

Minutes of the fifty-seventh meeting of the

Office for Legal complaints (OLC)

Monday 21 July 2014

12.15pm – 15.40pm

Baskerville House, Birmingham

Present:

Steve Green, Chair
Rosemary Carter, member
Tony Foster, member
Stella Manzie, member
Professor Philip Plowden, member
Karen Silcock, member
David Thomas, member
Maureen Vevers, member

In attendance:

Adam Sampson, Chief Ombudsman
Rob Hezel, Chief Operating Officer
Freda Sharkey, General Counsel
Ken Young, Interim Head of Policy and Communications
Alison Robinson, former Head of Policy and Communications

Apologies:

None

Board Secretary:

Helen White

Preliminary issues:

The quorum requirements for the Board meeting were met.

Professor Philip Plowden declared an interest in relation to Item 5.

Item 1 - Welcome and apologies

1. The Chair welcomed and thanked those in attendance. He welcomed Ken Young, the Interim Head of Policy and Communications to his first meeting and thanked Alison Robinson for attending as the final part of her handover schedule.

Item 2 - Minutes of the previous meeting

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2014 were approved.

ACTION:

- The Board Secretary to publish the approved minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2014.

Item 3 - Matters arising and outstanding action points

3. David Thomas requested that the General Counsel review the Act to confirm the requirements as CMC jurisdiction will require an entirely new set of rules which may require consultation. The Chief Ombudsman was requested to produce a timetable for the production of these new rules to cover CMC jurisdiction. The Board gave formal approval responsibility to David Thomas and Stella Manzie.

ACTION:

- The General Counsel to review the Act to confirm the requirements for changes to the Scheme Rules to cover CMC jurisdiction.
- The Chief Ombudsman to produce a timetable for the production of the new rules in consultation with David Thomas and Stella Manzie.

Chief Ombudsman's Report

4. The Chief Ombudsman reported that he and the Interim Head of Policy and Communications are producing a plan and timetable around the workstreams within the Policy and Communications team. This will be shared with the Board during the next few weeks.

ACTION:

- The Chief Ombudsman and Interim Head of Policy and Communications to share their draft plan and timetable for the workstreams within the Policy and Communications team.
5. The Chief Ombudsman confirmed that the permanent recruitment for the Head of Policy and Communications would not be started until September.
 6. The Chair updated members on his recent meeting with the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills.

Chief Operating Officer's report

7. The Chief Operating Officer updated members on the lease arrangements for the new office building. The members supported the Chief Operating Officer's proposal to proceed with the signing of the new building lease and he was satisfied that the new building could accommodate staff and provide sufficient meeting room and breakout space.
8. The Chief Operating Officer updated members on the Chair's recent attendance at a management team meeting. The collaborative working between the management team and the OLC Board will continue at the forthcoming Strategy Day on 8th September, which will be attended by both the management team and Board.

Gifts and Hospitality Register

9. The Register was approved for publication with one minor typographical amendment.

ACTION:

- The Board Secretary to publish the Gifts and Hospitality Register for the first quarter of the 2014/15 financial year.

Board Member Expenses

10. The paper was approved for publication and no comments were received from members.

ACTION:

- The Board Secretary to publish the Board Member Expenses for the periods Q4 2013/14 and Q1 2014/15.

Finance Report

11. The paper was noted and members thanked the Head of Finance for the Budget Reforecast paper which was found to be particularly useful.

Item 5 – Policy Review Report

12. The Chair of Audit and Risk to circulate the updated plan and progress report once received from management.

ACTION:

- The Chair of Audit and Risk to circulate the updated internal plan once input from management is received.

Item 6 – Data Publication

13. The paper was noted and members approved to publish complaints data in an accessible format, CSV (comma separated values format).

ACTION:

- The Interim Head of Policy and Communications to proceed with the publication of complaints data in an accessible format.

Item 7 – General Counsel Quarterly Update

14. The General Counsel updated members on Judicial Review cases. The OLC legal members are to be informed of any issues which arise following the change in the rules on Judicial Review claims introduced last year.

ACTION:

- The General Counsel to update Rosemary Carter, David Thomas and Prof Plowden on any issues which arise following the new rules introduced last year.

15. Discussion took place on the review of the policy as regards publication of cases, which was promised to take place two years after the policy was introduced. The General Counsel was asked to update the September meeting on the undertaking previously given so members can agree an action plan.

ACTION:

- The General Counsel to update the September meeting on the previous undertaking on the review of case publication.

Item 8 – Quarterly Performance Report

16. The Chief Operating Officer updated members on the quarterly performance of the organisation. The Board welcomed the level of detail in the board paper and the opportunity for an in depth discussion and raised a number of questions.

17. In the course of the discussion the following issues were discussed:

- a. The style of the report
- b. The efficiencies that will be realised once the resourcing software is implemented

- c. The focus in the Resolution Centre on case resolution and reducing the numbers of unallocated and work in progress cases
- d. The efficacy of the initiatives being taken to improve the allocation of cases
- e. The need to ensure that timeliness and quality complement each other.

18. The Chief Operating Officer noted the range of performance challenges which were currently being faced and stated that, given those challenges, performance is where he would have expected it to be. He reassured the Board that appropriate action is being taken and expressed confidence that performance targets will ultimately be achieved.

19. The Chief Ombudsman welcomed the challenge and expert advice brought by members. He reassured the Board that every effort would be made to meet the performance targets which have been set and that management would continue to pursue innovations where they believed that this could result in performance improvement.

20. The Chair confirmed that the quarterly performance review provides members with the opportunity to debate and discuss performance in depth. It was confirmed that the management team will continue as planned and monitor performance and report back to the October Board.

ACTION:

- The Chief Operating Officer to next present the Quarterly Performance Report to the October OLC Board Meeting.

Item 9 – Vision and Values

21. The Chair welcomed Nick Ranger and Chris Holmes from BrandPie to the meeting. The Chief Ombudsman gave the background to the process which was aimed at ensuring all the activities of the organisation remained fully in line with, and were effective in, delivering on the stated values and purpose of the organisation in the context of the strategic direction set.

22. BrandPie reported that they had been commissioned to look at the purpose of the Legal Ombudsman and how that purpose should be shaped for the future. They then set out a proposal for a revised purpose statement based on the Board's original work, but tailored to amplify its meaning and application to both the day to day and long-term vision and strategy.

23. David Thomas suggested that a further draft should more clearly reflect that LeO deals with people rather than cases, and clarify the link between independence and impartiality.

24. The Chair confirmed that management would now work on an action plan proposal to implement the proposition and requested continued sight on progress.

25. The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that this will feed into the ongoing work responding to the staff survey results and the September Board strategy session.

Item 10 – September Strategy Session

26. The Chair confirmed that it was agreed that Foresight Partnership would facilitate the September Strategy Session. In preparation, some of the members and management team will be contacted with a view to having a brief session with Sue Rubenstein.

Item 11 – Any other business

27. The Chair on behalf of the Board, thanked Alison Robinson for her hard work over the six years she had been with the Legal Ombudsman. The whole Board wished Alison well in her new role.

28. No other business was raised. The Chair declared the meeting closed.

Next meeting

29. The next OLC meeting will be held at 11.00 am on Monday 8th September 2014 at The Studio, Birmingham.