

Minutes of the 126th Meeting of the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC)

Wednesday 26 April 2023

<p>Present:</p> <p>Elisabeth Davies, Chair Rachel Cerfontyne Patricia Tueje Hari Punchihewa Alison Sansome Dale Simon Martin Spencer Jane Martin</p> <p>Minutes:</p> <p>Kay Kershaw, Board Governance Manager</p>	<p>In Attendance:</p> <p>Paul McFadden, Chief Ombudsman Steve Pearson, Head of Complex Casework and Deputy Chief Ombudsman Laura Stroppolo, Head of Head of Programme Management and Assurance Debra Wright, Head of Head of People Strategy and Services David Peckham, Head of Operations, Transformation and Business Intelligence Mike Letters, Head of Finance Susan Bradford. Independent Service Complaint Adjudicator (item 2) Deb McIntyre, Operations Manager (items 5 and 6) Treena Moseley, Operations Manager (items 5 and 6) Leanne Brookes, Operations Manager (items 5 and 6) Helen Savage, Operations Manager (items 5 and 6) Luke Hutcheson, Business Intelligence Manager (items 5 and 6) Steph Godbold, Stakeholder and External Engagement Manager (items 13 to 15) Sarah Gilbert, Policy Officer (items 13 to 15) Kathryn Bull, Campbell Tickell (observing)</p>
--	---

Item 1 – Welcome, apologies, matters arising and declarations of interest.

1. The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, noting that this was the first OLC Board meeting attended by new Board members, Rachel Cerfontyne and Patricia Tueje. Introductions took place.
2. There were no apologies.
3. The Board meeting was quorate.
4. There were no declarations of interest reported.

Item 2 – Independent Service Complaint Adjudicator’s Annual Report

5. The Independent Service Complaint Adjudicator (SCA) presented their Annual Report, drawing the Board’s attention to the following points:
 - Service complaints were being resolved earlier in the service complaint process and consequently only eleven service complaints had been escalated to the SCA in

2022/23. Over half of these complaints related to dissatisfaction with the outcome of the lawyer complaint and fell outside the scope of the Service Complaint Policy and the SCA's remit.

- The SCA had recommended a review of the practice of helping complainants to re-word complaints so that they fell within the scope of the Service Complaint Policy and SCA's remit.
 - The main themes underpinning service complaints in 2022/23 were dissatisfaction with the level of compensation and delay. A reduction in the number of service complaints about delay was expected now LeO was better resourced. There had been no service complaints about communication escalated to the SCA in 2022/23.
 - A full review of the Service Complaint process would be undertaken in 2023/24; this would take into consideration the SCA's recommendations for improvement.
 - The Service Complaint Team was very receptive to the SCA's feedback and recommendations for further improvements.
6. In response to a question, the SCA confirmed that clear information and guidance on the service complaint process was available to LeO's customers.
 7. Board members supported the SCA's recommendation to review the practice of re-wording service complaints.
 8. The Deputy Chief Ombudsman (DCO) commented on LeO's inclusive and extensive service complaint process and how service complaints were now recorded in the case management system to allow for improved monitoring and reporting.
 9. In response to an enquiry, and acknowledging the small sample size, the SCA confirmed that no trends had been identified in 2022/23 relating to the demographic of customers raising service complaints.
 10. The review of the service complaint process aimed to make the process more efficient and proportionate. The review would take into account the scope of Service Complaint Policy; the process for challenging the outcome of a lawyer complaints; the process for dealing with escalations made directly to Board members, and the recommendations made by the SCA for further improvement.
 11. In response to a question, the SCA confirmed that the Board should take assurance from their work, the work undertaken by the Service Complaint Team and the recommendations that had been made for further improvements.
 12. The Board **noted** the SCA's Annual report and offered thanks for the key role they played in supporting LeO's customers and driving organisational improvements.

Item 3 –Previous minutes

13. The minutes of the OLC Board meeting held on 25 January 2023 were **approved** for accuracy and **approved** for publication.
14. The minutes of the OLC RemCo meeting held on 24 November 2022 were **approved** for publication.

