

# SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974

Case No. 12845-2025

**BETWEEN:**

SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY LTD

Applicant

and

JONATHAN LEA

Respondent

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Before:

Mr U Sheikh (in the Chair)

Mr R Nicholas

Dr S Bown

Date of Hearing: 28 April 2026

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## **Appearances**

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

The Respondent was not represented.

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## **JUDGMENT**

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## **Allegations**

1. The allegations against Jonathan Lea (“the Respondent”), made by the SRA, were that, while in practice as a Director and Solicitor at Jonathan Lea Solicitors (“the Firm”):
  - 1.1 Between 5 July 2015 and 16 March 2023, he used his Twitter/X account to publicly share social media posts and/or comments, as identified in Schedule 1, that were: inappropriate and/or offensive, and/or antisemitic.

In so far as the conduct took place before 25 November 2019, the conduct alleged above breached any or all of Principles 2 and 6 of the SRA Principles 2011 (“the Principles 2011”).

In so far as the conduct took place on or after 25 November 2019, the conduct alleged breached any or all of Principles 2, 5 and 6 of the SRA Principles 2019 (“the Principles 2019”).

### ADMITTED

## **Executive Summary**

2. Mr Lea was admitted to the Roll in September 2006. The alleged misconduct occurred between 5 July 2015 and 16 March 2023 when he was a Director and Solicitor in the Firm specialising in corporate and commercial litigation. Mr Lea was the Managing Director of the Firm and was based in the Haywards Heath office. He had a practising certificate free from conditions.
3. The Rule 12 Statement was dated 25 September 2025. Part One Standard Directions were issued by the Tribunal dated 1 October 2025. Part Two Standard Directions were issued by the Tribunal dated 7 January 2026. Mr Lea filed and served the Respondent’s Answer dated 26 November 2025. In the Answer Mr Lea denied the allegations.
4. Mr Lea admitted Allegation 1 and admitted that his conduct breached Principles 2 and 6 of the 2011 Principles and Principles 2, 5 and 6 of the 2019 Principles.
5. The purpose of the hearing was for the Tribunal to determine whether the admissions were properly made and if so, to then consider mitigation, sanction, and costs. The Tribunal considered the appropriate and proportionate sanction.

## **Sanction**

6. The Tribunal decided that the proportionate sanction was a suspended suspension. Mr Lea was suspended from practice as a solicitor for the period of 12 months, such suspension to be suspended for a period of 24 months subject to a Restriction Order to commence on the 28th day of April 2026. The Restriction Order was made in the following terms:

*“The Respondent shall not publish or repost content on any social media platform which relates to matters of race, religion, or other protected characteristics, without first taking reasonable steps to ensure that such content complies with his professional obligations, including the SRA Principles 2019 and the SRA Warning Notice on Offensive Communications 2019. The Respondent shall ensure that any use of social media is undertaken in a manner consistent with maintaining public trust and confidence in the profession.”*

## **Documents**

7. The Tribunal considered all of the documents in the case which included:
- Rule 12 Statement dated 25 September 2025. [[here](#)].
  - Respondent’s Answer dated 26 November 2025. [[here](#)].
  - Statement of Agreed Facts dated 8 April 2026.
  - Respondent’s Skeleton Argument dated 20 April 2026.
  - SRA’s Warning Notice on Offensive Communications dated 24 August 2017, updated 25 November 2019.
  - Applicant’s Schedule of Costs for Substantive Hearing dated 16 April 2026.

## **Preliminary Matters**

8. Application by the Applicant to make submissions on sanction
- 8.1 Mr Lucarotti applied to address the Tribunal on sanction. He submitted that as the case was admitted the Tribunal might be assisted from hearing from the Applicant on sanction particularly in the context of the evolving subject matter of when it was appropriate for a solicitor to use social media to make publicly available comments.
- 8.2 The Tribunal asked Mr Lucarotti to what extent did the application of the Principles 2011 and the Principles 2019 change the picture in relation to sanction. He submitted that the threshold regarding breaches of the Principles in respect of conduct involving social media was made clear in 2019 after the application of the Principles 2019 and the Warning Notice on Offensive Communications was updated. However, the antisemitic content tweeted by Mr Lea in 2015 which fall under the Principles 2011 was of such a serious nature, the Principles 2011 were breached.
- 8.3 Mr Lea did not oppose Mr Lucarotti’s application. The Tribunal invited Mr Lea to respond to the SRA’s application. Mr Lea briefly set out his case on sanction. He accepted that his tweets on his Twitter/X Account fell well below the conduct expected of him in his position as a solicitor and Managing Director of the Firm. He referred the Tribunal to his Skeleton Argument dated 20 April 2026 which set out his position on sanction. He stated that in the three years since the commencement of regulatory proceedings there had been no further breaches of the Principles and he had deleted all of the relevant tweets. He had used his Twitter/ X Account minimally as it was a public platform and, in most circumstances, it was inappropriate for use by a solicitor. He created posts on LinkedIn and used AI tools as a check to ensure compliance with the Principles. He submitted that the case law indicated the appropriate sanction would be a suspended suspension which would reflect the

seriousness of his misconduct. He highlighted that there was a low risk of repeated misconduct of the same nature.

