

## Minutes of the 117<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC)

Tuesday 14 December 10:00 – 16:05

By video call

<p><b>Present:</b>          Elisabeth Davies, Chair          Lis Bellamy          Annette Lovell          Jane Martin          Hari Punchihewa          Alison Sansome          Dale Simon</p> <p><b>Apologies</b>          Martin Spencer</p> <p><b>Board Secretary</b>          Kay Kershaw</p>	<p><b>In attendance:</b>          Paul McFadden, Chief Ombudsman          Sandra Strinati, Chief Operating Officer          Steve Pearson, Head of Complex Casework and Deputy Chief Ombudsman          Michael Letters, Head of Finance          Debra Wright, Head of Head of People Strategy and Services          Laura Stroppolo, Head of Head of Programme Management and Assurance</p> <p>Luke Hutcheson (item 7, 8 and 9)          Deb McIntyre, Operations Manager (item 8)          David Peckham, Operations Manager (item 8)          Treena Mosely, Operations Manager (item 8)          Sarah Gilbert, Policy Officer (items 9 and 10)          Susan Bedford, Independent Service Complaints Adjudicator (Item 13).          Nicola Sinclair, EDI Manager – observing</p>
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### Preliminary issues:

The Board meeting was quorate.

### Item 1 – Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

1. The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, with special mention to the EDI Manager who was observing the meeting.
2. Apologies from Martin Spencer were noted.
3. There were no declarations of interest reported.

### Item 2 – Previous Minutes

4. The minutes of the OLC Board meeting held on 18 October 2021 were **approved** for accuracy and **approved** for publication.

**ACTION: Board Secretary to publish the minutes of the OLC Board meeting held on 18 October 2021.**

### Item 3 – Matters arising and outstanding actions from previous meetings

5. The Board ratified the following decisions made out of committee:
  - A unanimous decision made in November to appoint two level one Ombudsmen.
  - A decision made in November by the OLC Chair and a sub-committee of the Board, in line with delegated Board authority, to sign off the 2022/23 Budget and Business Plan consultation document.
6. Board **noted** the update on previous actions.
7. In response to a question raised, the CO explained that action 9 paragraph 39 from the July Board meeting, which related to the review and subsequent publication of complaints data and case studies, remained ongoing due to resource constraints within the Communications and External Affairs Team. The initial findings of the review of complaints data were consistent with previous reviews; no new themes had emerged and there were no new issues for concern, however a more detailed analysis of the findings was required. The Executive aimed to publish this information in early 2022.

### Item 4 – Executive report

8. The Board thanked the Chief Ombudsman (CO) for the comprehensive and helpful Executive report.
9. Recognising the volume of work that was being undertaken and the progress that was being made in challenging circumstances, Board members confirmed their support of the strategies being adopted by the Executive to stabilise the organisation.
10. Reflecting on the vacant Legal Manager and Quality Manager posts, the Board sought to understand the impact of the vacancies on the organisation and the action being taken to address them. In response, the CO reported that:
  - Recruitment for a Quality Manager had focused on the external market because internal recruitment would have created additional internal resource and performance pressures for the organisation. Every effort had been made to fill this vacancy, but it was proving difficult to find candidates with the specialist skills required. There was minimal adverse impact on quality assurance work arising from this vacancy because the work was being covered by an experienced member of staff member. There were currently no concerns arising from quality assurance reviews or customer satisfaction surveys.
  - An offer had been accepted for the Legal Manager post with a start date in March / April 2022. Attempts to appoint interim resource in the intervening period to support work on Judicial Reviews had been unsuccessful and so, to maintain resilience within the Legal

Team, consideration was being given to outsourcing legal work in line with the Civil Service Framework.

