

**Minutes of the seventh meeting of the Member Board of the  
Surveying Ombudsman Service Ltd**

**Monday 28 April 2008  
1 Birdcage Walk, London**

**Present:**

**Member Board**

**Maggie Jones - Chair  
Patrick Bligh-Cheesman  
Rosemary Carter  
Steven Gould  
Dianne Hayter  
Chris Kenny  
Christopher Lloyd  
Jane Pridgeon  
James Scott-Lee**

**Secretariat**

**Robbie Allcock**

**In attendance**

**Richard Brown  
David Pilling**

**1. Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies.

**2. Minutes of the Member Board meeting held on 28 February 2008**

The Minutes were approved for publication on the Surveyors Ombudsman Service website.

**3. Matters Arising from the Minutes**

All action points had been completed.

**4. tOSI Council Report**

There had been two tOSI Council reports since the last Board meeting.

The Chair reported on the March tOSI Council meeting. The main issues discussed were:

- Approval of the Business Plan & Budget for 2008/09;
- OFT – update on the Surveyors Ombudsman Service's application to be approved by OFT as a redress scheme for estate agents; and
- Succession Planning.

Steven Gould, substitute Council representative for the Surveyors Ombudsman Service

Member Board, reported on April's meeting. This meeting was preceded by a presentation from tOSI's Human Resources Manager on Absence Management.

The main issues discussed were:

- the Energy Ombudsman and Surveyors Ombudsman Service's applications to Ofgem and OFT for approval of their respective redress schemes;
- Productivity and efficiency saving; and
- British Property Federation (BPF) – tOSI had received initial contact from the BPF to discuss the possibility of providing it with a redress mechanism for its members. The Council had agreed this was a matter for the Surveyors Ombudsman Service Member Board to pursue and obtain further information.

Feedback was also provided from the Finance Board meeting held on 1 April. Steven Gould and Jane Pridgeon represented the Surveyors Ombudsman Service.

The main issues discussed were:

- Subject to some minor amendments the Board approved the tOSI Business Plan for 2008/09.
- It was agreed that the existing strategy for investment was 'risk free' and there was unanimous agreement not to ask for a higher risk based strategy.
- The Board agreed increases to the salaries of all Independent Directors.
- The Board discussed tOSI Reserves and cost attribution. The following actions were agreed:
  1. The cost attribution for Financial Year 2007/08.
  2. To draw up a statement of general protocol.
  3. To initially set out materiality at 5%
  4. To review on a quarterly basis.
- The Board also discussed its role. The Board would like to broaden its remit to incorporate some form of longer term financial planning, at the same time ensuring its deliberations did not cut across the remits of the tOSI Council, Member Boards or Audit Committee. It was noted that this would require a change to the Articles of Association at the next General meeting in July.

## **5. Performance Report**

The performance report was noted. For Otelo and the Energy Ombudsman Service, KPI targets are not currently being met. However, it was reiterated that overall case volume continues to increase above expectations and an Action Plan is in place to remedy the failure to meet the set KPIs. It was reported that all recruitment is now complete but both overtime and the use of the OutWorker panel will continue until the backlog has been overcome. It was also noted that this was having no major impact on Surveyors Ombudsman Service work.

In relation to the performance of the Surveyors Ombudsman Service it was noted that, although still relatively low, case numbers had tripled in the past three months (61 forms issued to date).

There was a discussion surrounding the KPIs used to measure performance and concern was raised that the tOSI Council had agreed to drop the KPI for responding to 95% of all correspondence within 5 days. Although it was confirmed that this was a decision for the Council only, of which representatives of the Board were part of, the consensus of the Board was that it should have been consulted before any such decision was taken. Although the view of the Council was that 10 days was an acceptable response time, it was the general consensus of the Board that this period was not sufficient. The views of the Board will be aired to the tOSI Council. It was also suggested that this information could still be provided to the Board, for example, within

the Management Information pack.

## **6. Update on Membership**

Of the 10,000 surveying firms RICS have written to regarding their regulation, 9359 have signed up to be regulated by RICS and, of these, 2974 firms have chosen to use the Surveyors Ombudsman Service as their redress mechanism.

It was noted that the number of firms who wish to use the Surveyors Ombudsman Service as their redress scheme may increase post CEARA 2007. It was the opinion of RICS that this could potentially lead to (a maximum of) an additional 500 firms requiring membership. RICS also confirmed that it was actively seeking to ensure that all of its regulated firms knew and understood exactly what redress options were available to them.

## **7. Management Information (MI) Pack**

Patrick Bligh-Cheesman had prepared a paper for the Board which contained a first draft of the proposed information to be contained within the MI pack. The Board discussed the main topics highlighted within the paper, the majority of which were acknowledged could be provided. However, there were discussions over some topics, namely 'Complaint Type' and 'Costs of the Service'. For 'Complaint Type' it was agreed that further work needed to be undertaken between Patrick and Richard Brown in order to refine the complaint groups. For 'Costs of the Service' there was lengthy debate regarding the fact that tOSI does not currently do any time recording and, as a result, cannot monitor actual case costs. It was suggested that Surveyors Ombudsman Service staff be required to keep timesheets to detail how much time is being spent on certain cases in order to try and determine if certain cases take more time than others. Richard Brown explained to the Board that the cost attribution model was not a cost per case model based on the types of complaint received, but simply a cost recovery mechanism. The scheme is also still in its infancy. It was further reported that such a change to the business model of tOSI would need to be determined by the tOSI Council. It was eventually agreed that it would be beneficial for the Surveyors Ombudsman, Ian Smith, to monitor this and then provide the Board with some information to see if certain types of complaints are more prevalent than others.

**AP: Patrick Bligh-Cheesman and Richard Brown to liaise further re Complaint Types**

**AP: Ian Smith to monitor prevalence of case types and report at a future Board meeting.**

## **8. Communication Plan**

The Board were provided with update papers from tOSI and RICS' Communications departments. Both papers were noted. For tOSI, it was particularly noted that the tOSI AGM and Annual Report launch will take place on Wednesday 16 July at the Attlee Suite, Portcullis House. Invitations will be sent to Board members in due course.

The Board held a brief discussion about non-RICS firms joining the Surveyors Ombudsman Service. The point was made that, although the scheme was open to non-RICS members, RICS is a professional body and the scheme was setup fundamentally for use by its own regulated firms.

## **9. Any other business**

There was no other business.

**Date of next meeting**

11.00 on Thursday 22 May at RICS offices, 12 Great George Street, London.

These minutes were approved at the Member Board meeting held on

Signed (on behalf of the Member Board)

**Baroness Maggie Jones**

**Chairman of Member Board**