
S T U D E N T L O A N S  C O M P A N Y L I M I T E D

Operational Delivery Board
Held at 10.30am on Tuesday 4th March, 2008
Dining Room, Mowden Hall
Darlington

Present:	Ralph Seymour-Jackson	Chief Executive	(Chair)	RSJ
	Martin Herbert	Customer Services Director		MH
	Les Campbell	Finance Director		LC
	Chris Andrew	Company Secretary		CA
	Alan Dickson	Head of Finance		AD
	Alan McLellan	Head of Business Services		AMcL
	David Thomson	Head of Contact Services		DT
	Peter Robertson	Head of ICT Development		PR
	Stephen O'Connor	Head of ICT Infrastructure		SOC
	Steve Simpson	Head of Human Resources		SS
	Chris Harrison	Head of Processing Services		CH
	John Rae	Facilities Manager		JR
	Ali Hewison	Customer Services 3i Manager		AH
	Jennifer Anderson	Senior Executive Secretary	(Minutes)	JA

Distribution: FOI Website

1. **Chairman's Opening Remarks**

RSJ welcomed the group to the first Operational Delivery Board meeting in Darlington. Return travel arrangements were confirmed and RSJ invited all Board members to attend the Darlington Listening Lunch if they so desired. RSJ specifically welcomed CH as the new Head of Processing Services and introductions were made.

2. **Operational Delivery Board Minutes & Matters Arising**

2.1 **Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 4th February, 2008**

The Minutes were noted and approved.

2.2 **Rolling Action Plan – 4th March, 2008**

Refer to separate outstanding Action Plan. One Action from the Closed Log was requested to be re-opened:

ODB006 – RSJ requested ODB006 is re-opened as he felt the update provided is not an answer to the reasoning behind the process of why the Collections department is unable to set up direct debit payments to take place before or after certain dates in the month due to changing interest rates. RSJ advised the interest rate change will be taking place in July 2008 and suggested there is no reason why SLC cannot advise customers of the change in interest rate in advance of this taking place, therefore, removing the constraints. DT agreed to clarify the position with Yvonne McLean.

3. **Items for Board Approval**

3.1 **Online Sponsorship Strategy**

DT presented a report providing the Board with an update on the current situation of online sponsor take-up rates in 08/09 and proposed Actions for maximising the potential of sponsor take-up. DT explained to the Board the KPI 2 target is based on the percentage of customers applying online and after an increase of online applications throughout 06/07 and 07/08, the proportion of sponsors applying online now sits at 25% against a target of 55%.

DT went onto to provide a more detailed update on the Actions being taken such as the production of a double sided leaflet, one side for students and the other side for sponsors guiding them through the process of online application and advising where to access further information. Changes have been made within the Contact Services Department to improve on processes and staff are actively encouraging sponsors to apply online. A separate URL for sponsors has also been created and the team is working on new initiatives such as an interactive flash demonstration. MH queried when this new service will be ready to launch. DT noted he was unsure at this point, however, would clarify for the next Board meeting. **ACTION(ODB019) – DT.**

DT went onto to provide an update on the analysis of sponsor take up for 06/07 and 07/08 and drew the Board's attention to the figures detailed on Appendix one of the Report. The Board noted the increase of online sponsors from 28,000 in 06/07 to 67,000 in 07/08. RSJ noted his surprise that half of the online applicants are interdependent students and are means tested and suggested further analysis is required to understand the figures to be able to change the behaviours of the different segments. DT agreed to undertake further research with AH. **ACTION(ODB020) – DT/AH.**

In relation to the "enhancements" added to the BAU Log, detailed in section 4.2, PR queried what with other work scheduled for April if DT was comfortable with how things are progressing. DT confirmed Lesley Raybould is leading on all required areas and has been liaising with Julie Barnett from ICT effectively.

AMcL queried if DT had considered offering alternative methods of applying instead of online i.e. by phone, however, DT explained this option is too expensive and AH and DT agreed to review and come back to the Operational Delivery Board in April 2008. **ACTION(ODB021) – DT/AH.**

4. Operational Risks & Issues

4.1 Critical Letters Shortfall – Cost/IT Technical

AMcL presented a paper in response to ODB016 from the February Operational Delivery Board, requesting AMcL and AD give consideration to all the factors noted at the meeting such as costs and technicalities of the installation and running of the equipment at Lingfield Point. MH reminded AMcL this was primarily to look at the end to end process of the required printer. AMcL provided an overview of the requirement for the additional printer reminding the Board the point of the exercise is to try and obtain best value by purchasing the additional printer and locating at Lingfield Point.

CA suggested AMcL consider approaching suppliers regarding the possibility of leasing the printer instead of purchasing outright, however, AMcL expressed concern that in a disaster recovery situation, SLC's needs would not be met if short notice. The group discussed the options available and RSJ queried if an assessment of the volumes of the critical letters has been undertaken and suggested further analysis be undertaken focusing on a joined up solution for mailing capabilities and capacity and bring back to the next Operational Delivery Board.