11. The Board had been keen to understand how staff had responded to the recent Government advice to work from home; was keen to ensure that Line Managers had the capability and capacity to support staff working from home, and that sufficient support for mental and physical health and productivity was in place for staff. In response, the CO advised that:
  - Overall, staff had been resigned to the return to home working guidance.
  - The Executive had some concern about the impact of homeworking on staff wellbeing and productivity; this was being closely monitored.
  - Line Managers were now more experienced in managing hybrid working and were taking a pro-active approach to ensuring staff were sufficiently supported. It would be important to ensure that policies were consistently applied, with empathy and care, whilst also ensuring that the standard of service provided to customers was maintained.
  - All staff had access to Well-Being Champions and an Employee Assistance Programme and regular communications were to be issued to remind them of the support that was available.
  - The office would remain open for those staff for whom personal circumstances made it difficult to work from home.
12. The OLC Chair reported that a sub-set of the Board would be set up to provide assurance on the work being undertaken on changing the Scheme Rules.
13. The Board **noted** the Executive report.

#### **Item 5 – Finance report**

14. The Head of Finance reported that the inability to recruit to key posts in November, along with the delay in the outsourcing of operational recruitment, had led to a further increase in underspend.
15. Invoices issued to the sector for the 2021/22 levy would be lower than originally anticipated to reflect the underspend and any reduction in the 2021/22 levy would offset the increase in budget being sought for 2022/23; the Board commented that it would be important to emphasise this in budgetary discussions with stakeholders.
16. The Board stressed the criticality of making best use of the underspend and urged the Executive to consider all options, including using the underspend to fund interim resource to support areas of the business that were under pressure and to investigate whether there was scope to roll the underspend over into 2022/23. In response, the Executive advised that:
  - Interim resource had been prioritised for key business areas and a managed consultancy service was also being considered to fill some corporate roles that were proving difficult to recruit to.
  - Strategic discussions with the MoJ would be required about the feasibility of rolling over the underspend into 2022/23.
17. Reflecting on the recruitment challenges, the Board sought assurance on confidence levels around the ability to successfully recruit the number of staff required to deliver the business plan. In response, the Executive advised that:

- The first national recruitment campaign had been positive and had attracted a high number of candidates. This provided a degree of confidence, both in terms of the current and future recruitment campaigns and should enable the Executive to over recruit to mitigate any assumed future attrition.
  - There was less confidence in the ability to recruit, either permanently or on an interim basis, to some corporate roles because of the challenging recruitment market and the specialist skills required.
  - When assessing the level of confidence to recruit, consideration should be given to the HR Team and its capacity to conduct simultaneous recruitment activity and its ability to deliver within the desired timescales.
18. The Board was advised that whilst every effort was being made to maximise the use of the IT underspend, options were limited. Much of the IT budget had been for IT licences which could not be purchased until staff had been recruited.
19. Following discussion, the Chair commented on the need for further consideration to be given to articulating and evidencing confidence levels around not having an underspend at the end of 2022/23.
20. Following discussion, the Board **noted** the finance report.

#### **Item 6 – RemCo update**

21. The RemCo Chair reported that the focus of the RemCo meeting held on 17 November 2021 had been on reviewing the Committee’s new Terms of Reference and key responsibilities.
22. There had been some concern about the potential to loss of focus on some of the people related matters, such as annual appraisals, during the transition period when people related oversight was being transferred to Board.
23. The next RemCo meeting had been scheduled for 8 February 2022; this would be preceded by a joint meeting with Staff Council.
24. The Committee would be considering how best to engage with staff in the future.
25. The Board **noted** the update on the RemCo meeting held on 17 November 2021.

#### **Item 7 – People and Performance**

26. Considering the ability for LeO employees to work from home, the Board sought to better understand the rationale for the Executive’s developing strategy to diversify away from a single site location by setting up regional hubs. The following key points were made:
- The regional hub strategy was being developed in line with LeO’s national recruitment strategy which aimed to attract staff from other areas of the UK where the employment market was less saturated with competitors requiring similar skills.
  - Hubs would provide a regional base for those staff that could not easily travel to LeO’s main office, enabling them to work collaboratively and access peer support. It was felt that having a regional presence would be more attractive to potential applicants.