### The Decision of the Tribunal

- 8.4 The Tribunal accepted Mr Lucarotti's submissions and acceded to his application to make submissions on sanction. It stated that although the established practice would be to refuse an application by the Applicant to be heard on sanction, the Tribunal would exercise its discretion in this instance and would hear submissions from both parties.

### **Factual Background**

9. On 19 October 2022, the SRA received a complaint from an anonymous individual about the content of Mr Lea's social media posts. The complainant raised further concerns on 11 January 2023 and 27 February 2023. The SRA was provided with evidence showing screenshots of posts and tweets, with threads provided, to show what Mr Lea posted and his comments where relevant. Following the complaints, the SRA reviewed Mr Lea's social media posts alongside the SRA's Warning Notice on Offensive Communications ("the Warning Notice") and the SRA's Topic Guide regarding the Use of social media and offensive communications ("the Topic Guide"). The evidence provided to the SRA were of posts on Mr Lea's Twitter/ X Account.
10. Mr Lea used the Twitter/ X handle '@jonathanlea' ("the Twitter/ X Account") which corresponded to his own name. It was also very strongly associated with the name of the Firm. The Firm operated as Jonathan Lea Limited trading as the Jonathan Lea Network. This profile was viewable to the public. Therefore, Mr Lea's posts were in the public and not the private realm. Up until 2023, the Twitter/X Account identified Mr Lea as a solicitor. When Mr Lea was referred to the SRA there was one individual on The Law Society's "Find a Solicitor" section of its website with the name Jonathan Lea. This individual was identifiable as the Respondent.
11. On 8 April 2026, the parties settled a Statement of Agreed Facts. It was relied upon by the SRA in support of the allegations pleaded in the Rule 12 Statement. Mr Lea accepted that between 5 July 2015 and 16 March 2023 he posted tweets, retweets and responses to tweets which were antisemitic, inappropriate, and offensive.
12. During the SRA's investigation into the Twitter/ X Account Mr Lea was given the opportunity to comment in respect of the posts. In April 2023 via his legal representative, he contended that he had "*the human right to free expression and free speech which can only be limited when prescribed by law and that any such restriction should only take place where the regulator has a particular expertise in the subject matter at hand*".
13. In July 2024 Mr Lea stated that his response to the SRA in 2023 had been defensive. He indicated that he was keen to cooperate with the SRA in respect of its investigation. He offered to delete certain posts and indicated that he would have done so before. In April 2025 Mr Lea's position was that he "*accepts, following careful reflection, that the content in question, fell below the professional standards expected of a solicitor*". He stated that he accepted the allegations and was committed to

remediation. On 30 April 2025, the SRA decided to refer Mr Lea's conduct to the Tribunal.

### **Witnesses**

14. The allegations were admitted by Mr Lea, and no oral evidence was heard at the hearing.

### **Findings of Fact and Law**

15. 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 rights to a fair trial and to respect for their private and family life under Articles 6 and 8 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.
16. The Tribunal had due regard to the following and applied the various tests in its fact-finding exercise:

### **Integrity**

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

### **The Applicant's Case**

#### 18. Antisemitism

- 18.1 On 5 July 2015, in response to a tweet questioning the Holocaust, Mr Lea stated "*interesting to note too that apparently Churchill never mentioned holocaust in his 6 volumes of memoirs*". This response to a tweet was antisemitic on the basis that it appeared to question the historical fact of the Holocaust and potentially cast doubt upon the documented atrocities.
- 18.2 On 22 November 2020, Mr Lea tweeted "*Not long, a one world tyrannical globalist/ Zionist police state, so sad*". This tweet was antisemitic on the basis that it juxtaposed 'globalist' with 'Zionist' in connection with a 'tyrannical' plot that affected the world.
- 18.3 On 14 November 2021, Mr Lea tweeted "*Rothschild central banking led cultural Marxism and depopulation agenda*". This tweet was antisemitic on the basis that it potentially invoked longstanding conspiracy tropes relating to Jewish financial control.
- 18.4 On 16 August 2022, Mr Lea responded to a question about why there was a need for diversity and stated "*To divide and mix us up, erase history and dilute social cohesion, get more insecure & cheaper labour, undermine the natives, all for the ultimate benefit of (&directed by) a tiny central banking bloodline financial elite who we should all unite and focus our attention against.*" This response was antisemitic because it referred to conspiracy narratives concerning a "*central banking bloodline financial elite.*" This construction was similar to established antisemitic tropes and

implied that Jews drove the destruction of social cohesion and the erasure of indigenous history.

