

Public Interest Decisions Committee

Terms of Reference

1. Strategic Overview

The Public Interest Decisions Committee (the Committee) is a committee of the Office for Legal Complaints (the OLC). The Committee has been established to fulfill the functions of the OLC, as detailed in its Publishing Decisions Policy (the Policy), in relation to the exercise of its discretion under Section 150, Legal Services Act 2007 to publish a report of the investigation, consideration and determination of a complaint made under the Legal Ombudsman scheme.

2. Specific Duties

These functions will principally involve:

- considering applications usually brought by the Chief Ombudsman (or such party to whom the Chief Ombudsman has delegated that responsibility) for OLC approval to publish a report of the determination of a complaint where there has been either a pattern of complaints or set of individual circumstances which indicate it is in the public interest that the legal service provider should be named; and
- taking such decisions and making such arrangements that it judges are necessary to exercise the authority of the OLC as set out in the Policy and in such other criteria and guidance as are relevant to the exercise of that authority.

3. Authorities

The Committee is authorised by the OLC to:

- act in relation to any activity or topic covered by these Terms of Reference;
- procure external legal or other independent advice, subject to the budgetary delegations and any other criteria or policies which apply to the OLC.

4. Governance

The Chair of the Committee will be the Chair of the OLC or such other lay OLC member as the Chair of the OLC nominates.

The Committee will consist of the Chair, one lay and one non-lay member of the OLC.

A majority of the Committee's members will always be lay persons.

Committee members will be appointed by and from the OLC and the period of appointment to the Committee shall be commensurate with the agreed term of appointment to the OLC.

5. Support and Meetings

The Committee will meet as required in order to receive applications from the Chief Ombudsman or delegated party.

The quorum for a meeting of the Committee will be three members, attending in any meeting format (in person or by telephone, online or hybrid).

Legal Ombudsman staff will attend the Committee as required by the Chief Ombudsman and / or Chair.

The Committee will have the right to direct those attending a meeting to withdraw to facilitate the open and frank discussion of particular matters.

Members of the Committee will act with independence and objectivity in the conduct of their responsibilities. In addition, members should have a sound understanding of the objectives and priorities of the OLC and their role as a Committee member.

Agenda and supporting papers will, wherever possible, be produced and distributed to members and attendees at least 3 working days before meetings.

Support for the Committee will be provided by the Legal Ombudsman's Executive Support Team who will make arrangements for the organisation of Committee meetings, the noting of actions from Committee meetings and the coordination and distribution of papers as required.

6. Reporting to the OLC

The minutes of each meeting of the Committee will be circulated to the OLC.

The Chair of the Committee will provide a written update to the OLC as to the activities of PIDCo at the OLC Board meeting immediately following a PIDCo meeting.

The Chair of the Committee will present by no later than 30 April of each year a written report about the activities of the Committee in the preceding financial year to the OLC.

7. Conflicts of Interest

A Committee member or attendee who becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest relating to matters being discussed by the Committee should give prior notification to the Chair. If that is not possible, they should declare the interest at the meeting and, where necessary, withdraw during discussion of the relevant agenda item.