SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974 Case No. 12870-2025

BETWEEN:

	SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY LTD	Applicant
	and	
	SIMON LANGFORD	Respondent

Before:

Mrs L Murphy (Chair)
Mrs A Sprawson
Ms E Keen

Date of Hearing: 3 July 2026

Appearances

Mr John Lucarotti. Barrister of Blake Morgan LLP, Apex Plaza, Forbury Road, Reading, RG1 1AX, for the Applicant.

The Respondent represented himself.

JUDGMENT

Allegations (all proved)

1. The allegations against the Respondent, Mr Simon Langford, made by the Applicant, are that, whilst in practice as a solicitor at Sayers Solicitors, ("the Firm") he:

1.1. Between June 2019 and April 2024, failed to register Property B at His Majesty's Land Registry ("HMLR") on behalf of Mr and Mrs A, despite having been instructed to do so, and in doing so he breached any or all of Principle 7 of the SRA Principles 2019 ("the Principles") and 3.2 of the Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs ("the Code").

1.2. Between 17 November 2021 and 1 November 2023, on up to seven occasions, provided false and/or misleading information to Mrs A in respect of the status of Property B's registration at HMLR, and in doing so, he breached any or all of Principles 2, 4 and 5 of the Principles, and Paragraph 1.4 of the Code.

1.3. Between 22 May 2023 and 27 November 2023, failed to assist with and/or respond to requisitions received from HMLR in respect of Property C in a timely manner, and in doing so he breached Principle 2 of the Principles.

1.4. Between December 2023 and February 2025, failed to perform and/or discharge an undertaking he gave to Premier Property Lawyers and in doing so he breached any or all of Principles 2 and 5 of the Principles and Paragraph 1.3 of the Code.

1.5. Between 27 February 2024 and February 2025, failed to co-operate with investigations by the SRA and/or respond promptly to its enquiries, and in doing so, he breached any or all of Principles 2 and 5 of the Principles and Paragraphs 7.3 and 7.4 of the Code.

Executive Summary

2. The Respondent was an experienced solicitor and the owner, manager and sole solicitor of the Firm, a conveyancing practice. He admitted five allegations arising from three conveyancing transactions and from his failure to co-operate with the Applicant's investigations, including that he had, on up to seven occasions, dishonestly provided false and misleading information to a client about the registration of her property. The Tribunal found all five allegations proved, and that the Respondent had acted dishonestly; it found no exceptional circumstances. The Tribunal ordered that the Respondent be struck off the Roll and pay costs summarily assessed at £45,630.

Professional Details

3. The Respondent was admitted as a solicitor on 15 June 1979.

4. At the relevant time, the Respondent was the owner, manager and sole solicitor at the Firm and specialised in conveyancing. He held the roles of Compliance Officer for Legal Practice ("COLP"), Compliance Officer for Finance and Administration ("COFA"), Money Laundering Compliance Officer, and Money Laundering Reporting Officer.

5. The Respondent was, as at the date of the Rule 12 Statement, still working in the same roles at the Firm.

Sanction

6. The Tribunal ordered that the Respondent be struck off the Roll and pay the Applicant's costs, summarily assessed at £45,630. The Tribunal's reason on sanction can be found [here].

Documents

7. The Tribunal considered all of the documents in the electronic bundle.

Preliminary Matters

8. Anonymity

8.1 The Applicant applied to the Tribunal to maintain the convention of anonymising clients. The Respondent did not object, and the Tribunal granted the application. The properties in question were attributed letters of the alphabet to prevent jigsaw identification of the clients.

Factual Background

9. The facts set out below were agreed between the parties in the Statement of Agreed Facts dated 2 July 2026.

10. The conduct concerned three separate conveyancing transactions and the Respondent's engagement with the Applicant's investigations:

(a) Property B (Allegations 1.1 and 1.2), for which the Respondent acted for the buyers, Mr and Mrs A, between April 2019 and April 2024.
(b) Property C (Allegation 1.3), for which the Respondent acted for the vendors between August 2022 and November 2023; and
(c) Property D (Allegation 1.4), for which the Respondent acted for the vendors between August 2023 and December 2024.