18.5 On 22 November 2022, Mr Lea shared an article on Israel's Prime Minister and tweeted the quote *"Israeli elections make clear the truth that Palestinians have always known: The Israeli state isn't just founded on Jewish supremacy, it depends on it"*. This tweet was antisemitic on the basis that it was hostile to the State of Israel. It could be understood as denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination as it suggested that advancement in Israel depended on Jewish identity.

18.6 On 21 February 2023, Mr Lea retweeted a post sharing a news article with the words *"Remember those Jewish kids TikTok's...turns out 'Hayim Cohen' adopted 9 boys, just so he could rype them up and larp as Yids on TikTok for clout...who coulda [sic] seen this coming?"* Thos post tweet was antisemitic on the basis that it could be interpreted as suggesting that abuse was inevitable within a Jewish family. Mr Lea used the pejorative term *'Yid'* which was a known antisemitic slur.

## 19. Covid-19

19.1 On 31 July 2021, Mr Lea tweeted *"I do not wish to discriminate in respect of people's medical choices, but if anyone applying to us wishes to disclose that they've not been jabbed then that will be looked at favourably as demonstrating both strong character and high intelligence"*. This tweet was inappropriate because it suggested that Mr Lea would treat vaccinated people less favourably than others.

19.2 On 28 August 2021, Mr Lea responded to a doctor discussing Covid-19 on her X platform and tweeted *"You're a filthy w\*\*\*\* of a bought and paid for propogandist and you of course full well know that"*. This response to a tweet was offensive because it was dehumanising and degrading towards an individual.

19.3 On 5 January 2023, Mr Lea tweeted *"If anyone arrives at @jonathanleanetwork law firm in a Covid muzzle they will be asked to take it off or go elsewhere. We act for discerning clients, not those belonging in a lunatic asylum who are perpetuating serious scientific and medical fraud to our great detriment."* This tweet was inappropriate and offensive because it suggested that Mr Lea would treat those who were vaccinated against Covid-19 less favourably than others. This was dehumanising and degrading towards them.

19.4 On 20 January 2023, Mr Lea tweeted *"surely the only people still getting the latest booster are the mentally impaired in old folks homes whose only access to media is being stuck in front of the BBC all day and who can't remember whether or not they had the last one anyway!?"* This tweet was offensive because it was dehumanising and degrading towards a section of society.

## 20. Gender critical issues

20.1 On 28 December 2022, Mr Lea retweeted *"The trans movement is inherently misogynistic. Mentally unstable men mocking and impersonality caricatures of women, whilst eradicating women's spaces, women's rights and even the definition of*

*a woman. Why do people support such a movement?"* This retweet was offensive because it degraded and dehumanised transgender individuals.

- 20.2 On 18 February 2023, Mr Lea shared a video of a gay couple discussing their surrogacy journey which included the caption "*reason 5,782 why surrogacy should be outlawed*". He added his own comment to the post which was "*the babies never look happy.*" This post was offensive because it was dehumanising and degrading towards gay couples.

21. Post inciting damage to public property

- 21.1 On 20 December 2022, Mr Lea responded to a tweet that suggested that automatic number plate recognition cameras were to be installed around designated zones around Canterbury. He stated that "*people need to organise, destroy those cameras and overwhelm the council with angry locals.*" This response to the tweet was inappropriate because it encouraged citizens to break the law.

22. **The Respondent's Case**

- 22.1 Mr Lea accepted that he was the author of the tweets in the Twitter/ X Account. He accepted that the posts of 5 July 2015, 22 November 2020, 14 November 2021, 16 August 2022, 22 November 2022, and 21 February 2023 were antisemitic, offensive, and inappropriate.
- 22.2 Mr Lea accepted that the posts of 31 July 2021, 28 August 2021, 5 and 20 January 2023 were offensive and inappropriate. He accepted that the posts of 28 December 2022 and 18 February 2023 were offensive and inappropriate. He accepted that the post of 20 December 2022 inciting damage to public property was inappropriate because it encouraged people to break the law.
- 22.3 In so far as Mr Lea's conduct took place before 25 November 2019, he admitted that he breached any or all of Principles 2 and 6 of the Principles 2011. In so far as Mr Lea's conduct took place on or after 25 November 2019, he admitted that he breached any or all of Principles 2, 5 and 6 of the Principles 2019.

