

**Minutes of the One Hundred and Second Meeting of the  
Office for Legal Complaints (OLC)**

**Wednesday 4 March 2020**

**10:30 – 11:30**

**Present:**

Wanda Goldwag, Chair  
Lis Bellamy (by telephone)  
Rod Bulmer  
Shrinivas Honap  
Annette Lovell  
Jane Martin

**In attendance:**

Rebecca Marsh, Chief Ombudsman (by telephone)  
Brendan Arnold, Director of Corporate Services  
Alison Wedge, Ministry of Justice  
Clare Hayes, Minister of Justice (by telephone)  
Matthew Hill, Legal Services Board  
David Eveleigh, Legal Service Board

**Apologies:**

Rebecca Hilsenrath

**Board Secretary:**

Kay Kershaw

**Preliminary issues:**

This was an exceptional meeting of the OLC Board.

The Board meeting was quorate.

**Welcome, apologies and declaration of conflict of interest:**

1. The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.
2. Apologies were noted.
3. There were no conflicts of interest reported.

**Matters arising:**

4. A suite of draft papers underpinning the OLC's 2020/23 budget application had been circulated prior to the meeting:
  - OLC Strategy 2020/23
  - Road Map to Green
  - 2020/21 Budget
  - Business Plan 2020/21

- People Plan 2020/21

5. The delivery of the OLC's strategy is dependent on the level of budget received. The OLC is seeking an increase in budget in order to improve performance. Mixed feedback on a potential budgetary increase with more respondents approving an increase than not had been received through consultation responses.
6. The 2020/23 Strategy, Road Map to Green, Business Plan and People Plan are all currently predicted on the acceptance of one of two programmes, each dependent on the level of budget received.
7. Feedback from the LSB prior to the Board meeting made it clear that the OLC's Budget application required further update before it could be considered for approval.

### **2020/21 OLC Budget Discussion**

8. The Chair reported that the Board had met in private before the Board meeting to discuss the 2020/21 budget application.
9. In discussion, the Board had acknowledged that, whilst a considerable amount of information had been sent to the LSB to support its budget application, the information had lacked a clear narrative.
10. In discussion, the Board had agreed that it would not actively pursue the higher budget increases set out in the original papers i.e a 28.7% increase to the Levy
11. Matthew Hill advised that, subject to the caveats set out in their recent correspondence, the LSB was supportive of the concept that LeO needed more resources to deliver its service, but it was imperative for the OLC Board to be confident in the proposals being put forward in its budget application and to be confident in LeO's ability to deliver the outcomes stated.
12. The Board agreed with the LSB that the budget application required an improved narrative in order to explain the underpinning drivers of the budget assumptions and how they would be delivered. In particular, the impact of attrition would need to be understood and its link to performance explained. Without this information, Board Members themselves would not be confident in approving the budget application for submission.
13. The Board asked the Executive to develop a table setting out data for a range of budget increase variables. This table is to be accompanied by a narrative document setting out the root cause of current issues (particularly attrition and performance) and an explanation of the underlying budget assumptions for each of the budget increase variables. The paper should also set out a summary of the Board's preferred budget increase option.
14. The LSB and MoJ welcomed this approach and the inclusion of stronger supporting narrative and which they recommended:
  - Should include more detail on why the back log at the front end of the business exists.
  - Should include a better explanation of why attrition is high and what is being done to address it. They suggested this might include more detail from staff engagement surveys and exit interviews and whether lower pay scales and / or cultural issues were underlying contributory factors.
  - Should consider whether the feedback to the profession had been adequately described and how it delivers value for money.

15. David Eveleigh stressed that the budget did not have to be approved in one go, and that the OLC should take its time to understand the underlying issues in order to ensure that the final narrative supporting the application was right.

#### **Agreed Actions**

- The Chief Ombudsman will draft a paper as outlined above.
  - A table setting out data for each of the budget increase variables will be produced.
  - Board Members from RemCo will review the documents and provide feedback.
  - The final documents will be circulated to the Board for approval.
  - Final documents to be submitted to the LSB.
  - The Strategy, Business Plan and People Plan will be discussed at the next Board meeting
16. The Board and Executive were grateful for the advice and guidance provided by LSB and MoJ on its budget application.
17. The DCS acknowledged that the budget application process had been very challenging and reminded Board that the Management Team had been working extremely hard to prepare the materials provided in the pack. In apologising for the fact that the summary information had not met the needs of Board on this occasion the DCS also provided assurance that the proposals submitted were viewed as deliverable by Management Team.
18. The Board re-confirmed they and the Executive would ensure that all parties would continue to work closely with the LSB and MoJ going forward.