11. Allegation 1.5 concerned the Respondent's engagement with the Applicant's investigations into Allegations 1.1 to 1.4.

12. Property B

12.1 On 16 April 2019, Mrs A instructed the Respondent in respect of the purchase of Property B by her and her husband, which included registering the purchase at His Majesty's Land Registry. On 26 June 2019, the Respondent informed Mrs A that the purchase had completed.

12.2 In mid-2020, Mrs A noticed that the property was not appearing on sold-property price websites and raised a concern about the registration. The Respondent said he would make enquiries. He did not respond to further requests made in January and June 2021.

12.3 Between 17 November 2021 and 1 November 2023, on up to seven occasions, the Respondent gave Mrs A assurances about the status of the registration. These included statements that he was awaiting the completed registration from the Land Registry; that the application was “back in” with HMLR and being processed; and, on 1 November 2023, that the applications “have been lodged”.

12.4 On 1 April 2023, Mrs A learnt from HMLR that no further application had in fact been filed since the original application by the Firm was rejected on 5 August 2019. On 26 January 2024, HMLR confirmed that no application had been received on any of the relevant title numbers since 2019. On 26 March 2024, Mrs A referred the Respondent to the Applicant.

13. Property C

13.1 In 2022, the Respondent acted for the sellers of Property C, a leasehold property. Knight Richardson solicitors acted for the purchasers. The sale completed on 2 December 2022.

13.2 On 19 May 2023, HMLR raised a requisition which Knight Richardson could not answer without information from the Respondent. Between 22 May and 22 November 2023, Knight Richardson sent six emails requesting a response. The Respondent did not respond to the first five. After the sixth email, which recorded that the matter had been reported to the SRA, the Respondent asked for a copy of the requisition and, on 28 November 2023, provided information on the first point raised. Knight Richardson reported the Respondent to the Applicant on 23 November 2023.

14. Property D

14.1 In 2023, the Respondent acted for the sellers of Property D, a leasehold property. Premier Property Lawyers (“PPL”) acted for the purchasers. A lease extension was required as part of the transaction.

14.2 By additional clauses added to the contract on 1 November 2023, the Respondent's firm undertook to submit the application to register the lease extension within three days of completion and not to allow the application to lapse. The sale completed on 15 December 2023, and on the same day the Respondent confirmed in writing that the firm would register the lease extension.

14.3 Between 20 March and 5 December 2024, PPL emailed the Respondent on 26 occasions, telephoned on 22 occasions, and wrote on two occasions. Notwithstanding those communications, the Respondent did not register the lease extension. PPL reported the Respondent to the Applicant on 16 October 2024.

15. The Applicant's Investigation

15.1 The Applicant contacted the Respondent in respect of each report. In respect of the report from Knight Richardson, the Applicant contacted the Respondent on 12 occasions between 19 February and 2 May 2024; the Respondent did not respond until 14 May 2024. In respect of the report from Mrs A, the Applicant contacted the Respondent on 11 occasions between 11 June and 1 October 2024 and received no substantive response in that period. In respect of the report from PPL, the Applicant contacted the Respondent on five occasions between 9 December 2024 and 13 January 2025 and received no substantive response.

Findings of Fact and Law

16. The Applicant was required to prove the allegations on the balance of probabilities. The Tribunal had due regard to its statutory duty, under section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998, to act in a manner which was compatible with the Respondent's right to a fair trial and to respect for his private and family life under Articles 6 and 8 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

17. The Tribunal had regard to, and applied, the below tests in its fact-finding exercise.

Dishonesty

18. The test set out at paragraph 74 of Ivey v Genting Casinos (UK) Ltd t/a Crockfords [2017] UKSC 67.

Integrity

19. The matters set out at paragraphs 97 to 107 of Wingate v SRA [2018] EWCA Civ 366.

20. **NOTE:** While all the evidence was carefully considered, the Tribunal does not refer to each and every piece of the evidence or submissions in its judgment and findings.