23. **The Tribunal's Findings on the Alleged Breaches**

- 23.1 The Tribunal found that Mr Lea's admissions were unequivocal, supported by the evidence and properly made. The Tribunal therefore found Allegation 1 proved in full to the requisite standard, namely on the balance of probabilities.

24. The Applicant's Submissions on Sanction

- 24.1 Mr Lucarotti submitted that Mr Lea was responsible for a high level of culpability and harm as his posts and tweets on the Twitter/ X Account were on a public platform and were of a repeated nature. He failed to have regard to the relevant regulatory guidance when he posted most of the tweets referred to in the Rule 12 Statement. He paid no regard to the Warning Notice. His incitement that people should commit criminal damage in his tweet of 20 December 2022 aggravated the seriousness of his misconduct. In admitting the breaches Mr Lea exhibited insight but his insight was

limited. Mr Lea's revised practice when posting on a public platform was to use AI to moderate the tone of his comments. This showed a change in conduct but his insight into the damage caused by his offensive tweets remained limited. Mr Lucarotti asserted that Mr Lea still risked public trust and confidence in the solicitors' profession and in the provision of legal services. Mr Lucarotti submitted that following careful consideration of the Guidance Note on Sanctions (11th edition of February 2025) the appropriate sanction was one that interfered with Mr Lea's ability to practice.

24.2 The Tribunal referred Mr Lucarotti to his submission that Mr Lea did not pay due regard to the regulatory guidance when he tweeted. It asked him if it was fair to conclude that the earlier tweets were less culpable. Mr Lucarotti submitted that in principle the seriousness of Mr Lea's conduct increased after the Warning Notice was updated in 2019 and the Principles 2019 were applied to solicitors' practice.

## 25. The Respondent's Submissions on Sanction

25.1 Mr Lea submitted that the tweets referred to in the Rule 12 Statement happened over a prolonged period during which he posted over 23,000 tweets on the Twitter/ X Account. His tweets were sporadic and not part of a concerted campaign against a specific group of people. He accepted that the allegations involved serious breaches of the Principles 2011 and the Principles 2019. However, there was no allegation of dishonesty, no harm to any clients, no identified complainant and he did not express violence in his tweets. Mr Lea accepted that his sporadic tweets could cause harm to the profession. He asserted that Twitter/ X encouraged quick responses to posts, and he often responded to posts without sufficient forethought. This was a judgment failure, and he did not wish this to happen again. He assured the Tribunal that he would not repeat the admitted misconduct.

25.2 Mr Lea submitted that he had a long history as a practising solicitor without any regulatory or disciplinary history. He embraced the regulatory Principles in his professional career and was particularly committed to practising in a way that encouraged equality, diversity, and inclusion ("EDI") in accordance with Principle 6 of the Principles 2019. He asserted that the character references supported his commitment. He wanted to work hard to ensure that any harm he caused through his tweets at the material time did not happen again. He held himself to the highest standards which he wanted to pass on through mentorship at the Firm.

25.3 Mr Lea referred to the seriousness of the breaches and the harm that his conduct caused. He referred to the case of *Hussain v SRA* [2025] EWHC 2139 (Admin) and asserted that that political speech, even when contentious or provocative attracted the highest level of Article 10 ECHR protection. Mr Lea accepted that the manner and mode of his posts breached the Principles 2011, the Principles 2019, the Warning Notice, and the Topic Guide. He submitted that in the three years since the commencement of the regulatory proceedings he gained insight into his misconduct and there had been no further breaches. He regretted his behaviour and his motivation was to learn from his mistakes and move on. He accepted that his misconduct had a damaging impact on the people around him in his business and personally and the consequences of his actions were a lesson well learned. He wanted to be at the top level of compliance in public and private forums.

