

Minutes of the seventeenth meeting of the

Office for Legal Complaints (OLC)

Monday 15th November 2010

11.30am – 3.00pm

Baskerville House, Centenary Square, Broad St, Birmingham B1 2ND

Present:

Elizabeth France, Chair
Margaret Doyle, member
Professor Mary Seneviratne, member
Rosemary Carter, member
Tony Foster, member
Brian Woods-Scawen, member
David Thomas, member

In attendance:

Adam Sampson, Chief Ombudsman
Gary Garland, Deputy Chief Ombudsman
Liz Shepherd, Operations Director
Alison Robinson, Head of External Affairs

Board Secretary:

Andy Taylor

Preliminary issues:

The quorum requirements for the Board meeting were met.

Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

1. The Chair welcomed those in attendance.
2. There were no apologies received.
3. There were no declarations of conflict or interest.

Item 2 – Minutes of previous meeting

4. The minutes of the meeting of 18 October 2010 were approved for publication.

Item 3 – Matters arising & action points

5. Members noted those items where action had been completed and that others were included as agenda items.

Item 4 – Items presented for information.

6. Members noted the items presented for information and no comments were received.
7. The Chief Ombudsman gave members an oral management update on the following;
 - Operations: approximately 8000 enquiries had been received by the organisation to date. This had led to some 4000 complaints, of which 650 have been accepted for further investigation. Of those not accepted, a significant proportion were found to be outside of the scheme rules, for example the issue had already been investigated by a previous body or the complaint was considered to be out of time. It is anticipated that work in progress will peak at around 2000 cases with a caseload of approximately 20 cases per investigator.
 - IT: there were five integration issues presently receiving attention. All had little real impact upon the IT infrastructure which continued to work well and was proving to be resilient.
 - Staffing: the final tranche of staff would join the organisation in January 2011 and following the six week training programme would commence work in February.
 - Other matters: the financial position of both the landlord and IT provider was being monitored on a regular basis by the Director of Finance and Business Services. Development of the revised framework agreement with the MoJ continued, with a draft copy to be electronically issued to members for consultation by the Director of Finance and Business Services as soon as possible.

ACTIONS

- Members requested that a volume report should be included on the agenda for the April 2011 meeting.
- The Director of Finance and Business Services to provide Members with an electronic copy of the revised MoJ framework agreement.
- The Chief Ombudsman to include an update on the position of OLSO within the next monthly report to the OLC.

Item 5 – Oral report from committees.

8. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee confirmed that a meeting with the new NAO Director was to take place on 18 November. The next meeting of the committee was scheduled for January 2011.
9. The Chair of RemCo advised that a meeting was due to take place immediately following this meeting and was to focus upon matters relating to equality and diversity.

Item 6 – Finance report

10. The report was presented in a new format following go-live and provided details of the monthly, year to date and forecast expenditure for the 2010 – 11 financial period.
11. Members noted and approved the new format and requested that the Director of Finance and Business Services ensures that the NAO structures the 2010/11 OLC accounts to take into consideration the complexities of moving from set-up into steady state, for example to include confirmation and segregation of the project and set up costs.

Item 7 – Recruitment update.

12. Members were advised that all Team Leader positions had been successfully filled, however, the staffing projections made to October 2010 and March 2011 currently evidenced a shortfall in some staff positions, for example Investigators and Assessors. Further interviews for both roles commence shortly with a view to the additional staff commencing work in January 2011 as planned.

Item 8 – Quarterly review of performance Vs business plan

13. Members noted the report and were advised this was the final paper detailing the work undertaken by work-streams leading up to go-live. The Chief Ombudsman advised that some outstanding work remained in respect of quality, knowledge management and HR documentation; this would be undertaken in the course of normal business following go-live.

Item 9 – Equality, diversity and accessibility

Summary of the tabled paper

A number of informal external and internal consultations have taken place since the September OLC meeting. External consultations included a range of groups representing lawyers, consumers, the LSB Consumer Panel and the MOJ, with internal consultations including a variety of staff groups from across the organisation.

The revised paper was based upon the outcome of the consultation events and included further information on the requirements placed upon public bodies in respect of equality and diversity matters.

The paper proposes that initial priorities and objectives are geared towards embedding equality and diversity systems into operational processes and policies. An initial priority will be to ensure that the organisation collects accurate equality and diversity data to inform future objectives and that these should remain in place for approximately one year; covering the period February 2011 to March 2012. Stakeholders that took part in the consultation events supported this approach.

14. Members noted the revised equality and diversity paper and asked for a number of amendments to be incorporated, in particular to the attached appendix before it was resubmitted electronically to the appropriate OLC member in conjunction with EMT for approval.

ACTIONS

- The equality and diversity Ombudsman to amend the document as requested by the OLC and submit to the appropriate OLC member in conjunction with EMT for approval.

Item 10 – Proposed OLC agenda timetable 2011/12

15. Members noted the proposed timetable for 2011/12 and requested that a number of amendments be incorporated, for example that;

- a quarterly progress report outlining the key issues being dealt with by senior management is included for discussion
- judicial review matters to be included on the agenda when appropriate
- the timetable be changed to reflect the progress of work undertaken by the OLC sub committees
- the inter-relationship between KPI's to be considered and the timetable revisited accordingly
- standard monthly agenda items to be removed from the timetable

16. Members noted the proposed agendas for the OLC meetings scheduled for December 2010 and January 2011, the former incorporating a joint meeting with the LSB in the afternoon. Members suggested that the Executive produce papers in respect of the joint meeting with the LSB (13 December 2010) as soon as possible.

ACTIONS

- The OLC Secretary to incorporate the suggestions into a revised timetable in discussion with the Chief Ombudsman and to electronically re-issue to members before the next OLC meeting.

Item 11 –Any other business

17. The next meeting will be held on 13 December 2010 commencing at 11.00am at Baskerville House in Birmingham.

Andy Taylor
Board Secretary
22 November 2010