

**Minutes of the twenty-fifth meeting of the Council of the Telecommunications  
Ombudsman Service Limited (TOSL)**

**Tuesday 24 February 2004 at 11:30 hours**

**The Brewhouse, Wilderspool Park, Greenall's Avenue, Warrington**

Present:

Council

Margaret Doyle

Chris Holland

Peter Holland (Chairman)

Rosaleen Hubbard

Roger Jefferies

Secretariat

Chris McAlpine

In attendance

Elizabeth France (Ombudsman)

Richard Brown

Richard Sills

**Preliminaries**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

There were apologies for absence from Jeremy Mitchell due to a family bereavement. The Chairman expressed condolences on behalf of the Council.

**2. Minutes of the Council meeting held on 9 December 2003**

The minutes were approved for publication on the Otelo website.

**3. Matters arising from the Minutes**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

**4. Chairman's Report**

4.1 The Chairman had been invited to meet Phil Kirby, Vodafone's new representative on the Member Board. Richard Feasey, Chris Holland and Rosaleen Hubbard were also at the meeting on 28 January. Some issues of substance were raised by Vodafone, relating to the build up of the Service. The Chairman had been happy to assure them that all the points they raised had been taken into account by the Council, Member Board and Executive.

4.2 The Chairman had also attended a meeting of the Communication Managers Association with Richard Sills. The Ombudsman had spoken at a previous CMA event. The meeting was interesting and useful.

## **5. Ombudsman's Report**

- 5.1 The Ombudsman had attended a number of meetings during a busy January. There was a common theme: alternative dispute resolution in different areas of the economy. The Ombudsman added that all the meetings had proved very informative and demonstrated that there was serious consideration being given to the introduction of alternative dispute resolution in other regulated areas. A discussion followed on how any developments might affect Otelo's current or future role and the Ombudsman was asked to keep up to date with developments and brief the Council as appropriate. Rosaleen Hubbard would ensure that the Member Board were aware of developments. The Ombudsman also commented on the Consumer Panel Event at BT which had been very well received. All who attended agreed that it had been well facilitated. Chris Holland said that from BT's perspective the event had proved very successful. He thanked the Ombudsman for her presentation at the end of the event.
- 5.2 The Ombudsman had also spoken at the PITCOM AGM and attended a workshop at Ofcom. Rosaleen Hubbard and Dick Sills were also at the workshop as were a number of our Member companies. The Ombudsman welcomed the approach of Ofcom to contacts, which will be split into 3 categories; enquiries, dissatisfied customers and complaints. In discussion it was agreed that there was still work to be done to ensure that providers, the two dispute resolution schemes and the Regulator had a common understanding of each others' roles. It was clear that the industry remained concerned about what they saw to be inadequate consultation on some points.
- 5.3 The Ombudsman confirmed that a media bulletin had been issued, drawing attention to the publication of anonymised case summaries. This had not led to any immediate publicity but there had been interest from some BBC researchers.
- 5.4 Richard Brown, answering questions on the Finance Report said that the current position was positive. The position of debtors and invoices outstanding was explained. Payments were shown as outstanding after 60 days. The cashflow position was also clarified.
- 5.4 Richard Sills answered questions on the Operations report. There were no outstanding issues on the report.

## **6. Member Board Report**

- 6.1 Rosaleen Hubbard provided a brief overview of Member Board matters. The Member Board had met in January and held a conference call in February. At the January meeting Richard Brown had set out the draft budget and the conference call had outlined some issues to be addressed. The conference call was positive and another one is planned for March when the budget will be considered for agreement.
- 6.2 A question was asked about a meeting for all members, and it was confirmed that it is planned for this to take place in September. It was also confirmed that in terms of communication, the Member Board minutes are issued to all member companies and the website area dedicated to members is being piloted. Additionally each Member

Board member has responsibility for a group of members. The Ombudsman added that a seminar-type session will be set up in June by the Executive for operations contacts at the smaller member companies. It was also confirmed that the Member Board would look again at its structure to ensure that the number of small members who had recently joined were adequately represented..