- 25.4 Mr Lea referred to the SRA's case against him. The discriminatory nature of some of his tweets were things that came to his mind in the heat of the moment. He accepted that they were expressed in a lewd and unacceptable manner. He accepted that his misconduct caused harm in terms of the public's perception of the profession and legal services. He admitted that at the material time he did not have full awareness of the requirements set out in the Warning Notice. During the regulatory proceedings he became aware of the Warning Notice. Since that time, he had tried to obtain training on the threshold set by the Warning Notice with reference to offensive communications. He had struggled to find any professional training available on the Warning Notice.
- 25.5 Mr Lea accepted that the breach of Principle 6 of the Principles 2019 related to his tweets against specific sections of society. He stated that he had a much better understanding of the requirements of Principle 6 and accepted that he showed insufficient care in how he articulated his thoughts at the material time. In response to the SRA's assertion that his conduct was aggravated because he incited criminal damage, Mr Lea asserted that he responded to a tweet about criminal damage. He did not consider the implications of his conduct at the time. He recalled that there was strong public feeling against the automatic number plate recognition cameras, and he responded immediately on the Twitter/ X Account. He regretted responding to the original tweet in the way that he did and he would not act so irresponsibly again.
- 25.6 Mr Lea accepted that he used AI tools when creating posts for LinkedIn. He did not use AI to minimise the risk of breaching the Principles 2019. He used AI to ensure that the content of his posts was compliant with the Principles. He used AI to review legal aspects of his writing and compliance with the Principles. He stated that even when he used AI tools to check his writing, he did not always publish the checked posts. He undertook his own research before drafting pieces, particularly when he thought his writing could result in a heated debate. In these circumstances he often did not publish his views in posts. Mr Lea stated that he had not published any views about Israel and Gaza. If he were not a solicitor, he would be more outspoken about this situation in a very careful manner. However, he was aware of his duties to the public and his responsibilities under the Principles and accepted that there were subjects on which he should not comment on a public platform.
- 25.7 Mr Lea referred to the length of the regulatory and disciplinary proceedings against him and highlighted that there had been no repeated misconduct. Therefore, the risk of repeated misconduct was extremely low. During the proceedings he gained insight into the standards that he must meet as a regulated solicitor. He did not intend to risk the reputation of his business and the people that worked hard to maintain it. He wanted to improve the business, and he did not intend to use public platforms such as the Twitter/ X Account. Mr Lea confirmed that he used the platforms LinkedIn and the Financial Times to post his considered view on business matters.
- 25.8 Mr Lea asked the Tribunal to consider the SRA's case against him and compare it to the case of *SRA v Sarfraz* [12682-2024]. In *Sarfraz* the Tribunal determined that a suspended suspension was the appropriate sanction. Mr Lea asserted that in *Sarfraz* there was no Agreed Statement of Facts between the parties and the allegations against the Respondent were of a more serious nature. The Chief Rabbi was targeted by the Respondent, and the Principles 2011 were also applied in the case. Mr Lea

contended that the tweets in *Sarfraz* touched on antisemitic tropes and his tweets did not. He referred to the case of *SRA v Mahmood* [11625-2017] in which a suspended suspension was deemed to be the appropriate sanction following the Respondent's antisemitic posts on a public platform. Mr Lea asserted that the SRA was mindful of any referrals relating to Principle 6 of the Principles 2019 touching on EDI. However, in *Mahmood* the Respondent posted comments including calls to kill Jewish refugees and he showed no insight or remorse. Mr Lea stated that his posts and tweets did not come close to the misconduct which was the subject matter in *Mahmood*. He highlighted a character reference from a Jewish person he met on Twitter/ X which stated that she had not seen any material on the Twitter/ X Account which she characterised as antisemitic. He highlighted that the other character references were from Partners in high profile firms.

- 25.9 Mr Lea submitted that his witness statement and Skeleton Argument evidenced that he had developed insight into the damage caused by his posts. His level of insight was shown by his decision to admit the allegations against him. He asserted that his case was referred to the Tribunal and being treated as seriously as the similar cases he mentioned because it involved EDI misconduct. He agreed that it was right to treat his case seriously because harm was caused to sections of society who were offended by his posts. He stated that the Firm was an inclusive business. It was important to him that every member of staff and all clients felt included. He contended that the posts which were the subject of the SRA's case predated the SRA's approach to counter non-inclusive behaviour by solicitors through the Principles 2019. Mr Lea asserted that this was the reason why the SRA argued that the appropriate sanction in this case would be to suspend him immediately from practice.
- 25.10 Mr Lea argued that an immediate suspension was not the appropriate sanction in this case. He accepted that the allegations were of a serious nature and stated that a suspended suspension was the appropriate sanction to be ordered by the Tribunal. Three years had passed since regulatory proceedings commenced and there was no evidence of repeated misconduct. He had put EDI training in place in the Firm. He insisted that he wanted to do more in respect of EDI.
- 25.11 Mr Lea stated that his LinkedIn presence received positive commentary and praise for marketing the Firm. He had not received any complaints or referrals to LinkedIn about his posts on that public platform. He undertook to be increasingly careful about the few public platforms that he used. He accepted that the Twitter/ X Account was not an appropriate forum for a solicitor. When he used AI tools, he did not use them in substitution of his own judgment. Mr Lea highlighted that when he self-censored in his writing he went beyond the threshold set by the Principles. He was totally committed to the development of the Firm he had spent years building. He did not want to compromise the Firm anymore. This is why he had tried to keep the case against him confidential. Mr Lea confirmed that one person handed in their notice when details of the hearing were published on the Tribunal's website. He highlighted that the practice manager and a solicitor member of the Firm provided him with character references.
- 25.12 Mr Lea submitted that on conclusion of the disciplinary proceedings solicitors would be made aware of the length of time it took to investigate and prosecute such misconduct. This would function as a significant deterrent and in turn protect the

