

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

**Thursday 22 May 2008
1 Birdcage Walk, London**

Present:

Member Board

**Maggie Jones - Chair
Patrick Bligh-Cheesman
Rosemary Carter
Steven Gould
Chris Kenny
Christopher Lloyd**

Secretariat

Robbie Allcock

In attendance

**Richard Brown
David Pilling**

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Dianne Hayter, Jane Pridgeon and James Scott-Lee. It was confirmed that Dianne Hayter had tendered her resignation from the Board as she had been asked by RICS to chair a committee on Residential Property Standards. On behalf of the Board, the Chair expressed her thanks to Dianne Hayter for her contributions to the Board.

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

Subject to minor amendments the Minutes were approved for publication on the Surveyors Ombudsman Service website.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

AP: Patrick Bligh-Cheesman and Richard Brown to liaise further re Complaint Types. This matter was dealt with under Agenda item 7.

AP: Ian Smith to monitor prevalence of case types and report at a future Board meeting. This action was ongoing - Ian Smith will prepare a paper for the July's Board meeting.

It was noted that tOSI had received further questions from OFT in relation to its application for approval as a redress scheme for estate agents. tOSI will work on a response to this in conjunction with RICS.

AP: Draft response to be circulated to Member Board

4. tOSI Council Report

Steven Gould reported on the May tOSI Council meeting. The main issues discussed were:

- Succession Planning;
- Energy Ombudsman/Otelo funding – there was a discussion surrounding the Energy sector’s decision to fund recruitment ‘ahead of the curve’ and the benefit Otelo may have gained from this. This will be a matter for tOSI’s Finance Board to debate;
- Performance – the Council had discussed the way in which performance stats were reported and published. It had been agreed to publish KPIs in a consistent form but to ensure that the Council and Member Boards receive all ‘stock’ figures;
- the Energy Ombudsman application to Ofgem for approval as a redress scheme and also the possibility of tOSI tendering to become an approved redress scheme for Postal Services. The overriding view of the Council is that any additional work should not damage any of the existing Services it administers.

This meeting was preceded by a presentation from Craigforth, an Independent Research company who carried out the annual Satisfaction Surveys for the Energy Ombudsman and Otelo schemes for 2007/08. It was noted that the results overall were good and dissatisfaction amongst complainants correlated with the outcome and length of their case. The reports will be published in July. No survey was carried out for the Surveyors Ombudsman Service due to the early stages of the scheme.

5. Performance Report

The performance report was noted. Although KPI targets are still not currently being met, it was noted that for the first quarter of 2008, tOSI had actually taken on the equivalent of one month’s worth of additional cases than had been expected. Full recruitment is now in place and a pool of OutWorker’s are now being trained up. It was also reported to the Board that the current high case volume is expected only to be a ‘spike’ and not a long term trend. It was reiterated that this was not yet having a significant impact on the Surveyors Ombudsman Service.

In relation to the performance of the Surveyors Ombudsman Service it was noted that there are currently 60 cases in stock, 27 of which are over 8 weeks.

The Board also noted that In terms of Finance, staff costs are currently greater than budget due to the increased use of OutWorkers and overtime in order to remedy the failure to meet KPI targets. This should come back into line as the year progresses.

6. Update on Membership

Of the 10,000 surveying firms RICS have written to regarding their regulation, 9337 have signed up to be regulated by RICS and, of these, 3061 firms have chosen to use the Surveyors Ombudsman Service as their redress mechanism.

It was noted that RICS has been provided with £100,000 by the RICS Client/Money Protection scheme in order to assist in looking for firms who are RICS practicing firms, but are not actually registered as being regulated by it, on its database e.g. sole practitioners.

Steven Gould also confirmed that he was happy for RICS regulated firms to have any approved redress scheme in place providing it was free to the consumer.

7. Management Information (MI) Pack

Following liaison with Richard Brown, Patrick Bligh-Cheesman had prepared a second draft for the Board of the proposed information to be contained within the MI pack. Patrick had explained that he had tried to obtain the information the Board would require in a readable fashion. The Board again discussed the main topics highlighted within the paper, the majority of which were acknowledged could be provided. However, there was another debate over 'Complaint Types'. After some discussion regarding Level 1 and Level 2 'Complaint Types' it was again agreed that further work was still required on this issue, in particular with the assistance of Chris Lloyd and James Scott-Lee who both have industry expertise. It was pointed out that there remains some confusion as to the terms 'client', 'consumer' and 'complainant' and the importance of tOSI staff being able to differentiate between all three. The Board had also agreed all other sections of the proposed information (after it had been agreed to change the heading of section 1).

AP: Patrick Bligh-Cheesman to liaise with RICS, Chris Lloyd and James Scott-Lee re Complaint Types and report back at the next meeting with a view to signing off the MI pack.

8. Any other business

It was confirmed that tOSI will launch a corporate annual report and one for each of its three Ombudsman Services on 16 July, Porticullis House. Invitations will be sent out to Board members in due course. There was a brief discussion surrounding the process for drafting the reports. It was explained that the Ombudsman writes the Annual Report and it is then sent to Council for observation. No formal intervention is required of the Member Board, although suggestions could be made. It was agreed that the Board would wait for the report to be published and then feedback any comments afterwards.

It was also noted that RICS was carrying out some web based marketing activity with firms in order to raise the profile of the SOS. This will also aim to promote the scheme to consumers too and the Board agreed that such activity could be monitored against stats in the future.

Date of next meeting

11.00 on Thursday 24 July 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