

## **Draft**

### **SHADOW JUSTICE SECRETARY, DOMINIC GRIEVE QC MP OUTLINES HIS APPROACH TO THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE PORTFOLIO TO PABA MEMBERS**

Dominic Grieve QC MP, the Shadow Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary, addressed a meeting of the Public Access Bar Association on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2010 in Portcullis House, Westminster. In a detailed talk, he spoke of the ‘creeping authoritarianism’ and over regulation facing the Bar at the present time of budgetary restraint. He also addressed wider current issues covering his portfolio including the crisis in the Prison Service, the Human Rights Act, the Supreme Court and the immediate challenge to an incoming government that there ‘is no more money to spend’. He said there would be ‘less money in the foreseeable future and for the years to come.’

Amongst a number of commitments which Dominic Grieve highlighted should the Tories win the general election were the

establishment of a 'Legal Aid Review' to consider the Jackson Report, and the need for a 'light touch regulator' for professional conduct. Grieve told PABA members that 'the shape of the Bar in the next 18 months is likely to be different amid rapid change'. He said the new government would not reverse the Legal Services Act but would seek to maintain professional standards, describing the Ministry of Justice as 'a strange new hybrid department'.

In answer to a cross section of questions which raised concerns from PABA members, Dominic Grieve identified that the recent rise in court fees had reduced the number of cases in court providing less revenue. On the vexed issue of criminal legal aid, he was told by a number of questioners that the Independent Bar was 'much cheaper', that 'we do not stop work at 5pm', whereas the costs of 'in house' CPS advocates and their state pensions had serious 'cost implications'. Dominic Grieve ended his talk by saying that there was going to be a period of substantial change and things were 'going to be different'.

Marc Beaumont, the PABA chairman, thanked Mr Grieve for his speech and for taking questions, reminding PABA that Dominic was 'one of us'. Dominic Grieve had been introduced and asked by Marc Beaumont to provide a thumbnail sketch of a Conservative design for a more liberal, less interfering, more laissez-faire form of regulation and he did just that. He gave a frank picture of the problems to be faced by a new government and PABA look forward to inviting him back for another talk after the General Election later this year.