

NOTE OF SUPERVISORY BOARD MEETING

Thursday 31 July 2003

Present:

Juliet Wheldon
Len Berkowitz
Mark Blythe
Valerie Cain
Vivienne Collett
Simon Harker
Hilary Jackson

Jonathan Jones
Philip Kent
Barrie McKay
David Pearson
Iv Rees
Alison Schofield
Doug Walters

Graham Bate (Item 6)
Simon Lewis (Item 6)
Olu Mateola (Item 6)

Apologies:

Robert Aitken
David Brummell
Martin Hemming

Tony Hindley
Rosemary Jeffreys
Isabel Letwin

Mike Thomas

Juliet opened the meeting by informing the Board of TSOL's likely role in the Hutton Inquiry. Although Clifford Chance had been appointed Official Solicitor to the Inquiry, the proceedings were likely to place heavy demands on TSOL resources.

1. Business Performance

(a) **PRACAMS/MoB** – an Activity Report to 4 July had been circulated prior to the meeting. David reported on the main activities:

- the Working Group Leaders presented the findings of their reports to the Programme Board. Their recommendations would be fed into the ongoing modelling work;
- further work had been done on clarifying the purpose and expected outcomes of the programme;
- additional hardware for PRACAMS was being assessed, to identify the best resilience option to support our BCP requirements; and
- "Valid" had been chosen as the preferred supplier for the eRIK platform, and they were now working closely with Solicitec.

It was noted that it was agreed at the Audit Committee that the Committee should receive reports from Steve Phillpotts, as independent Auditor, on the progress of MoB and PRACAMS.

(b) **Finance/Targets** – The revamped management information pack had been circulated. Hilary noted some of the highlights:

- chargeable hours to the end of June were around 25% of budget, which was slightly higher than the average outturn in the last three years;
- Finance were analysing accounting entries to resolve the discrepancies currently evident in the figures for disbursement income.
- the volume of debt over 90 days old had not grown. Finance were continuing actions to reduce the volume, and in some cases would welcome the support of other Divisions in chasing debtors; and

- performance on the prompt payment of invoices had slipped to 89%, meaning that, although we should be able to improve on this, we could not achieve the aim of paying 100% of invoices within the 30 day period this year. DOCS had now put action in hand to focus improvement, but managers would need to carefully monitor the issue.

(c) Client Care

The Client Care Activity Report for July had been circulated to the Board, highlighting that the brochure would be issued in September and that work was underway on improving TSOL's capacity to deal with tenders.

The first client focus group had been held to review the satisfaction survey methodology, and the second had been scheduled. The clients attending the first meeting had provided some positive input, and the Client Care Group would be sure to build on the outcomes of the meeting.

(d) Work Programme

Two of the items on the work programme carried an amber status:

- The DOCS delegations had now been completed, so the status of the 'Financial Systems' work would return to green.
- The 'Reward Strategies' work was likely to remain amber until the ongoing pay negotiations had been finalised.

2. Legal Information Sharing

Simon was thanked for his paper. The Board agreed with the paper's summation that TSOL should have an electronic facility for managing and sharing legal information, and that the project should be taken forward as part of the eRIK project.

The Board agreed that some of issues needing careful consideration would be:

- the role of technical support lawyers. The system would need experienced practitioners with sufficient credibility in their specialised field to perform these roles;
- decisions on the volume of information to be stored, and the policies on storing sensitive information and archiving information;
- the relationship between the new system and existing systems such as PRACAMS and LION.

It was noted that the eRIK team had initial work in hand. Some of these issues might usefully be picked up in the business planning/SR2004 planning later this year (see AOB)

3. Information Security Policy

The Board approved the Information Security Policy, which was one of the requirements of the BS 7799. The policy summarised and consolidated existing information, with the exception of changes to password length and to the clear desk policy, which would now focus on sensitive documents that merited a protective marking.

The policy would be launched in September, and the paper put forward some communications options. The Board agreed that security issued needed prominence, and thought it important to note that security breaches had occurred in the past and that the consequences had been severe.

Whilst the new policy introduced few changes, it was agreed that any changes to existing practices or policy should be handled carefully.

Hilary agreed to look at the clear desk section of the policy to ensure that it covered all types of sensitive information (e.g. personal information held by staff in BV).

Action: Hilary

4. Flexible Working

The Board endorsed the revised office notice on flexible working, which was geared towards highlighting the Agency's commitment to pro-actively support flexible working. The notice would be issued in September, allowing case studies to be drawn up in August with examples of different working patterns currently in operation. Board members agreed to e-mail to Alison any possible case-studies.

Action: Supervisory Board

Some discussion was held on how the commitment would work in practice. It was stressed that each case would need to be considered on its individual merits, taking full account of the ability to deliver business requirements – not every job would lend itself to flexible working patterns but many can. The HR team and the Diversity Group would be on hand to provide support and guidance to individuals and management.

Valerie agreed to highlight the issue as the main 'key message' arising from the meeting. It would be scheduled as an SB agenda item in 6 months time.

Action: Valerie; Board Secretary

5. Staff Survey Response Plan

The Board agreed that the action plan should be issued, subject to clarifying the roles of team leaders in Litigation.

It was confirmed that Divisional breakdowns of the results to the staff survey could be issued within teams. The Divisional response plans would further inform the Agency's plan.

Alison agreed to extend the 3rd task on the plan to include helping staff to understand how their work contributed to their Division's plans and objectives. **Action: Alison**

Alison also agreed to ask PwC to provide a summary of results for the different groups in Litigation. **Action: Alison**

Progress against the Divisional Action Plans would be discussed at quarterly business plan review meetings. It was also agreed that the Supervisory Board would ask a couple of its members to provide updates on the work being undertaken in their respective Divisions every couple of months to provide the opportunity to share experience.

Action: Supervisory Board

6. Communication

Graham Bate was thanked for his papers on SB profiles and the on-line forum. Board members agreed to submit profiles of themselves to Graham. **Action: Supervisory Board**

Simon Lewis and Olu Mateola provided a demonstration of the On-line Forum interface. It was agreed that the facility should be piloted and that the Pilot Forum board should be as proposed. Two volunteer lawyers from the SB were needed to complete the Board – volunteers would contact Graham Bate. The pilot would need to identify and address possible security issues as well as assess timescales. It was also agreed that designated board members would need to take responsibility for collective responses.

Action: Supervisory Board.

7. Any Other Business

Juliet informed the board of the MOD's decision to take its advisory support in-house. Staff would be informed later in the day. Current MODLA staff would be offered the choice of taking up an MOD post or remaining with the MODLA team on secondment from TSOL.

Hilary would soon be issuing a note on the 2002-04 Spending Review. The intention would be to streamline the SR bidding process with TSOL's business planning. A steering group with representation from across TSOL would be established to take forward the process.

A paper on SCS Corporate Development had previously been circulated to the Board. The Board endorsed the approach of holding bi-annual meetings to discuss SCS development within TSOL and across the civil service as a whole. The first seminar would be arranged in early October.

Hilary reported that two main accommodation options were being assessed – making improvements to QAC; or moving to a new building in Kingsway. Work was continuing and a SWOT analysis would be carried out before final proposals were made. The Board approved the draft Intranet note that would update staff on the issue.

Hilary reminded the Board that Hugh Grover, the new Head of the Business Strategy Unit, would be starting on Friday 1 August.

Hilary also noted that the Attorney General had approved TSOL's 2002/03 Annual Report.

Business Strategy Unit
1 August 2003