



Small Business
Commissioner

The Office of the Small Business Commissioner Annual Report and Accounts

For the year ending 31 March 2020



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For the year ending 31 March 2020

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The Performance Report

This section of the annual report explains the role and purpose of the Small Business Commissioner (SBC). The Performance Analysis sets out how the Office of the Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) has performed during 2019/20 against key objectives and its statutory reporting requirements. The main risks to the achievement of the OSBC's objectives along with explanations are set out in the Governance Statement.



Overview

The Small Business Commissioner (The Commissioner) was established under the provisions of the Enterprise Act 2016 (the Act) to tackle unfair payment practices in the private sector. The Commissioner's principle functions are to provide general advice and information to small businesses in connection with their supply relationships with larger businesses, including signposting small businesses to existing services; and to consider complaints from small businesses relating to payment matters in connection with the supply of goods and services to larger businesses and make (non-binding) decisions, and make recommendations.

The Office of the Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) was launched in December 2017 and is an independent non-departmental public body (NDPB) which covers the whole of the UK. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is the responsible department for the OSBC.

In accordance with section 10 of the Act, the Secretary of State must review the Commissioner's performance every three years. The first review, which covers the period from 6 April 2017 to 31 March 2020, has been temporarily postponed due to the Covid-19 crisis and the OSBC going through a period of transition. The review will take place after a permanent Commissioner is appointed and after the Prompt Payment Code has been transferred the OSBC and BEIS has begun work to strengthen and reform the Code.

If a small business has a contract with a larger business whereby there is a late payment dispute that they cannot resolve themselves, the OSBC can step in and help. The OSBC is independent and will offer an unbiased view, to get to the crux of the problem and help to reach a solution that helps both sides move forward. If a small business has been treated unfairly, the Commissioner can use his powers to make sure things are put right. The Commissioner can recommend that the larger business simply pay and apologise, to act or to pay compensation and late interest payments – in a way that reflects the circumstances. The OSBC plays an important role in representing the interests of small business owners in UK. Offering a service which is free of charge and at no risk to the complainant as investigations will be treated anonymously if requested.

The OSBC is committed to sharing insight and experience right across the UK, through inspiring confidence to empower small businesses to speak out. We work closely with small business owners, large business, UK government, local councils, and industry associations, together the OSBC are striving to foster a business-enabling environment for small businesses.

With small business needs at the centre of its work, the OSBC seeks to simplify the operating environment for small businesses in the UK by identifying key issues and areas for government intervention that assist in reducing the cost, complexity and administrative burden of running a small business.

The OSBC website (<https://www.smallbusinesscommissioner.gov.uk/>) has driven initiatives, such as Get your Contract Right, How to Get Paid etc and the use of late payment interest to tackle systemic issues impacting small businesses.

The Office of the Small Business Commissioner Risks

The OSBC Management Board (see page 53) is responsible for identifying, monitoring and mitigating issues and risks associated with the operation and administration of the OSBC and the exercise of the statutory functions of the OSBC during this reporting period.

As in previous years, an important challenge for the OSBC has remained the reputational risk associated with managing stakeholder expectations about the impact of the OSBC in general, and the take-up of the service.

The key strategic risks which impacted on the reputation of the OSBC during this reporting period are payment issues which are not translating into complaints due to the fear of loss of business with the customer or insufficient knowledge of the OSBC.

Awareness of the service

There is a risk that the OSBC will find it harder to achieve its their goals if the service is not being fully utilised. The OSBC is aware that only a small percentage of small businesses know about our service despite taking every opportunity for extensive self-promotion among small businesses and stakeholders to inform them about what we can provide. From the outset, it was a valuable exercise to identify as many stakeholders as possible that we needed to engage with by attending a wide range of seminars, expos and forums. A key part of our communications and engagement process has been to identify who we wanted to communicate with and what messaging we wanted to get across. We identified all stakeholders relevant to the OSBC and assessed their interest and involvement in working with us. We have met their specific needs and we have ensured that their goals can be met by working collaboratively through the design and delivery of events. For regional small businesses, we have assured that their trade will not be adversely affected by attending our events and have put on early morning breakfast seminars and panels or some events work best as a single speaker evening seminar. We have learned what timing and format will drive the biggest audience and engagement for specific and targeted events. This intel has come from attending meetings, questionnaires, and consultations to help us gain small business input to understand their needs.

It has been important that, where possible, small businesses can access our support, so with our stakeholder sponsors we have carried out positive marketing and media coverage and used social media channels to enhance and promote our local and national events. Part of our on-going communication plan requires us to ensure that relations are maintained and developed, and we carry out regular meetings and use social media and blogs to provide updates on our work with event sponsors.

A crucial step for us wherever we go is to be honest by “telling the truth well” about our organisation, what complaints we can and cannot deal with, being open and sharing our latest news, intelligence and highlighting and celebrating our casework achievements.

This year we have seen a marked change compared to this time last year, when we were actively pursuing stakeholders to ensure we were invited to attend their events. We are now in a position where the OSBC is having to consider our likely availability and manage daily requests which offer and secure us prime time and keynote theatre speaker slot's. In annex A you will see the wide range of marketing and PR activities we have carried out to spread the word.

Communication is key, we can't tackle unfair payment practices on our own, we need to work with and alongside the package of government measures available to tackle the issues of late payments that are not translating into OSBC complaints and address concerns around prompt payment, working collectively we can address this issue.

Lack of Complaints

Launching a significant challenge against a larger firm, especially as a small business, can be daunting. There is a significant risk of damaging the business relationship and losing supplier status.

A lack of resource and in-house expert knowledge can also result in a small business simply writing off any debt or costs, while seeking legal advice often proves more expensive than the cost of the outstanding late payment.

This leaves smaller businesses vulnerable and continues to give larger firms the upper hand and, unfortunately, we can't incentivise a small business to complain to us when they are faced with this issue. But what we can do is give them the courage to make that first initial call to us and from that we can provide, advice, options, and signposting to enable them to make informed decisions.

Based on discussions with stakeholders, we understand that a small business might prefer to remain anonymous when challenging a larger company on their contract terms and practices for fear of jeopardising the business or supplier relationship. We explore those options with the small business when they make that call to us always ensuring that the needs of every small business is paramount.



Foreword by the Small Business Commissioner

My career in credit management spans 40 years across a range of sectors. I was appointed Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Credit Management (CICM) in 2005, and I was delighted to be asked to bring my relevant knowledge and business experience to the post of interim Small Business Commissioner which I took up on 27 January 2020.

This past financial year has been a challenge for the Office of the Small Business Commissioner (OSBC). The standing down of the previous Commissioner, Brexit, taking on the administration of the Prompt Payment Code (PPC) and dealing with Covid-19 have resulted in a challenging and rapidly changing environment.

In my last year as CEO of CICM I spoke to, and worked with, numerous large businesses that had been suspended from the PPC for failing to comply with its requirements. This activity delivered transformational change across many of them and saw almost 70% reinstated following the implementation of action plans to improve payment performance.

Top Issues

The team at the OSBC has talked to over 2,000 people and stakeholders, raising awareness of the Office's services which include the resolution of business disputes sensitively, and often without the need for public scrutiny. But since joining the team in January 2020, I have recognised that awareness of the OSBC service remains disappointingly low. We provide a free service through a dedicated team of caseworkers ready to resolve a variety of late payment related matters. Businesses that have used the service testify to the swift successful outcomes, often delivered informally and avoiding the need to escalate into any kind of formal complaint. Recognising the importance of maintaining ongoing relationships, the casework team offer expert advice, guidance, and signposting, and provide informal mediation adopting a sensitive approach. Results speak for themselves and, for matters or complaints relating to late payment, a success rate of 100% has been achieved with £6.7m being recovered to date. This could not have been achieved without the specialised skills, commitment, and dedication of the OSBC staff.

In order to drive up awareness, we have implemented new ways of collaborating and communicating with our stakeholders, with a particular focus on building our social media activity. We have also engaged with a range of business organisations in the delivery of webinars through which we can reach relevant audiences and provide appropriate information.

During the 2019/20 financial year, the team have delivered presentations, webinars, and other stakeholder engagements to raise awareness of who we are and what we do. With the outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020, online activity increased exponentially as all business organisations pulled together to offer information and advice to the small business sector. Every communication method was used to highlight the support that government was offering through its package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support public services, people, and businesses alongside the practical support that the OSBC was able to provide.

To ensure that the OSBC service operates effectively across the entire United Kingdom, and to ensure I fully understand all of the UK challenges, I have met officials from the UK, Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish Governments.

This has helped me understand and appreciate the particular circumstances in the devolved administrations and I look forward to continuing to work closely with them in the future.

Office of the Small Business Commissioner

In 2019, with the assistance of Government's Internal Audit Agency (GIAA), we completed a review of the OSBC complaint handling and end-to-end dispute resolution process. A similar exercise will be carried out for the end-to-end administration of the PPC and related compliance activity during the coming year. In parallel, we will continue to streamline our processes and ensure they are fit-for-purpose to meet growing demand, and we will develop automated solutions utilising our case management technology where appropriate.

In the third quarter of this financial year, the OSBC caseworkers were assigned to particular geographical regions. This allows their expertise to be more readily available to organisations with which we collaborate, including the major banks, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Growth Hubs, and the regional networks of business organisations and trade bodies. This activity and the resulting partnerships will continue to be developed in the months ahead.

Complaints

The progress the team at the OSBC has made over the last couple of years is all theirs, I have taken great pride in joining a team that really want to make a difference. I am amazed when I have taken up an issue on a small business's behalf that the very fact we go in and raise the issue makes a world of difference.



"I am currently receiving great support and guidance from your team for my partner's unpaid invoices. I have recommended your service to another 3 small businesses that I know are being subjected to the same treatment and unfavourable practises by the same company."

Small Business Quote

Investigation into poor payment practices

My focus when I joined was to understand and interpret the Enterprise Act 2016 legislation in order that I could continue calling out poor payment practice when it was reported to us. A huge amount of work goes into an investigation and I became aware of how complex and involved it was when we investigated Bombardier and Incentive FM. To ensure they are objective and thorough, these investigations take weeks to complete and require dedication from my casework team and the casework managers who see this complaint process through from start to finish. The process of collecting evidence, interviewing CEO's, and Finance Directors, following up where information is missing and then clarifying situations with both the small and the large business is extremely time consuming.

By being briefed in these investigations before reaching decisions on them, I learn much that enables me to speak authoritatively about the issues facing our UK small businesses and sectors.

I published my first report, on [Bombardier](#), on 13 April and worked on [Incentive FM Ltd](#) during the month of April. Both reports are on our [website](#).

I want to reflect here on the issues.

Bombardier Transportation UK Ltd was the first case that required my determination. The business claimed to have had robust procurement and payment systems in place, but those systems proved to be ineffective on the occasion of this complaint.

Looking deeper into Bombardier Transportation UK Ltd, its mandatory payment practice reporting indicated that it paid 61% of its suppliers outside of payment terms, with an average time of 116 days to settle an invoice. This data highlighted that Bombardier needed to take accountability and make significant changes to its internal processes to ensure the small business supply chain was paid on time.

The management team at Bombardier Transportation UK Ltd recognised there was a failure and took steps to put this right. They worked with me and took on board my recommendations, agreed to pay the small business complainant, and promised to review their payment practices and report back to me within 60 days.

I cannot over-emphasise the importance and benefit of having an honest conversation with the CEO of a large business. My knowledge and experience of the late payment culture, credit management, and the importance of cashflow, coupled with an appreciation of the small business owner's perspective allows me to challenge and motivate large businesses to act responsibly and to take the right steps in looking at their payment practices and quickly resolving and settling disputes.

The Enterprise Act 2016 allows me to challenge big businesses where payment practices are not ethical. My approach is to work in a spirit of collaboration rather than confrontation and I have been proactively writing to a number of businesses where intelligence has been provided seeking clarification before taking action.

One of the key things my research has shown is that small businesses have an array of information available on websites but working through this to access the right information can be difficult, confusing, and time consuming.

In January 2020 we started work on redeveloping the SBC website, to incorporate a wealth of easy to access and understand information tailored to reflect the specific concerns that small business owners and operators had raised with us. This development incorporated enhancements to accommodate the hosting and administration of the PPC by the OSBC.

Transferring responsibility for the PPC from the CICM to the OSBC had been planned for some time in order to bring government's late payment initiatives under one umbrella. The transfer was completed on 9 March 2020 and work on strengthening the Code has commenced. This work will involve reviewing the Code's governance structure and increasing the representation of key stakeholders including large and small businesses, industry leaders and trade bodies. It will provide support and constructive debate and drive the evolution of the Code to increase its effectiveness.

The activity related to PPC compliance enforcement will complement the work of the OSBC and this cohesive approach will assist in the identification of issues affecting small businesses and contribute to our drive to change the late payment culture.