[Rule 12 here]

21. **Allegation 1.1**

The Applicant's Case

21.1 The Applicant relied on the evidence of Mrs A, on the documentary record, and on the Respondent's admissions.

21.2 On 16 April 2019, Mrs A instructed the Respondent in respect of the purchase of Property B by her and her husband, which included registering the purchase at HMLR.

21.3 On 26 June 2019 the Respondent informed her that the purchase had completed. In mid-2020 she noticed that the property was not appearing on any sold-property price websites and became concerned about the registration; she emailed the Respondent, who said he would make enquiries.

21.4 She made further requests for an update in January and June 2021 to which the Respondent did not respond. On 1 April 2023 she learnt from HMLR that no further application had been filed since the original application by the Firm had been rejected on 5 August 2019. On 18 January 2024 she again sought an update from HMLR, and on 26 January 2024 HMLR confirmed that no application had been received on any of the relevant title numbers since 2019. On 26 March 2024 she referred the Respondent to the Applicant.

21.5 The documentary record relied upon included the Respondent's confirmation of completion on 26 June 2019; the information obtained from HMLR on 1 April 2023 that no further application had been filed since the original application by the Firm was rejected on 5 August 2019; and HMLR's email of 26 January 2024 confirming that no application had been received on any of the relevant title numbers since 2019.

21.6 On that evidence, the Applicant submitted that the Respondent having been instructed in 2019 to register Property B at HMLR and having still not done so by 2024, the service provided was not competent or delivered in a timely manner, in breach of Paragraph 3.2 of the Code, and that in failing to perform a key part of the conveyancing process the Respondent exposed his clients to avoidable risk and uncertainty over a prolonged period, which was not in their best interests, in breach of Principle 7.

The Respondent's Case

21.7 In his response to the Notice dated 20 March 2025, the Respondent stated:

> *"I have considered the Notice and recommendations. Whilst I do not agree fully with some the facts stated I cannot deny the thrust of the allegations…In respect of the allegation made by [Mrs A], admitted."*

At the case management hearing on 5 March 2026, the Respondent admitted the allegations.

21.8 The Respondent again admitted this allegation, and all the breaches applicable to it, in the signed Statement of Agreed Facts dated 2 July 2026.

The Tribunal's Findings

21.9 The Tribunal reviewed all the material before it and was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the Respondent's admissions were properly made. The Tribunal found Allegation 1.1 proved.

22. **Allegation 1.2**

The Applicant's Case

22.1 The evidence of Mrs A was that, between 17 November 2021 and 1 November 2023, the Respondent gave her a series of assurances about the progress of the registration which did not reflect the true position. These included that he was awaiting the completed registration from the Land Registry (17 November 2021 and 31 January 2022); that the completed registration had not come through and he would have it chased (21 February 2022); that the application was "back in" with HMLR and being processed, for which he was "truly sorry" (30 November 2022); that the matter had "gone back in" but he would have it checked (3 April 2023); that he would see what he could do to progress it (3 May 2023); and that the applications had "been lodged", with the Land Registry references to follow (1 November 2023). Her evidence was that she subsequently established from HMLR that no application had in fact been lodged since the original application was rejected on 5 August 2019.

22.2 The documentary record relied upon comprised, in particular, the Respondent's own emails to Mrs A on the seven occasions relied upon, which were said to constitute the false or misleading statements, together with the information from HMLR establishing that, contrary to those statements, no application had in fact been lodged. The Applicant's case on dishonesty rested substantially on this documentary record.

22.3 On that evidence, the Applicant submitted that the information the Respondent provided to Mrs A between 2021 and 2024 about the status of the application to HMLR was false and misleading, in breach of Paragraph 1.4 of the Code.