ACTION: The Board Governance Manager to arrange for the minutes of the OLC Board meeting held on 25 January 2023 and the minutes of the OLC RemCo meeting held on 24 November 2022 to be published.

Item 4 – Matters arising and previous actions.

15. The Board ratified a decision made out of committee by six of the eight Board members in March to approve an amendment to the RemCo Terms of Reference; a decision made out of committee by six of the eight Board members in March to approve the appointment of 4 Level 1 Ombudsmen in line with the Chief Ombudsman's (CO) recommendation; a decision made out of committee by six of the eight Board members in February to approve the revised trajectories and assumptions for the 2023/24 Business Plan and Budget Acceptance Criteria, and a decision made out of committee by the OLC Chair in line with delegated authority from the Board, to approve the 2023/24 Budget and Business Plan and Budget Acceptance Criteria for submission to the LSB in February.
16. Having noted the updates provided in the Previous Actions paper, the Board **agreed** that the following actions should be closed:
- Action 5-8, paragraph 39; from the January 2023 Board meeting.
 - Action 13, paragraph 73 from the January 2023 Board meeting.
 - Action 13, paragraph 77 from the December 2022 Board meeting.

ACTION: The Board Governance Manager to close actions 5-8, paragraph 39 and action 13 paragraph 73 from the January 2023 Board meeting, and action 13, paragraph 77 from the December 2022 Board meeting.

17. Action 5-8, paragraph 41 from the January Board meeting: The CO explained that consideration was being given to the best way of providing a summarised page on performance to the Board.
18. The Board reflected on previous Board discussions about the potential for Power BI to replace the Agreed Data Set (ADS) so that a single set of performance data could be provided to all stakeholders. The CO confirmed that the ADS was now in Power BI. Considering this, and LeO's improving performance trajectory, the Board discussed the possibility of rationalising performance data so that a single set of data was produced. The CO explained that there had been discussions with MoJ and LSB last year in preparation for the move to a digitised Power BI ADS which had suggested that rationalisation of the ADS indicators was not appropriate at this time. This would be something to be considered further at a future point.
19. Action 15, paragraph 80 from the January 2023 Board meeting: This action remained ongoing. A new Terms of Reference for the Performance Sub-Group (formerly known as the Performance and Quality Task and Finish Group) was being developed by the OLC Chair and Chair of the Performance Sub-Group.
20. Action 19, paragraph 95 from the January 2023 Board meeting: Consideration was being given to adding a section to Board paper cover sheets to highlight EDI implications.
21. Actions 11, paragraphs 68 and 71 from the December 2022 Board meeting and action 15, paragraph 66 from the October 2022 Board meeting : Board members recommended that these actions were either closed or their due dates for completion redefined to reflect when

the action was expected to be completed. The OLC Chair and Board Governance Manager **agreed** to consider this recommendation and update the actions log accordingly.

ACTION: The OLC Chair and Board Governance Manager to consider closing or redefining the due date for completion of actions 11, paragraphs 68 and 71 from the December 2022 Board meeting and action 15, paragraph 66 from the October 2022 Board meeting.

22. Following discussion, the OLC Chair and Board Governance Manager **agreed** to consider whether reference to the 'date required' in the Board actions log should be replaced with 'target date,' and whether items for ratification should be included in the actions log or included on the agenda for future Board meetings.

ACTION: The OLC Chair and Board Governance Manager to consider whether reference to the 'date required' in the Board actions log should be replaced with 'target date' and whether items for ratification should be included in the actions log or included on the agenda for future Board meetings.