Alongside the integration of the PPC into the OSBC, activity will be undertaken to highlight the exemplary payment practice of many large businesses that show leadership in their responsible treatment of suppliers. We will promote membership of the PPC as a kitemark of good practice, encourage greater engagement from businesses of all sizes, and recommend it to small businesses as a means of determining the likelihood of being paid on time.

Case studies

I have [published 4 case studies](#) since I joined this year, but there have been a number of occasions when I have raised an issue with a small business, it has been thoroughly investigated internally and dealt with immediately.

I am also pleased to report that there have been many instances when small businesses have contacted me directly to report that mentioning their intention to engage the OSBC services to a customer had resulted in payment being received without further delay. They are always keen to tell me this privately but there is sadly a reluctance to share their experience more publicly.

During the year I have met with a wide range of stakeholders and carried out a number of webinars where I relay these stories to encourage small businesses to have the confidence to be more assertive in dealing with their large business customers.

The Commissioner's view on the issues facing small businesses in 2019-20

“We understand that many issues around late payment stem from disputed invoices. All too often the first time a query is raised is when the small business chases for payment and/or when the invoice is overdue. When an invoice is disputed, a period of negotiation and ultimately litigation can occur, the cost of which is borne by the small business. We plan to lobby larger businesses through roundtable discussions to address this issue. The most effective means of overcoming this problem is to incentivise large businesses to resolve disputes quickly and to make prompt payment. The OSBC will be focusing on the #MakePaymentPrompt campaign in March 2020, to raise awareness of this.

“The Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 has been in existence for 22 years yet is still widely ignored or bypassed by large businesses. In some cases, we have had large businesses refusing to pay the interest despite the legislation. Our role is to support small businesses with these claims and educate larger businesses how early payment can avoid additional cost. We will also raise awareness of the interest calculator on the OSBC website and continue to inform and encourage small business to claim late payment interest.

“We need to move the debate beyond the transactional nature of invoices being paid late. Of course, late payment damages small businesses and the wider economy but it can also have a huge emotional impact on business owners. An invoice paid late can result in the mortgage not being paid or employees waiting for their wages and the link between late payment and mental health is real and worrying.

“Through my role I'm going to be rigorous in calling out bad practice and will work tirelessly to support the 5.7 million small businesses in the UK.

“Thank you to the stakeholders and small businesses who have shared their views and opinions with us. I would also like to thank my dedicated team for their continued support and passion when dealing with an array of complex enquiries and cases on a daily basis.”

Forward look

There will be no reduction in activity in the coming year. As well as investigating poor practice, I will also be highlighting exemplars who show leadership in the late payment landscape.

Following the publication of my report, I will be working closely with Bombardier to ensure it fully implements my recommendations and I will be sharing the learnings with other large businesses. During the year, BEIS will also conduct a consultation on the Commissioner's powers and I encourage all those with an interest in the work of the OSBC to give their views.

We will continue to promote our **#MAKEPAYMENTPROMPT** campaign and our informal dialogue with Chief Executives of businesses that fail to consider adequately the impacts and consequences of their actions on the smallest partners in their supply chain. We will showcase best practice that ensures the supply chain is sustainable and, when necessary and appropriate, we will use our powers to uphold formal complaints and publicly name businesses that are adopting poor practice and abusing their position of power to the detriment of the businesses most needing their support.

Cashflow is vital for the survival of all businesses, and payment practice impacts not only hugely on the health of the economy, but also on the wellbeing and mental health of small business owners. My primary aim is to drive change in the late payment culture such that poor practice becomes the exception rather than the norm. During the period under review in this report we have seen positive progress; I am determined to build on that and drive further improvements in the year ahead. I am already seeing striking evidence that my collaborative approach is reaping significant results.

I would like to thank the Small Business Minister Paul Scully and his predecessor, Kelly Tolhurst, for their support since my appointment in January 2020. I would also like to acknowledge the ongoing assistance provided by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. Finally, I want to express my appreciation and gratitude to colleagues in the OSBC Team for their commitment, loyalty and determination in supporting small businesses across the UK, for making me feel so welcome, and for helping me settle into the role of Commissioner so quickly and easily.

Statutory reporting requirement

Since the OSBC implementation in December 2017, the two greatest challenges faced by the OSBC have proved to be a lack of awareness about the organisation and the services it provides, along with a reluctance for small businesses to come forward and formally complain due to fear of damaging their existing and future business relationships.

The Commissioner and his team have attempted to overcome these challenges by promoting the work of the OSBC through stakeholder engagement, speaking to over 2000 small businesses throughout the country, the organisation's website, social media platforms and attendance at various business events and exhibitions. This engagement has proved to be successful as we witnessed a sharp increase in our case volume which required two further full-time caseworkers to be employed.

What has the Commissioner done so far?

Strong engagement nationally has been achieved through the Commissioner attending forums, roundtable events to discuss issues affecting small businesses across all levels of government, collaborating on common approaches to tackle issues, and exploring options for reform.

We understand the challenges facing small business owners. We provide free access to our complaints service for those small businesses who may be involved in a late payment disagreement and we have helped many small businesses to find a solution to their problem without having to go to court.

There are several different activities the Commissioner has carried out in fulfilling the role of Small Business Commissioner. Broadly these include:

- Conducting enquiries and research and following up on the large businesses named in OSBC reports to ensure they continue to implement their report recommendations and agreed actions
- Working with other arms of government
- Contributing to enquiries and consultations
- Delivering a position paper on Freelancers
- Promoting and advocating for prompt payment and fair business practice, driving small business engagement via interactive webinars and other online platforms
- As the Coronavirus health crisis developed, working with Government to offer a signpost support and advice service for impacted small businesses
- Producing a number of communication materials including explainer videos, articles and webinars to answer specific small business questions
- Participating in numerous webinars and meetings held via online platforms held as a result of face-to-face events being cancelled as a result of Covid-19
- Engaging with businesses that had delayed or suspended payments to smaller business suppliers urging them to recognise the impact of their actions and encouraging them to pay more quickly.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the Commissioner has been engaging with the Small Business Minister and many large companies to ensure small businesses are being supported, and that Government support is appropriately targeted. The OSBC will continue to advocate for small businesses to ensure they are supported through the Covid-19 crisis.

A full list of all the events the Commissioner has attended are included in Annex A on Page 90

Most significant matters raised by small businesses

The OSBC has a range of issues referred to it from small businesses, large businesses, direct and indirect suppliers, trade associations, other bodies and the media. These issues give the OSBC vital information to inform current and future action. In order to ensure the OSBC meets the duty to preserve the confidentiality of those who provide information, the OSBC will not publish statistical information on issues raised.

The OSBC keeps the current, monitored and previous significant issues under regular review, responding to changing supplier concerns and monitoring large businesses payment activities

The OSBC receives daily stories from small businesses and from industry professionals of the financial difficulties small businesses are experiencing, they are often reluctant to seek help for fear of retribution. The sooner small businesses seek our help, the quicker and more likely it is they can achieve a positive resolution and payment. There has been significant progress in recovering late payments for small business and the OSBC will continue to champion improvements in this area.

Mental health is a serious issue for the UK small business community, often exacerbated by unexpected events such as flooding experienced in areas across the UK and, more recently, the outbreak of Covid-19. Small business owners need to seek support when necessary to protect their mental health and wellbeing.

Below are other recommendations:

Commissioner’s recommendations to Small Businesses

<p>Ask for a dispute resolution clause to be included in contracts and ask for details of the invoice payment escalation process before the contract starts.</p>	<p>Include a statement on all invoices, and within contracts where possible, stating that the small business will charge interest on late payment, and that any late payment disputes will be referred to the OSBC.</p>
<p>Check that the contract does not waive’ or curtail statutory rights regarding late payment interest and compensation</p>	<p>Negotiate or, where necessary, re-negotiate, the contract terms and ask for the payment terms you want.</p>
<p>Carefully read the entire contract before signing it. Rights and responsibilities are typically scattered throughout an agreement and in the small print. Seek our advice if you are unsure Negotiate, or where necessary re-negotiate.</p>	
<p>Be aware of the resources available to you that can help unblock late payment issues</p>	<p>Always obtain a Purchase Order number before undertaking work. This can help avoid late payment issues</p>
<p>If you encounter late payment issues, contact the OSBC to share your experiences.</p>	<p>Be aware of your statutory right to claim late payment interest</p>

Commissioner's recommendations to Large Businesses

Clearly set out dispute resolution and invoice payment escalation processes at the start of the contract	Put in place a service level agreement on the time for resolving disputed invoices	Create opportunities to understand your supply chain, organise supplier day events or direct communications to help create better understanding
Provide small businesses with a single point of contact for late payment queries, which would allow for a speedier resolution.	Identify small businesses in supply chains to mitigate against the negative effect that late payment can have on them.	
Regularly review procurement processes to identify and remove errors and weaknesses.	Provide regular training for employees on procurement processes.	
Offer shorter and preferential payment terms to small and micro businesses. Businesses that have done this see a more reliable and sustainable supply chain and benefit from adopting a partnership approach.		



Philip King
Interim Small Business Commissioner
Date: 8 September 2020

Mission and Priorities

Our Mission

Our mission is to support small businesses on matters relating to late payment and we advocate on their behalf, providing them with information, advice, signposting and access to our complaint handling service. We also drive culture change of late payment practices in larger businesses to have a positive impact on their supply chain.

This mission is achieved and supported by:

- Providing information and tools to help small businesses tackle late payment themselves and raise their awareness of existing tools and services;
- Dealing with complaints to support small businesses struggling to resolve issues with their larger clients;
- Engaging with the business community to highlight the importance of prompt payment to all sizes of business.

The OSBC is part of a portfolio of measures designed to tackle late payments and unfair practices. Other measures include the Payment Practices Reporting Requirement, the Prompt Payment Code, and the Public Procurement Review Service. Some of these interventions cover both public and private sectors. They are all helping to tackle the late payment culture, and the OSBC will publicise poor payment practices and highlight good payment practices to ensure it has maximum impact in addressing the imbalance between large and small businesses.

Our Priorities

Our priority is to handle complaints in a fair and reasonable way, publishing reports and recommendations from which both large and small businesses can learn and that lead to improvements in supply chain relationships.

We will maintain our website to ensure it delivers up to date information and advice for small businesses.

The OSBC acts as a representative for UK small businesses on government agency consultations, reviews and reforms, and works closely with small businesses to provide general advice and information in connection with their supply relationships with larger businesses, including signposting small businesses to existing services.

The OSBC acts as an advocate ensuring small business interests are well represented within government, and that their concerns over payment matters are effectively communicated.

Last year, the OSBC reviewed and commented on the BEIS call for evidence on tackling late payment, Creating a responsible payment culture:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/creating-a-responsible-payment-culture-a-call-for-evidence-on-tackling-late-payment>, which was published on the 4th October.

The OSBC encouraged businesses to complete this to ensure small businesses have their say on legislative and policy proposals affecting them.

Our Strategy

Our new campaign #MakePaymentPrompt puts small business at the heart of our decision-making, service design, and service delivery. It also recognises the rapid changes in the way businesses interact with each other and conduct business.

It is not just about our frontline complaint service but also about changing things behind the scenes, from streamlining the design of our services to improving our communications approach to maximise our effectiveness and deliver the very best outcomes for UK small businesses.

We are collaborating with a wide range of stakeholders, allowing us to reach the largest audience of small businesses and provide appropriate support and guidance.

Our aspiration is to reduce the incidence of late payment, deliver a culture of prompt payment, and provide an exceptional quality of service for users.



Our Ambition

The strategic ambition of the OSBC is to empower small businesses throughout the UK to resolve payment disputes with larger businesses and avoid future issues by encouraging a culture change in payment practices and how businesses deal with each other.

To achieve this ambition, building on our previous work, we will strive to achieve each of the following strategic objectives:

Strategic objective 1: Generate a greater awareness within the business community of the support available from the OSBC, and establish the Office as the go-to organisation for small businesses experiencing payment problems with large businesses

Strategic objective 2: Provide high-quality and comprehensive information and advice to small businesses about tackling payment problems, build their confidence and capabilities to assert themselves and negotiate more effectively. Encouraging small businesses to embrace modern technology, such as social media and other communicative applications, as well as the FinTech platforms so businesses can thrive and grow

Strategic objective 3: Investigate quickly and impartially complaints from small businesses experiencing payment problems

Strategic objective 4: Develop and organise a governance operating structure for Prompt Payment Code (PPC)

Strategic objective 5: Ensure the OSBC operates in a way that maximises value for money delivered for the taxpayer.



Strong Financial and Governance Controls

Legislative Requirement

- The Commissioner will publish and provide an Annual Report which will be laid in Parliament.

