

## **Minutes of the Office of Fair Trading Board Meeting**

**Thursday 9 February 2006**

### **Present**

Philip Collins (Chairman)  
John Fingleton (CEO)  
Allan Asher  
Lord Blackwell  
Christine Farnish  
Rosalind Wright

### **Apologies**

Richard Whish

### **OFT Staff**

Sue Cook  
Ray Hall  
Paul Gurowich  
Chris Jenkins  
Brian McHenry  
Jonathan May  
Barbara Powell  
Hannah Priest  
Bart Smith  
Julia Smith  
Vincent Smith  
Graham Winton

### **Board Secretariat**

Erik Wilson  
Francesca Seymour (Board Secretary)

### **Item 1        Minutes from the last Board meeting (12 January)                  (OFT(06)1<sup>st</sup> minutes)**

Subject to some amendments, the minutes were accepted as a true record.

### **Item 2        Divisional Directors Reports**

The CEO and Divisional Directors provided the Board with key updates on their respective areas:

## **CEO**

### *Senior Executive Team (SET)*

The Senior Executive Team has been set up, and has met several times. More about the work and findings of SET will be presented to the Board on 21 February.

- SET will lead the OFT response to the Consumer Voice consultation
- One member of SET to become the cross-office liaison point for FSA

### *Public Accounts Committee appearance and Annual Plan Stakeholder events*

Both these events had gone well. The two stakeholder events in Edinburgh and London had been useful, with the Scottish event being particularly useful.

### *OFT Plus*

We have now seen the LBRO vision document. We are working with DTI, HM Treasury the other regulators and Trading Standards to develop the LBRO concept and to ensure that model fits well with OFT Plus.

### *National Weights and Measures Laboratory (NWML)*

The Chairman and CEO had a meeting with NWML and DTI last week.

### *Credit Card default charges*

This was discussed at the last SET meeting, and will come to the Board in March.

### *Competition Commission (CC) lunch*

The Chairman and CEO had lunch with the CC earlier that day. This had gone well, with both parties agreeing that they share a similar view in implementing consumer welfare in their respective work.

## **CE**

### *European Commission Green Paper - Private Enforcement*

We are co-ordinating our response with DCA and DTI, which is due by 21 April.

### *Review processes*

Arising from the discussions on recent cases, the Board recommended that the Executive put in place a "wash up" review process at the end of key projects or cases, in order to reinforce the OFT's learning culture.

## **Communications**

### *Consumer Direct*

A press officer has been recruited who will spend half his/her time in London and Maidstone. Communications issues are under discussion.

## **MPI**

Jonathan May congratulated and thanked his team for their work in his absence.

## **Corporate Services**

### *Accommodation strategy*

This is being looked at by OMG.

## **CRE**

### *UCPD*

We need to respond to the DTI by 8 March, and the team will be meeting the CEO on 13 February to discuss our response.

### *Guidance on Credit Card providers/the unilateral raising of credit card limits*

Following up on a point raised at the January meeting, the Board was advised that although the OFT has scope to consider fitness guidance on this we do not think it appropriate to do so as the government has so far specifically rejected measures of this kind in the Consumer Credit Bill. The CEO said that broader work on credit could be an important element of work next year.

### *Hampton footnote*

The team is working with DTI, HMT and the FSA on a consultation document. Some feasibility work will be needed on the operational matters and a paper will come to the Board in due course.

## **Legal**

The s75 case has been heard in the Court of Appeal. We await judgment.

## **Item 3      Market Study**

The Board was updated on an ongoing market study.

## **Item 4      Board Away Day**

The CEO has given Branch Directors a presentation based on that given to the Board at its away day. He is planning two team-building events with Branch

Directors (probably in May and June), and to include Jonathan May and Amelia Fletcher who were unable to attend the Top Management Team away day. The Chairman is working on the relationship/role of the Board and the Executive, which will be discussed in March.

## **Item 5 Update on Consumer Direct and PROMOD**

### **Consumer Direct**

The Maidstone office will start to be occupied from 3 April. Some IT and performance and quality managers have already joined the team, and the knowledge transfer from DTI is underway. Michael Ridley will stay on beyond 1 April to ensure that the transfer is complete.

A paper by Sue Cook and Michael Ridley on branding will be taken by the Transition Advisory Group. All regions will have a consultative voice on future direction and development through the Consumer Direct council.

There are some questions over data. It was agreed that we would need to consult publicly in the next financial year on who can access this data, and to assess what demand there is for it.

The Board asked that a paper covering governance, resourcing, outstanding issues with the DTI and current expectations of delivery be tabled at the March meeting.

### **PROMOD**

The extension to the lease on Craven House has de-risked some earlier problems. The data model and transfer of data process has been agreed with Logica, although it is not in a position to handover a system yet. We should have a clearer timetable at the end of February.

## **Item 6 Any other business**

### **Future Board meetings**

#### *21 February*

It was agreed that members of the Executive could attend this meeting.

#### *September planning day*

This needs to be agreed – it may be that two half days may be required.

#### *March meeting*

It was agreed that this will run from 1230 – 1700. Lunch will be provided.

## **Conflicts of interest**

The procedures for handling conflicts need to be re-examined.

Papers below the line:

### **Item 7 Relationships with Scottish Executive and Scottish TSIs**

It was agreed that this issue should come back to the Board at a later date.

### **Item 8 Management Accounting Information**

The Board noted the information provided for the 10 months ended 31 January.

### **Item 9 Update on OFT Plus**

This was noted. Key updates had been raised by the CEO under Item 2.

### **Item 10 Corporate Risk Register**

It was agreed that quality control needed to be assigned as a higher risk, and that 'guard against fraud' needed to be included. The Board will clear the final version at the start of the next financial year.

**Francesca Seymour**  
**Secretary to the OFT Board**  
**10 February 2006**