22.4 As to dishonesty, the Applicant relied on the test in *Ivey v Genting Casinos* and submitted that, on each of the relevant occasions, the Respondent knew that: (i) the applications for registration were not pending with HMLR because they had not been lodged; (ii) the information he provided falsely gave the impression that the applications were pending; and (iii) Mrs A was entitled to know the true status of the application. The Applicant submitted that, given that state of knowledge, the Respondent's conduct was dishonest by the standards of ordinary decent people and was conscious and deliberate.

22.5 The Applicant further submitted that a solicitor acting with integrity would not knowingly give false or misleading information to a client, in breach of Principle 5 (relying on Wingate v SRA), and that the conduct would diminish the trust the public places in solicitors and in the provision of legal services, in breach of Principle 2.

The Respondent's Case

22.6 In his response to the Notice dated 20 March 2025, the Respondent stated:

> *"I have considered the Notice and recommendations. Whilst I do not agree fully with some the facts stated I cannot deny the thrust of the allegations…In respect of the allegation made by [Mrs A], admitted."*

At the case management hearing, the Respondent admitted the allegations.

22.7 The Respondent admitted this allegation, including the breach of Principle 4 (honesty), in the signed Statement of Agreed Facts dated 2 July 2026. In that statement, dishonesty was agreed as an aggravating factor. An express finding applying the two-stage test in *Ivey* is recorded below.

The Tribunal's Findings

22.8 The Tribunal reviewed all the material before it and was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the Respondent's admissions were properly made including the breach of Principle 4. Applying the test in Ivey, and on the agreed facts, the Tribunal was satisfied that the Respondent had acted dishonestly. The Tribunal found Allegation 1.2 proved.

23. **Allegation 1.3**

The Applicant's Case

23.1 Knight Richardson acted for the purchasers of Property C, a leasehold property, in respect of which the Respondent acted for the sellers. The sale completed on 2 December 2022. On 19 May 2023 HMLR raised a requisition containing two points which Knight Richardson could not answer without information from the Respondent. Between 22 May and 22 November 2023 Knight Richardson sent the Respondent six emails requesting a response to the requisition; the Respondent did not respond to the first five. The sixth email, sent on 22 November 2023, recorded that his failure to assist had been reported to the SRA, following which the Respondent asked for a copy of the requisition and, on 28 November 2023, provided information in relation to the first point raised. Knight Richardson reported the Respondent to the Applicant on 23 November 2023.

23.2 The documentary record relied upon included the requisition raised by HMLR on 19 May 2023; the six emails sent by Knight Richardson to the Respondent between 22 May and 22 November 2023; the Respondent's reply of 22 November 2023; and the information he provided on 28 November 2023.

23.3 On that evidence, the Applicant submitted that the public are entitled to expect solicitors to work collaboratively and professionally on property transactions, and that by not responding for some six months to the requests from Knight Richardson for information about the requisition the Respondent failed to behave in a way that maintained public trust and confidence, in breach of Principle 2.

The Respondent's Case

23.4 In his response to the Notice dated 20 March 2025, the Respondent stated, in respect of the allegation made by Knight Richardson, "admitted". At the case management hearing, the Respondent admitted the allegations.

23.5 The Respondent again admitted this allegation, and the breaches applicable to it, in the signed Statement of Agreed Facts dated 2 July 2026.

The Tribunal's Findings

23.6 The Tribunal reviewed all the material before it and was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the Respondent's admissions were properly made. The Tribunal found Allegation 1.3 proved.

24. **Allegation 1.4**

The Applicant's Case

24.1 PPL acted for the purchasers of Property D, a leasehold property, in respect of which the Respondent acted for the sellers. A lease extension was required as part of the transaction. By additional clauses added to the contract on 1 November 2023, the Respondent's firm undertook to submit the application to register the lease extension within three days of completion and not to allow it to lapse. The sale completed on 15 December 2023 and, on the same day, the Respondent confirmed in writing that the firm would register the lease extension upon receipt of the relevant document. Between 20 March and 5 December 2024, PPL emailed the Respondent on 26 occasions, telephoned him on 22 occasions, and wrote to him on two occasions. Notwithstanding those communications, the Respondent did not register the lease extension. PPL reported the Respondent to the Applicant on 16 October 2024.

