and each time I would snatch it back…I could feel that he was aroused…'* [**TW1, 41**]

36. Person A was speaking to Person C at this time. She could not say if he could see what was happening but describes Person C looking '*confused*' and then '*shocked*'. Person C leaned forward and asked Person A if she was okay and she replied that

she was not. Person C then told the Respondent to leave Person A alone [**TW1, 41**].

37. Person C advised in interview that when the group was sat in a booth, he noticed that the Respondent was '*getting very handsy, his hands were all over Person A and he cuddled her up to him…it wasn't an obvious grab for anywhere particular…it was more of a 'huggy' type touch. It did strike me as inappropriate to the extent that I remember saying something to [Person A]…she didn't look comfortable…she didn't say anything, so I repeated myself…*' [**TW1, 15**]

38. Person A states that Person B may have seen the Respondent put Person A's hand on his penis as she stood up, took Person A's hand and asked her to come with her to get water. Person A describes '*thinking about how I could get out of the situation without angering Andy. I was worried about this because he had just said he gets a say in whether I get a job or not so I wanted to get away from him but amicably without causing a scene'* [**TW1, 42**].

39. Person B states that after she came back from the bathroom, she saw the Respondent put his right arm around Person A's waist and move his hand up and down between '*her waist and upper torso'*. Person B describes Person A looking '*like she did not want him to touch her but was putting up with it. She looked really uncomfortable. I think this happened for around a minute before Person C and I started getting involved…[I was] running through different ways in my head to help her get out of this situation without making it too obvious…Person C asked Person A if she was okay and she said yes but she looked really uncomfortable'* [**TW1, 64, 74**].

40. Person B confirms she asked Person A to come with her to get some water and then describes that the Respondent *'then grabbed Person A's left hand with his right hand and brought it between his leg…He pulled her hand three quarters of the way up his right thigh. He was sat with his legs slightly apart and I saw him move Person A's hand up towards his crotch area'*. At this point, Person B pulled Person A away and they went to the bar area [**TW1, 64, 75**].

41. Persons A and B state that Person C came to join them at the bar and asked if she was okay [**TW1, 42, 64**]. Person A decided to leave the Club, followed by Persons B and C and the Respondent [**TW1, 42**].

42. Outside, the Respondent left and Person A was supported by Persons B and C. Person B confirmed that Person A told Persons B and C about what had happened, including the comment about having control over her job. Person A was worried about a planned supervision with the Respondent the following day. Person A reports that Person C said that he would ensure that the supervision did not take

place and that that he '*had a duty to report it but he didn't want to without my blessing. He told me to think about it and not to worry about the supervision and that we could speak in the morning…Person B said she would support me if I chose to report it*…' [**TW1, 43**].

43. Person B states that she made a note of the night [**TW1, 74-79**] whilst waiting for her bus because she '*thought what had happened was a breach of both the law and the SRA principles and codes of conduct, and I considered my obligations as a solicitor, as well as my moral obligations, to report the matter. I thought [the Respondent's] actions were unacceptable and that he had sexually assaulted [Person A]* [**TW1, 66**].

44. On Monday 18 December 2023, Person A informed Persons B and C that she would report the Respondent's behaviour [**TW1, 16-17, 44, 66**].

45. Person A made notes about the events on 15 December 2023 and expanded these for the internal investigation [**TW1, 13, 44, 55-58**].

46. The internal investigation led to the Respondent's dismissal for gross misconduct on 10 January 2024.

47. In her statement, Person A states that she would have left the Firm had the Respondent not been dismissed. She describes being less trusting and more withdrawn. She feels that she would not feel comfortable having a male supervisor. She had undergone therapy as a result of the index events [**TW1, 45**].

48. Person B has stated that she was '*scared that Person A would not feel able to finish her training contract at the firm and of the impact this would have on her career. It was very disheartening and distressing to see a senior member of the profession take advantage of their position to cause harm to a more junior member of the profession'* [**TW1, 67**].

Breaches of the Principles and the Code in relation to Allegation 1.1

Principle 5 - Integrity

49. In *Wingate v Solicitors Regulation Authority v Malins* [2018] EWCA Civ 366, it was said that integrity connotes adherence to the ethical standards of one's profession:

"*Integrity is a broader concept than honesty. In professional codes of conduct the term "integrity" is a useful shorthand to express the higher standards which society*

expects from professional persons and which the professions expect from their own members" [Paragraph 96].

"*The duty to act with integrity applies not only to what professional persons say, but also to what they do"* [paragraph 101].