- Candidate data from the national recruitment campaign would be analysed to ascertain the feasibility and benefits of developing regional hubs and where they should be located. Hubs would be based in existing MoJ estate.
- A site visit to a potential regional hub would be undertaken early in the January.
- Further work would be undertaken to test proof of concept and determine how the strategy on regional hubs would be progressed.

**27.** Clarity was sought on the investigator roles that had been advertised nationally and the expectations around where successful candidates would be expected to work and what flexible working arrangements would be in place for them. In response, the Board was advised that extensive legal advice had been received before these roles had been advertised. Based on this advice, adverts stated that the roles would be based on hybrid working and that flexible working may be available. Applications for flexible working would be discussed on an individual basis in line with the flexible working policy in place for existing staff.

**28.** In discussion, the Board made the following key points:

- The response rate to the first national recruitment campaign had been pleasing.
- It would be important to understand what had made the national recruitment campaign more successful than previous local recruitment campaigns.
- Identifying what attracted people to apply to work for LeO, any barriers to recruitment and understanding what was driving attrition would ensure that the right recruitment and retentions strategies were in place.
- There was support for over recruiting to mitigate anticipated attrition.
- Assurance was sought on the progress being made on the wider deliverables set out in the People Plan.

**29.** In response the Head of People Strategy and Services confirmed that:

- An analysis of recruitment and retention was being undertaken as part of the People Plan deliverables and a temporary HR advisor had been appointed to review end to end recruitment.
- GIAA would be undertaking an audit of recruitment in January.
- External salary benchmarking of operational and corporate roles was underway to address concerns about LeO's lack of competitiveness.
- Work was being undertaken with the EDI Manager to consider how LeO was presenting externally as an employer and to analyse applicant data to ensure maximum applicant reach and identify any barriers to recruitment and retention.
- Much of this work was linked into the re-prioritised People Plan and was due to be delivered by the end of March and would inform LeO's future strategy on recruitment and retention.
- A revised Celebrating Success: Reward and Recognition Scheme, agreed by RemCo, ensured that reward and recognition was more widely accessible to staff across the organisation. This scheme formed part of LeO's retention strategy. The first nominations submitted under the revised scheme had recently been considered by a moderation panel where it had been noted that nominations from a wider range of staff had been received. The scheme would be rigorously monitored and kept under review.

30. In response to a request from the Chair for an update on the staff appraisal process, the Board was advised that LeO's performance management framework, which would incorporate the staff appraisal process, was currently being reviewed in line with the re-prioritised People Plan and was track to be completed within the agreed timescales.
31. To ensure that LeO had a robust performance management framework, it had first been necessary to ensure that all job descriptions and role requirements were up to date and fit for purpose; this work was approaching conclusion with operational job descriptions due to be updated by the end of December and corporate job descriptions updated by the end of March.
32. A revised performance management framework would be presented to RemCo at its meeting in February.
33. The Board thanked the Executive for the very clear performance paper, and had been pleased by the good performance that had been achieved considering the reduced levels of investigator resource and other challenges faced by the organisation.
34. The Board **noted** the update on People and Performance.

#### **Item 8 – Reducing the backlog**

35. Operations Managers reported that all PAP reduction activities in progress, or in train, had been chosen because they would have greatest impact on reducing the PAP. Careful consideration had been given to risks, benefits and cost for each of the activities.
36. Board members commented on how GETi role presentation that had taken place prior to the formal Board meeting had given them a real sense of what could be achieved through this PAP reduction initiative.
37. The Board considered the range and scale of the PAP reduction activities and their impact on delivering the Business Plan and sustained performance improvement. Reflecting on whether stakeholders would consider the activities to be 'radical' enough, it was acknowledged that often smaller changes to the business process made the biggest impact.
38. The Board noted that the impact of the early initiatives in terms of proportionality, efficiency and benefits to staff were in line with initial expectations and that the recently introduced initiatives were also delivering to expectations. Regular meetings were being held to review and monitor all initiatives to ensure that assumptions, proportionality and impact were in line with what had originally been expected.
39. Following discussion, it was suggested that to provide confidence amongst stakeholders, it would be helpful to explicitly highlight the impact and benefits of the PAP reduction activities in communications, including the Business Plan consultation document.
40. Board **noted** the update on reducing the backlog.

