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## Minutes of the Thirty-seventh meeting of the Council of the Telecommunications Ombudsman Service Limited (TOSL)

Tuesday 16 May 2005 at 1pm

Otelo Offices, Wilderspool Park, Greenalls Avenue, Warrington

### Present:

**Council:** Peter Holland (Chairman)  
Margaret Doyle  
Rosaleen Hubbard  
Roger Jefferies  
Julie Meadows  
Jeremy Mitchell  
Chris Holland

**In Attendance:** Elizabeth France (Ombudsman)  
Richard Brown  
Richard Sills  
Andrew Bradley

### 1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies

### 2 Minutes of the Council Meeting, held on 19 April 2005

The Minutes, with minor drafting amendments, were approved for publication on the Otelo website.

### 3 Matters Arising

The Communications Manager, Andrew Bradley, and Margaret Doyle confirmed that they had discussed approaches to consumer groups.

Meetings had taken place with the aim to improve the ways that Otelo's performance is reported to Council.

The Director of Operations, Richard Sills, and the rest of the Otelo team were congratulated for their work on the response to Ofcom's formal request for information which was considered by the Council to be of a high standard.

There was a discussion about the provision of some of the information contained in Otelo's Customer Satisfaction Survey for 2005 to Ofcom, before it had been presented to the Council. It was agreed that this had been exceptional but justified by the timing deadlines for Ofcom's review.

### 4 Chairman's Report

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The Chairman and the Ombudsman had attended meetings with Centrica and Scottish and Southern Energy. During discussions the possibility of extending the Ombudsman Service's approach to gas and electricity customers was raised. Representatives from these companies were to visit Otelo to look at the way the service operates. A meeting with Powergen was also being arranged.

Ed Blades, Assistant Director, Economic Regulation Team at the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) had contacted the Ombudsman for updated information about the work of Otelo in the context of further work for DTI ministers taking forward the work arising from the consultation exercise: extending competitive markets: empowered consumers, successful business

It was agreed that Otelo should keep aware of developments in this area and that the Service may be able to consider offering to provide ADR in respect of services other than telecommunications if such a need or desire became apparent in future. To help form a better view of this the executive was asked to do some work for the Council so that it could understand better, and possibly respond to, any future opportunities presented by any policy development in relation to ADR.

Next the Chairman asked Council to consider its future meeting schedule. Suggestions were tabled and it was agreed that a revised meeting schedule would be circulated.

**Action Point 1:** The Executive are to provide information for the Council's October meeting in relation to ADR for the utilities.

**Action Point 2:** A revised meeting schedule for the period to April 2006 is to be circulated.

## 5 Ombudsman's Report

This was the first month that Otelo had provided information in relation to the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) set out in the Strategic Plan for 2005/6. The Council asked for future reports to give the targets alongside the performance achieved.

The Ombudsman had met with the Removals Ombudsman and the Estate Agents Ombudsman. The Swiss Telecoms Ombudsman would shortly be visiting Otelo.

Future recruitment and training needs were explained. Staff in the Enquires and Investigations Teams had been offered the chance to develop by taking on supervisory roles. New Case-officers had been recruited to the pool.

A communications report was given. Otelo will exhibit at the Trading Standards Conference in Brighton, Citizens Advice Scotland Conference in Edinburgh and will exhibit and host a seminar at Citizens Advice Conference in York.

Margaret Doyle gave a report on the work she had done with Andrew Bradley to address the needs of consumer groups. A list of consumer contacts was being created and contacts at Citizens Advice from both policy and information sections, are to meet Margaret and Andrew to discuss how Otelo might improve the accessibility of information to their staff. A consumer event was now being planned for late Autumn. There was a discussion about how best to structure this event. It was agreed that Margaret and the Andrew would continue to work on this.

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Ways of measuring the effectiveness of communications activities were discussed. Looking at the source of information about Otelo cited by contacts, and at the proportion of those contacting the service at an appropriate time in the progress of their complaint would be two good indicators of success. This data is already collected. It was also suggested that Otelo should aim to improve communications with small and medium sized enterprises (SME's).

The Ombudsman confirmed that she had written to the new Secretary of State and invited him to speak at the Otelo event at the House of Commons in July. The Managing Director of Onetel had also been invited to speak.

The Operations and Finance reports were given and discussed. It was agreed that greater understanding would be achieved if the information given in charts was on the same basis as the information in tables. Julie Meadows would provide a template to the Executive which would set out what the Council would like to see on a regular basis, and how this would feed through to the Member Board.

**Action Point 3:** The Executive would present information in a new format once a template had been agreed

**Action Point 4:** Arrangements for a consumer event in the autumn should be taken forward.

## 6 Member Board Report

The Chairman of the Member Board confirmed that they had discussed Otelo's Articles of Association in relation to casual vacancies on the Member Board. They approved the set of instructions that Roger Jefferies' working group proposed.

The Member Board had discussed the sort of information they would like to see from Otelo. Julie Meadows would take this into account in the work she was doing.

The member company extranet was now fully operational and was being used by members. Work will continue to ensure that relevant information is placed on the site.

It was agreed that it would be beneficial if one or two representatives from the Member Board were to attend Otelo's open-day for the operational staff at its member companies in June.

The Member Board proposed that the Council should remove from membership three companies that had failed to provide information about their Total Relevant Retail Revenues as required by the Articles of Association. All companies had been sent reminders and a final letter was sent on 7 April. No responses had been received. The Council agreed to this proposal.

**Action Point 5:** Richard Brown to write to:

- Telecubes Ltd
- Cable Direct Ltd
- Telecom Warehouse Ltd

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notifying them that their membership of the Telecommunications Ombudsman Service will be withdrawn at the next meeting of the Council. The correspondence should be copied to Ofcom and to CISAS.

## **7 Member Update**

The Ombudsman reported that a further eight members had joined the Service since the last meeting – making 137 members.

## **8 Date of Next Meeting**

28 June 2005 at 1pm. The meeting will be preceded by a meeting of the Audit Committee, to be held at 11.30am.