23. Board **noted** the update on previous actions.

Item 5 – Executive report

24. The CO presented the Executive Report, drawing attention to the following key points:

- The MoJ's pay remit guidance, based on a 4.5% pay increase with an additional 0.5% for lower paid employees, was being assessed by the Executive. Clarity was being sought on the definition of 'lower paid' staff and consideration was being given to the risks and mitigations, including whether to submit a Flexibility Application which would require both Cabinet Office and Treasury approval.
- The options for managing the 2023/24 budget were also being considered because of the differential between the pay remit guidance and the proposed 8% pay award. An out of committee steer from the Board may be required on this.
- The Government Property Agency (GPA) was helping the Executive to source accommodation options to assess for the Birmingham office. It had been anticipated that Edward House would be one of those options for assessment but a change in GPA guidance indicated less scope for Arm's Length Bodies to use commercially leased office space, prioritising the use of space which is Government owned; considering LeO's Levy funding, the Executive would continue to explore its options for office accommodation with the GPA. Regular meetings to discuss office accommodation have been diarised with the MoJ and staff.

25. Board members thanked the CO for the comprehensive Executive Report.

26. In response to a request for further information, the Board was advised that discussions with the Challenge and Advisory Group (CAG) in February had focussed on the assumptions underpinning performance trajectories and forecasts for 2023/24 prior to the Business Plan being finalised. The CO **agreed** to reflect on how best to ensure the Board was updated on engagement with external stakeholders in the future.

ACTION: The CO to reflect on how best to ensure the Board was updated on discussions with external stakeholders.

27. Board members felt there was merit in submitting a Flexibility Application to address the differential between the pay remit and the proposed 8% pay increase that had been budgeted for, both in terms of demonstrating the Board and Executive's commitment to staff and to highlight to stakeholders the potential risks and impact of the pay remit on attrition and organisational performance. It was recommended that evidence from the pay benchmarking exercise should be used to support the Flexibility Application.
28. The Board had been concerned to note that Investigator attrition, mainly due to pay and career progression, had increased during March. In discussion, the CO advised that corporate and operational attrition and the inability to recruit was escalating and crystallising as the key strategic risk to organisational performance; this, and the correlation with pay and performance, were central to the Executive's regular risk assessment and monitoring and a key focus of discussions at quarterly Business Assurance meetings with the MoJ.
29. In response to a question, the Board was advised that there were no underlying or linked issues associated with the slight drop in performance against quality metrics in the Resolution Centre and the number of Pre-Action Protocol Letters received in Q4.
30. The Board had been pleased to note the significant improvement in the 2022/23 year end underspend position compared to the previous two years.
31. Board members reflected on how the Accommodation and Hub Strategies would both need to be considered as part of its wider discussion on the developing 2024/27 OLC Strategy.
32. The EDI Board Sponsor commented on the timely appointment of the Interim EDI Manager which she had found reassuring and had maintained the focus on EDI.
33. The Board **noted** the Executive report.

Item 6 to 9 – Performance Dashboard: Quarter four reporting

Operational Performance.

34. The Board congratulated the Executive on performance in March and Q4.
35. Noting that the Pre-Assessment Pool (PAP) had temporarily increased in March due to an increase in the number of cases being transferred in from the front end, the Board sought to understand whether the PAP workflow would be steadier from April onwards. In response, Operations Managers confirmed that overall workflow would be steadier, but a temporary decrease in workflow was anticipated in the short-term. This was due to the Scheme Rules changes and the need to proactively assess and identify cases where Ombudsman discretion would need to be applied and because of the additional support Ombudsmen would be giving to the thirty-one new starters in Operations.
36. A strategic decision had been made to harness the momentum seen in PAP performance during March to ensure that April's performance got off to the best possible start. Operations Managers were aware of the blockers to performance and the levers that could be pulled to ensure that performance remained on track in Q1. Reporting against a range would provide some flexibility and the Executive was confident that Business Plan commitments for Q1 would be met, subject to any unexpected attrition.
37. Decisions made about future ways of working, recruitment strategy, induction and Grad Bay would take account of lessons learned in response to operational attrition.

38. On behalf of the Board, the OLC Chair thanked the Business Intelligence Manager for their role in helping to re-build confidence in the Legal Ombudsman Scheme and for the precision and focus they had brought to the role and wished them well for the future in their new job.
39. The Board **noted** the update on Operational Performance for Q4.