24.2 The documentary record relied upon included the additional clauses (the Rider) added to the contract on 1 November 2023 recording the undertaking; the Respondent's email of 15 December 2023; and the record of PPL's communications with the Respondent between 20 March and 5 December 2024, comprising 26 emails, 22 telephone calls and two letters. The Applicant additionally relied on the SRA's published glossary definition of an undertaking and the SRA's guidance on undertakings.

24.3 On that evidence, the Applicant relied on *Briggs v Law Society* [2005] EWHC 1830 (Admin) for the importance of undertakings to the system of conveyancing, and submitted that the failure to perform the undertaking was in breach of Paragraph 1.3 of the Code; that a solicitor acting with integrity would have performed the undertaking, or at least done so when reminded, in breach of Principle 5 (relying on *Wingate v SRA*); and that the failure diminished public trust and confidence, in breach of Principle 2.

The Respondent's Case

24.4 In his response to the Notice dated 20 March 2025, the Respondent stated, in respect of the allegation made by PPL, *"admitted"*. At the case management hearing, the Respondent admitted the allegations.

24.5 The Respondent again admitted this allegation, and the breaches applicable to it, in the signed Statement of Agreed Facts dated 2 July 2026.

The Tribunal's Findings

24.6 The Tribunal reviewed all the material before it and was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the Respondent's admissions were properly made. The Tribunal found Allegation 1.4 proved.

25. **Allegation 1.5**

The Applicant's Case

25.1 This allegation was supported by documentary evidence alone; the Applicant relied on no witness statement in support of it. The evidence was the correspondence between the Applicant and the Respondent between January 2024 and January 2025, including a Production Notice in the Property B investigation to which the Respondent failed to respond. That evidence was that, in respect of the report from Knight Richardson, the Applicant contacted the Respondent on 12 occasions between 19 February and 2 May 2024 and received no response until 14 May 2024; in respect of the report from Mrs A, the Applicant contacted the Respondent on 11 occasions between 11 June and 1 October 2024 and received no substantive response in that period; and in respect of the report from PPL, the Applicant contacted the Respondent on five occasions between 9 December 2024 and 13 January 2025 and received no substantive response.

25.2 On that evidence, the Applicant submitted that the Respondent had a duty to engage and co-operate with the Applicant's investigations; that, across the three investigations, he failed to respond promptly or at all to repeated enquiries over a protracted period; and that, as an experienced solicitor and the Firm's COLP, his conduct demonstrated an unwillingness to adhere to his regulatory obligations. The Applicant submitted that this amounted to a breach of Paragraphs 7.3 and 7.4 of the Code, a lack of integrity in breach of Principle 5 (relying on Wingate v SRA), and conduct damaging public trust and confidence in breach of Principle 2.

The Respondent's Case

25.3 The Respondent did not make any representations specific to this allegation in his response to the Notice. More generally, he stated:

> "*In each case my actions or inactions fell beneath my usual standards and the professional standards which could have been expected of me… I deeply regret my actions/inactions which have led to these complaints.*"

25.4 The Respondent admitted this allegation, and the breaches applicable to it, in the signed Statement of Agreed Facts dated 2 July 2026.

The Tribunal's Findings

25.5 The Tribunal reviewed all the material before it and was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the Respondent's admissions were properly made. The Tribunal found Allegation 1.5 proved.

Previous Disciplinary Matters

26. There were no previous findings of the Tribunal; however, Mr Lucarotti informed the Tribunal that the Respondent had been subject to an SRA Rebuke in March 2022 and fined £300 for failures to co-operate with the SRA and the Legal Ombudsman.

