

**Minutes of the 65<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the  
Office for Legal Complaints Remuneration and Nomination Committee  
20 March 2025**

**Present:**

Alison Sansome, Chair.

Elaine Banton.

Rachel Cerfontyne.

**In attendance:**

Paul McFadden, Chief Ombudsman.

Debra Wright, Head of People Strategy and Services.

Lisa Hanlon, Strategic HR Business Partner

Elisabeth Davies, OLC Chair, observing.

Nawal Henry, Health and Safety and Facilities Manager (item 8)

**Apologies:**

Laura Stroppolo, Head of Programme Management and Assurance (item 8)

**Minutes:**

Kay Kershaw, Board Governance Manager.

**Item 1 – Welcome, apologies and declarations of conflict of interest**

1. The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.
2. Apologies were noted.
3. There were no declarations of interest reported.
4. The meeting was quorate and with a lay majority.

**Item 2 – Reflections on RemCo's annual meeting with Staff Council**

5. The annual meeting with Staff Council had been positive, with high levels of engagement and balanced feedback on two agenda items focussed on the 2024 Civil Service People Survey results and the new Staff Council.
6. Since forming, the new Staff Council had already achieved a lot, including engagement on key matters such as the new hybrid working model. Levels of commitment were high, with Staff Council members keen to engage more proactively with staff and do more to fulfil their role, which RemCo felt could be very effective, especially with the co-ordination and focus of the new Lead Representative.

7. The Executive would be considering further ways to raise the profile of Staff Council and promote the added value of the role it fulfils in supporting communications and co-ordinating the 'employee voice' on key strategic matters.
8. The Executive would follow up with Staff Council in response to points raised about union recognition.

### **Item 3 – Previous minutes, matters arising and actions from previous meetings.**

9. The minutes of the RemCo meeting held on 27 November 2024 were **approved** as an accurate record of the meeting.
10. RemCo **noted** the update on previous actions.
11. There were no matters arising.

### **Item 4 – HR people metrics**

12. A paper updating RemCo on HR metrics for the period November 2024 to February 2025 was presented by the Strategic HR Business Partner.
13. In discussion, the following key points were made:
  - Overall attrition and investigator attrition had continued to fall and remained well within target, despite a small increase in February compared to January.
  - Corporate attrition had increased due to six staff leaving the organisation mainly for personal advancement. Recruitment for all six posts was progressing well with no cause for concern.
  - Retaining attrition within manageable levels remained a key priority. Actions arising from the 2024 strategic attrition workshop continued to be progressed and implemented to inform LeO's attraction and retention strategy and employee value proposition.
  - Overall sickness absence levels had decreased over the last three months but still remained high and above target.
  - Long-term sickness absences had peaked in January for various reasons including cancer, surgery, pregnancy, and non-work related mental health. Long-term sickness absences had reduced in February; this improvement had been attributed to changes in individual circumstances and the intervention and support of Line Managers to help people return to work.
  - Short-term sickness absences had been higher than long-term absences for most of the reporting period, partly due to a small number of staff with recurring short term absences which had triggered absence management interventions in line with LeO's sickness absence policy.
  - The deep dive of long-term and recurrent sickness absences had concluded, and HR was working closely with LeO's employment law solicitors to assess the appropriate next steps.

- The HR and ED&I teams have worked closely on a wide range of initiatives and policy enhancements to improve absence management.
- Improvements in sickness absence reporting processes and systems functionality now ensured the timely intervention by Line Managers, with support from HR Business Partners once sickness absence triggers had been met. Enhanced interventions had been put in place to support disabled staff.
- Leadership training provided to Line Managers, in addition to the support provided by HR Business Partners, ensured that LeO's sickness absence policy and other associated HR policies were consistently applied in a timely manner.
- The rationale for timely sickness absence management was generally well understood and accepted by staff. Each sickness absence case was dealt with on its own merits, and whilst there may always be scope to learn and do more to reduce the number of absences, particularly short-term absences, changing the culture and the way staff perceived sickness absence management was key, and this would take time.
- There may be value in researching whether there was any positive or negative correlation between sickness absence rates and home, hybrid and office working and benchmarking the data against other similar organisations in the future.

14. Following a detailed discussion, RemCo **noted** the update on HR metrics and the work undertaken by HR to manage attrition and sickness absences.

