

Minutes of the twenty fifth meeting of the

Office for Legal Complaints (OLC)

Monday 18 July 2011

11.30am – 2.30pm

Petty France, London

Present:

Elizabeth France, Chair
Margaret Doyle, member
Tony Foster, member
David Thomas, member
Rosemary Carter, member
Professor Mary Seneviratne, member

In attendance:

Adam Sampson, Chief Ombudsman
Rob Hezel, Director of Finance and Business Services
Alison Robinson, Head of Policy and Communications
Liz Shepherd, Director of Operations

Board Secretary:

Andy Taylor

Apologies:

Brian Woods-Scawen

Preliminary issues:

Where a decision was made this was approved by a lay majority. The quorum requirements for the Board meeting were therefore met.

There were no declarations of interest.

Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

1. The Chair welcomed those in attendance.
2. Apologies were received from Brian Woods-Scawen.

Item 2 – Minutes of previous meeting

3. The minutes of the meeting of 20 June 2011 were approved for publication.

Item 3 – Matters arising & action points

4. Members noted those items where action had been completed and that others were included as agenda items.
5. Members requested that a suitable 'OLC members' area', with appropriate access rights, should be set up on the staff intranet as soon as possible. The OLC members' area should also include an electronic repository for OLC and sub-committee papers.
6. Members requested that a report should be provided by the Executive in respect of equality and diversity data at least twice a year.

ACTIONS

- The OLC Secretary to liaise with the Head of IT and Telecoms to develop an OLC members' area and to provide a suitable electronic repository, with appropriate access rights for members, on the staff intranet as soon as possible.
- The OLC Secretary to include a bi-annual equality and diversity data report on the OLC agenda planner.

Item 4 – Comments received regarding items presented for information.

7. Members noted the items presented for information. No comments were received in advance of the meeting for circulation.
8. The Chair updated members with details of the LSB meeting she attended with the Chief Ombudsman on 13 July. Matters discussed included will writing and alternative business structures and the contents of the OLC 2010/11 annual report.
9. Members were advised the next meeting involving the Chair of the OLC, Chairman of the LSB and the respective Chief Executives of LeO and the LSB was scheduled to take place on 25 July.
10. Members confirmed that OLC papers should be forwarded to the LSB in accordance with the appropriate Memorandum of Understanding agreed on 17 December 2009.
11. Members asked for details of the roles recently advertised by the SRA to be circulated electronically as soon as possible.
12. Members discussed the suite of internal KPI data and requested that further information should be included in future, for example inflation adjusted costs relating to previous schemes and regular data relating to internal service complaints. Members also requested that the information contained within the pie charts should be comparable.

13. Members agreed that a set of LeO KPI data along with the commentary from the OLC should be sent to the LSB by the end of week commencing 18 July 2011.
14. Members noted that a further paper in respect of publishing Ombudsmen's decisions would be presented to the OLC meeting on 26 September.

ACTIONS

- The OLC Secretary to issue a web link to the recently advertised SRA roles to members and the Executive as soon as possible.
- The Director of Finance and Business Services to include comparator cost information in future KPI reports relating to previous schemes.
- The Head of Compliance to include internal service complaint data and analysis in future internal KPI reports.
- The Head of Finance to update the pie charts included in the KPI report to ensure consistency of reporting.
- Tony Foster, on behalf of the OLC, to issue a set of KPI data to the LSB along with an appropriate commentary by the end of week commencing 18 July.

Item 5 – Finance report.

Summary of the tabled paper

The tabled paper provided members with details of the financial position of the organisation for the month of June 2011 and full year forecast.

15. Members noted that the primary reason for costs being below budget was an under spend on staffing costs. However they acknowledged that there would be an impact following the implementation of the pay remit which would be reflected in the July payroll.
16. The Director of Finance and Business Services advised members that further expenditure in respect of staff training would be included in later reports. Members suggested the finance team continue to monitor the level of late payments being received.

Item 6 – HR report

Summary of the tabled paper

The tabled paper provided members with an update on performance on key HR issues across the Legal Ombudsman and included details of progress made on:

- i. the seven points raised in the HR internal audit;
- ii. senior HR staff work plans;
- iii. the LeO pay and performance framework;

- iv. equality and diversity data collection matters;
- v. the HR IT system;
- vi. the flexible benefits scheme; and
- vii. general HR matters, including sickness absence and staff turnover data.

17. Members noted the report and the Chair of RemCo thanked the Director of Finance and Business Services for the support he had provided to the team, which had been reflected the progress made and looked forward to receiving further regular reports in the future.

18. Members were made aware of the Ombudsman pay level having become disconnected from the lowest point of the judicial pay scale. Members recommended that a process should be put in place to avoid this occurring in future and requested further information from HR before a decision was taken on how to proceed.

ACTIONS

- The Director of Finance and Business Services to provide members of RemCo with details of the Ombudsmen's pay arrangements as soon as possible in order that a full discussion may take place and response agreed.

Item 7 – Operations business process report

Summary of the tabled paper

The tabled paper provided members with details of planning and efficiency assumptions and the proposed actions to be implemented to address the underlying causes of delays to work in progress.

19. Members noted the paper and questions were invited. Members were advised:

- A full cleansing of operations data was required in order to ensure that the correct case commencement date was recorded.
- Although it was clear when the case management process had finished, further work was required in respect of defining when the case 'clock' began. Members suggested the Executive work to define this more closely, while maintaining consistency with the position outlined in the 2010/11 annual report.
- All staff across the organisation, including corporate teams, were supportive of the proposals to manage and improve the level of work in progress as quickly as possible.

20. Members advised the Executive they would monitor progress appropriately and would provide a commentary to accompany the KPI data issued to the LSB by the end of this week.

ACTIONS

- The Executive to define the timing of the case 'clock' as soon as possible and to complete any required data cleansing before reporting further to the OLC.

Item 8 – Stakeholder advisory panel report

Summary of the tabled paper

The tabled paper provided members with an interim report provided by the stakeholder advisory panel following a visit to LeO during May 2011.

21. Members noted the paper and the number of positive comments made by the Panel. Members asked the Chief Executive to respond to the interim report and invite a summary version for publication. Members suggested that an annual stakeholder advisory panel report should be obtained going forward as it provided the organisation with an independent external view of the Legal Ombudsman.
22. Members agreed that the report also identified areas the OLC may wish to consider in the future and this topic should be included within the 2011 strategy day agenda.

ACTIONS

- The Chief Executive to respond to the interim stakeholder advisory panel report and to invite a summary version for publication.
- The OLC Secretary to include time within the strategy day agenda for discussion on the stakeholder advisory panel report.

Item 9 – 2012 annual business plan - approach

Summary of the tabled paper

The tabled paper provided members with details of the proposed 2012 annual business plan development and consultation timetable.

23. Members noted the paper and considered that in some areas, the production timescales were ambitious. Members agreed there should be a single paper detailing both the 2012 business plan and high level strategy.

Item 10 – Any other business.

24. Members were informed the 2010/11 OLC annual report had been laid before Parliament during the progress of the meeting.
25. The next OLC meeting will be held on 5 September 2011 as part of the OLC/Executive strategy day. This will take place in the Drummond Room, Burlington Hotel, New Street, Birmingham, commencing at 11.00am.

Andy Taylor
Board Secretary
22 July 2011