Quality and Service

40. The DCO explained that the quality of Level 1 Ombudsman and Investigator service against quality service standards in Q4 was lower than desired. Mitigating actions were being taken to address the underlying issues which would be monitored by the Quality Committee and the Executive.
41. It was expected that quality of service would improve new L1 Ombudsman and Investigators became established in role.
42. The Quality Assurance Framework review would consider the relevance and appropriateness of the quality service standards considering that they had not been updated to reflect any procedural changes since they were introduced over 12 years ago.
43. The slight drop in performance against quality metrics in the Resolution Centre in Q4 had been due to issues linked to communications and managing customer expectations; this had not adversely impacted the quality of outcomes for customers. Changes had been made to the way LeO communicated with customers, with most interactions now taking place by telephone rather than in writing which would help to better manage customer expectations; an improvement in quality was now expected.
44. The DCO updated the Board on the external quality benchmarking exercise, advising that LeO's Quality Assurance Framework had been independently benchmarked against eleven similar organisations. The emerging theme was that every organisation dealt with quality assurance in different ways depending on the size of the organisation and the resource available; no single best practice model had been identified. A list of reflective questions has been provided to assist LeO in assessing its Quality Assurance Framework.
45. In response to a question from the OLC Chair, the DCO confirmed that LeO was not under-delivering in terms of quality when compared to other organisations.
46. Further questions were raised by the Board about whether LeO's quality targets had been set too high and whether additional staff training might be required to improve the quality of service provided. In response, the Board was advised that:
- Quality targets would be reviewed as part of the review of the Quality Assurance Framework.
 - Core skills training had been planned for Q4 but had to be deferred to Q1 because of the priority to train staff on the new Scheme Rules.
 - The mix of established and non-established staff within the organisation at any one time had a direct an impact on the quality of service.
47. The Board **noted** the update on Quality and Service for Q4.

Finance

48. Since issuing the Performance Dashboard report, the budget underspend had reduced to within £6k of the budget.
49. The Board had been pleased to note the proactive efforts that had made to reduce the underspend and the significant improvement that had been made compared to the £700k underspend in 2021/22 and the £86k underspend in 2020/21.
50. The Board was advised that the principals and disciplines in place to manage the budget were now well embedded in LeO's processes; this ensured that the budget was rigorously monitored and early mitigating action taken in the event of an emerging underspend. ARAC received regular budgetary updates and would be alerted to an emerging underspend at the earliest opportunity.
51. The Board **noted** the update on Finance for Q4.

People

52. The Head of People Strategy and Services updated the Board on the external pay benchmarking exercise that was being undertaken for all roles across LeO, advising that the work was on schedule and that a detailed analysis of the data was being undertaken and would be shared with the Executive and Board.
53. Complementary work was also underway to compare LeO's pay and benefits to those of direct competitor organisations, this would help to inform LeO's Employee Value Proposition (EVP) and, along with the pay benchmarking data, would help to inform future discussions on pay and benefits with the MoJ.
54. Recognising that LeO's EVP was not just about pay and benefits, the Head of People Strategy and Services reported on other work being undertaken to develop LeO's EVP, including strengthening staff engagement through staff network groups and a refreshed Staff Council, introducing an improved Employee Assistance Programme and investing in Leadership and Development Training.
55. Reflecting on how employees liked to align their personal values to those of their employer, Board members suggested there may be value in building on this as part of the ongoing work to develop LeO's EVP.
56. The Board **noted** the update on People for Q4.
57. Following a detailed discussion, the Board **noted** the Q4 Performance Dashboard.

Item 10 – Update on the RemCo meeting held on 27 March 2023

58. The RemCo Chair reported on the annual joint RemCo and Staff Council meeting and the RemCo meeting that had taken place on 27 March. The following points were made:
 - The meeting with Staff Council had been positive and engaging. Discussions included the Civil Service People Survey and the planned refresh of the Staff Council. Staff Council members appreciated the Executive and Board's transparency on the efforts being made to improve pay and benefits for staff and were aware of the associated constraints.

- A key focus of discussions at the RemCo meeting had been the People Strategy and the Civil Service People Survey. RemCo had noted the impressive amount of work that had been done so far on People Strategy considering the small team involved and had noted the benefits being seen following the rollout of the new Performance Development Process and the Leadership Development Programme.