#### **Item 9 – The 2022/23 Budget and Business Plan**

41. The Chief Ombudsman and Policy Officer reported on the high-level responses received so far to the 2022/23 Budget and Business Plan consultation, which had closed on 13 December. The key points made were:



- Confidence levels had increased amongst stakeholders, who had welcomed the improved levels of openness and transparency and the willingness to share data though increased channels of communication.
- There had been express support for LeO's leadership and organisational aims and objectives.
- There had been strong support for outsourcing to help reduce the backlog.
- There had been little support for the option 2 of the budget proposal.
- Some stakeholders felt that there should be a separate recovery plan focussing on longer-term recovery.
- Some stakeholders felt that whilst priorities two and three were important, the focus should be on priority one to ensure future stability.
- There was overall support for proportionality and early resolution initiatives but more detail was required to ensure that their application was fair and consistent.
- There had been general acceptance of the difficulties outlined in the business plan, and there was consensus that performance trajectories were too ambitious, particularly considering the recruitment challenges. It was felt that there had not been enough acknowledgement that similar service providers were also facing similar challenges.
- Stakeholders felt that more focus on the customer experience was required along with more details of when acceptable performance would be achieved.

42. The Board **noted** that further consultation responses were awaited.

43. A detailed analysis of all consultation responses would be undertaken by Executive and shared with the Board out of committee.

**ACTION: The Policy Officer to share a detailed analysis of all the stakeholder feedback received in response to the 2022/23 Budget and Business Plan consultation with the Board out of committee.**

44. Stakeholder feedback from the consultation would be taken into account when re-drafting the 2022/23 Budget and Business Plan. The updated 2022/23 Business Plan would be presented for review and approval at the Board meeting/workshop on 11 February.

**ACTION: The Executive to take into account the consultation responses when re-drafting the 2022/23 Budget and Business Plan to be presented to the Board for review and approval at a Board meeting/workshop on 11 February.**

45. Reflecting on the feedback received so far, Board members felt that it would be helpful to explore further and gain an understanding of what lay behind the comments from stakeholders about the option 2 budget, the recovery plan, and challenges faced by similar organisations.

**ACTION: The Executive to explore further and gain an understanding of what lay behind the comments from stakeholders about the option 2 budget, the recovery plan, and challenges faced by similar organisations.**

46. Additionally, Board members felt that it would be helpful to reflect further on the performance trajectories, particularly considering the recruitment and attrition challenges, to provide greater confidence on whether they were achievable.

**ACTION: The Executive to reflect further on the performance trajectories, particularly considering the recruitment and attrition challenges, to provide greater confidence on whether they were achievable.**

47. In response, the CO commented that it was clear from stakeholder feedback that LeO / OLC must use this consultation and Business Plan process to reflect on, and respond to, the comments made about levels of confidence and ambition and to draw out more clearly the radical activities that would lead to sustainable performance improvement.
48. Board **noted** the stakeholder feedback received so far in response to the consultation on the 2022/23 Budget and Business Plan.

