

<b>Meeting</b>	OLC Board	<b>Agenda Item No.</b>	7
		<b>Paper no.</b>	121.6
<b>Date of meeting</b>	30 June 2022	<b>Time required</b>	15 Minutes

<b>Title</b>	<b>Strategy timings</b>
<b>Sponsor</b>	OLC Chair and Chief Ombudsman
<b>Status</b>	OFFICIAL

<b>Executive summary</b>	
<p><b>1. Background</b></p> <p>The current OLC Strategy for the Legal Ombudsman scheme runs from 2020 to 2023. The Business Plan for 2022/23 sits within the context of this three-year strategic framework and is therefore the third year of the Corporate Strategy period.</p>	
<p><b>Vision: Our work builds genuine confidence in legal services in England &amp; Wales</b></p>	
<b>Strategic objectives</b>	Improving the experience of our service for complainants and service providers while using our expertise to guide and add value to the complaints journey
	Increasing the transparency and impact of our casework to support greater access to justice
	Developing our service to ensure it is appropriate for the evolving legal sector
<b>2022/23 Business Plan priorities</b>	1. Support our people to perform at their best
	2. Deliver improvements to streamline handling of complaints and deliver a more proportionate service focused on early resolution
	3. Developing learning and insight mechanisms to increase impact of work and support improvements in the sector for providers and consumers

## **2. Recommendation**

Given the timeframe covered by the current Strategy the Board needs to consider whether it aims to oversee the delivery of a new three Strategy that runs concurrently with the current Strategy, namely one that starts from April 2023 onwards.

Following discussions between the OLC Chair and the Chief Ombudsman we recommend that:

- The OLC and LeO work on developing a new Strategy that runs from April 2025 to April 2028.
- That work on this Strategy should start in the 2022/23 business year with some dedicated Board and Executive discussions.
- That new strategic objectives could be piloted in the 2023/24 business year, with a greater focus on what is currently framed as Priority 3 and laying the groundwork for strategic development.
- And that existing plans and commitments for 2023/24 and 2024/25 are reframed and positioned as a tightly focused 'two year or holding' strategy.

## **3. Rationale**

The key reasons for these recommendations are as follows:

3.1 LeO is already working to a multi-year Business Plan that sets out a clear improvement trajectory to the end of 2023/24. This includes a clear vision for customers and the type of service they should receive by 2024. Whilst the multi-year Business Plan is not a strategy, it has nonetheless occupied the space of a longer-term approach and one that is being assiduously scrutinised and monitored.

3.2 LeO is now firmly and clearly on its improvement trajectory having spent 2021/22 stabilising itself. There is no room for complacency and much of 2022/23 will be spent demonstrating that improvement is both sustained and sustainable.

3.3 Confidence is being re-established in the work of the Scheme but this is a slow process and one which cannot be taken for granted. As organisations continue to develop confidence in the Scheme they will be more receptive to wider-ranging strategic discussions and this includes a greater priority being given to Priority 3 style work. However, at the moment, and certainly for the next year, LeO will still be expected to continue to focus more of its attention on Priorities 1 and 2. Until LeO is delivering better experiences for customers it will not be able to own the space of 'what type of Ombudsman do you want to be?' and the risk is that this significantly limits engagement with the Strategy or how it is received.

3.4 The EDI Strategy starts in 2022. By 2024 LeO will be in a much clearer position to build on this and to fully embed and integrate EDI within the full corporate Strategy.

- 3.5 The Scheme Rules Review is going before the LSB Board in July 2022. Both stage one and stage two of the review speak to the longer-term timeframe of a new Strategy, including new legislative requirements.
- 3.6 There is much to do to develop LeO's longer term approach to Priority 3 particularly in terms of identifying insight to inform wider reporting and impact work and to broaden LeO's focus on this. Work is ongoing through the 22/23 Business Plan to develop these mechanisms, including better drawing learning from our Ombudsman community and putting in place better mechanisms with them and other LeO staff. Work will also continue on our approach to transparent reporting more generally. This will continue to progress as planned across 2022/23 but, as we direct resources and attention to performance recovery as our organisational priority, it will not be possible to develop this significantly beyond what is planned or in a way which would meet the strategic ambitions OLC and LeO would have in this area.
- 3.7 The People Strategy has also started in 2022 and is full and wide-ranging. By 2024 progress will be much further along including the completion of the benchmarking exercise of LeO's terms and conditions of employment (e.g. salaries, annual leave) to provide comparisons with other employers/competitors; the end-to-end review of the recruitment process and candidate journey; development of a total reward and recognition strategy (to include a review of the Celebrating Success scheme) ; implementation of the new Developmental Performance Management Framework and associated policies, including Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) to assist in addressing performance variation where necessary, recognise and reward excellence and support employees' development and career aspirations.
- 3.8 LeO is in the process of reviewing its Communication and External Affairs resource and this includes its capacity and capability to lead on a wide-ranging consultation on a new Strategy. At the moment this is not yet in place and so the greater onus of this work is likely to rest with the Chief Ombudsman who still has a significant improvement programme to oversee.

#### **4. Risks**

- 4.1 It has been important to consider whether there are any risks with LeO not having a new Strategy that is concurrent with the existing three-year Strategy.
- 4.2 The rationale above demonstrates that LeO has a clear vision for its customers. It will be essential that this continues to be clearly articulated. This is not about the OLC not having a Strategy for LeO but it will be about setting out what LeO's plans are between 2023/24 and 2024/25 and to show the self-discipline and tight focus that will continue during this timeframe.
- 4.3 The rationale will also be shared with the LSB and the MoJ, ensuring that they fully understand the reasoning.
- 4.4 Above all, strategic discussions with the OLC Board will still start in 2022/23, recognising the value in taking time to ensure full Board ownership.

## 5. Moving forward

Both the OLC and LeO are ready to have a good discussion on Strategy and there is value in taking the time to do this and not underestimating how long it will take. It is recommended that the OLC adopts a tightly focused two year or 'holding strategy' for the Legal Ombudsman that runs to the end of 2024/25. Starting in 2022/23 and continuing in 2023/24 and 2024/25, the OLC and LeO will work on a more expansive and substantive strategy. The holding or two-year Strategy will act as the glue in drawing together the existing EDI strategy, People Strategy and multi-year approach to improvement.

### **Recommendation/action required**

Board is asked to **approve the recommendation** that:

The next OLC Strategy for LeO will run from 2025 to 2028; a two-year holding strategy will be developed to run from 2023 to 2025.