59. The Board noted the update on the Annual RemCo and Staff Council meeting and the RemCo meeting.

Item 11 – Civil Service People Survey

60. Improvements had been seen in the scores across eight of the nine core themes in the Civil Service People Survey. The low score for pay and benefits had been expected.

61. The survey scores had been shared with the Executive, Staff Council, RemCo and Board and were soon to be shared with staff.

62. The EDI Manager would be leading safe space sessions with staff network groups to gain a better understanding of the EDI related factors underpinning the survey scores. Line Managers would be exploring the factors underpinning the top and bottom five survey scores with their teams; this would help to inform the EVP and the type of benefits package staff would value.

63. The feedback from the staff engagement sessions would be collated and regular staff communications would be issued to highlight the actions being taken in response to the survey and staff feedback.

64. Board members had been pleased with the improved survey scores, noting the scope for further improvement.

65. Board members had also been pleased to note the follow up work being undertaken by the EDI Manager with staff networks and how it would help to gain a better understanding of those groups that were less engaged than others.

66. It was suggested that staff focus groups could explore the factors underpinning Investigator attrition and whether there was any correlation with the factors underpinning the survey scores for learning and development and leadership and change.

67. Board members commented on the ongoing support that would need to be provided to Line Managers for performance management.

68. In response to a question, the Board was advised that information about the benefits staff would like outside of salary was not yet known; feedback on this would be sought as part of the planned discussions between Line Managers and their teams.

69. Board members questioned the scope for changing the current flat grading structure and were advised that changing the grading structure would be challenging in the short term because of the limitations of the pay remit however there was merit and scope for considering this as part of the follow up work in response to the pay benchmarking exercise, the developing EVP and the developing OLC Strategy for 2024/27.

70. Noting the Board's feedback, the Head of People Strategy and Services stated that there would be no complacency, whilst the improvement in the survey scores would be celebrated there was strong recognition of the work that still needed to be done. The

feedback from staff focus groups would help to address the issues and staff would be kept updated on the actions being taken by the Executive to address them.

71. The Board **noted** the update on the Civil Service People Survey.

Item 12 – Update on Scheme Rules

72. The DCO drew the Board's attention to the following key points:

- The new Scheme Rules went live on 1 April; all systems and process were working effectively and no issues had been identified.
- The number of new cases received since the 1 April outside of the new time limits were being assessed to see if they were consistent with expectations and specific processes had been put in place to ensure that a cautious and thorough approach was being applied to the exercise of Ombudsman discretion in the initial phase of implementation. The time required to request and receive relevant information to make this assessment means that it will not be possible to assess the full impact immediately.
- A full report on the impact of the new Scheme Rules would be provided to the Board and LSB at the end of Q1.
- Training for operational staff on the new Scheme Rules in areas such as the practical application of Scheme Rules 5.19 and 5.20 was planned.

73. In response to a request from the OLC Chair, the DCO agreed to ensure that the Q1 update to the Board and LSB would include an update on the forecast assumptions relating to the Scheme Rules changes on time limits and application of Ombudsman discretion.

ACTION: The DCO to ensure that the Q1 update on the Scheme Rules changes to the Board and LSB included an update on the forecast assumptions relating to the Scheme Rules changes on time limits and application of ombudsman discretion.

74. The Board was advised that information on the new Scheme Rules was not up to date on some service provider websites. LeO was working with service providers and Regulators to address this to ensure that up to date information was available to customers.

75. The Board **noted** the update on the Scheme Rules.

Item 13 – 2023/24 Budget and Business Plan: Lessons Learned

76. The Board's attention was drawn to a paper setting out the lessons learned from the 2023/24 Budget and Business Plan process and a proposal to introduce a criteria assurance document to ensure greater individual accountability for the data and narrative submitted for inclusion in future Budget and Business Plan documents.

77. A discussion took place about the pros and cons of introducing a cut-off point in Q3 for the agreement of data and assumptions informing Business Plan trajectories.