Governance Objectives

- Deliver high quality payment resolution through excellent, timely case management, decision-making advice, and casework preparation.
- Maintain business confidence by being fair, effective and independent.
- Continuously improve how we work by listening to the needs of businesses and adapting our approach accordingly.

Finance Objectives

- Spend responsibly within budget and ensure value for money in line with Managing Public Money and other HM Treasury guidance.

All processes are subject to regular review, with suggestions for improvements being considered and approved by the Strategic Board.

We have reviewed and challenged accounting policies adopted, and accounting practices used for unusual or significant transactions, and assessed whether appropriate standards have been carried out in the following areas:

- Internal controls and risk- management systems
- The adequacy and effectiveness of internal financial control, and internal control and risk management systems.
- Compliance, whistleblowing and fraud
- The adequacy of our arrangements for employees and contractors to raise concerns, in confidence, about possible wrongdoing in financial reporting or other matters.

Continuous improvement is key, and we work with other similar organisations to learn from their experience to fulfil our ambition to be a small organisation exemplary in good governance.

Our financial controls are delivered through our shared services provider, UK SBS, and through our sponsor department, BEIS.

The statement of Taxpayers Equity, within the financial statements shows expenditure of £747,652 and grant in aid from BEIS of £733,804, resulting a loss in equity of £44,140. This is largely due to the creation of a provision during the year, which results as an expense in the accounts, but for which Grant in aid from BEIS has not yet been paid to SBC. BEIS continue to fund the SBC and have committed to covering their expenses for the 2021 financial year.

Building Capability and Capacity

Objectives

- Increase Caseworkers knowledge in order to signpost to the right support
- Offer informal intervention in order to expand our knowledge of issues being faced
- Inform small businesses of their rights and responsibilities to claim late payment interest

Raising awareness of the Small Business Commissioner service

- Generate a greater awareness across the business community of the support available from the OSBC and establish the Office as the go-to organisation for small businesses experiencing payment problems with large businesses.
- Raise the profile of the OSBC to increase the number of complaints received
- Build effective partnerships with stakeholders, Local Employment Partnerships (LEP) & Growth Hubs, banks and finance service providers, and business organisations to enhance the effectiveness of our messages, through collaboration and dissemination to their networks
- Publicise recommendations that improve payment practice to enable businesses to learn from them.

The OSBC is fast becoming the first point of contact for small businesses seeking to better understand where to go for advice and support. The OSBC offers information, strategic and procedural advice, and can signpost to other organisations such as Ministry of Justice mediation services to support small business owners to negotiate successful outcomes to a wider range of disputes.

The OSBC has:

- Partnered with a wide range of organisations to promote the support and advice available
- geographically split its casework team to ensure that there is regional single point of contact for each of the LEP & Growth Hub networks
- created a YouTube channel to carry videos promoting the work of the OSBC, highlighting key issues, and containing links to speeches given by the Interim Commissioner
- attending a range of local events and providing education and access to advice, engaged with local authorities, combined authorities and devolved governments.
- supported and promoted face-to-face business advice services provided by other organisations.

Universities

University lecturers have approached the OSBC requesting support for entrepreneurial students who plan to set up their own business. Most degree courses do not include teaching on how to run a business and, without that knowledge, they are more likely to be taken advantage of or fail.

The OSBC has prepared and delivered workshops to students providing relevant advice and education and has produced useful 'hints and tips' literature as a source of reference.

The OSBC has attended a number of graduate open days to provide support and business advice to students who are looking to set up their own business. The Commissioner has presented at incubator sites, set up with funding from High Street Banks and Universities, providing premises and a support network to new Graduate start-ups.

The OSBC plans to expand its work with universities and other supporting organisations across the UK as part of its commitment to educating future business owners on how to prevent late payment issues from arising.

In 2019/20 financial year the OSBC has met with the following universities.

- Sussex
- Aston
- Bristol
- Loughborough
- Middlesex
- Peterborough



Late Payment Complaints Handling

Legislative Requirements

- Investigate quickly and impartially complaints from small businesses experiencing payment problems.
- Maintain an effective complaints handling scheme and investigate, consider and make determinations on relevant complaints.

Act fairly and reasonably in the Commissioner's determination of complaints.

Overview

- Where possible, published complaint reports will include recommendations.
- Every effort will be made to increase the numbers of complaints and enquiries received.

Working with BEIS & Government Agencies

The OSBC is in the business of creating positive and sustainable change for small businesses in the UK by working closely with a wide range of stakeholders, including small business owners, councils, regional and government departments and industry associations to resolve late payment disputes and identify and address the key causes.

The OSBC advocates for late payment policy reform and regularly shares feedback and insight with BEIS about the themes and trends it sees. It also uses this intelligence to inform its own programme of work. In 2018/2019, relevant themes included complaints from the construction sector, fraud and scams, and complaints relating to second and third tier contractors.

In addition to sharing regular reports about the volume and type of complaints we see; we share qualitative and quantitative information through regular and ad hoc meetings at all levels – as well as through exchanges of correspondence. In 2019/2020 we continued to share insight with the Public Procurement Service and the Financial Ombudsman Service. These meetings are an opportunity for each body to share information about emerging risks and to look collectively at the financial landscape.

Working collaboratively across government to help small business

The UK wishes to further strengthen its position as the best place to start and grow a business, as stated in all the major political party manifestos at the 2019 election. Particular focus needs to be given to educating small businesses not only at start-up phase but also throughout the life cycle as they grow into large-scale businesses.

The OSBC regularly engages with government agencies to stay abreast of any potential changes to legislation, policy or administrative processes that could impact small businesses in UK. It has formed strong relationships with UK Government departments and is actively involved in preliminary consultations as policy directions are developed.

Provide Information and Advice

Legislative Requirement

- The Commissioner will provide general advice or information that he considers may be useful to small businesses in connection with their supplier relationships with large businesses.

Objectives

- Provide increasingly high-quality and comprehensive information and advice to small businesses about avoiding and tackling payment problems;

The OSBC plays a key role in delivering support and advice for small businesses. Through its advocacy and dispute resolution service, it is helping many businesses across all industries to start up, grow and innovate.

Informal intervention service

The OSBC provides an informal intervention service to small businesses helping them to work through the options of resolving a dispute. OSBC caseworkers can assist at any stage of a dispute, helping to address key issues and find a solution without the need to resolve the dispute through the courts. The disputes can be between small and large businesses and the OSBC intervention has the added benefit of ensuring government is made aware of the issues impacting small businesses. These informal intervention negotiations are non-disclosable and have led to successful brokered non-disclosure agreements.

Dispute Resolution

Assisting UK small businesses in their commercial dealings with other parties, the OSBC offers a range of information, strategic and procedural advice, and signposts to Ministry of Justice mediation services to help resolve disputes quickly and inexpensively.

The OSBC deals with many enquiries outside of late payment and these include:

- Commercial agreements
- Rent and service charge disputes
- Leasing
- Business Rates
- Financing Options
- Grant funding
- Research and Development Tax Credits
- Debt Management
- Covid-19 support
- Construction disputes
- Utility tariff disputes
- Postage disputes

Performance Analysis

How do we measure performance?

The link between our key performance indicators, our risks and future uncertainties

Performance of the OSBC is measured against our three key delivery strands of:

- Complaints handling
- Information and Signposting
- Communications and Governance

The key performance indicator for the service is a measure of how many complaints we receive from Small Businesses against Larger Businesses.



Each of the other objectives feeds into this one. For example, we can measure how successful certain communications have been by the number of enquiries and complaints we receive thereafter. Most of the specific risks around our work arise from challenges relating to the volume of complaints.

Drivers for our work are largely outside of our control. For example, social, culture, demography and environmental changes have a major impact upon products, services, markets, and customers. Small businesses are being challenged by this, which could result in an influx in our workload.

Before launch, demand for our services was difficult to predict. Therefore, the estimates made in the Impact Assessment that accompanied our founding legislation were not met in the first year and are not expected to be met in the following three years. This is because the barriers preventing small businesses from complaining are much greater than anticipated.

This makes our communications objectives more important as they are key to breaking down those barriers. We measure ourselves on the numbers of businesses spoken to, and also on the level of engagement after radio interview, business expos or other activity designed to raise awareness of the OSBC.

Good governance provides us with the basis to succeed in providing a quality service for small businesses, but it is impossible to entirely eliminate the risks that potentially threaten our ability to deliver.

Managing uncertainty

As we set out in our strategic plans and budget, a key element of our strategy is to manage unpredictability in our casework. We need to maintain the ability to scale up operations to meet spikes in demand and a caseload that is growing in number and complexity.

We have yet to see a significant increase in late payment complaints, and it is unclear how many will raise concerns directly in preference to using online channels. However, we expect to see a significant rise in volume in the next reporting period, as a result of Covid-19. Our approach, which will continue into 2020/2021, is to monitor our service to ensure we can respond flexibly to demand. Where necessary, this will include the use of recruitment agency contracts to meet short-term peaks.

The volume of complaints we are able to resolve is subject to:

- How well small businesses manage their cashflow and chase payments due to them.
- Whether small businesses apply their statutory right to apply late payment charges and interest using the advice and calculator available on the OSBC website.
- The extent to which small businesses are dissuaded from using the OSBC service due to fear of retribution or commercial damage.
- The extent to which information can be obtained from both parties to inform and facilitate the resolution of a dispute.

We always strive to prioritise cases where our intervention is needed most urgently, and where we can have the greatest impact. We are particularly sensitive to cases where a business is facing insolvency, or where the business owner is encountering serious financial hardship or suffering mental and wellbeing issues as a result of the dispute.

Later this year, BEIS is expected to consult on an extension of the powers of the OSBC. Our programme of work involves considering how our service will need to evolve in the event that changes are introduced, and the challenges and opportunities they might present.

Performance Summary

Overview

The OSBC's casework facility has continued to develop through 2019/2020 with the recruitment of two additional caseworkers.

Our unique selling point is that the casework team offers a free, personal complaint handling and enquiry service. Each complaint and enquiry are managed by a dedicated caseworker who follows the case through from start to finish. This allows them to build up a rapport with the small business and ensure the best outcome is achieved.

The casework team is proud to report that, where a payment dispute has been in the scope of the complaints scheme, they have a 100% success rate in recovering the amount due. It is not unusual for a single call from a caseworker to result in payment to the small businesses within a matter of days.



Successes in 2019-2020

The following list summarises some of our key achievements in 2019/20:

Complaints Handling		
Resolved 31 in-scope complaints and handled 44 complaints informally from small businesses. Signposted 186 complaints that fell outside our statutory functions to alternative support providers. The average turn-round time for each complaint was 24 days against a target of 40 days.	Responded to 330 enquiries, signposting 77 to alternative support.	In this period, we recovered £3,338,510.49, bringing the total money recovered from Implementation in December 2017 - 31 st March 2020 to £6,771,476.
Published 6 complaint reports identifying large businesses that had demonstrated unfavourable payment practices, setting out the findings, together with recommendations.	Provided training to all our staff, tailored to their individual needs. This suite of training, which includes a module provided by ACAS on mediation, ensures each team member has the skills and knowledge required to perform their role.	Developed and implemented a new case management system 'iCasework' for processing and administering complaints and enquiries.
Information & Signposting		
Generated an awareness within the business community of the support available from the OSBC and established the Office as the go-to organisation for small businesses experiencing payment problems with large businesses.	Built effective stakeholder links and worked in conjunction with LEPs and Growth hubs around the UK to deliver payment best practice workshops.	
Communication & Governance		
Redeveloped and improved the OSBC website to provide high-quality and comprehensive self-help information and guidance for small businesses on avoiding late payment and how to make a complaint to the OSBC.	Planned and implemented the transfer of administration of the Prompt Payment Code from the Chartered Institute of Credit Management.	Continued to carry out work to raise awareness of the role of the OSBC.
Achieved a substantial rating from the Government Internal Audit Office for the management and control of the casework management system.		

Promoting the work of the Office of the Small Business Commissioner

Stakeholders

The allocation of each region to a specific caseworker has supported the development of closer stakeholder engagement in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas to increase awareness and visibility of the OSBC, with late payment and best payment practice workshops being held, across the regions of the UK.

Our casework team will continue to build stakeholder links in their areas, deliver workshops to support small business, and maintain close engagement with small business owners, large businesses, business representative bodies, UK government, local councils, and other industry trade associations through 2020.

The OSBC collaborated with a wide range of organisations during the year including the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Institute of Directors (IoD), Financial Ombudsman Services, Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs) & Growth Hubs, as well as many others building constructive relationships. Regular meetings were held with BEIS to discuss our performance, trends in complaints and in preparation for taking over the administration of the Prompt Payment Code.

Overall volumes 2019/2020

We resolved 592 cases in 2019/2020, comprising of 262 complaints and 330 enquiries. A new case management system was introduced in June 2019 to capture this data.

