

SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974

Case No. 12571-2024

BETWEEN:

SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY LTD

Applicant

and

CHRISTOPHER JAMES HAWKES

Respondent

Before:

Ms H Hasan (in the chair)

Mr J Abramson

Mr C Childs

Date of Hearing: 25 July 2025

Appearances

There were no appearances as the matter was dealt with on the papers.

JUDGMENT ON AN AGREED OUTCOME

Allegations

1. The allegations against Mr Hawkes, made by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (“SRA”) were that, while in practice as a Solicitor at Clarke Wilmott LLP (“the Firm”):
 - 1.1 On 14 September 2022 he removed an email received from Client A dated 26 May 2022 from the Firm’s Document Management System to conceal that he had received it and in doing so he breached any or all of Principles 2, 4 and 5 of the SRA Principles 2019 (“the Principles”) and Paragraph 1.4 of the SRA Code of Conduct for Solicitors, RELs and RFLs (“the Code for Solicitors”).
 - 1.2 Between 15 and 16 September 2022 he sent emails to Client A and his supervising partner at the Firm denying that he had received the email from Client A dated 26 May 2022 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 for Solicitors.
2. Mr Hawkes admitted the allegations, including that his conduct was dishonest in breach of Principle 4 of the Principles.

Documents

3. The Tribunal had before it the following documents:-
 - Rule 12 Statement and Exhibit NG1 dated 1 March 2024
 - Respondent’s Answer and Exhibits dated 20 August 2024
 - Statement of Agreed Facts and Proposed Outcome dated 23 July 2025

Professional Details

4. Mr Hawkes was admitted to the Roll in September 2021. He did not hold a current Practising Certificate. His employment with the Firm was from 3 September 2021 until his dismissal on 23 September 2022.

Application for the matter to be resolved by way of Agreed Outcome

5. The parties invited the Tribunal to deal with the Allegations against Mr Hawkes in accordance with the Statement of Agreed Facts and Outcome annexed to this Judgment. The parties submitted that the outcome proposed was consistent with the Tribunal’s Guidance Note on Sanctions.

Findings of Fact and Law

6. 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 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.
7. The Tribunal reviewed all the material before it and was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the Respondent’s admissions were properly made.

8. The Tribunal considered the Guidance Note on Sanction (11th Edition – February 2025). In doing so the Tribunal assessed the culpability and harm identified together with the aggravating and mitigating factors that existed. Mr Hawkes had deleted communications from the Firm's electronic system and had deliberately misled both his client and his supervising partner. The Tribunal found the dishonest conduct to have been deliberate and calculated. The Tribunal determined that, in light of the dishonesty, the only appropriate and proportionate sanction was to strike Mr Hawkes off the Roll of Solicitors. The Tribunal did not find that there were any exceptional circumstances that would justify a lesser sanction.
9. Accordingly, the Tribunal approved the sanction proposed by the parties.

Costs

10. The parties had agreed costs in the sum of £5,000. The Tribunal found the agreed sum to be reasonable and proportionate. Accordingly, the Tribunal ordered Mr Hawkes to pay costs in the agreed sum.

Statement of Full Order

11. The Tribunal ORDERED that the Respondent, CHRISTOPHER JAMES HAWKES, 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 fixed in the sum of £5,000.00.

Dated this 1st day of August 2025
On behalf of the Tribunal

H. Hasan

H. Hasan
Chair