Mitigation

27. The Respondent explained that he had admitted the allegations because he did not, in substance, disagree with the complaints made against him, and that he had not wished to waste the Tribunal's time by requiring the matters to be gone through line by line, which he considered it would have been improper to do.

28. As to his circumstances, the Respondent explained that he practised from a small high-street office. His business partner had died unexpectedly in 2017, being, as he put it, "there one day and not the next." He had not been prepared for that loss and had spent a great deal of time reflecting on whether to continue the practice or to close it. He had staff who had been with the firm for more than thirty years, and he had felt that he owed it to them to carry on.

29. The Respondent said that he had been under considerable pressure since that time. Although he had not put the matter forward in any of the papers, and had provided no medical evidence, he told the Tribunal that he had been suffering from depression caused by work-related stress, for which he had been taking medication for some years. He accepted that, as an experienced solicitor, he had known that he needed to attend to these matters and to resolve them, but that his head had become buried in the sand, which should not have happened.

30. The Respondent expressed remorse. He said that he was distressed at the problems he had caused for his clients and for the other solicitors involved by reason of his lack of action, that he had brought shame upon himself and upon the profession, and that he was truly sorry for the outcome of his inaction.

31. The Respondent accepted that the only sanction the Tribunal could realistically impose was that he be struck off, although he would have preferred that it not be made. He explained that he had already been considering closing the practice and did not intend to apply for a further practising certificate. He had hoped to be allowed until the end of August or September to wind the practice down in an orderly manner but recognised that a striking off would remove that opportunity in any event. Having practised for some 47 to 48 years, he said that he would have wished to leave the profession without this stain upon his character, but that he had got himself into difficulties from which, under the pressure he was experiencing, he had been unable to extricate himself. He told the Tribunal that, at his age, an end to the constant stress of running a small high-street practice would in truth be a blessing.

Applicant’s application to be heard on sanction

32. This was refused by the Tribunal. This case raised no novel issues and/or points of law. The issue of the most appropriate sanction was well within the Tribunal’s capabilities as an expert and experienced Tribunal.

Sanction

33. The Tribunal referred to its Guidance Note on Sanctions (11th Edition, February 2025) when considering sanction and the proper approach to sanctions, as set out in Fuglers and Others v SRA [2014] EWHC 179.

34. The Tribunal's overriding objective, when considering sanction, was the need to maintain public confidence in the integrity of the profession. In determining sanction, it was the Tribunal's role to assess the seriousness of the proven misconduct and to impose a sanction that was fair and proportionate in all the circumstances.

35. The Tribunal then assessed the level of the seriousness of the misconduct by considering the Respondent's culpability and the harm caused, together with any aggravating or mitigating factors.

36. The Tribunal first assessed the Respondent's culpability, which it found to be high. The motivation for his misconduct was not easy to determine; however, it was clear he had got himself into an organisational mess which he failed to deal with and had then tried to conceal his own failures from his client.

37. The Respondent's conduct was not spontaneous but had been deliberate, calculated, and repeated; certainly, after the first occasion he knew that he had not done what he ought to have done with respect to his client. He had had direct control of, and responsibility for, the matters giving rise to the misconduct: he was the owner, manager, and sole solicitor of the Firm and its COLP and COFA. He was a very experienced solicitor, admitted in 1979.

38. The Tribunal did not find that he had deliberately misled the regulator; rather, there had been a failure to co-operate with it during the investigation. The misconduct involved a serious breach of the position of trust in which a solicitor is placed, the client having trusted him implicitly.

39. The Tribunal then assessed the harm. While the misconduct had not caused catastrophic financial loss, the harm was nonetheless serious. The Respondent's clients had trusted him implicitly and had been badly let down, and other firms had been put to considerable trouble in chasing him. More significantly, the extent of the Respondent's departure from the complete integrity, probity and trustworthiness expected of a solicitor was very great, and the harm to the reputation of the profession was correspondingly high. The harm was intended or reasonably foreseeable, the Respondent having known what he was doing.