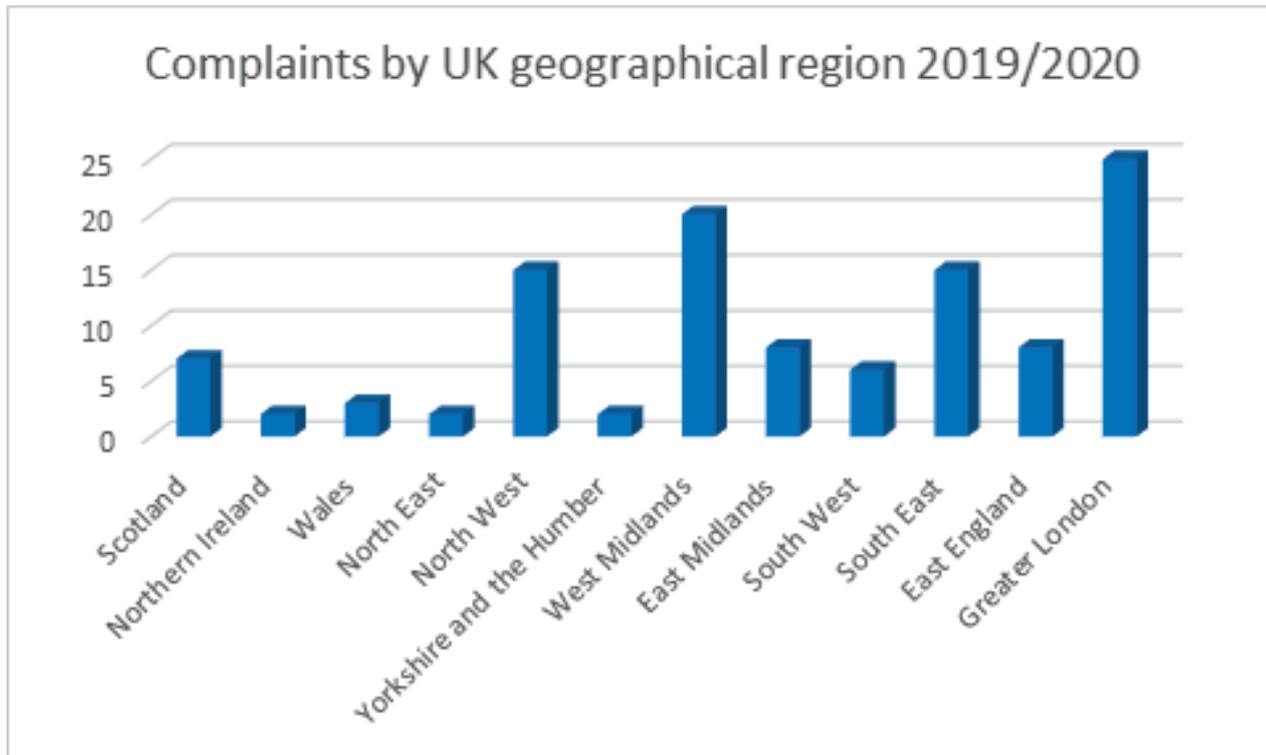
The complaints we dealt with in 2019/20

We are able to formally consider complaints brought to us by the very smallest businesses (fewer than 50 employees), and those who have engaged with us recognise the benefits of our free informal dispute resolution advice. Businesses see our advice and as an alternative to the courts. In many cases, these very small businesses have typically do not access legal or accounting support in relation to payment disputes, and little or no greater knowledge than individual personal customers about financial services. However, complaints made by businesses can involve particular contractual complexities, and our caseworkers can draw on their specialist knowledge and signpost to external expertise in these areas.

During 2019/2020 we experienced a steady increase in demand. The chart displayed at figure 1 below shows the geographical breakdown of complaints received in 2019/2020 where regions have been disclosed. Complainants are not required to disclose their region and, for the majority of complaints (53%) in 2019/2020, this is unknown. For future enquiries, the OSBC is capturing this data to allow us to identify any areas where complaint volumes are particularly high or low. This will enable us to target promotional work and stakeholder engagement in line with the patterns identified.

Figure 1:

****Excludes 130 complaints where regions were not disclosed****



Where regions have been disclosed in 2019/2020, the highest number of complaints have been received from London (10%). The next highest volume derives from West Midlands (8%) followed by the South East (6%) and North West (6%). Figures for all other areas remain lower and fairly consistent.

Given the high level of business activity in London and the West Midlands, this was anticipated.

To increase the use of our service in other geographical areas and extend stakeholder relationships across the whole of the UK, all geographical areas have been allocated to caseworkers who will focus their efforts on their individual areas. Going forward this will enable analysis around geographical areas and best practice around raising awareness to be conducted in more detail.

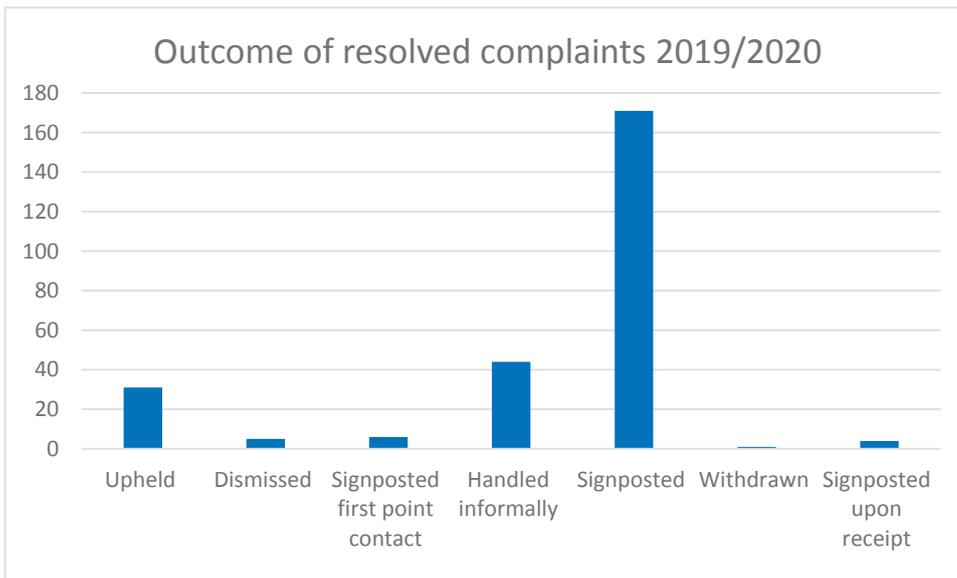
In addition to the allocation of geographical areas to each case worker the OSBC has committed to working more closely with the Scottish devolved authority and provides regular casework surgeries for Scottish small businesses at the Scottish Assembly.

The OSBC intends to raise awareness of the support provided to Welsh Small Business by exhibiting and speaking at 3 Welsh Business exhibitions in 2020. This will be in addition to our commitment to strengthen links with the Welsh Assembly.

Increasing awareness of the role of the OSBC in Northern Ireland has proved to be problematic with the collapse of power sharing. However, the OSBC has engaged with Northern Ireland business groups has attended events and has accepted an invitation to appear before the Committee for the Economy of the Northern Ireland Assembly in Stormont. The restoration of power sharing in Northern Ireland will provide the opportunity to forge stronger links at a strategic level and develop a plan regarding raising the awareness of the role of the OSBC.

Figure 2 below displays the outcome of all complaints resolved during 2019/2020.

Figure 2:



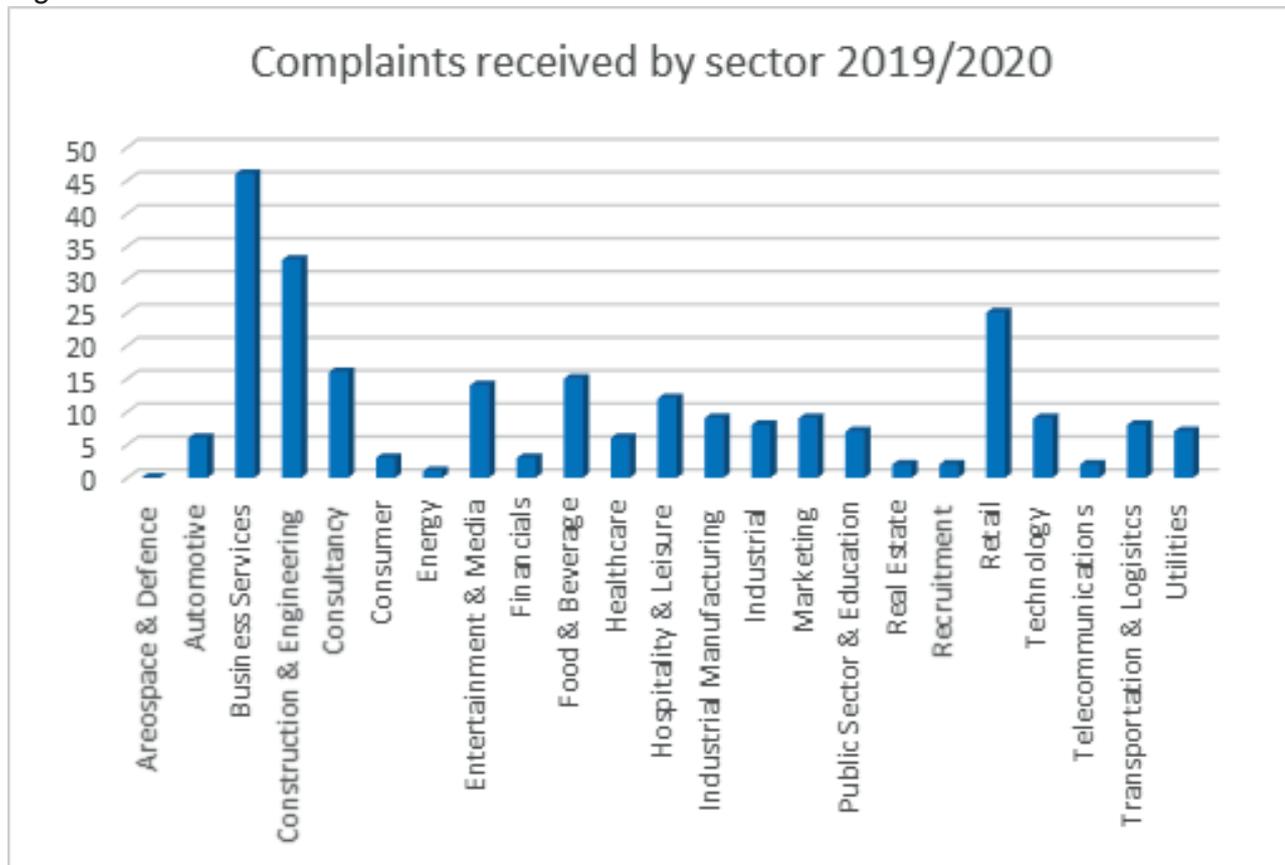
The majority of complaints were signposted or handled informally rather than being investigated formally. Signposted complaints are those that fall outside the remit of the OSBC and have been supported by signposting to relevant alternative services, either immediately upon receipt or after further investigation.

Whilst the number of cases investigated this year is lower than those we have signposted, monies released reflects a successful outcome.

Cases investigated during 2019/2020 have resulted in total payment of £3,338,510.49.

The graph at figure 3 below displays the breakdown and makeup of the business sector where complaints have been received.

Figure 3:



The highest number of complaints received were from small business operating in the business services environment (19%). This is unsurprising given the UK is predominantly a service – based economy. The categorisation of Business Services includes consultancy, recruitment, design, marketing, professional services, translation services, project management and property management. However, as a high volume of the complaints received in this sector were specifically from small businesses within consultancy, retail and marketing, additional complaint categories for these sectors were created in September 2019 to provide a more detailed breakdown of future complaints.

Whilst complaints from companies providing consultancy services have been particularly high, many of these complaints have been about the contract or delivery of service rather than payment.

Complaints from the construction sector constituted a significant part of all complaints (14%) since the OSBC was launched. However, this sector falls outside of the OSBC remit. The OSBC has made a concerted effort to inform small businesses and trade associations of its scope and remit, hoping to reduce the number of enquiries and complaints from the construction sector.

Complaints from the retail (10%) and consultancy (6%) sectors were also amongst the highest volumes of complaints received, this has been consistent since the OSBC was implemented in December 2017.

Previously, retail and consultancy were included in the categorisation of Business Services however as they were identified as prevalent sectors, we gave them their own categories.

The lowest number of complaints received were from the energy industry, closely followed by telecommunications and real estate.

Figure 4 below demonstrates the trends highlighted above.