public and reputation of the legal profession. The Guidance required a sanction that did not go further than seeking to protect the public and the reputation of the profession. Mr Lea submitted that an order for a suspended suspension could include conditions stating that he was prohibited from posting on any social media platforms.

- 25.13 The Tribunal referred Mr Lea to the Respondent's Answer dated 26 November 2025. In Section 8 he referred to "*Personal and Family Connections Demonstrating Absence of Hostility*". Mr Lea stated that one of the Firm's consultants was Jewish and was "*regularly tagged in on pro-Israel (and anti-Muslim) content on his Facebook account, yet we have worked closely and respectfully together for over a decade.*" The Tribunal reminded Mr Lea of his submission that he enabled changes in the Firm relating to EDI. The Tribunal asked Mr Lea for details of the social media policy at the Firm as a consultant was allowed to exhibit anti-Muslim content on a social media platform. Mr Lea stated that members of staff had been told that they should not post antagonistic wording on any public platforms. He stated that the Firm had provided internal EDI training which included training on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's ("IHRA") working definition of antisemitism. The Firm had provided training on the use of discriminatory language against various sections of society. Mr Lea insisted that there had been no issues with politics at the Firm. Mr Lea confirmed that he did not speak to the consultant about his content on Facebook as it did not seem appropriate when he became aware of this.

### **Previous Disciplinary Matters**

26. Mr Lea had no previous disciplinary findings recorded against him.

### **Mitigation**

27. Mr Lea accepted that his behaviour fell below the required professional standards and that it was not consistent with the integrity expected of a solicitor. He referred to his earlier response to the SRA and accepted that his language was inappropriate and fell below the standards expected of a solicitor. He accepted responsibility for his misconduct. He claimed that this demonstrated insight, and he would not repeat such inappropriate behaviour.
28. Mr Lea stated that his level of insight was such that he would avoid commenting on sensitive political topics where there was a risk that someone could perceive him as being critical or negative towards commonly accepted values of EDI.
29. Mr Lea was remorseful for his misconduct highlighting that he regretted the content of what he said and the fact that he allowed himself to communicate in that manner. He accepted that his conduct fell short of the standard expected by the public of the legal profession and that he was required to confront the consequences of his actions. He was committed to ensuring there was no repetition of the behaviour so that he could set a positive compliance example for the legal profession.

### **Sanction**

30. The Tribunal considered its Guidance Note on Sanctions (11<sup>th</sup> edition of February 2025) and the proper approach to sanctions as set out in *Fuglers and others*

*v SRA* [2014] EWHC 179. In doing so the Tribunal had to assess the culpability and harm identified together with the aggravating and mitigating factors that existed.

