

Minutes of the Office of Fair Trading Board Meeting

Thursday 11 May 2006

Present

Philip Collins (Chairman)
John Fingleton (CEO)
Allan Asher
Lord Blackwell
Christine Farnish
Richard Whish

Apologies

Rosalind Wright
Vincent Smith
Christine Wade

OFT staff

Colin Brown
Sarah Cardell
Darryl Fernandez
Brian McHenry
Jonathan May
Ali Nikpay
Chris Mayock
Simon Priddis
Barbara Powell
Hannah Priest
Mike Ricketts
John Shelley
Bart Smith

Board Secretariat

Erik Wilson
Francesca Seymour (Board Secretary)

Item 1 Minutes from the last Board meeting (6 April) (OFT(06) 4th minutes)

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record, subject to the addition of a sentence at Item 4 stating that 'further work on selection of market studies is being undertaken and will return to the Board at a future date'.

Item 2 HR strategy

The Board received a presentation on work completed to date, and being undertaken, as part of the revised strategy for the OFT's Human Resources service.

Work completed thus far includes the agreement of a Code of Conduct for HR staff which is part of the Corporate Services Annual Plan. This Code of Conduct resulted in the creation of an HR vision statement developed and supported by HR staff.

The HR plan for 2006/07 considers the need for looking at how we recruit and retain staff, and plan for succession. Succession planning will also facilitate internal career progression. How talent is managed also needs to be considered. Leadership training and developing management skills are paramount to supporting behavioural and culture change. HR believe that the proposed leadership management programme can be delivered internally with the assistance of a consultant, and will cost somewhere in the region of £200-250k in the first year. E-HR is up and running, with some 260 staff already using this facility to update personal information. The OFT's core competencies are being reviewed to include the behavioural changes that the office needs.

The Board's role in HR policy will be discussed in July.

Item 3 Divisional Director's reports

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

CRE

Promod

The 'go live' date has been put back to the end of August. The Board asked for a note on the lessons learnt from the Promod project.

Money Laundering Directive

Discussions with HMT are underway on this issue and where these responsibilities lie.

OFTPlus

The joint OFT/TSS action plan has been drafted, with the final version to be launched at the TSI conference in June.

CRE Legal

The Section 75 case is going to the House of Lords.

The interim judgment on MB Designs has been upheld.

Communications

Consumer Direct

The launches will be led by the Chairman, CEO and Christine Wade. Due to the recent re-shuffle, no Ministers are expected to attend.

Media coverage

The decision to refer supermarkets had received extreme publicity. Celesio had been covered by the FT, and there had been some coverage on NMD. The PAC report on the competition enforcement regime will be covered by the press on 16 May.

MPI

Car warranties

The evaluation report of the car warranties market study will be published at the end of May. This is the first of such reports.

Consumer Direct

MPI1 is now reviewing samples of data, rather than contracting out this work.

CE

CE Legal

The Board was informed of developments in various cases.

Corporate Services

Annual accounts

The Board authorised the CEO to sign of the annual accounts which will go to the Audit Committee on 15 May. The accounts will be laid before Parliament before the next Board meeting.

PPDRs

99 per cent of the PPDRs have all been completed to date. Changes aimed to simplify the system have resulted in managers having better discussions with staff about performance, and less time spent in form filling.

Item 4 CE case

The Board discussed on ongoing case.

Item 5 SR07

This issue is due to come back to the Board in June, following discussion at the Senior Executive Team meeting on 23 May.

As part of the review for SR07, our future accommodation and consumer activities are also being looked at. The consultants assisting with this work will also be speaking to selected Board members.

Item 6 Any other business

The following Items were covered under any other business:

Future agenda items

The following items were added to the forward list:

- Priority areas update (September/October)
- Competition activities of other regulators (September)
- OSC report (July)

Reshuffle implications

The Board noted our Minister was now Rt Hon Ian McCartney MP, who will be based in the FCO.

New structure

Plans for the new structure and its implementation plan will be discussed at the June Board.

Papers below the line

Item 7 External communications Strategy

The Board noted that work on the external communications strategy would be looked at once the new Communications Director was appointed. Points raised at SET had been taken on board.

Francesca Seymour
Secretary to the OFT Board
15 May 2006