Figure 4:

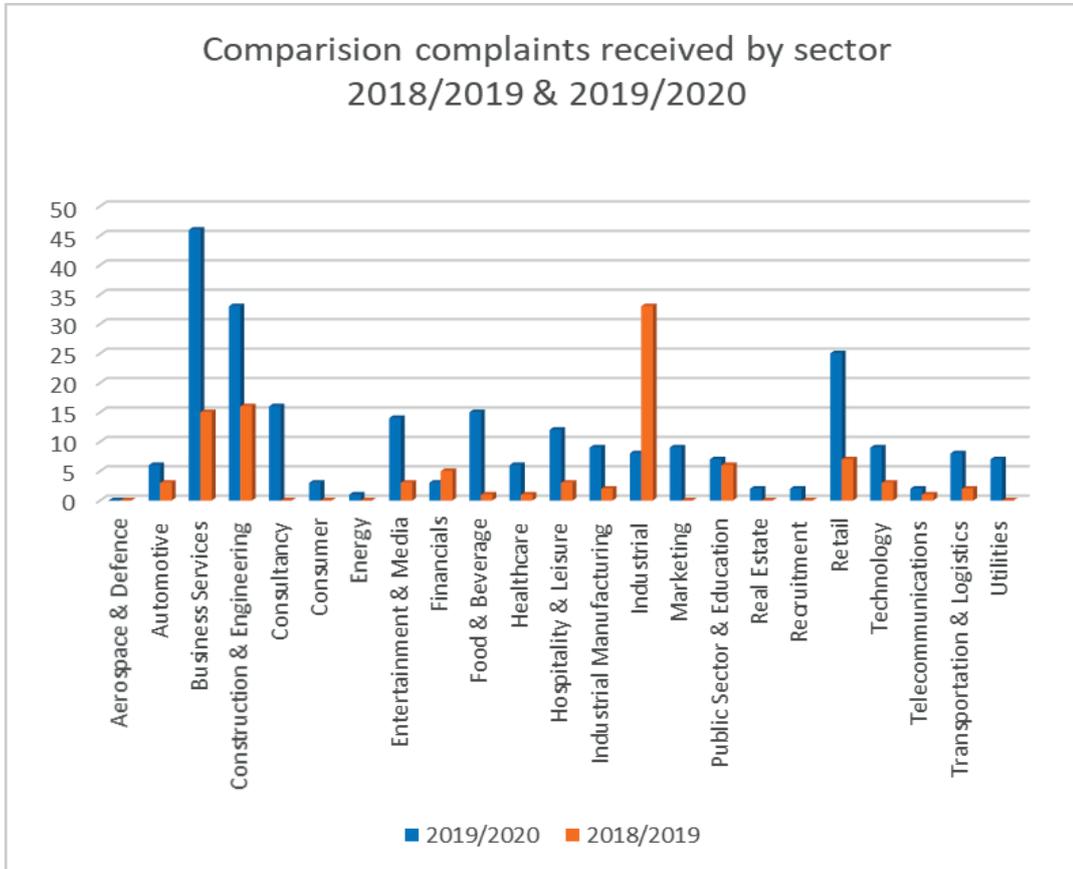
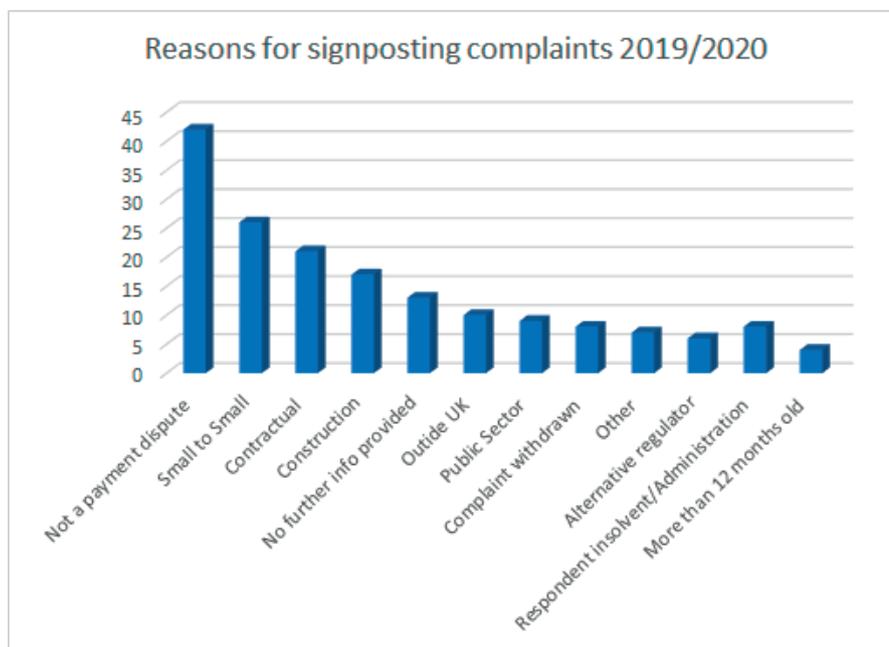


Figure 5 below displays the number of complaints that fall outside of the scope of OSBC, these complaints have all been supported and signposted to other areas.

Figure 5:



Complaints about payment disputes with other small businesses continue to be prevalent, as do complaints which involve a dispute around contractual requirements of an agreement.

However, the highest category of signposted complaints is those not directly related to payment, and usually connected to one or other aspect of service or product delivery.

Between September 2019 and January 2020, we saw a significant increase in the number of non-payment related cases that we were able to signpost for alternative support, resulting from a high-profile advertising package sale scam affecting many small retail businesses.

An underlying theme of payment disputes reveals a lack of awareness and understanding of basic business and credit management practice. Several complaints the OSBC has investigated have demonstrated that the small business has not understood the agreed payment terms, often believing they were operating on different payment terms to what was set out in the contract. This supports the continued requirement for the OSBC to work with stakeholders to educate and upskill small businesses in this area.

We receive consistent feedback that the imbalance of power between large and small businesses leaves the smaller party reluctant to enforce their rights or resist changes to contract terms. This leaves them feeling vulnerable and likely to be subject to unfair treatment and exploitation. Such behaviour can be difficult to challenge, let alone resolve, without outside help.

We are often asked by complainants if they can remain anonymous. The legislation allows for this and the OSBC is sympathetic, but it does raise complex procedural legal issues. The OSBC take all complaints received seriously and, where these fall outside our jurisdiction, we take the necessary steps to ensure they are appropriately investigated or signposted. Unfortunately, when a complaint is anonymous, the larger business is hampered in responding to us in a meaningful way as an anonymous and/or confidential complaint may not provide us with a full picture of the alleged wrongdoing.

Although the Enterprise Act 2016 provides the legislative power for the Commissioner to investigate and publish a report where a small business does not wish their identity to be released to the other party, there are practical difficulties. Publishing a report when the named party does not know where the complaint originated and has not been able to investigate and respond may be deemed contrary to natural justice and subject to legal challenge.

The OSBC's approach is always to actively listen, document the correspondence and respond with an appropriate level of urgency based on all other information available. We have had examples of cases where we were due publish a report naming a larger business and received notification at the last minute that the dispute had been settled. In some cases, the small business had also entered into a non-disclosure agreement.



Case Study 1

Company: Anonymous

Region: Nottinghamshire

Location: Nottingham

Link: https://www.smallbusinesscommissioner.gov.uk/case_studies/anonymous-3/

A small catering business contacted the OSBC stating they were owed in excess of £7K in unpaid invoices. The small business contacted their client to pursue the outstanding payment and was informed their agreement had been cancelled and the account would be settled. The small business submitted a revised invoice for service up to the date of cancellation in the sum of £7,905.00.

The small business was paid £7,495.72. The small business chased their client for the remaining balance, finally contacting the OSBC when they were unresponsive. The OSBC attempted to discuss the reason for the non-settlement of the account without success and issued a formal complaint determination decision. On receipt of the Commissioner's formal determination the large business responded and explained that illness had delayed their response, but they had no record of the service that was billed in the final had been provided. However, they agreed to settle the amount as a goodwill gesture.

Case Study 2

Company: Anonymous

Region: Leicestershire

Link: https://www.smallbusinesscommissioner.gov.uk/case_studies/anonymous-5/

A small aircraft management consultancy business was contracted to carry out some research for a multi-national aviation company.

Upon completion of the project the small business submitted its invoice, however payment remained outstanding. The small business logged a formal complaint with the OSBC after attempting to contact the aviation company numerous times to chase payment without any success. An OSBC Caseworker contacted the multi-national company on behalf of the small business to investigate the dispute and following this discussion, the outstanding invoice of £2944.80 was paid in full.



“I greatly appreciate all your work in obtaining this outstanding amount”

Small Business Quote

Case Study 3

Company: Anonymous

Region: Northern Ireland

Location: Northern Ireland

Link; https://www.smallbusinesscommissioner.gov.uk/case_studies/42502/

A small communications business was contracted to deliver a PR project for a large, international company in the hospitality sector.

The project was completed, but the invoice remained unpaid. The small business joined a Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce webinar and discovered the free support offered by the OSBC. The business went on to log a formal complaint with the OSBC.

A Caseworker from the OSBC assessed the complaint and requested further information to begin the investigation process, However the small business advised that after making the complaint, they once again contacted the large company highlighting that a formal complaint had been made to the OSBC. Subsequently, full payment was received the following day.



“For any small business, the late payment of invoices is a constant worry as it can have a seriously negative impact on cash flow. We had been struggling to get paid for a job we did the previous year for a large business in the hospitality sector and it was a growing concern as the work had involved a large outlay of our own money. When we found out that the Office of the Small Business Commissioner could assist us, we immediately asked for their help and thankfully just the mention of the organisation’s involvement was enough for payment to be made the next day. We found communicating with the Office simple, quick, and efficient and the staff working on behalf of the Commissioner are friendly and super helpful. I’d recommend engaging with the Small Business Commissioner to any small business who is owed money by a larger organisation and I couldn’t speak more highly of the help they offered our business.”

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF THE SMALL BUSINESS QUOTE

Social media engagement

It is hard to be different, be newsworthy and be interesting when the complaints we see around late payments are very much the same. We therefore have targeted our press releases at the right publications to ensure they are relevant. It is exciting to gain a “big splash” of press coverage about a publication report, but it is all too easy to think that this will be enough.

We recognise that editorial coverage in newspapers and magazines is often believed to have more “clout” than paid advertising. But there is competition for limited space, so we have been careful to make sure that our message stands out. Paid-for advertising has limited benefits, so our focus is on marketing campaigns to ensure we maintain the ground we have already gained.

To date we have:

- 70,594 website users,
- 1,760 Twitter followers for @SB_Commissioner
- 483 LinkedIn followers
- 25 YouTube videos
- 63 Facebook followers on our recently launched page.

We have utilised the services of an external PR consultant to create digital news content and features coverage, provide PR opportunities and generate press coverage.

From 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 we had 55,192 users visit our website. The three most viewed pages were.

1. Late Payment Interest-calculator: 18,892 views
2. Deal with an unpaid invoice: 14,665 views
3. Legal action you can take: 13,642 views



Our top three Twitter impressions were

1) **March 2020**

- Impressions: 36,542
- Profile clicks: 124
- Likes: 78
- Retweets: 61

Small Business Commissioner UK @SB_Commissioner

Small businesses facing #LatePayment issues don't need to suffer in silence. The SBC provide a free service and are here to tackle the late payment crisis.

Visit our website or contact our team today and find out how we can help you get paid. #MakePaymentPrompt 🇬🇧 🇬🇧 🇬🇧
pic.twitter.com/VOzs9gxOaM

2) **May 2019**

- Impressions: 10,724
- Profile clicks: 29
- Likes: 59
- Retweets: 29

Did you know that there are 5.6 million small businesses in the UK? They contribute £1.9 trillion to our economy each year. This evening @fsb_policy will be celebrating this as they choose their Small Business of the Year for 2019: fsbawards.co.uk
#FSBAwards pic.twitter.com/yKREk8A8HD



👤 1 🔄 29 ❤️ 59

1) **September 2019**

- Impressions: 12,747
- Profile clicks: 12
- Likes: 19
- Retweets: 4

The Small Business Commissioner cuts the ribbon at West Midlands first drive-thru bank. @Metro_Bank #MerryHill.
pic.twitter.com/1E8EUOgEuY



Our OSBC Facebook page was launched in September 2019 and our three most engaged posts were;

1. Stone

- 61 Engagements: 28 Reactions/comments/shares, 33 Post Clicks (Links, photo, see more or page title)
- 210 People Reached



2. MicroBizMatters

- 50 Engagements: 15 Reactions/comments/shares, 35 Post Clicks (Links, photo, see more or page title)
- 185 People Reached



3. 500k

- 42 Engagements: 16 Reactions/comments/shares, 26 Post Clicks (Links, photo, see more or page title)
- 232 People Reached



Maximising opportunities

Our use of social media enhances our reputation of tackling late payment and gives us credibility for tackling the issue and supports our efforts to raise awareness of our service.