### **Item 10 – Confidence levels in the models and assumptions**

49. The Board reviewed a slide setting out the 2022/23 Business Plan activities and their performance trajectories and a discussion took place about confidence levels in the models and assumptions that underpinned them.
50. Overall, the format and detail of the information presented had been welcomed by the Board, but to provide stakeholders with greater confidence in LeO's ability to deliver the performance trajectories, Board members felt that it would be important to capture the level of rigour that underpinned the modelling and assumptions.
51. The following comments and recommendations for improvement were made:
- Consider setting out current performance and the journey required to move performance to an acceptable level; the impact of current and planned activities (best case, worst case and mid-way point); overlay risk, and provide details of how each risk would be pro-actively managed.
  - Some Board members expressed a degree of caution regarding levels of optimism around the RAG status as set out in the slides, commenting that it was too early to provide a green RAG status for recruitment and the hub initiative.
  - A Board member suggested that consideration should be given to modelling for 20% attrition across the organisation.
  - Considering the success of the recruitment campaign and that staff had the ability to work effectively from home, questions were raised about whether the regional hubs initiative was really required, particularly in light of the amount of time and resource that would be required to set them up.
  - Board members felt that it would be important to ensure that the extent of ambition set out in the 2022/23 Business Plan was balanced against plausibility.
52. The Executive **noted** the Board's feedback on confidence levels in the models and assumptions and the recommendations made for further improvement. This feedback would be taken into account when re-drafting the 2022/23 Business Plan document. The updated 2022/23 Business Plan would be presented for review and approval at the Board meeting/workshop on 11 February.

**ACTION: The Executive to take into account the Board's feedback and recommendations on the models and assumptions when re-drafting the 2022/23 Business Plan to be presented to the Board for review and approval at a Board meeting/workshop on 11 February.**



53. The Board was advised that final Budget Acceptance Criteria (BAC) had been received from the LSB. A meeting attended by members of the Executive and the Chair of the Performance and Quality Task and Finish Group had taken place with the LSB to discuss ways of strengthening the OLC's response to the BAC.
54. The final, approved 2022/23 Budget, Business Plan and BAC would be submitted to the LSB at the end of February for consideration at their March Board meeting.

### **Item 11 – Transparency agenda: Publishing Ombudsman's Decisions**

55. The Board welcomed the clear and detailed paper that had been presented outlining the business case for publishing full ombudsman decisions, noting the recommendations that had been made on how this project should be taken forward.
56. In discussion, the Board and Executive acknowledged the value in publishing ombudsman decisions and confirmed its commitment to the transparency agenda.
57. It was acknowledged that the implementation of this work would require a significant investment of time and resource that would take away the focus on reducing the PAP backlog (priority one of the Business Plan) and improving operational performance.
58. Reflecting on stakeholder feedback received following the consultation on the 2022/23 Budget and Business Plan about maintaining focus on priority one of the Business Plan, the Board **agreed** that LeO would not be able to implement work on publishing ombudsman's decisions until operational performance had stabilised and the organisation was sufficiently resourced.
59. Following discussion, the Board **agreed** to commit to making progress towards publishing full ombudsman decisions by adopting a methodical and practical approach to the timing and implementation of this work.
60. The Board suggested that, in the intervening period, any changes to policy and business processes should take account of requirements for publishing decisions and that adopting a greater focus on publishing Category One decisions would demonstrate progress and commitment to the transparency agenda.
61. The Board **noted** the update on the transparency agenda and publishing ombudsman decisions.

### **Item 12 – EDI Update**

62. The EDI Manager drew the Board's attention to the following key points:
  - The EDI Steering Group had been set up and would be chaired by the Board's EDI Sponsor Dale Simon. Terms of Reference for this group would be presented at the January Board for approval. The EDI Steering Group would meet on a quarterly basis and regular EDI updates would be provided to the Board.
  - Integrating EDI would be challenging considering the volume of other organisational priorities. Work had commenced to integrate EDI into the Business Plan cycle and plans were in place to include EDI as an objective for all staff. Ultimately, the aim was for EDI to become part of business as usual.