ACTION(ODB022) – AMcL/JR/AD.

5. Management Reports

5.1 Monthly Operations Update

DT and AMcL presented a joint report providing an update on both Customer and Business Services. AMcL referred the group to section 3 of the report, highlighting the KPI 1 position is green at present, however, due to recent system issues, the Service Level Agreements are clearly at risk, in particular, Usability. Availability figures have not yet been produced, however, AMcL made the group aware that they may not have been met for February, but should be back on track for the remainder of the year.

RSJ requested an update on the DWP Data Exchange and AMcL advised the backlog of 18,500 files has been cleared, however, noted there was a slight time delay in turnaround due to staff resource and encryption/decryption issues, however all Devolved Administrations and DIUS have been informed.

In terms of Tuition Fees, work continues between Business Services and ICT to resolve the outstanding system issues, with 90% of the issues now resolved.

The 08/09 Application Cycle is up and running with no issues to report.

DT went on to provide an update on Customer Services highlighting in relation to the customer satisfaction survey figures, no return was made by CCA, resulting in no figures to report at present. The YTD figure against KPI 9 stands 91.5% at present and CA noted due to the rounding off of percentages now, this does not result in the KPI status being green. DT noted there is a potential for missing this years KPI target for KPI 9. DT referred the group to the graph presented in section 4 and advised the two lowest scoring elements for January were "Ease of Contacting SLC" and "Information on the Repayment Process". DT advised changes to the IVR menus are in process reducing the options to 3 to assist in "Ease of Contacting SLC".

In terms of Volumes and Forecasts, DT referred the group to February 2007 and 2008 Actual Figures highlighting the big increase in calls, noting this is slightly above the forecast. PR noted the graph suggests performance is going well and queried if a trend can be identified, however, DT advised he does not have this information. DT advised March has been forecast lower due to the expectations of previous years providing the CSO Department with availability throughout the month to catch up on paperwork. PR queried why this was the case and DT explained calls are spread across the SLA. DT queried if a full year forecast would be of assistance to the group and MH advised his reporting expectations are to see a focus on issues affecting current operations together with an assessment and discussion on risks to the future running of the operation. RSJ went on to query why double the amount of calls were handled this year from last and DT explained this is due to statements from November/December time which has had a knock on affect. MH expressed concern in relation to the graph, that telephone answering targets will not be made in the Autumn and suggested consideration be given to what needs to be done to try and resolve. DT agreed to update the next Operational Delivery Board. **ACTION(ODB023) – DT.**

DT highlighted the email and web-chat figures, however, noted online self-service figures have not been forecast but will be included going forward. CH suggested it would be useful to see the total of self service transactions which DT agreed to include going forward. **ACTION(ODB024) – DT.**

MH queried the situation with the payment schedule letter and DT advised the specification has been signed off and he is waiting on ICT. PR agreed to chase up. **ACTION(ODB025) – PR.**

AMcL went onto provide an update on KPI 4 highlighting an issue in relation to the recent withdrawal of data exchanges between HMRC and SLC which could potentially result in not achieving the target. LC questioned if SLC can do anything to assist HMRC in achieving the March timelines required for matching the files and AMcL noted the only thing which can be done is chasing up by phone. DT offered assistance from the Customer Services Department within March due to the availability previously mentioned. AMcL and DT agreed to discuss offline. RSJ noted it would be helpful to know the proportion of people with a verified NINO and AMcL agreed to add a comment next to the KPI on verified NINOs going forward. **ACTION(ODB026) – AMcL.** RSJ also requested CA add this as an Agenda item to the next Executive Board for discuss prior to the Main Board. **ACTION(ODB027) – CA.**

In relation to ICR Operations, MH queried if there are any actions in place to clear the backlog of approximately 1000 P14s. AMcL noted there is always ongoing work in hand, however, RSJ noted it is difficult to tell work is in progress from the Report. DT and AMcL agreed to highlight exceptions from or variances from planned activities in next months report. **ACTION(ODB028) – DT/AMcL.**

DT provided an update on the Collections Department advising recruitment is ongoing to fill the 12 FTE vacancies. Discussion took place surrounding the Collections KPI activities and how adhoc events such as staff conferences etc have a knock on affect on performance. PR noted staff turnover in the department is down and DT advised Yvonne McLean is working on the Mortgage Style Review which will tackle staffing issues.

The group discussed the need for the Operational Delivery Board to receive information on other operational areas and RSJ noted there would be value to adding information from the Complaints Department to the Operational Report. **ACTION(ODB029) – DT/CA**. RSJ also noted he would be keen to have sight of a joint ICT Development/Infrastructure Report highlighting key future works scheduled going forward.

5.2 Monthly Human Resources Update

SS provided an update on the Human Resources department highlighting a new balanced scorecard approach has been undertaken and will continue to be developed. Sickness/Absence is currently above the year end target and SS advised he is hopeful to hit the target for staff turnover. The key focus at present is the recruitment exercise for Darlington with 40 staff due to start on 17th March, 40 on 7th April and another 6 on 6th May. SS noted training the staff is a concern as systems are not in place, however, knowledge solutions will be used.