The Commissioner and the wider OSBC team use stakeholder meetings event networking, newsletters, mailshots, and general enquiry phone conversations to promote our free service.

Online, through our active channels, we have tweeted out the news of our press coverage to our Twitter followers, shared it on our Facebook page and announced it on LinkedIn. We invest significant time in these networks, building up our followers and connections who in turn help by retweeting, sharing our content, and “liking” our news.

We have utilised LinkedIn not only for connecting with people we meet at networking events but to further raise our profile by joining relevant groups. We are now starting or joining in discussions or offering expert advice. In turn we support our connections, too, sharing and “liking” their news to further spread the word about our service. Many of our events have been organised as a result of a LinkedIn connection.

Networking has provided us with the opportunity to communicate our brand to a room full of people engaging in meaningful conversation, genuinely listening and showing an interest in the issues being raised. We have used case studies to tell people about our successes and through this we have built credibility and new relationships.



Performance on other measures

Information security

We fulfil our role as a Public Sector Information Holder through adherence to the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts. Our data policies are compliant with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which came into force on 25 May 2018.

We mandate annual 'Responsible for Information' learning for our staff and augment it by promoting good practice in the areas of email security, password protection and the use of cloud collaboration tools. All staff are aware of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and undergo training on an annual basis.

Any security breaches and near misses are reported to the Management Board with individual breaches considered and escalated as appropriate dependent on their seriousness.

In the period covered by this report the OSBC had no data handling breaches or near misses that resulted in a notification to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO).

Open and full information

Freedom of information

We will be publishing information about the number of freedom of information requests we receive and respond to on a quarterly basis on our website. We expect to publish data from the first quarter of 2020.

Modern Slavery

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement April 2019 – March 2020

This voluntary statement has been published in accordance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015. It sets out the steps taken by the OSBC to prevent modern slavery and human trafficking in its business and supply chains.

The OSBC is committed to the principles of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and the abolition of modern slavery and human trafficking. As an equal-opportunities employer, the OSBC is committed to creating and ensuring a non-discriminatory and respectful working environment for its staff.

The OSBC recruitment and people management processes are designed to ensure that all prospective employees are legally entitled to work in the UK and to safeguard employees from any abuse or coercion once in our employment.

Their statement is published on their website:

[UK SBS Modern Slavery Statement \[PDF, 61.4kb\]](#)

Our Supply Chains

The Small Business Commissioner's procurement for goods and services is provided by our shared services provider, UK SBS. UK SBS contracts directly with approximately 230 suppliers, but our supply chain is limited, and we procure goods and services from a restricted range of UK and overseas suppliers. Only two of the companies that we have procured through Crown Commercial Service Frameworks are of a size to be subject to Section 54, and both have complied. UK SBS have also published their statement on Slavery & Human Trafficking which includes their mechanisms for guarding against modern slavery in their client's supply chains.

Over the past 12 months, the OSBC has undertaken the following actions:

- Made all staff aware of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and informed them of the appropriate action to take if they suspect a case of slavery or human trafficking.
- Ensured the OSBC and UK SBS procurement strategies and contract terms and conditions include references to preventing modern slavery and human trafficking

Actions taken for the period ending 31 March 2020

During 2019-20, OSBC has undertaken the following activities:

- Continued to work to raise awareness of modern slavery within the OSBC by reviewing and evaluating the measures and processes that we have implemented so far to ensure their effectiveness.
- Worked with our suppliers and reviewed our processes with our delivery partners to identify any additional measures we can take as a business to combat modern slavery and human trafficking.
- Continued to develop a staff awareness strategy for the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and reporting mechanisms if a case of slavery or human trafficking is suspected.
- Made information available to businesses to inform them of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and the appropriate action to take if they suspect a case of slavery or human trafficking.

Recruitment Policies

Our recruitment is carried out under the remit of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's policies and procedures as our sponsor department.

Recruitment into our sponsor department, and the Civil Service, is regulated by the Civil Service Commission. Our recruitment is limited by budget and physical space. Any additional office space requires a written notice period.

In line with the Civil Service more widely, we adopted the new Civil Service Recruitment Framework to enable effective business delivery and build capability in key areas.

Diversity and Inclusion remain a high priority for us, so our recruitment and attraction strategy include a range of actions to develop an ever-increasing level of diversity.

Learning & Development

Our people's learning and development is central to our ability to resolve complaints fairly, and to run our organisation as effectively as possible. This year we continued both to develop our employees' skills in their current roles, and to identify and develop skills our service will need in the future.

Some 2019/20 highlights and developments include:

- Responding to demand for leadership and management skills, 3 of our people have completed the BEIS bootcamp.
- Recruiting an apprentice who is working towards their professional qualifications in Customer Service Level 3 and has successfully gained a regional apprenticeship leader position
- Developing a talent pipeline holding a 12-month reserve list on our vacancies, we have a waitlist for our Communication Manager role, Business Manager role and have an Apprentice on our reserve list.
- 2 members of the team gaining successful promotion from Higher Executive roles to Senior Executive roles.
- ACAS 'Handling difficult conversations' training delivered on 6th June 2019
- ICASEWORK training delivered on 27th June 2019

Anti-corruption and anti-bribery matters

All staff have completed their counter fraud, bribery and corruption training which is completed through Civil Service Learning and this course is refreshed annually.

Health and Wellbeing

We're committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone who works for us and with us. People across our service are responsible for health and safety, including our property management team, managers, first aiders, fire marshals and our health and safety committee, who help raise awareness of health and safety issues and minimise the number of accidents.

In 2019/2020 we:

- Continued to engage with our people to raise health and safety awareness across the organisation
- Continued to run e-learning, classroom and practical health and safety training, including first aid courses, fire marshal training, and manual handling training completed by our people
- Raised awareness of the network of mental health first aiders, who can offer immediate support for colleagues experiencing mental ill health at work and direct them to longer-term professional support where necessary
- Enhanced our personal emergency procedures, which has resulted in more people telling us about the additional help they might need if they have to leave the building because of a fire or other emergency.

During the 2019/20 year we had no accidents or near misses reported.

Flexible working

We offer flexible ways of working to help people manage their life in and outside work – including parenting and caring responsibilities – as well as to support their wellbeing. We encourage managers and employees to work together to agree arrangements that work for everyone, and we encourage all staff to work for one day a week from home and this can be increased upon request.

In our ongoing commitment to flexibility, we aim to support our employees. Our family- friendly policies include six months' enhanced maternity pay, two weeks' enhanced paternity pay, six months enhanced shared parental leave pay, two days' paid dependants leave, and five days' paid carers leave. Our positive approach to flexibility is supported by the feedback from our staff who tell us that our family friendly approach and a good work- life balance is one of the best things about working for us.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

In 2019/2020 we maintained a network of mental health first aiders across our service, raising awareness of their dedicated phone number and their role in supporting their colleagues. Like physical first aid, MHFA is intended to support people through single instances of mental health problems as they manifest at work. A key part of mental health first aiders' role is to signpost people to appropriate support, whether this is from their manager, our employee assistance programme, health services, or a combination.

Sickness absence

Through the focus on wellbeing and supporting managers in how they respond to sickness absence, we have not encountered high levels of sickness absence rates.

Health & Safety

We're committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone who works for us and with us. People across our service are responsible for health and safety, including our Government property management team, managers, first aiders, fire marshals and our Business User Group/health and safety committee, who help raise awareness of health and safety issues and minimise the number of accidents.

We continued to engage with our people to raise health and safety awareness across the organisation and encouraged workplace adjustment assessments to be undertaken.

We continued to ensure that mandatory and practical health and safety training was completed by all staff, we offered places on first aid courses, fire marshal training, Defib and manual handling training.

We have a maintained network of mental health first aiders, who can offer immediate support for colleagues experiencing mental ill health at work and direct them to longer- term professional support where necessary.

We tested our emergency evacuation procedures, to ensure we were aware of any additional help staff might need if they have to leave the building because of a fire or other emergency.

No accidents or near misses were reported during 2019/2020.

Diversity

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We're committed to being a great place to work, and an employer that attracts and develops people from the widest possible range of backgrounds. We want everyone to perform at their best and feel able to be themselves – and if we're diverse and inclusive, we'll better understand different perspectives, which is fundamental to our job resolving late payment complaints.

In 2019/2020, reflecting the strength of our commitments in these areas, we established a team specifically focused on embedding inclusion, diversity and wellbeing into our overall business strategy.

Environmental Impact

In 2019/2020 we maintained our commitment to running our organisation sustainably and minimising our impact on the environment. During the year, we've continued to focus on recycling more, using less energy, using space efficiently, and reducing print and costs through the increased use of technology.

- We promote the BEIS campaigns to raise our people's awareness of how they can make a difference to our sustainability.
- We focus on reducing our use of stationery and other consumables.

We scan every item of correspondence we receive – and we make arrangements with our small businesses to send their complaints to us electronically, which saves on time and money. Our online forms have helped reduce the paper we receive, and this will be further improved when we launch our portal later in 2020 and continue to explore smarter ways of working.

Our waste

We encourage our people to dispose of their waste in a way that helps to reduce our impact on the environment. Every floor of our offices has recycling, non-recycling and food waste bins. Under our service charge, our landlord disposes of the waste we generate as part of its own waste strategy.

The materials we recycle are paper and cardboard, cans, plastics and glass.

In addition, we recycle confidential papers and any written correspondence we receive through our suppliers.

Sustainable Procurement

We take an ethical approach to procurement – choosing to work with suppliers that take corporate social responsibility seriously, including the environmental impact of their business. We applied this approach when we procured catering for an event, and we promote the use of reusable crockery and cutlery.

Corporate social responsibility

One of our core values as a service is doing the right thing. We attract employees who share this ethos. It extends beyond how they approach their day-to-day work, to how they contribute to their local community.

We regularly raise money for charities by doing dress-down days and Christmas jumper days. The OSBC cannot personally accept gifts, however in any circumstance where gifts have been sent, we seek permission from the sender and in spirit of good intent we donate them to charity to help them raise funds for valuable causes. The OSBC maintains a gift and hospitality register. During 2019/20 the OSBC were gifted 4 bottles of champagne and donated this gift to the local haematology department.

Apprenticeships – Investing in the next generation

As an organisation with only a small team of staff, we do not fall within the scope of the Government's Public Sector Apprenticeship Target. This target means we should employ at least 2.3% of our workforce as new apprenticeships starts from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021, and report annually on the average we have achieved each year. However, we have supported BEIS in their overall target by recruiting an apprentice.

Our approach to apprenticeships has been to offer a variety of work to enable the apprentice to upskill and develop with us. We will use the apprenticeship programme to attract, develop and retain the talent we need to meet our strategic priorities.

Our apprentice is working towards their professional qualifications in Customer Service Specialist Apprenticeship level 3.

“Since the start of my apprenticeship, I have received an incredible amount of support and opportunities from every single member of the team to complete my modules and experience criteria. I am constantly being pushed to develop and better myself.”

REBECCA LEESE, OSBC APPRENTICE



The Accountability Report

These sections cover our audit arrangements, our Parliamentary accountability and remuneration and staff report. The Corporate Governance Report is also part of the Accountability Report. Our lead Non-Executive Director on the Audit, Risk and Assurance Board has a role in ensuring the organisation is accountable and acts within corporate governance standards.

Non – Executive Director Accountability statement

I was appointed a Non-Executive Director for the Small Business Commissioner’s Advisory Board in January 2019 and appointed Chair of its Audit, Risk and Assurance Board at its first Advisory Board meeting on the 11th February 2019.

My main duties at the Board consist of ensuring governance matters, decision-making and financial management are carried out appropriately within the OSBC and that arrangements are in place to provide assurance on risk management. This includes seeking assurance both as to the effectiveness of the internal control and risk management systems and that the quality and performance of the organisation is maintained in a manner consistent with the standards expected of a public body. As well as ensuring accountability, I aim to contribute to the formulation of strategy and organisational culture.

The OSBC has continued to develop and grow its small team and to build on its achievements since its inception. The resilience and flexibility of its structures, procedures and team have been demonstrated by its ability to sustain service through the transition period between Commissioners and to absorb the operational support for the Prompt Payment Code. Current business conditions, in the context of the impact Covid-19 has had on businesses and the economy, underline the importance of the Commissioner’s work and will continue to provide challenging times for the OSBC.

The OSBC has revised and reviewed its priorities to reflect support to the Prompt Payment Code and the current, very challenging, business environment emerging from the impact of the Covid-19 response. The OSBC has leveraged this to inform the creation of its three-year business plan.

As a member of the Board, I contribute to supporting the Commissioner’s strategic aims and supporting the organisation to continue to evolve to meet those objectives. This includes continuing to articulate these strategic aims to stakeholders and leveraging the wide skills available within the organisation and its sponsor Department to help shape and deliver on those aims. I will also work to support the team and the Commissioner’s work to build the profile of the OSBC and wider awareness of the issues arising from late payments.