40. The Tribunal identified the following aggravating factors. The misconduct involved dishonesty, which was admitted. It was deliberate, calculated, and repeated, and continued over a lengthy period of time. It involved concealment of wrongdoing: the Respondent repeatedly represented to his client that the applications had been lodged and were being processed when he knew that they had not been. The Respondent placed blame on others, for example, HMLR.

41. The Respondent knew, or ought reasonably to have known, that his conduct was in material breach of his obligations to protect the public and the reputation of the legal profession. It was noted that the Respondent had previous regulatory findings against him and this should have put him on notice regarding co-operation failures with the SRA.

42. As to mitigating factors the Tribunal found that there were very few. The misconduct did not result from any deception or coercion by a third party. The Respondent had not made good the position, despite ample opportunity to do so. He had not voluntarily notified the regulator; the matter had been reported by his client. The misconduct was not a single episode or of brief duration but comprised several episodes over a very long period. The Respondent had not made open and frank admissions at an early stage, nor had he co-operated with the investigation. Such insight and remorse as he had shown had come late, and not during the investigation. The Tribunal gave him limited credit for his admissions and for attending, which had avoided the need for a contested hearing.

43. Taking those matters together, the Tribunal determined that the seriousness of the Respondent's misconduct was at the highest level.

44. The Tribunal next considered the purpose for which sanctions are imposed, noting that an important purpose of a sanction is to maintain the reputation of the solicitors' profession (*Bolton v The Law Society* [1994] 1 WLR 512).

45. The Tribunal considered the available sanctions in ascending order of seriousness. Given the seriousness of the misconduct and the finding of dishonesty, no order, a reprimand, a fine and a restriction order would each be plainly insufficient, whether to protect the public or to maintain the reputation of the profession. A period of suspension, whether fixed or indefinite, would not adequately reflect the seriousness of the misconduct or protect the reputation of the profession.

46. The Tribunal then turned to the consequence of its finding of dishonesty.

47. Dishonesty having been admitted and found, the Tribunal reminded itself that, in accordance with *Sharma*, a finding of dishonesty will almost invariably lead to striking off, save in exceptional circumstances, and that any exceptional circumstances must relate to the nature and extent of the dishonesty and the degree of culpability (*Sharma*; *Imran*; *James*). The dishonesty here was not momentary but was repeated and sustained over a lengthy period, involved concealment, and was attended by a high degree of culpability. The Tribunal found no exceptional circumstances. It had regard to the Respondent's asserted depression, but that assertion was unsupported by medical evidence and, in any event, in accordance with James, stress or depression arising from working conditions cannot, without more, amount to exceptional circumstances. There was nothing in the Respondent's personal mitigation capable of amounting to exceptional circumstances.

48. Accordingly, the Tribunal determined that the seriousness of the misconduct was at the highest level, such that a lesser sanction was inappropriate, and that the protection of the public and of the reputation of the legal profession required it. The Tribunal ordered that the Respondent be struck off the Roll.

Costs

49. The Applicant sought its costs in the total sum of £46,830 (including VAT), as set out in its Statement of Costs dated 26 June 2026. That sum comprised Part A, the SRA's investigation and supervision costs, of £1,350, and Part B, the costs of Blake Morgan LLP, of £45,480, being a fixed fee of £37,900 plus VAT of £7,580.

50. Mr Lucarotti explained that Blake Morgan LLP had been instructed on a fixed-fee basis, the fee being set by reference to the assessed complexity of the case at the outset and covering all work up to and including the hearing. Although a fixed fee was not attributable to hours at an hourly rate, a breakdown of the work was provided to assist the Tribunal, showing a combined total of 1,344 units across all stages, including an estimate of 100 units for the final hearing and post-hearing matters. There was a nominal hourly rate of £282 per hour which compared favourably to the guideline National 1 rate of £295 per hour.