In terms of OD, Performance Management training has taken place and training on the Oracle element of Performance Management will kick off in due course. *SOC expressed his disappointed at the Performance Management training and expressed concern in relation to objective setting for staff going forward.* SS advised a generic standard objective has been agreed and valuations from all areas with exception to ICT have been good. SS agreed to discuss with SOC out-with the meeting.

LC queried if a scorecard approach could be also be developed for the figures within the report to assist in putting the target as well as the actual into context providing a trend. SS agreed to review and provide further narrative to support the figures reported. **ACTION(ODB030) – SS**.

An issue in relation to how some training requirements throughout the company are being funded was raised and SS reminded the Board that all training requirements should be sourced and organised through the Learning & Development Department who hold the centralised budget. It was noted this issue has arose due to a number of courses being funded through other divisional budgets in the company. The Board discussed the issue and SS advised the process has been changed for the next 12 months, where Learning & Development Managers will meet with Departmental Managers to agree Departmental Training Plans. SOC queried the position in relation to training required for external projects and SS confirmed Learning & Development should source training for external projects, however, agreed to clarify whether or not the training should be project funded or not. **ACTION(ODB031) – SS**.

5.3 Internal Board Communications Strategy

SS presented a proposed Internal Board Communications Strategy suggesting the key messages from each of the internal boards are approved as part of each meeting and updated via the Intranet as part of an All Staff Communication process. The Board approved the Communications Strategy.

5.4 3i Team Development

AH provided the Operational Delivery Board with a presentation outlining the proposed structure and budgetary responsibilities of the 3i team for information, highlighting the key role of the team is to develop insights to ensure SLC understand the needs and expectations of customers and ensure SLC's processes are optimised to deliver quality customer satisfaction. AH highlighted the key services the 3i team expect to undertake and provided background information on the requirement of the 3i Analyst role which is scheduled to be advertised through Oracle in the next 2 weeks.

5.5 3i Team Budgeting

AD presented a paper in line with the 3i Team Development presentation, requesting the 3i team hold the budget for the efficiency programme of £800k going forward (AD noted at this point he would provide a more in-depth explanation of the Efficiency Programme at Agenda Item 5.6). The 3i team manager will also utilise the spare capacity budget of £500k to £600k held within Change Management. For specific initiatives cost/benefit analysis will be completed and initiatives with an expenditure of up to £50k can be submitted by the Head of Finance and Customer Services Director for approval and requests over £50k will require to be submitted to the Operational Delivery Board for agreement. CH queried if plans to re-invest the savings achieved have been considered and AD confirmed this is part of a longer term strategy. The Board approved the request.

5.6 Efficiency Programme

AD presented a paper outlining a strategic funding problem with SLC's Operating Budget due to the reduced amount of funding being provided by stakeholders and the savings required to be achieved. AD advised SLC's focus needs to change and suggested to tackle these issues, the current Programme be split by Value for Money and 5 Big Initiatives which will improve both Customer Service and reduce operating costs. AD sought agreement from the Board that the 3i team become the budget owners of the Programme. AMcL questioned who would be responsible for initiatives out-with the Customer Services Department and AD explained this would fall under the normal VFM Programme process and a satisfactory business case would be required.

AMcL also expressed concern that the 5 Big Initiatives are already in the scope of Customer First and deductions have been made from the Operating Budget. AD advised that in his opinion there is no double counting and advised there are genuine savings available to be made.

The Board agreed the feasibility should go ahead and agreed to discuss further at the next Operational Delivery Board. **ACTION(ODB032) – AD/JA.**

5.7 Accommodation Strategy

JR presented the Accommodation Strategy for approval by the Operational Delivery Board. RSJ noted the analysis undertaken is exactly what is required and suggested JR provides the Board with regular updates every second month. **ACTION(ODB033) – JR/JA.** SS highlighted a policy on Home-Working is being submitted for review to next week's Finance & Governance Board. The Board approved the Accommodation Strategy.

6. FOI Minutes

6.1 Operational Delivery Board Minutes (FOI Version) – 10th January, 2008

RSJ requested any FOI amendments be forwarded to CA prior to uploading to the SLC Website.

6.2 Operational Delivery Board Minutes (FOI Version) – 4th February, 2008

RSJ requested any FOI amendments be forwarded to CA prior to uploading to the SLC Website.

7. Any Other Business

RSJ requested JA amend the timings of the Operational Delivery Boards scheduled to take place in Darlington to 3 hours as opposed to 2 hours. **ACTION(ODB034) – JA.**

8. Date of Next Meeting

- Tuesday 15th April, 2008

Meeting Closed 12.30pm

NB: Where asterisks appear these items have been excluded from the minutes before placing on the website as the subject under discussion falls within one or more of the exemptions contained in Part II of the Freedom of Information Act, 2000 and can be reasonably withheld.