- Work being undertaken as part of the EDI strategy would help to identify the reasons for attrition and would inform LeO's retention and inclusion strategies.
  - An EDI data set was to be presented at the March Board.
63. The EDI Board sponsor reported that the integration of the EDI strategy was in the early stages. This was an important strategy that would underpin how the organisation engaged with staff and demonstrated that they were valued. The commitment to EDI from the OLC Chair and Senior Executive was clear, but there were legacy issues that needed to be addressed through improved organisational policies and the introduction of individual objectives before this commitment would filter through to staff. It was recommended that the Board and Executive seized the opportunity to progress the EDI agenda to ensure that it was embedded across the organisation.
64. Board members thanked the EDI Manager and the EDI Board sponsor for the EDI update, noting the progress that had been made on developing the EDI strategy and offering their support to progress the EDI agenda.
65. The EDI Manager reported on how the Inclusive Leadership training taking place on 14 January would help Board members to progress the EDI agenda. The training aimed to give them a better understanding of their role in embedding the EDI agenda across the organisation and raise awareness of how decisions made by the Board impact on LeO's staff and customers.
66. The Board was advised of work being undertaken to raise LeO's profile within the Ombudsman Association. An EDI specialist group of leaders had been set up; working with this group would help to benchmark EDI at LeO against other similar organisations and would provide opportunities for collaborative working across the Ombudsman Sector and Civil Service.
67. In response to questions raised by Board members, the EDI Manager reported on opportunities for staff to be recognised for their work through the Celebrating Success Reward Recognition Scheme and advised that this scheme would be monitored to ensure that it remained fair and inclusive.
68. Additionally, work was being undertaken to update LeO's Behaviour and Competency Framework to ensure that it promoted fairness and inclusivity.
69. The Chair reported that consideration would be given to changing the order of future Board meeting agendas to ensure that EDI was discussed earlier in the meeting.
- ACTION: The OLC Chair and Board Secretary to consider changing the order of future Board meeting agendas to ensure that EDI was discussed earlier in the meeting.**
70. The Board **noted** the EDI update.

### **Item 13 – Twice-yearly Quality Assurance Report**

71. Having considered the update on quality assurance, the Board asked whether any external quality assurance benchmarking had been undertaken. In response the Deputy Chief Ombudsman advised that there was currently no external benchmarking being undertaken but this would be considered as part of the Quality Assurance Framework review that would be undertaken once a Quality Manager had been appointed.
72. In discussion, the Board was advised that the response rate to customer satisfaction surveys was low, typically within a range of 10 – 30%; benchmarking against other

organisations would provide clarity on whether this response rate was in line with other similar organisations.

- 73.** Reflecting on the impact of the PAP backlog on the quality of service provided to customers, the CO explained how resource constraints and a lack of resilience within the Quality Team prevented more work being done to address the issues reported in response customer satisfaction surveys about delay.
- 74.** The Executive was assured by the quality assurance processes in place, the quality of the work undertaken by the Quality Team and the output from the Quality Committee but felt that there was more that could be done to demonstrate their confidence in this to the Board and external stakeholders.
- 75.** The Board **noted** the Quality Assurance update.

#### **Item 14 – Independent Service Complaint Adjudicator’s 2021/22 Interim report**

- 76.** The Independent Service Complaint Adjudicator (SCA) joined the meeting to present their interim report for 2021/22. The key points made were:
- Having been in role for eight months, the SCA had dealt with six stage three service complaints.
  - The SCA had been impressed with the standard of service complaint handling at stages one and two and the way LeO actively used the service complaint process to identify learning and make improvements.
  - The quality of responses to stage 1 and 2 service complaints meant that the SCA had little to add following their stage 3 investigation.
  - The SCA had made some recommendations for improvements, including changes to the Vexatious Complaints and Dignity at Work policies, ways for the Service Complaint Team to be clearer about whether service complaints had been upheld or whether a service failing had been identified, and for staff to be alert to whether customers needed additional assistance when English wasn’t their first language.
- 77.** The Board endorsed the recommendations that had been made regarding changes to the Vexatious Complaint and Dignity at Work policies.
- 78.** In response to a question raised by a Board member about the feasibility of utilising the language skills of staff to assist customers when English wasn’t their first language, the Executive advised that LeO had a contract with a translation and interpretation service; using this service to support customers was recommended to ensure the independence of service complaint investigations.
- 79.** The EDI Manager reported on ongoing work being undertaken in conjunction with the Service Complaint Team to proactively identify EDI issues within the service complaint handling process; gaining a better understanding of this would allow the EDI Manager to put measures in place to address any issues identified with a view to providing better support for customers and staff.
- 80.** The Board sought to understand whether customers properly understood LeO’s service complaint process. In response, the SCA confirmed that the service complaint process and