51. Mr Lucarotti said that it was appropriate for the Applicant to recover its costs in full, which were reasonable and proportionate in all the circumstances, notwithstanding efforts to achieve an agreed outcome which proved ultimately unsuccessful.

52. Mr Lucarotti noted that the case had been listed for a full day's hearing but would run to a little under half a day; however, he saw no reason for a reduction of the costs on this basis as the hearing had required the same amount of preparation.

53. The Respondent submitted that the amount of costs claimed by the Applicant was too high and that he did not have the means to pay it without causing financial hardship to him and his wife. He said he had attempted to simplify the matters before the Tribunal by making admissions and negating the need for the Panel to go line by line through the evidence for which he sought an appropriate discount. He owed money to the Revenue and needed time to close his firm in good order and set his finances straight. This would involve making his staff redundant though it was unlikely there would be enough left over to make redundancy payments. He asked for a discount on costs because his admissions shortened the hearing and he asked that no order be made, or that he not be pursued until his firm's administration and HMRC position were resolved that

54. The Respondent had lodged a Statement of Means dated 1 July 2026, in which he set out his financial position. He reported a gross annual income of £65,249 (including a State Retirement Pension of £12,624 per annum), net monthly income of £2,416 and total monthly expenditure of £1,803, giving an average monthly surplus of some £613.

55. As to capital, he reported that he owned his home jointly with his spouse (approximate value £500,000, unencumbered), a 50 per cent interest in the Firm's business premises (his share approximately £125,000), bank and building society balances of some £15,200, Premium Bonds of approximately £15,232 and a stocks and shares ISA of approximately £120,000, together with a personal pension. As to liabilities, he reported approximately £30,000 of outstanding income tax owed to HMRC, and that the Firm had outstanding VAT liabilities of approximately £120,000 to £130,000. He reported no county court judgments, bankruptcy proceedings, or individual voluntary arrangement.

The Tribunal's Decision on Costs

56. The Tribunal assessed the Applicant's statement of costs, guided by reference to its jurisdiction pursuant to Rule 43 of the Solicitors (Disciplinary Proceedings) Rules 2019 which gave it a wide discretion in its assessment of costs. It also had regard to the conduct of the parties, whether the amount of time spent on the matter was proportionate and reasonable, and whether any or all of the allegations were pursued or defended reasonably.

57. The Applicant having succeeded, the allegations having been admitted and proved, the Tribunal considered whether the costs claimed were reasonable and proportionate. It was satisfied that the involvement of three fee earners, each of whom had undertaken a distinct part of the work, was not unreasonable, and that the level of the attendance units, though high, reflected the Respondent's own lack of engagement and the chasing that this had necessitated.

58. A reduction fell to be made in one respect only: the estimate of 70 units for attending the final hearing had assumed a full day, whereas, the matter having been resolved on admissions and an agreed statement of facts, the hearing occupied no more than around

two and a half hours. Applying the rate of £282 per hour, the Tribunal reduced the costs by £1,200 to reflect the shorter hearing.

59. As to means, this was not a case of impecuniosity, or one in which any order was unlikely ever to be satisfied (*Barnes v SRA Ltd* [2022] EWHC 677 (Admin)); the burden of establishing limited means lay on the Respondent (*Davis and McGlinchey*; *Agyeman*), and his own evidence showed that he had ample resources to pay without being left destitute. The Tribunal accordingly made no reduction on account of means and assessed the Applicant's costs summarily in the sum of £45,630.

60. The Tribunal ordered that the Respondent do pay the costs summarily assessed and fixed in the sum of £45,630.

Statement of Full Order

61. The Tribunal ORDERED that the Respondent, Simon Langford, Solicitor, be STRUCK OFF the Roll of Solicitors, and it further ORDERED that he do pay the costs of and incidental to this application and enquiry, summarily assessed and fixed in the sum of £45,630.

Dated this 30th day of July 2026
On behalf of the Tribunal

L. Murphy

L. Murphy
Chair