Minutes of the 147th Meeting of the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC)

Wednesday 17 June 2026

Board members present.	**In attendance**
Ric Blakeway, OLC Chair	Phil Cain, Chief Ombudsman
Elaine Banton – items 2 to 8	David Peckham, Head of Operations, Business Transformation, and Intelligence
Rachel Cerfontyne	Steve Pearson, Deputy Chief Ombudsman
Georgina Philippou	Blessing Simango, Head of Finance, Procurement, and ICT
Hari Punchihewa	Zoe Grainger Head of People Strategy and Culture
Owen Purcell	Mike Harris, Head of Communications, Engagement, and Impact
Alison Sansome	Laura Stroppolo, Head of Programme Management and Assurance
Minutes: Kay Kershaw, Board Governance Manager	

Item 1 - Welcome, apologies, declarations of interest and other preliminary matters

1. The Chair welcomed attendees. The meeting was quorate with a lay majority.
2. There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.
3. Board members noted the papers presented for information.

Item 2 – Developing the 2027/30 OLC Strategy

4. The Board discussed the emerging framework for the 2027–30 OLC Strategy. Focussing on LeO's operating environment, emerging strategic objectives, supporting activities and enablers, and strategic risks, Board members provided feedback to support its further development.
5. The key points considered included:
    - The characteristics of a high-performing ombudsman scheme and insights from external benchmarking and wider sector development.
    - How timeliness was defined and measured across other ombudsman schemes and how LeO's proposed timeliness measures compared to them.
    - The importance of innovation, effective complaint resolution, and LeO's role in influencing positive outcomes across the wider legal services sector.

- Opportunities to build on learning from other Ombudsman schemes and external research while recognising that statutory constraints could limit the adoption of some approaches. The Board agreed that it would be helpful to maintain visibility of legislative and regulatory barriers that may affect future service development.
- The clarity and sequencing the emerging strategic objectives and their alignment of with the OLC / LeO's long-term vision and ambitions.

6. The following actions were agreed:

ACTION: The Executive Team to circulate the external benchmarking report to Board members when available.

ACTION: The Executive to provide benchmarking information to the Board on timeliness measures and performance standards used by other ombudsman schemes.

ACTION: The Executive Team to develop and maintain a record of legislative and regulatory constraints that limit potential service improvements or future development opportunities.

ACTION: The Executive Team to refine the draft 2027/30 Strategy, taking account of Board feedback, and present a revised version for consideration at the July strategy workshop.

Item 3 – Previous minutes and actions and matters arising.

7. The Board approved the minutes of the Board meetings held on 28 January 2026, 25 February 2026 and 29 April 2026 for accuracy and publication, subject to minor updates to the February April minutes. The Board also approved the minutes of the of the ARAC meeting held on 9 February for publication.

ACTION: The Board Governance Manager to update the minutes of the Board meeting held on 25 February 2026 and 29 April 2026 in line with the Board's feedback and arrange publication of the minutes from the 28 January, 25 February and 29 April 2026 Board meetings and the minutes of the 9 February 2026 ARAC meeting.

8. The Board **noted** the updates to the previous actions.
9. Board members were reminded to review and update their entries in the Register of Interests to confirm whether their external roles were remunerated.

10. The Board **agreed** to close action 2, paragraph 6, from the January 2026 Board meeting relating to engagement with the Legal Services Board and Ministry of Justice on the approach to Scheme Transformation, noting that updates would continue to be provided through the Chief Ombudsman's report and other relevant Board reporting.
11. The Board noted that the Digital Transformation Strategy (action 3, paragraph 13, from the January 2026 Board meeting) would now be presented at September's Board meeting and not July's meeting to accommodate a full agenda.
12. The Board noted clarification that the delivery date for the action 5, paragraph 30, from the September 2025 Board meeting had previously been revised to September 2026.

Item 4 – Annual Report and Accounts

13. The Board discussed the 2025/26 Annual Report and Accounts.
14. The Chair of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) reported that the Committee had considered the Annual Report and Accounts at its June meeting. The Committee had received assurance from the Chief Ombudsman as Accounting Officer, the Government Internal Audit Agency, which had issued a moderate annual audit opinion consistent with previous years, and the external auditors, who had confirmed that no material issues had been identified through the Financial Statements Audit. ARAC had been satisfied that one minor issue identified by external auditors had been addressed and that appropriate mitigations had been put in place to reduce the risk of reoccurrence. The Committee therefore recommended the Annual Report and Accounts to the Board for approval.
15. The Board **approved** the 2025/26 Annual Report and Accounts.
16. The Annual Report and Accounts remained on track for laying before Parliament on 2 July 2026, subject to completion of the final reviews and MoJ approval processes.
17. The Board discussed lessons learned from the production of the report and accounts, including opportunities to agree templates earlier, improve the production timetable and strengthen supplier management to ensure sufficient opportunity for Board feedback to be considered and incorporated. A lessons-learned report would be presented to ARAC in October 2026. The Board recognised the need to balance further improvements with the resource demands placed on the organisation.

18. The Board thanked the Executive team, ARAC members and all those involved in preparing the Annual Report and Accounts.

Item 5 – Update on the consultation on Scheme Rules, case fee arrangements, and decision transparency

19. The Board received an update on the consultation, which had launched on 10 June 2026.

20. The Board noted encouraging early engagement with the consultation, with a number of responses received during the first week. Members discussed the responses received to date, noting that they had primarily been from service providers and had focused on the proposed 12-year longstop for complaints and changes to case fees. The Board emphasised the importance of securing wider stakeholder feedback, including from consumers and consumer groups, to ensure a balanced understanding of stakeholder perspectives, and noted the ongoing engagement activity being undertaken to support this.

21. The Board discussed stakeholder feedback, including on the proposed publication of Ombudsman decisions and stakeholder concerns regarding potential equality impacts. Members noted observations that complaint rates for some minority ethnic service providers may be disproportionately higher than other groups and emphasised the importance of a robust Equality Impact Assessment in informing consideration of consultation responses and any subsequent recommendations. The Board also noted the challenges associated with obtaining relevant diversity data from legal service regulators.

Item 6 - Effectiveness of the meeting

22. The Board reflected on the effectiveness of the unstructured and interactive discussions that had supported the development of the 2027/30 OLC Strategy, noting that they had facilitated constructive debate, consideration of a range of perspectives and the continued refinement of the emerging strategy.

23. The Board discussed arrangements for the next 2027/30 Strategy discussion at July's Board meeting, including opportunities to maximise the time available for strategic discussion and incorporate stakeholder perspectives into its deliberations.

Item 7 - Voluntary assurance letter

24. The Board discussed and **agreed** the proposed approach and key messages to be reflected in June Voluntary Assurance Letter to the Legal Services Board (LSB).

Item 8 – Any other business

25. The Board received an update on arrangements for sharing Board papers with the LSB, noting that the Data Protection Impact Assessment was awaiting LSB approval. Pending review of the Memorandum of Understanding, an interim arrangement had been agreed whereby only finalised Board papers would be shared.

26. The Board **agreed** that papers from the June 2026 Board meeting should be published in accordance with the Freedom of Information classifications recorded on the relevant cover sheets.

27. Board members were reminded to complete the Board effectiveness questionnaire by the stated deadline.

ACTION: The Board Governance Manager to arrange for an email to be issued to Board members to remind them to complete the 2026 Board Effectiveness Questionnaire.

28. The Board discussed the approach to complainant correspondence sent directly to Board members.

29. Board members were reminded of the Disability Pride event on 8 July 2026.