As Chair of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee I aim to provide, where necessary, rigorous and effective challenge to the Board on assurance and governance matters based upon my experience from working, with a focus on Risk and Assurance, in a variety of business sectors.

This is a critical moment for UK business and an opportunity for the OSBC to help redefine the landscape for business payments and change the culture of damaging late payments.

Laurence Milsted, 8 September 2020

Auditors

National Audit Office (NAO)

To oversee the relationship with the external auditors, the National Audit Office (NAO). The NAO has direct access to the chair to discuss financial reporting matters and is invited to all audit committee meetings. Our annual report and accounts are subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General, head of the NAO.

Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA)

To monitor and review how effective our internal audit function is, in the context of the overall risk management and independent assurance – and to approve the appointment and removal of the internal auditor.

Responsibilities for accounting to Parliament

The accountabilities include:

- Producing, signing and publishing an annual report and accounts detailing the activities of the Small Business Commissioner, and ensuring that proper records are kept relating to the accounts and that the accounts are properly prepared, audited, and presented in accordance with any directions issued by the Secretary of State
- Preparing and signing a Governance Statement covering corporate governance, risk management and assurance of any local responsibilities, for inclusion in the annual report and accounts
- Ensuring that effective procedures for handling complaints about the OSBC are established and publicised
- Acting in accordance with the terms of this document, including the list of government-wide corporate guidance instructions listed at Appendix 1, Managing Public Money and other instructions and guidance issued from time to time by our sponsor department, the Treasury and the Cabinet Office
- Giving evidence, normally with the Principle Accounting Officer, when summonsed before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on the Commissioner's stewardship of public funds.

Regularity of Expenditure – Losses

There were no losses in the reporting period

Regularity of Expenditure – Special payments

There were no special payments in the reporting period

Regularity of Expenditure – Gifts

No allowances, bonuses or benefits in kind have been made to the Small Business Commissioner. Gifts and hospitality are recorded in the Small Business Commissioner's Gifts & Hospitality register.

Fees and Charges

The OSBC does not have any fees or charges.

Remote Contingent Liabilities

There were no remote contingent liabilities to disclose in the reporting period.



Corporate Governance Report

The Directors Report

The OSBC is a corporation sole and is sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

As Accounting Officer, I am responsible for ensuring that the OSBC has an appropriate governance structure and systems to ensure I meet my statutory obligations. I am personally responsible for safeguarding public funds for which I have charge; for ensuring propriety and regularity in the handling of public funds; and for day-to-day operations and management of the OSBC as set out in Managing Public Money. The OSBC governance structure combines efficient decision making with accountability and transparency.

The decisions made at Strategic Board meetings help inform the Advisory Board and Audit, Risk and Assurance Board of the day to day challenges that the OSBC is addressing and where we may seek the help and guidance from our non-executive Directors to assist us in our broader sense of direction. I chair the OSBC Advisory Board which is responsible for ensuring that the OSBC statutory obligations are met, that decision-making and financial management are carried out appropriately and that the OSBC is managed effectively. I have attended my first Strategic Board meeting in my capacity as the Accounting Officer, and I chaired that meeting. Working with my executive team we are planning our future priorities, goals and objectives and will make our formal strategic decisions using a democratic cohesive approach to ensure we remain on track to deliver our statutory functions and achieve financial probity.

I have felt welcomed into our executive team of commercial experts and I have participated in the Audit, Risk and Assurance board which is chaired by Laurence Milsted. My observations of the team driving the OSBC are that they are a team of experts with astute commercial knowledge and a wide range of experience. Their intelligence and understanding of the small business landscape ensure we remain focused on our delivery.

I am personally responsible for promoting and safeguarding regularity, propriety, affordability, sustainability, risk and value for money; and accounting accurately and transparently for the OSBC financial position and transactions. A review of Board effectiveness is due to be carried out on a bi-annual basis and will next take place in 2020/21 as reported in the Annual Report, for 2018/19.

As part of my induction into the Interim role, I have met with officials from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) implementation/sponsorship team on a monthly basis. These meetings have covered expectations of my role, the importance of continuing our good governance, reviews of our progress and the OSBC achievements to date. Working as a new member of the governance boards, we assess the effectiveness of our governance arrangements and take actions where necessary to streamline our boards in order to remove duplication.

The Governance Statement

The OSBC launched its services on 20 December 2017 and covers the whole of the UK (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). Established under the provisions of the Enterprise Act 2016 (“the Act”), the Commissioner plays an important role in supporting small businesses to resolve their payment disputes with larger businesses, providing advice, and helping bring about culture change in private sector payment practices. Created in legislation as a corporation sole, the Commissioner is classified as a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) – operationally independent of government and a partner organisation of Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

The Secretary of State is responsible for the overall policy framework within which the Commissioner operates and has statutory powers in relation to the Commissioner. Furthermore, the Secretary of State is ultimately responsible to Parliament for the Commissioner and accordingly will account for its business in Parliament.

The Interim Commissioner, Philip King, is the Accounting Officer. Governance of the OSBC is carried out through an Executive Board, Audit, Risk & Assurance committee, and an Advisory Board. Board and committee members assess the information provided to them and challenge it where appropriate to ensure robust considerations. The OSBC has 3 non-executive directors.

The OSBC framework document was drawn up by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in consultation with the OSBC. This document formally sets out the broad framework within which the Small Business Commissioner will operate and the role and responsibilities of the Commissioner. The document is available to members of the public on the Commissioner's page on GOV.UK.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/small-business-commissioner-framework-document>

The Small Business Commissioner’s Strategic Board

The Strategic Role of the Board

The role of the board of the OSBC is to:

- Ensure that the service is properly resourced and able to carry out its work effectively and independently.
- Agree the strategic direction of the service and its key commitments.
- Oversee and monitor the service’s operational and financial performance.
- Prepare and approve an annual plan that sets out how resources will be used.
- Approve the annual review and the directors’ report & financial statements.

The board is made up entirely of non- executive directors. Members of the executive team are invited to attend board meetings as required, with regular attendance from the Commissioner & BEIS representatives. The board combines executive and non- executive insight to govern the service effectively.

Strategic Board

Board Membership	Role	Meetings Attended
Paul Uppal (Former Chair)	Former Small Business Commissioner (resigned 10 October 2019)	5/6
Philip King (Chair)	Interim Small Business Commissioner (appointed 27 January 2020)	1/6
Suzanne Burke	Head of Operations	6/6
Corinne Brooke	Head of Policy	2/6
Jacqueline Moore	Casework Manager	4/6
Neil Cowley	Casework Manager	3/6
Pooja Raj	Business Manager	4/6
Manveer Mann	Communications Manager	1/6

The Commissioner’s Non- Executive Directors

Governance

Recruitment

The recruitment process for non-executive positions is open and transparent, with advertisements running in the national media. We make appointments as an equal opportunity employer, in line with the principles of fairness and impartiality and our commitment to diversity and inclusion. Board appointments are made by the Secretary of State for BEIS.

The chair and members of the board are appointed in the public interest, not as individual representatives of any group or sector – and they’re not involved in considering the individual complaints that are brought to us, all board members are independent.

Members of the board are required to complete an annual declaration about their current interests and those of people connected with them – and to confirm that those interests are not in conflict with their position as a Non-Executive Director.

During 2019/2020, a recruitment search was undertaken for a 3rd non-executive director. Dr Yvonne Gale was successful and joined the board in November 2019.



Laurence Milsted

Audit and Risk Non-Executive Director

Laurence is an experienced Chief Financial Officer with large professional services firms. As well as his Non-Executive Director roles, he advises firms on finance, systems and strategy and coaches executives through change. He is currently a Trustee and the Audit Committee Chair of ESCP Europe Business School and is an independent member of the Ministry of Justice Audit Committee. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.



Heidi Rehman

Corporate Services Non-Executive Director

Heidi is the Chief Operating Officer at the Biometrics Institute. Previously, she was the CEO of sustainable womenswear brand, Rose & Willard, and also spent almost 14 years as a senior equity research analyst at Citi. She is a Fellow of the Association of Chartered and Certified Accountants and has degrees in Mathematics and Applied Accounting.



Dr Yvonne Gale

Non-Executive Director

Dr Yvonne Gale was appointed CEO at business finance specialists NEL Fund Managers in 2015. She has been a director for several small businesses focusing on strategy, delivery and resourcing. Other board appointments include Shared Interest Society, an ethical finance provider, and advising the United Arab Emirates' government investment on the £500m Mohammed bin Rashid Innovation Fund which helps local innovators access affordable finance.

She is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales and holds both a Master's and a Doctorate in Business Administration together with the Institute of Directors' Certificate and Diploma in Company Direction.

The Small Business Commissioner’s Audit, Risk and Assurance Board

The Audit Risk & Assurance chair and Commissioner meet regularly to discuss the operation and development of the service. The chair ensures that the service has a clear strategy and direction – with effective management for its current and future needs. The chair leads the board and ensures it meets its statutory and corporate responsibilities and is effective in its decision-making.

The chair provides oversight to ensure the information provided to the board is of sufficient accuracy and quality, including in terms of the clarity of content and the purpose and action required. The chair has an important role in role-modelling the OSBC service culture and values and its commitment to diversity and inclusion, as well as acting as an ambassador for the service externally.

The Interim Commissioner & Head of Operations are responsible for leading the service’s strategy and overseeing the delivery of its commitments. They also lead the executive in making and implementing operational decisions, and ensuring that the board has high quality, clear, timely and accurate information about operational and financial performance. They are responsible for providing leadership across the OSBC service, and together with the Risk & Assurance chair, the board and the executive team, role-modelling the OSBC’s service, culture, and values.

The chair, the Interim Commissioner & Head of Operations set board agendas in advance, ensuring an appropriate balance between strategic matters and operational and assurance business. The schedule of matters reserved for the board sets out the key areas on which the board and its committees receive assurance during the course of the year – including the service’s performance, management of corporate risks and the effectiveness of internal systems and controls.

Performance evaluation of the board

Each year the board will carry out a formal evaluation of its own performance and that of its committees. In this evaluation, the board considers the balance of its skills, experience and knowledge of the service, its diversity, how it works together as a unit, and other factors that influence its effectiveness.

Corporate governance

The OSBC is committed to maintaining the highest standards of corporate governance in line with best practice.

Under changes introduced in the Government Resource and Accounts Act 2000, the Comptroller and Auditor General is responsible for the audit of our annual accounts. Like the other members of our regulatory family, we’re subject to an annual account’s direction from HM Treasury.

We continuously engage with a wide range of people who have an interest in our work – including, where appropriate, at chair-to-chair level. These stakeholders include financial businesses and trade bodies, consumer groups, regulators and government, parliamentarians, claims-management companies and the media.

The executive team is grateful to the chair and board members for the additional time they give to support our strategic development.

The Audit, Risk and Assurance board met 4 times during the financial year 2019/2020. This table shows the number of meetings attended during the year.

Board Membership	Role	Meetings Attended to 31 March 2020
Laurence Milsted (Chair)	Non-Executive Director	4/4
Heidy Rehman	Non-Executive Director	4/4
Yvonne Gale	Non-Executive Director (appointed November 2019)	2/4
Paul Uppal	Former Small Business Commissioner (resigned 10 October 2019)	2/4
Philip King	Interim Small Business Commissioner (appointed 27 January 2020)	1/4
Suzanne Burke	Head of Operations	4/4
Pooja Raj	Business Manager	4/4
Rannia Leontaridi	Former Sponsorship Director, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	0/4
BEIS Representative in place of Rannia's absence	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	4/4
Observing Representative	National Audit Office	4/4
Observing Representative	Government Internal Audit Agency	4/4

Audit committee members

The board is satisfied that the combined knowledge and experience of the audit committee members ensures that it can fulfil its responsibilities effectively. During the year, as well as its review of the Annual Report & Accounts and financial forecasting statements, the committee's main business included:

“Deep- dive” risk reviews across a range of areas, including our service development programme – with a focus on our case handling teams and our internal case handling function. GIAA conducted an audit on our case management handling process and we received a moderate marking.

- Reviewing updated policies on conflict of interest, procurement and investment, and sustainability
- Monitoring progress against the annual internal audit plan and considering all completed internal audits in the year; considering our internal audit requirements for future years
- Noting the corporate risk register, and entries on registers covering gifts and hospitality, single tender actions, fraud, whistleblowing, and data protection
- Agreeing the external audit and production of the annual report and accounts.

The Commissioner, Head of Operations & BEIS executives, and BEIS finance BPs are invited to attend all audit risk and assurance committee meetings.

The NAO and the GIAA internal auditors are also invited to attend the meetings. The chair updates the board on the committee's activities and the minutes are also shared.