78. The Board noted that an earlier sign off on the data and assumptions would alleviate some of the pressure on the Executive and help to reduce the risk of inaccuracies arising from any late changes made to the Budget and Business Plan documents but sought to ensure that a finite cut off point earlier in the planning cycle would not prevent the most up to date data being included.

79. In response, the Executive explained that the Board's decision to report against data ranges provided more scope for data to be signed off at an earlier point; that the schedule of Performance Sub-Group meetings would be changed so that the Sub-Group would meet earlier in the planning cycle to allow more time to test and challenge the data and assumptions and provide earlier assurance to the Board; that an earlier cut off point would enable the Executive to share draft documents earlier with the Board for review; that there would be flexibility for the Board to approve the data early in Q4 in the event of any significant changes being made to the assumptions and trajectories after the Q3 cut off point.
80. The Chair of the Performance Sub-Group commented that the Terms of Reference for the Sub-Group would be updated in the context of Budget and Business planning and its relationship with the Board, so there would be clarity on what was expected of the Sub-Group, as delegated by the Board and how that linked to the Budget and Business planning timetable.
81. In response to a question, the Executive confirmed that the Board meeting schedule was aligned to Budget and Business planning timetable.
82. Following discussion, the Board **confirmed** that it was supportive of an earlier cut off point for the agreement of data, subject to the proposed changes to the schedule of Performance Sub-Group meetings.
83. Board members suggested the following Business Plan improvements for future consideration:
- The inclusion of clearer customer experience metrics, including customer satisfaction and customer journey times.
 - The inclusion of value for money and demand forecasting metrics; this would align to information currently included in the LSB's Budget Acceptance Criteria.
 - The re-integration of risks and risk appetite into the Business Plan; further consideration would be given to this at the Board risk workshop in July.
84. The Board **noted** the 2023/24 Budget and Business Plan: Lessons Learned

Item 14 – 2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts: First Draft

85. The Board reviewed a first draft of the 2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts, noting that it reflected the feedback provided at the Board workshop in February and that year-end data was being verified ahead of the audit of Financial Statements commencing on 9 May.
86. Board members commented that the Annual Report and Account was structured and written well and how the inclusion of graphics would impact on the way the information was presented. Members felt that there was scope for further editing to remove unnecessary words and sub clauses, particularly after the graphics had been added.
87. In response to questions and comments from Board members the following points were made:
- Specialist tools and templates had been procured to assist the production of graphics.
 - The Annual Report and Accounts would be a printed and online document.

- External support was being procured to edit and proof-read the document.
- 88.** A further draft of the Annual report and Accounts, taking account of the Board's feedback and incorporating the data and graphics would be shared with the Board at the end of May for further review and comment and the Board would be asked to approve the Annual Report and Accounts at the June Board meeting.
- 89.** The Board **noted** the first draft of the 2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts.

Item 15 – 2024/27 OLC Strategy: Development update

- 90.** The CO updated the Board on Executive Team discussions that had taken place following the Board's externally facilitated Strategy workshop in February. Discussions had focussed on the areas of ambition that had been captured by the external facilitators around service, impact, funding and people and had taken into consideration the lessons learned from the past OLC Strategy; future ambition around service and impact; funding; resource; and the need to balance ambition with realism.
- 91.** Noting that the LSB was not required to approve the 2024/27 OLC Strategy, the Executive had also considered the benefits of unhinging Strategy from the Budget and Business Plan process as this would allow more time for the Strategy to be developed as part of an iterative process that would include engagement with internal and external stakeholders.
- 92.** Noting that further discussions on the emerging 2024/27 OLC Strategy would take place at the June and July Board meetings, Board members provided the following feedback:
- The identification of strategic vision and goals would help the Board to determine the level of aspiration which would then inform further discussions on the 2024/27 OLC Strategy and the 2024/25 Business Plan. It would be important to balance ambition with realism.
 - Key data on expected business activity over the 2024/27 Strategy period may help to inform further discussions on how radical the Board could be when determining the Strategy.
 - When discussing the 2024/27 OLC Strategy, service and impact would need to be considered holistically because of their inter-dependencies. Consideration would also need to be given to EDI to ensure that all customers received an equal experience of LeO's service and to innovative ways of improving and adding more value to the service provided by LeO.
 - Funding and people would be key enablers of the 2024/27 Strategy.
 - Unhinging the 2024/27 Strategy from the 2024/25 Budget and Business Plan process would be beneficial, but it would be important for the 2024/27 Strategy to be developed to enable the Board to provide strategic direction on the 2024/25 Business Plan.
 - Consideration could be given to developing a rolling three-year Strategy in the future.
- 93.** In terms of next steps, the OLC Chair and CO would reflect on the Board's feedback ahead of the June Board meeting when further discussions on the content of the emerging 2024/27 OLC Strategy would take place.