## 7. Member Update

- 7.1 Three new member applications in February were approved by the Council. A further list of recent applications was given to Council to consider. A reminder e-mail would be sent to Council members in March regarding these new applications.

### Action Points

- AP1 Otelo to send reminder e-mail to Council members.

## 8 Revised Draft Budget

- 8.1 The Ombudsman explained that a covering paper had been prepared which was designed to answer the questions that had been raised following the presentation to the Member Board. The Ombudsman provided an overview of the current position and Richard Brown answered questions raised. He pointed out that the increase in case numbers had brought forward the recruitment of Investigation Officers. It was noted that the financial trends were positive and appeared sustainable. The deficit was discussed as was the split between member subscriptions and case fees. Rosaleen Hubbard pointed out that the financial position would be reviewed by the Member Board in September.
- 8.2 Chris Holland was happy that, following an explanation by the Executive of couple of minor points of detail, the draft budget could be passed to the Member Board. .
- 8.3 Richard Brown raised the issue of the subscription rebate and it was agreed that this would be decided by the Member Board in a conference call including Richard Brown
- 8.4 Following discussion, **the draft budget was commended to the Member Board by Council.** The Executive was asked to ensure that the latest version, and commentary, are available to the Member Board for its March meeting.
- 8.5 KPIs were discussed. It was generally agreed that there should be a maximum of five KPIs and a discussion took place about the KPIs set out in the draft budget. These were agreed as satisfactory and the Ombudsman confirmed that management information can be made available if required. **It was agreed that the KPIs were to be presented to the Member Board with the draft budget.**

### Action points

- AP2 Otelo to ensure draft budget, commentary and KPIs are sent to the Member Board.

## 9. Proposal for Customer Satisfaction Survey

- 9.1 The Chairman expressed his thanks to Margaret Doyle and Jeremy Mitchell for working with the Executive on this. Useful comments had also been received from Chris Holland. It was agreed that the proposal was now more focused and ready to go out to potential bidders. The Chairman asked that Margaret Doyle, Andrew Bradley and a member of the Executive take forward the process.

- 9.2 A question was raised about the sample size to be used, and it was agreed that the possibility of sending a satisfaction survey at the completion of the process to all Otelo complainants would be explored with the successful bidder.
- 9.3 It was agreed that the outcome of the research would be brought to the attention of Ofcom's Consumer Panel

#### Action Points

- AP3 Otelo to proceed to agree a contract for the Consumer Satisfaction Survey, involving Margaret Doyle as Council representative.

### **10. Communications Plan and Costed Key Deliverables for 2004/5**

- 10.1 Comments on the plan were discussed. It was agreed that before paying to attend any Conference or Exhibition the value of so doing – in terms of raising awareness with delegates and/or encouraging invitations to local events – would be assessed.
- 10.2 While the overall budget figures were accepted there were some questions about precise spend within it. It was agreed that the Executive would discuss further with Margaret Doyle how the figures had been arrived at with a view to an oral report at the next meeting. The plan would also be checked for consistency in terms of the language used.

#### **Action point:**

- AP4 **Otelo to discuss the plan further with Margaret Doyle before the next Council meeting.**

### **11. Any other Business**

- 11.1 The Chairman raised the issue of how best to utilise future dates when Council was not holding a formal meeting and requested ideas for using these dates. Council were enthusiastic about this and agreed to consider ideas.
- 11.2 The proposed meeting for Member Companies in September was discussed. It was agreed that the Member Board would also consider what type of function this should be. Various suggestions were made regarding the content and format of the event including the venue, speakers and capacity. It was agreed that these matters needed to be confirmed as soon as possible and the event should be aimed at senior regulatory representatives of member companies.

### **12 Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 20 April 2004 at 11:30 hours at Otelo's offices in Warrington.