its limitations were explained to all customers. Many service complaints were underpinned by a customer's dissatisfaction with the outcome of their lawyer complaint and were escalated through the service complaint process in the hope that that SCA was able to change the outcome of their lawyer complaint. The SCA suggested that it might be possible to explain more, at an earlier stage, about what the service complaint process and the SCA could and could not do.

**ACTION: The Deputy Chief Ombudsman to give further consideration to the suggestion made by the SCA to provide a clearer explain to customers about what the service complaint process and the SCA could and could not do.**

- 81. The Board and Executive thanked the SCA for their interim report and had been pleased to note that the SCA had been satisfied with the way LeO handled its service complaint process.
- 82. The Board **noted** the Independent Service Complaint Adjudicator's Interim report for 2021/22.

#### **Item 14 – Annual report on enforcement**

- 83. The Board was advised that the annual report on enforcement was presented to provide assurance that a proportionate approach to enforcement was being undertaken.
- 84. In response to question from the Board, the Deputy Chief Ombudsman explained the rationale for a decision not to commence enforcement proceedings on one Ombudsman's decision made during 2020/21.
- 85. The Board **noted** the report on enforcement.

#### **Item 15 - Quarterly transparency publications**

- 86. The Board **noted** and **approved** a report on Board Member and Senior Manager expenses covering the period 1 September to 7 December 2021.
- 87. The Board **noted** the Q3 Board Member Register of Interests report and **approved** it for publication subject to an update to Dale Simon's details.
- 88. The Board **noted** the Q3 report on the Ombudsman and Senior Manager Register of Interests and **approved** it for publication.
- 89. The Board **noted** the Gifts and Hospitality report and **approved** it for publication.

**ACTION: The Board Secretary to update Dale Simon's details on the Board Member Register of Interests and then publish the Q3 transparency publication reports.**

#### **Item 16 – Board Paper Redactions and Non-Disclosure report**

- 90. The Board reviewed a paper setting out the redactions and items for non-disclosure proposed in respect of the December Board papers.
- 91. The Board Secretary reported on information in the PAP Backlog paper that may require redaction, subject to the CO's approval.
- 92. Subject to the approval of this additional redaction, the Board **approved** the items identified for redaction and non-disclosure.

**ACTION:** Subject to the CO's clarification of a potential redaction on the PAP Backlog paper, the Board Secretary to publish the December Board papers in line with the Board's approval of the redactions and items for non-disclosure.

### **Item 17 – Board Effectiveness**

- 93.** In line with the Board's commitment to improving Board effectiveness, Jane Martin reflected on the meeting and made the following points:
- The GETi presentation that had taken place prior to the formal Board meeting had been helpful and informative.
  - The verbal Business Plan discussion had gone well.
  - The best papers were the Performance, People and Transparency Agenda papers, which had been focussed and well written.
  - Overall, the quality of Board papers had improved, but the Executive was reminded that requests for more information did not mean more narrative.
  - Clarity on organisational objectives and strategy would ensure clearer messaging to stakeholders.
  - Being positive, confident, open and transparent in all communications would be important when communicating with stakeholders.

### **Item 16 – Any other business**

- 94.** The Chair sought confirmation on levels of confidence following discussions that had taken place at the Board meeting.
- 95.** The OLC Chair offered sincere thanks to the Executive Team for their hard work during 2021 and offered best wishes for the festive period.
- 96.** All LeO staff, except for the CO and the Head of People Services and Strategy left the meeting.
- 97.** The CO and Head of People Services and Strategy updated the Board on a HR matter.