**Item 5 - People strategy: Approval of the updated 2024/27 People Strategy and progress against the 2024/25 action plan.**

15. The Head of People Strategy and Services presented an update on the 2024/2027 People Strategy and the progress made on the delivering the 2024/2027 People Strategy Action Plan for 2024/25 and other HR activity during the 2024/25 year.
16. The 2024/27 People Strategy had been reviewed and updated to ensure that it remained relevant, able to respond to the changing needs of the organisation and aligned to the 2024/27 OLC Strategy. In response to the review two new areas of focus had been added: Artificial intelligence (AI) and digital transformation.
17. The action plan and deliverables for 2025/26 aimed to strike a balance between continuing to build on the progress that had already been made and taking the first steps in developing these new priority areas and took account of the implications of HR resource and leadership transition following the resignation of the Head of People Strategy and Services.
18. A discussion took place about the potential implications for public and civil servants of artificial intelligence and digital transformation, the de-regulation agenda, and the Government's ongoing efficiency drive. Whilst there had been no significant emerging issues or concerns raised about this by staff, the Executive would remain alert to the risks and would address any concerns through timely staff communications.
19. Following discussion, RemCo **approved** the updated 2024/27 People Strategy and the 2025/26 deliverables.

20. The Head of People Strategy and Services reported on the progress that had been made on delivering the 2024/25 deliverables and other HR people-related activity throughout the year, drawing particular attention to:
- The work undertaken to improve the induction and on-boarding process which would be rolled out at the end of April 2025, and which would complement the improvements that had already been made to the recruitment process.
  - The development and implementation of a new apprenticeship framework.
  - The ongoing development of a new attraction and retention strategy and further improvements being explored to complement the employee value proposition (EVP) which would be rolled out to the organisation at the end of quarter four.
  - The completion of a first draft of succession planning and a talent management framework for consideration by the Executive.
21. In response to a question, RemCo was advised that staff communications about the revised EVP would be linked to the launch of the new attraction and retention strategy. All the elements of the EVP were to be collated into a single document for ease of reference and accessibility and would be shared with staff and communicated across all communications channels including Staff Council.
22. The Head of People Strategy and Services **confirmed** that all 2024/25 People Strategy deliverables would be completed before they left the organisation at the end of April 2025.
23. RemCo commended the Head of People Strategy and Services on the considerable and impressive amount of work that had been undertaken to deliver LeO's People Strategy, commenting on how the improvements to recruitment and retention, absence management and leadership and development were now reaping rewards, including improved organisational performance.
24. RemCo **noted** the update and progress that had been made on the 2024/25 People Strategy and deliverables.

#### **Item 6 – 2024 civil service people survey**

25. A report on the results of the civil service people survey 2024 and the actions taken in response to the findings of the 2023 people survey was presented by the Head of People Strategy and Services. The following points were drawn to RemCo's attention:
- The 2024 people survey had closed on 8 October 2024 having received a 60% response rate which was a 3% improvement on the previous year and just 1% lower than the overall civil service response rate.
  - The survey responses had been positive, providing a snapshot in time on nine core themes, eight of which had improved and one, 'My Manager,' remaining unchanged when compared to the previous year.
  - Like previous years, to gain further insight on the survey responses, safe space sessions with members of staff networks and manager led sessions would be

held and the feedback provided would be analysed to further inform 2025/26 People Strategy deliverables, ED&I Strategy, and action planning.

- Staff communications, which would be supported by staff council, would be issued on a regular basis to inform staff of the action being taken in response to the survey results and the feedback provided by staff.
26. Having questioned whether more could be done to improve the people survey response rate, RemCo noted that whilst time had been allocated during the working day for staff to complete the survey, its completion was voluntary, and some staff may have been discouraged from completing it because it was lengthy and less relevant to them as non-civil servants.
27. The civil service had planned to re-design the people survey and consideration would be given to exploring whether it could be re-designed in a way that clarified its relevance to staff in non-civil service organisations like LeO.
28. To determine whether any particular cohorts of staff that were more, or less, engaged in the people survey and whether further targeted action could be taken to encourage engagement, consideration would be given to exploring whether there was a correlation between the people survey respondents' length of service and the length of service profile of the wider organisation.
29. RemCo urged the Executive to do all that it could to encourage staff to complete future people surveys.
30. RemCo had been pleased to note that staff feedback at the recent International Women's Day event had confirmed that those present had not experienced any harassment or discrimination whilst working at LeO.
31. RemCo **noted** the 2024 civil service survey results.

