

**Minutes of the Thirty-eighth meeting of the Council of the Telecommunications
Ombudsman Service Limited (TOSL)**

Tuesday 28 June 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 16 May 2005

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

3 Matters Arising

The Executive confirmed that they are working to provide information for the Council's October meeting in relation to ADR for utilities

4 Chairman's Report

The Chairman and the Ombudsman had attended a very positive meeting with British Gas.

The Chairman asked Julie Meadows to report back on the work she had done with Otelo's Executive to improve the way that Otelo reports its performance to the Council. Following feedback from Council Julie proposed a framework which combines monthly exception reporting with quarterly in-depth reviews of performance.

It was confirmed that Council members would, at all times, continue to have full access to detailed information through the extranet service and that the new reporting process would begin in September.

The Member Board will see KPI information at each of its meetings and will receive more detailed performance reports bi-annually.

The Away-day planned for October was discussed and The Chairman asked for suggestions from Council on content. It was envisaged that time will be spent on strategic planning for the period 2006-9. A half year review is also planned.

5 Ombudsman's Report

Otelo continued to work on a month-on-month improvement toward KPI targets. The number of cases accepted for investigation had increased significantly and action had been taken to manage the extra work by recruiting more staff and case-workers. The Council asked for future KPI reports to be given greater detail which would place them in context.

Capital investment in the phone system had also been made to accommodate the number of calls that can be answered simultaneously.

The full time equivalent of six new Enquiry Officers and five new Investigation Officers had been recruited and new positions were being advertised for a part-time Human Resource Assistant and a full-time Information Assistant.

A draft copy of The Ombudsman's Annual Report had been circulated to Council members so that they may see the information that will be included.

An Open-day had been held for the Operational staff at Otelo's member companies. This was well attended and well received. The Chairman of the Member Board apologised that the Member Board was not represented at the event but agreed to take on the advice that came out of this meeting that the role of the Ombudsman should be cascaded through member companies so that all staff understand Otelo's role.

Margaret Doyle and Andrew Bradley had attended a meeting with Citizens Advice policy and advice staff. They learned about Citizens Advice systems and helped to improve the information that Citizens Advice held about Otelo. They were also given sight of Citizens Advice evidence files and were invited to send staff to look at these on a regular basis. An event for Consumer Advisors to be held later in the year was discussed and a way forward was planned.

The agenda for the combined event for the launch of the Ombudsman's Annual Report and meeting for senior staff at Otelo's member companies to be held at the House of Lords in July was discussed and it was confirmed that the Minister of State for the Department of Trade and Industry had agreed to speak. The Ombudsman will invite the Minister to visit Otelo's offices following the event.

An explanation of Otelo's work to build a 'Knowledge base' was given.

It was confirmed that income for the third consecutive month was considerably over budget.

6 Member Board Report

The Chairman of the Member Board confirmed that they had discussed Otelo's Articles of Association and they would pass them back to the Council for adoption at the AGM.

As a minority representative was not present at the Member Board meeting, it was deemed inappropriate for them to continue to consider changes to the structure of the Member Board. Nominations for this role had been received and the elected person would be contacted over the summer in preparation for the Autumn meetings.

A presentation had been given to the Member Board on Otelo's financial performance. Suggestions were invited for discussion at the next meeting on how a surplus should be dealt with. The Chairman of the Member Board stressed that a cautious and holistic approach would be taken when thinking about this.

The Chairman of the Council asked the Council representatives to be briefed before participating in discussions about changing Otelo's charging structure. It was commented that any surplus should be refunded to Otelo's members and that this should be considered separately to question of whether to change the way the Service is funded.

7 Member Update

The Ombudsman reported that a further eight members had joined the Service since the last meeting – making 143 members.

8 Removal of Members

In accordance with Article 8, the Company Secretary had written to the Company Secretary of three member companies that had failed to submit a TRRR return. One company had provided this information however two had not. It was agreed that these two companies should be removed from membership. Ofcom and Cisas will be notified of this decision.

A procedure for the re-admittance of expelled Service Members was clarified and agreed.

9 Draft Accounts

Following a meeting of the Audit committee the draft accounts were endorsed and commended to the Council with minor amendments to drafting. A vote was taken, the accounts were unanimously accepted and to confirm this, a letter was passed to the Chairman for his signature on behalf of the Directors.

10 Customer Satisfaction Survey

A presentation was given by Craigforth Consultancy and Research on the results of the research they had undertaken for Otelo's Customer Satisfaction Survey for 2004-5.

Craigforth commented about the continued high standard of Otelo's performance, as shown by the Customer Satisfaction Survey.

11 Any Other Business

There were no issues raised.

12 Date of Next Meeting

Monday 25 July at 10:30 at Towerhouse Consulting, 50-60 Russell Square, London.
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