31. In determining culpability, the Tribunal found that Mr Lea was motivated to post offensive and inappropriate material on the Twitter/X Account by his strong appetite to attract attention. The Tribunal found that no malice was intended when Mr Lea posted on the Twitter/X account, rather there was a disregard professionally and personally as to the consequences of his actions. There was no intention to cause harm. The Tribunal found that Mr Lea's antisemitic posts were not motivated by antisemitism on his part. His posts relating to gender critical issues were transphobic. The Tribunal carefully considered Mr Lea's submissions and determined that he did not hold the viewpoints aired in the posts he made on the Twitter/X Account between 5 July 2015 and 16 March 2023.
32. The Tribunal found that Mr Lea reacted instantly to material he read on the Twitter/X Account, rather than engaging in calculated wrongdoing. He had been in direct control of his actions and though his 20 years of experience could have increased his culpability he posted on a platform that required immediate responses to tweets so there was little assessment or forethought before posts were made. The Tribunal found that during the investigation Mr Lea did not deliberately mislead the SRA.
33. The Tribunal acknowledged the potential, if not actual harm to the public and the sections of society offended by the material posted by Mr Lea. The complainant raised a complaint against Mr Lea three times and was seriously affected by his actions. The Tribunal found that Mr Lea caused great harm to the groups of society referred to in his posts. Some of his comments were deeply offensive. Mr Lea did not consider the vulnerability of people of Jewish heritage when conflict was an issue. The tweets relating to Covid-19 were made during a period when many people lost their lives to Covid-19 and their family members and friends would have been greatly impacted by his comments. Mr Lea had acknowledged the harm caused to the Firm because of his misconduct to the point that a person left his employment. Mr Lea's conduct had been a complete departure from the "*complete integrity, probity and trustworthiness*" expected of solicitors and harmed the profession's reputation. The Tribunal considered that Mr Lea should have foreseen the potential for harm that would result from his actions. The Tribunal determined that this was a matter to which he should have given much more consideration which would have led him to carefully consider his posts before making incredibly offensive comments about vulnerable sections of society.
34. When examining aggravating factors, the Tribunal noted that dishonesty was not a consideration, eliminating what would have been a major aggravating factor. The conduct was deliberate and repeated over eight years, though due to Mr Lea's spontaneous behaviour the conduct was not calculated. The conduct involved no abuse of power for personal gain and included no concealment of wrongdoing. The Tribunal found that Mr Lea demonstrated hostility to groups of society based on personal characteristics. Mr Lea's openness about his actions where he did not seek to place the blame for his conduct on others was noted by the Tribunal. As was the absence of any previous disciplinary matters further limiting aggravating factors. Nevertheless, Mr Lea ought reasonably to have known that his conduct breached his

obligations under the Principles to protect the public and the reputation of the legal profession.

35. The Tribunal noted that there were not significant mitigating factors. Mr Lea's impaired judgment represented an explanation but not an excuse for the serious misconduct found by the Tribunal. However, the Tribunal was convinced that Mr Lea's understanding and perception of the seriousness of his conduct evolved during the regulatory and disciplinary proceedings, and he now demonstrated significant insight. He expressed remorse during his submissions and offered to absent himself from social media entirely because of the potential for harm that could flow from the social media space. He had submitted that in order to protect the public and the legal profession, a solicitor should restrict engagement with social media to professional platforms such as LinkedIn. The Tribunal noted that Mr Lea admitted all of the allegations in the Rule 12 Statement in the Statement of Agreed Facts.
36. In determining the most appropriate sanction the Tribunal considered the least serious sanctions first, adopting a 'bottom up' approach. The Tribunal found a breach of integrity and conduct which could undermine the trust the public placed in solicitors under Principles 2011 and Principles 2019 to be so serious that no order, a reprimand or fine would have been inadequate to reflect the gravity of the breaches or provide adequate deterrent effect. However, the absence of dishonesty meant that the most severe sanctions of striking off, or immediate suspension would have been disproportionate.
37. Therefore, the Tribunal decided that in all the circumstances a suspended suspension and a Restriction Order represented the most appropriate and proportionate sanction it could impose to mark the undoubted seriousness of the misconduct, protect the public and maintain the reputation of the profession. The Restriction Order required Mr Lea to refrain from publishing or reposting content on any social media platform which related to matters of race, religion, or other protected characteristics without first taking reasonable steps to ensure that such content complied with his professional obligations, including the SRA Principles 2019 and the SRA Warning Notice on Offensive Communications 2019. The Restriction Notice required Mr Lea to ensure that any use of social media was undertaken in a manner consistent with maintaining public trust and confidence in the profession. The sanction allowed for rehabilitation, permitting Mr Lea to continue practising while taking steps to recalibrate his professional objectivity and observance of the rules, Codes and Principles which governed modern practice.
38. The suspended suspension reflected a conclusion that Mr Lea's conduct while objectively wrong and professionally inadequate represented an error in judgment rather than a failing deserving of the most severe sanctions available to the Tribunal. The Tribunal determined that it was not minded to prevent him from continuing to practise which would have penalised his existing clients and employees unnecessarily and thereby caused them potential harm.
39. The Tribunal considered that this case presented a warning that even experienced professionals could make serious errors in judgment when acting hastily. Solicitors as legal professionals should retain professional objectivity.