50. A solicitor acting with integrity would not have:

50.1 Placed his right arm and/or hand around Person A's waist without permission or any indication from Person A that such contact was welcome;

50.2 Run his hands up and down Person A's body from her right breast to her right buttock repeatedly without permission or any indication from Person A that such contact was welcome;

50.3 Prevented, or tried to prevent, Person A from moving away from him and/or prevented, or tried to prevent, other colleagues from moving Person A away from him;

50.4 Conducted himself towards Person A in a way which made her feel distressed;

50.5 Behaved towards Person A in such a manner that Person B felt it necessary to intervene to try to alleviate Person A's distress;

50.6 Taken advantage of Person B's absence to take a seat next to Person A and resume touching Person A's waist, right breast and right buttock and to hold her hand and touch her left breast, without permission or any indication from Person A that such contact was welcome;

50.7 Held Person A's left hand so tightly that she could not pull away and then repeatedly placed her left hand onto his erect penis, without permission or indication from Person A that such contact was welcome and despite Person A repeatedly attempting to disengage her hand;

50.8 Subjected Person A to inappropriate and sexualised behaviour in circumstances where it was, or could have been, witnessed by other colleagues;

50.9 Treated Person A in such a manner and caused her such distress whereby Persons B and C felt it necessary to intervene; and

50.10 Failed to cease or amend his behaviour towards Person A despite her distress and the intervention of other colleagues;

51. The conduct described in paragraph 50 was aggravated by:

51.1 The Respondent's abuse of his authority as a Legal Director and trainee supervisor towards a trainee solicitor for whom he had supervisory responsibility;

51.2 The Respondent's abuse of power by telling Person A that he had a say in whether she obtained a role as a newly qualified solicitor. In making this comment, the Respondent knew or ought to have known that he would, or could, cause Person A to be concerned about her role and position at the Firm if she did not acquiesce to his unwanted touching.

51.3 The Respondent, having emphasised his influence over Person A's employment, engaging in increasingly inappropriate and sexualised touching.

52. The SRA's guidance on sexual misconduct published on 1 September 2022 states that '*The closer any behaviour is to an individual's professional practice the more likely it is that the conduct might impact on or call into question the integrity of the individual or the wider trust in the profession - and therefore more likely the need for regulatory action'*.

53. The guidance goes onto state that relevant factors in considering if conduct is sufficiently connected to professional practice can be whether the conduct '*arose from a practice context - this includes official or informal firm events at a firm's premises or in other locations. Such events could include a firm seminar, a social event such as a firm Christmas party, after-work drinks, or a firm trip/holiday…[and] involved a colleague…'*.

54. As the Respondent's conduct involved a colleague and took place at a venue which was booked by the Firm as part of a social event arranged and paid for by the Firm for the benefit of its employees, there is a sufficient connection between the Respondent's practice and his conduct for regulatory action to be necessary.

55. The Respondent's conduct was manifestly inappropriate and, therefore, the Respondent's conduct breached Principle 5.

56. The Respondent has admitted breach of principle 5 (see paragraph 82 below).

Principle 2 – Public Trust

57. The conduct alleged also amounted to a breach by the Respondent of the requirement to behave in a way which maintains the trust placed by the public in them and in the provision of legal services.

58. In *Beckwith v SRA* [2020] EWHC 3231, the High Court stated '*seriously abusive conduct by one member of the profession against another, particularly by a more senior against a more junior member of the profession is clearly capable of damages public trust in the provision of professional services…*' [paragraph 44].

59. Paragraphs 50-51 are repeated.

60. The public would not expect a senior member of the profession to subject a junior colleague to unwanted and inappropriate comments and sexualised touching and where there were, or may have been, attempts to coerce and manipulate the junior colleague into accepting that conduct.

61. The public would also not expect a senior member of the profession to continue with a course of conduct where it was clear, or ought to have been clear, that this conduct was unwelcome and unreciprocated and where other colleagues had had to intervene.

62. The Respondent has admitted breach of principle 2 (see paragraph 82 below).

Principle 6 – Encourage equality, diversity and inclusion

63. Regulated individuals are required to act in a way that encourages equality, diversity and inclusion.

64. Paragraphs 50-51 and 60-61 are repeated.

65. As a Legal Director and Trainee Supervisor, the Respondent had a responsibility to encourage equality, diversity and inclusion at the Firm and to foster a positive workplace culture based on trust, engagement and loyalty. Touching Person A in an inappropriate, unwanted and/or sexual manner is contrary to these responsibilities.

66. The Respondent made comments to Person A calculated to emphasise the power imbalance and inequalities between him and Person A and followed this with unwanted sexualised conduct which caused Person A distress.