94. The Board **noted** the update on the Executive's discussion on 2024/27 Strategy.

Item 16 –Board Effectiveness Update

95. The OLC Chair reported on the progress that had been made on Board effectiveness over the last twelve months, highlighting the following points:

- Board effectiveness was taken seriously and it had been prioritised in several ways over the last twelve months, including through an External Board Effectiveness Review and through themes emerging from Annual Board member appraisals.
- The OLC Board was an evolving Board that recognised the importance of its own development alongside demonstrating a commitment to its effectiveness.
- LeO was also evolving and entering a new phase as an organisation, this provided the Board with an opportunity to elevate itself and begin to focus more on strategic issues and less on operational issues.
- The Board and Executive worked well together; working relationships were professional and there was a shared sense of responsibility.

96. In discussion, the following comments were made:

- The Board and the Executive worked well together and there was appropriate challenge. Individuals were not always in agreement but their views were valued and it was recognised that everyone had the best interests of the OLC/ LeO at heart.
- The time taken by the Board to reflect, learn and improve was positive and reflective of the progress that had been made.
- The opportunity to move forward and focus more on vision and strategy was welcomed.
- Members of the Executive had provided individual feedback on how the Board operates as part of the external board effectiveness review.

97. A discussion took place about the possible ways to bridge the gap between levels of operational detail and strategic focus as the Board and LeO both adapted and moved forward into their next phase: The following points were made:

- Consider introducing a 'customer-journey walk through' to provide the Board with a better understanding of the experience from a customer and service provider perspective.
- Continue to provide updates on quality and customer satisfaction.
- Consider introducing updates on public interest cases, cases relating to specific areas of law and cases that presented specific challenges.
- Continue to invite Board members to attend external stakeholder visits to LeO.

98. Board members were asked to forward any further suggestions directly to the Chair.

ACTION: Board members to forward suggestions to the Chair on ways to bridge the gap between levels of operational detail and strategic focus as the Board and LeO moved forward into its next phase.

99. The Board **noted** the update on Board effectiveness.

Item 17 – Transparency Publications Reports

100. The Board **noted** and **approved** the following reports for publication:

- The Q4 Board member register of interests.
- The Q4 Ombudsman and senior manager register of interests.
- The Q3 and Q4 Board member expenses
- The Q4 senior manager expenses

101. There had been no entries on the Gifts and Hospitality Register since it was last presented to the Board at the January 2023 Board meeting.

ACTION: The Board Governance Manager to arrange the publication of the transparency reports.

Item 18 - Board Paper Redactions and Non-Disclosure Report

102. The Board **approved** the items identified for redaction and non-disclosure in the April Board pack.

ACTION: The Board Governance Manager to publish the April Board papers taking account of the redactions and items for non-disclosure approved by the Board.

Item 19 – Board Effectiveness

103. In line with the Board's commitment to improving Board effectiveness, Rachel Cerfontyne provided feedback on the Board meeting. The following points were made:

- The best paper had been the Executive Report; it had provided a good summary of the key points for discussion.
- The best sessions were those that related to people; discussions were cohesive and linked key issues around pay and benefits.
- There may be learning and value in taking a thematic approach when discussing key items such as strategy to ensure that a more holistic and cohesive approach is taken.

Item 20 – Any other business

104. The DCO reported that guidance was being drafted for Board members on the approach to dealing with emails from members of the public.

105. There was no other business.