## Costs

40. Mr Lucarotti made an application for costs as set out in the Applicant's Schedule of Costs for Substantive Hearing dated 16 April 2026. The total costs claimed amounted to £30,480.00, comprising of Part A costs in the sum of £1,200.00 for the SRA's investigation and administration and Part B costs in the sum of £24,400.00 for solicitor agent work and VAT, bringing the total costs to £30,480.00. Mr Lucarotti argued that the costs were inevitable given the serious nature of the allegations involved and represented the true economic cost to the regulator. He submitted that although the parties settled a Statement of Agreed Facts, this was only agreed on 8 April 2026. Mr Lea changed his position as proceedings developed and this impacted on preparation time for the case. Mr Lucarotti argued that although Mr Lea's evolving position demonstrated insight, preparation for the case took longer, particularly because he was not represented for most of the proceedings. He explained that the solicitor agents worked on a fixed fee basis and that the case was categorised at the lowest tariff. On this basis, he submitted that the effective hourly rate of £210.00 was not disproportionate.
41. Mr Lea accepted that costs were payable, given the admissions, but contended that the amount claimed was not proportionate. He submitted that he did not seek to avoid responsibility for his misconduct. He sought to put the regulatory and disciplinary experience behind him while taking on his responsibility to pay appropriate costs. He referred to his Statement of Means dated 10 April 2026. Mr Lea stated that he covered the costs of his family and the costs of the Firm. He had restricted his personal earnings from the Firm due to the impact of the proceedings on the Firm's earnings.
42. Mr Lea rejected Mr Lucarotti's contention that the SRA took more time preparing the case because he was unrepresented. He asserted that he responded quickly to efforts by the parties to finalise the Statement of Agreed Facts and only one day was required for the hearing when it was originally listed for two days. Mr Lea submitted that costs should be reduced on this basis to a proportionate sum. He added that due to his personal circumstances he would only be able to settle payment of costs in instalments to the SRA. He suggested a payment of around £700.00 per calendar month. The Tribunal asked Mr Lea if he had conducted an assessment for an order for reduced costs. He accepted that at the earlier stages of proceedings, more time was required for work on the case. He suggested that an assessment of reduced costs should be in the region of £15,000.00.

### The Tribunal's Decision on Costs

43. The Tribunal noted that under Rule 43(1) of the Solicitors (Disciplinary Proceedings) Rules 2019 it had discretion to make such order as to costs as it thought fit, including the payment by any party of costs or a contribution towards costs of such amount (if any) as the Tribunal considered reasonable. Under Rule 43(4), when deciding whether to make an order for costs, against whom and in what amount, the Tribunal should take into account all relevant factors, including the parties' conduct, compliance with directions, the reasonableness and proportionality of time spent and rates claimed, and the means of the paying party.

44. The Tribunal was satisfied that the proceedings had been properly brought by the SRA and that, in principle, the costs claimed were reasonable. The preparation undertaken by the SRA and its solicitors was appropriate given the nature of the case and the need to present the matter before the Tribunal. The Tribunal accepted that the SRA had incurred genuine economic costs and that a proportion of those costs were properly recoverable.
45. In considering the amount to be ordered against Mr Lea, the Tribunal had regard to the admissions made by him, which simplified the case considerably, as well as the relatively limited volume of documentation and the absence of witnesses. While Mr Lea was not impecunious, the Tribunal considered his means and the need for any costs order to be reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances.
46. The Tribunal reminded itself of the principles established in *R v Northallerton Magistrates' Court, ex parte Dove* [1999] 163 JP 894, that an order for costs was compensatory, not punitive, and must not exceed costs reasonably incurred. It also had regard to relevant authorities confirming that costs should be moderated where circumstances, including admissions and ability to pay, made full recovery disproportionate.
47. Applying those principles, the Tribunal concluded that while the SRA was entitled to recover its costs in principle, a reduction was appropriate to reflect Mr Lea's admissions and the overall proportionality of the claim. Accordingly, the Tribunal allowed the Part A costs in full and £23,800.00 of the Part B costs, fixing the final costs order at £25,000.00.

### **Statement of Full Order**

48. The Tribunal ORDERED that the Respondent, JONATHAN LEA, Solicitor be SUSPENDED from practice as a solicitor for the period of 12 months, such suspension to be suspended for a period of 24 months to commence on the 28th day of April 2026 subject to the following Restriction Order:
  - 48.1 The Respondent shall be subject to the following Restriction Order for a period of 24 months to commence on the 28th day of April 2026:
    - 48.1.1 The Respondent shall not publish or repost content on any social media platform which relates to matters of race, religion, or other protected characteristics, without first taking reasonable steps to ensure that such content complies with his professional obligations, including the SRA Principles 2019 and the SRA Warning Notice on Offensive Communications 2019. The Respondent shall ensure that any use of social media is undertaken in a manner consistent with maintaining public trust and confidence in the profession.
    - 48.1.2 The Tribunal further Ordered that the Respondent do pay the costs of and incidental to this application and enquiry fixed in the sum of £25,000.00.

Dated this 14<sup>th</sup> day of May 2026  
On behalf of the Tribunal

*U. Sheikh*

U. Sheikh  
Chair