67. The Respondent's conduct has had long term effects on Person A, undermining her confidence, and causing her to question her future at the Firm and, potentially, as a member of the profession.

68. A solicitor of the Respondent's seniority would be expected to demonstrate higher levels of insight and judgement as to the effects, or possible effects, of their conduct.

69. The Respondent has admitted breach of principle 6 (see paragraph 82 below).

Paragraph 1.2 of the Code – abuse of position by taking unfair advantage of others

70. Paragraphs 50-51, 60-61 and 65-68 are repeated.

71. The Respondent was in a position of seniority and had a supervisory capacity in respect to Person A. The Respondent's comment to Person A to the effect that he had a say in whether she got a job was directed at, and/or had the effect of, intimidating Person A such that she felt unable to challenge the Respondent's behaviour and was, therefore, an abuse of position. The Respondent then took advantage of his position by subjecting Person A to unwanted and increasingly sexualised touching.

72. As set out in her statement, the Respondent's abuse of his position has had a significant impact on Person A, including diminishing her trust in others and impacting on her ability to work with male supervisors.

73. The Respondent has admitted breach of paragraph 1.2 of the Code (see paragraph 82 below).

Paragraph 1.5 of the Code – treating colleagues fairly and with respect

74. Paragraphs 50-51, 60-61, 65-68 and 71-72 are repeated as examples of behaviour on the part of the Respondent which demonstrated that he failed to treat Person A with fairness or respect.

75. The Respondent has admitted breach of paragraph 1.5 of the Code (see paragraph 82 below).

Allegation 2 – Sexual Motivation

76. The SRA relies upon the test for sexual motivation set out in *Basson v General Medical Council [2018] EWHC 505. (Admin),* which defined it at paragraph 14; "*A sexual motive means that the conduct was done either in pursuit of sexual gratification or in pursuit of a future sexual relationship".* The SRA's case is that the Respondent's conduct was done either in pursuit of sexual gratification or in pursuit of a future sexual relationship. The Applicant's case is based on the following:

    76.1 The Respondent's unsolicited initiation of physical contact by putting his arm and/or hand around Person A's waist.

    76.2 The Respondent's explicit reference to Person A's employment and future status which had the effect of making Person A feel unable, or reluctant, to challenge the Respondent's behaviour.

    76.3 The Respondent's touching becoming more sexual in nature, involving Person A's breast and buttock, following this comment.

    76.4 The Respondent tightening his grip on Person A to prevent her moving away and causing her additional distress due to her being unable to escape.

    76.5 The Respondent following Persons A and B to a seating area and reinitiating physical contact with Person A as soon as Person B was absent.

    76.6 The Respondent moving to sit next to Person A and immediately escalating the nature of the physical contact by running his hands from her waist to her breasts and then locking his fingers over Person A's hand so that he could place her hand on his erect penis.

    76.7 The Respondent placing Person A's hand on his erect penis two to three times, despite Person A trying to pull her hand away.

    76.8 Engaging in such behaviour in the presence of other colleagues and continuing to do so despite their intervention.

77. The SRA's case is that the conduct set out above was inherently sexual in nature and sexually motivated.

78. Further, the Respondent's conduct demonstrated an escalating and persistent approach, moving from holding Person A around the waist, to touching her right

breast and buttock and then, after following Person A, continuing to touch her waist and breasts, before placing Person A's hand on his erect penis. At all times, the Respondent sought to control Person A's movements.

79. The Respondent's conduct towards Person A also amounted to harassment in the form of unwanted sexual conduct which had the purpose and/or effect of creating an intimidating, degrading and humiliating environment for Person A.

The SRA's investigation

80. The SRA notified the Respondent of its investigation on 29 January 2024.

81. On 23 July 2025, the SRA issued a notice recommending referral to the Tribunal [**TW1, 80-93**].

82. The Respondent, via his representative, made representations in response to the notice recommending referral to the SDT on 15 August 2025 [**TW1, 95-96**]. These representations stated that the Respondent '*accepts the allegations made against him and will in due course enter appropriate admissions to the allegations. He is desperately sorry for his actions, which he maintains were wholly out of character, and he would be grateful if his intentions to admit the allegations and his apology be conveyed as soon as possible to Person A'*.

83. On 27 August 2025, an Authorised Decision Maker of the SRA decided to refer the Respondent to the Tribunal [**TW1, 99-102**].

Statement of Truth

I believe the contents of this statement are true.



.....

Tina Whitman

Dated this 27th day of January 2026