#### **Item 7 – Pay and reward strategy: Celebrating success scheme.**

32. To ensure that it remained fit for purpose, the celebrating success scheme, which had last been reviewed in 2021, had been reviewed in consultation with Staff Council, the Management Team, and Executive Team.
33. The Head of People Strategy and Services presented a report updating RemCo on proposed changes to the scheme which included changes to the frequency of awards and the inclusion of a more detailed section on factors to consider when submitting a nomination. Most of the feedback received had been in relation to the practical application of the scheme rather than the principles of the scheme itself; the Head of People Strategy and Services confirmed these would be addressed and when the updated scheme was rolled out it would be accompanied by detailed guidance.
34. In response to a question, RemCo was advised that the revised scheme would have more rigour in terms of monitoring and analysing its equality impact, this would include:
- all award nominations being 'sense-checked' by a moderation panel.
  - an analysis of the submission of nominations and the number of approved nominations across all the different protected groups to identify whether they

were proportionate and whether there were any managers that were less engaged in the scheme compared to others.

35. It was noted that the EDI data collected on the celebrating success scheme would also be used to inform the annual gender pay gap report.
36. Following discussion RemCo **approved** the updated celebrating success scheme.

### **Item 8 – Annual health and safety compliance report**

37. The Health and Safety and Facilities Manager presented the annual health and safety compliance report.

38. In discussion, the following points were made:

- Compliance with mandatory e-learning was 90%. This figure was expected to increase following adjustment to take account of staff that had left or recently joined the organisation.
- Since issuing the Health and Safety Compliance report, a further two DSE referrals had been received, resulting in a total of 14 DSE referrals being made to external specialists since April 2024.
- All staff had been asked to complete DSE assessments, specifically for homeworking, following the introduction of LeO's new hybrid working arrangements. The assessments were now being reviewed to identify any additional equipment needs or reasonable adjustments to be implemented.
- Homeworking guidance was to be reviewed in April and updated as required.
- There had been no health and safety incidents or near misses in the last 12 months.
- The lift at the Birmingham office was expected to remain out of service until the summer of 2025 whilst the Landlord sourced specialist suppliers through a tender process to replace it.
- A survey of the windows at the Birmingham office had been conducted and a report was awaited from the landlord's property agents. Since issuing the Health and Safety Compliance report there had been a further issue with a window that had become dislodged. This had happened when the office had been closed and had been reported to landlords managing agents for further action.
- A health and safety week was planned for later in the year. The OLC Chair requested that this was arranged for a week when the Board would be present in the Birmingham office for a Board meeting.

**ACTION: The Health and Safety and Facilities Manager to arrange the Health and Safety when the Board would be present in the Birmingham office for a Board meeting.**

39. RemCo **noted** the annual Health and Safety compliance report.

**Item 9 – RemCo Self-effectiveness review**

40. RemCo is required to review its effectiveness every two years by assessing its performance against its terms of reference to identify any gaps and areas for improvement.
41. To inform the 2025 self-effectiveness review, RemCo members would be asked to complete a self-assessment questionnaire which would be issued in March. The responses would be collated and shared with members for further consideration.
42. At the request of the RemCo Chair, it was **agreed** that the questionnaire would also be shared with the Chief Ombudsman and Head of People Strategy and Services.
43. It was also **agreed** that, if time allowed, RemCo would meet again after the Board meeting on 18 June to agree the next steps in response to the findings of its self-effectiveness review.

**ACTION: The Board Governance Manager to schedule an additional RemCo meeting after the 18 June Board meeting if time allowed to agree the next steps in response to the findings of its self-effectiveness review.**

44. The outcome of RemCo's 2025 self-effectiveness review would be considered as part of a wider 2025 internal review of Board effectiveness.
45. RemCo **noted** the update on the 2025 self-assessment of committee effectiveness.

**Item 10 – Items to escalate to Board.**

46. There were no items identified for escalation to the Board.
47. The RemCo Chair would provide a written update of the meeting for the Board.

**ACTION: The RemCo Chair to provide a written update of the meeting for the Board.**

**Item 11 – Effectiveness of the meeting**

48. The meeting had been positive, effective, and well chaired. The agenda had been focussed on the right items and had been supported by well-written papers, which had facilitated good discussions at the right level of detail.

**Item 12 - Any other business**

49. At the Board's request, an update on the People Survey was to be provided at April's Board meeting, as part of a wider RemCo update agenda item. Mindful of the need to avoid duplication across the Board and its committees, the OLC Chair welcomed any further feedback on this after April's Board meeting.
50. Recognising that this would be their last RemCo meeting before leaving the organisation in April, the RemCo Chair thanked the Head of People Strategy and

Services for all their hard work and achievements in delivering LeO's People Strategy and leading HR.

51. There was no other business.