

13 January 2021

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Dear Elisabeth

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your consultation about the Legal Ombudsman's budget and business plan.

IPReg does not have any specific comments on your proposed business plan, other than to say that it is clearly in the public interest and essential for consumer protection that the Legal Ombudsman operates as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible.

However, we are concerned that the significant increase in the proposed OLC budget (19% in 2021/22 and a further 5.9% in 2022/23) could have an impact on the levy that IPReg pays. I should add that our concern is heightened by the fact that the LSB is consulting on an increase in its budget of 4.4% for 2021/22.

As you know, IPReg has only ever been required to pay the minimum amount of the OLC levy because of the very low level of complaints to the Ombudsman about patent and trade mark attorneys (fewer than 10 cases in a rolling 3 year period). IPReg's current OLC levy is £5000 a year. The consultation is silent on how the operational OLC budget would be funded, but assuming the methodology remains unchanged, it seems likely that IPReg's levy would increase significantly over the course of the next 2-3 years. Given that there have been no complaints to the Legal Ombudsman about patent or trade mark attorneys recently, we can see no justification for passing on any increase to IPReg and seek your reassurance that this is not your intention. We would also be interested to know whether you intend to reduce the OLC's budget once the key priorities have been achieved.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this response.

Yours sincerely



Fran Gillon
Chief Executive