The Small Business Commissioner's Advisory Board

The Advisory Board consists of the Commissioner (as Chair), three non-executive directors, and representation from Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

The Advisory Board ensures that the OSBC receives expert advice on emerging technology, small business late payment issues, or to gain insight into doing business in a diverse UK market.

All of the board members provide great value and, Philip King, as the Interim Commissioner, is ultimately responsible for decision-making authority and collective responsibility. Our Advisory boards members provides us with a range of talent that the OSBC would otherwise not be available. They are experienced and understand the commercial challenges that come with running an organisation.

Albeit the advisory board has no governance authority or statutory responsibilities, it meets as a board quarterly and is consulted on an ad hoc basis as required. In 2019/20 it has assisted in marketing our complaint service and has provided counsel on public relations and reputation management.

The Board's primary purpose is to assist the Commissioner in discharging his statutory responsibilities. Members of the OSBC attend the meetings to provide work stream updates and the Secretariat function for the board is provided by the OSBC.

The advisory board has a clear remit, objectives, and terms of reference, as well as the expected time commitment, established at the start of their appointments.

It has played an increasingly significant role in assisting OSBC through a period of economic uncertainty and senior management changes. The board has supported the OSBC by providing expert insight and contacts.

Within our board we have a collective enthusiasm for the business, and we have had a successful year as our board members have a genuine association with the OSBC.

The Advisory Board follows the Code of Good Practice for Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments, to the extent that it is relevant and proportionate.

A Code of practice is in place for Advisory Board members, consistent with the Cabinet Office Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies, as far as this is relevant and proportionate.

In this next year the board will have the opportunity to shape our ever-changing agenda highlight topics on which it believes we should focus.

The board met 3 times during the financial year 2019/2020. This table below shows the number of meetings attended during the year.

Board Membership	Role	Meetings Attended to 31 March 2019
Paul Uppal (Chair)	Former Small Business Commissioner (resigned 10 October 2019)	1/3
Philip King (Chair)	Interim Small Business Commissioner	1/3
Laurence Milsted	Non-Executive Director	3/3
Heidy Rehman	Non-Executive Director	3/3
Yvonne Gale	Non-Executive Director	1/3
Suzanne Burke	Head of Operations	3/3
Pooja Raj	Business Manager	3/3
Rannia Leontaridi	Sponsorship Director, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	0/3
BEIS Representative in place of Rannia's absence	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	3/3

Register of Interests

We have reviewed our conflicts of interest policy, introducing additional recording and reporting procedures to support the annual obligation on Non-Executive Directors and senior staff to declare any interests – and updating the policy to reflect the introduction of complaints about Prompt Payment Code.

A register of interest for the Commissioner and his team is maintained by the Business Manager. All staff, including the Commissioner, are required to update the Register of Interests on a quarterly basis and the Non-Executive Directors are also required to update the register annually.

The Commissioner and three Non-Executive Directors are subject to disclosure rules. During the year Paul Uppal resigned as SBC in October 2019 following recognition of a potential conflict of interest.

The current interim arrangements and previous Commissioner decisions have been reviewed to ensure they have been free from conflicts of interest, to mitigate the risk of real or perceived conflicts of interests arising in this work. All Non-Executive Directors have no interests which are considered to give rise to any conflict. Contingencies are in place in case a conflict of interest does occur.

Personal data related incidents

All staff are aware of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and have completed all mandatory training on my Civil Service Learning. Staff undergo relevant training and update their knowledge as and when required.

There have been no personal data related incidents formally reported to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) in the reporting year

Whistleblowing

It is our intention to support the efficacy of whistleblowing practices, and to give visibility at Board level, a Non-Executive Board member acts in the capacity of whistleblowing champion. A report is provided to the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee annually on the operation of the OSBC whistleblowing policy. This is further scrutinised by the Audit and Risk Committee board members.

Key issues & Risks

Robust Risk identification and management arrangements are in place with regular monitoring being undertaken between senior managers, the departmental sponsorship team, and staff, following the principles of the Corporate Risk Management Strategy in accordance with the Treasury guidance 'Management of Risk: Principles and Concepts'. We ensure that our risk management strategy utilises relevant aspects of best practice in corporate governance.

The risk register is reviewed every quarter by the senior leadership team and at the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee. The risk categories are Information Security, Reputation, Stakeholder and Political Relations and Financial. A risk report and the risk register has been provided to the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee; the risk management strategy was approved by the Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee on the 27th February 2019.

Funding

The Commissioner's funding will be by way of grant-in-aid provided by our sponsor department for the year in question and will be voted in our sponsor department's supply estimate and be subject to parliamentary control.

Statement on Internal financial controls

Accountant and auditor

Statement of Accounting Officers responsibilities

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, appointed Paul Uppal as Accounting Officer for the OSBC. Paul Uppal stood down from his position as Commissioner on 10 October 2019 and Suzanne Burke, Head of Operations for the OSBC was appointed as the Acting Accounting Officer with effect from 11 October 2019 until 27 January 2020, when Philip King was appointed Interim Commissioner. The Commissioner is a statutory officer holder and Corporation Sole.

The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding the OSBC's assets, are set out in Managing Public Money published by the HM Treasury.

The Enterprise Act did not require the Commissioner to keep accounts or prepare an annual statement of accounts and there was no provision dealing with the appointment of the Comptroller & Auditor General as auditor. However, the Commissioner was subsequently included in the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000 (Estimates and Accounts) Order 2019, which came into force on 1 April 2019 and designated the Commissioner for inclusion in departmental estimates and accounts from the financial year ending on 31 March 2020. The OSBC therefore now falls within the departmental budgetary control limits set by HM Treasury and so its inclusion within departmental estimates and accounts better aligns the main elements of the spending control framework.

The Framework Document states that the Commissioner, as Accounting Officer, is responsible for producing, signing and publishing an annual report and accounts, ensuring that proper records are kept relating to the accounts. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the OSBC and of its income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year. It also states that the Commissioner must comply with Managing Public Money and the Government Financial Reporting Manual. An Accounts Direction given by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (with approval of HM Treasury) in Accordance with Sections 8 of the Small Business Commissioner Framework Document signed 30 November 2018 has been issued.

The OSBC has prepared accounts for the period from commencement on 1 April 2019 to the year ending 31 March 2020 and will continue to prepare such accounts for subsequent financial years.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual and in particular to:

- Observe the Accounts Direction issued by BEIS, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis
- Make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis

- State whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the financial statements
- Prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis and confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understand

The Accounts for the OSBC have been prepared to.

- (a) Give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the net resource outturn, changes in taxpayers equity and cash flows for the financial year
- (b) Provide disclosure of any material expenditure or income that has not been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament or material transactions that have not conformed to the authorities which govern them

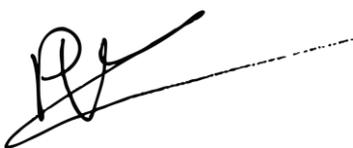
As the Accounting Officer for the OSBC, I confirm that as far as I am aware, there is no relevant information of which the OSBC's auditors are unaware. I have taken all steps that I ought to have done to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that our auditors are aware of that information.

I take personal responsibility for the Annual Report & Accounts and confirm that I consider the OSBC's Annual Report and Accounts to be fair, balanced and understandable.

Statement by the Commissioner

I have considered the evidence that supports this governance statement and I am assured that the OSBC has systems and controls in place to support the delivery of my statutory purposes.

I have no disclosures of control weaknesses to make for the 2019-20 financial year.



Philip King, Accounting Officer
Interim Small Business Commissioner
Date: 8 September 2020

Remuneration and staff Report

Remuneration Policy

The remuneration of senior civil servants (SCS) is set by the Prime Minister following independent advice from the Senior Salaries Review Body. The Review Body takes account of the evidence it receives about wider economic considerations and the affordability of its recommendations.

The Interim Small Business Commissioner, Philip King, was appointed for a period of one year from 27 January 2020 to 31 January 2021. The Small Business Commissioner has no remuneration responsibilities. The remuneration of the Commissioner is determined by the Secretary of State for the Department for Business, Energy, Industrial Strategy under Part 1 in the Enterprise Act 2016. The Commissioner is a public appointment, designated as a Statutory Office Holder and is a corporation sole. The salary of the Commissioner is set by the Department for Business, Energy, Industrial Strategy.

Staff are appointed, or seconded, on terms and conditions determined by the Small Business Commissioner and approved by the Secretary of State. All seconded staff retain their home departments terms and conditions and remain civil servants. Staff directly appointed by the Small Business Commissioner will be public servants, not civil servants. We do not currently have any directly appointed staff.

The Small Business Commissioner team, 11 members excluding the Commissioner, were all recruited as secondees from Other Government Departments (OGDs) in the public sector and they retained the terms and conditions set by their home departments.

The Commissioner and all members of staff receive a civil service pension and other pension commitments are met by the home departments of the secondees to the OSBC.

Single total figure of remuneration (01 April 2019– 31 March 2020) Public appointee	Salary (in 5k bandings) £'000	Bonus payments (in 5k bandings) £'000	Benefits in kind (to the nearest £100)	Pension benefits (to the nearest £1000)	Total £000
Paul Uppal	60 – 65	-	-	-	60 - 65
Suzanne Burke	15 – 20	-	-	8,000	25 - 30
Philip King	15 - 20	-	-	6,000	20 - 25

Note:

- The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus (the real increase in any lump sum) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases exclude increases due to inflation or any increase or decreases due to transfers of pension rights.

- ‘Salary’ includes gross salary; overtime, reserved rights to London weighting or London allowances; recruitment and retention allowances; private office allowances and any other allowances to the extent that is subject to UK taxation.
- Paul Uppal stood down as commissioner on the 11th of October 2019. The full-time equivalent remuneration he received in 2019/2020 was £120k - £125k.
- Suzanne Burke was appointed acting commissioner on the 11th of October 2019 to 27th January 2020. The full-time equivalent remuneration she received in 2019/2020 was £65k - £70k.
- Philip King was appointed interim commissioner on the 27th of January 2020. The full-time equivalent remuneration he received in 2019/2020 was £120k - £125k.
- Salary information above excludes employers’ national insurance contributions.
- No allowances, bonuses or non-cash benefits in kind have been made to the Commissioner.
- All gifts and hospitality received are recorded in the Small Business Commissioner gifts and hospitality register.
- The Pensions Benefits figure does not represent a cash payment, but is a calculation, provided by the pension administrator, of the estimated value of pension benefits accrued during the year under the scheme.

Pension Entitlements

Pension benefits are provided through the Civil Service pension arrangements. There are five schemes: classic; premium; classic plus; nuvos; and alpha. From 1 April 2015 a new pension scheme for civil servants was introduced – the Civil Servants and Others Pension Scheme or alpha, which provides benefits on a career average basis with a normal pension age equal to the member’s State Pension Age (or 65 if higher). From that date all newly appointed civil servants and the majority of those already in service joined alpha. Prior to that date, civil servants participated in the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS). The Interim Commissioner is in the alpha civil service pension scheme.

These statutory arrangements are unfunded with the cost of benefits met by monies voted by Parliament each year. Pensions payable under classic, premium, classic plus, nuvos and alpha are increased annually in line with Pensions Increase legislation.

Existing members of the PCSPS who were within 10 years of their normal pension age on 1 April 2012 remained in the PCSPS after 1 April 2015. Those who were between 10 years and 13 years and 5 months from their normal pension age on 1 April 2012 will switch into alpha sometime between 1 June 2015 and 1 February 2022. All members who switch to alpha have their PCSPS benefits ‘banked’, with those with earlier benefits in one of the final salaries sections of the PCSPS having those benefits based on their final salary when they leave alpha.

The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach the higher of 65 or State Pension Age for members of alpha.

Further details about the Civil Service pension arrangements can be found at the website: www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk

Further details of the alpha scheme are available at:

<http://www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk/members/the-new-pension-scheme-alpha/>

The Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV)

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme.

The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued because of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

The figures include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the member has transferred to the Civil Service pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their buying additional pension benefits at their own cost. CETVs are worked out in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 and do not take account of any actual or potential reduction to benefits resulting from Lifetime Allowance Tax which may be due when pension benefits are taken.

Real increase in CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV that is funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

	Accrued pension at age 65 as 31 March 2020 and related lump sum £'000	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age	CETV at 31 March 2020 £'000	CETV at 31 March 2019	Real increase in CETV
Paul Uppal	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Suzanne Burke	15 - 20 plus a lump sum of 30 - 35	0 - 2.5 plus a lump sum of 0 - 2.5	284	269	7
Philip King	0 - 5	0 - 2.5	6	0	5

Fair pay disclosures

The Small Business Commissioner has a total of 12 members of staff.

All posts (excluding the commissioner) were filled via secondments from OGDs. The Commissioner, as a public appointment, was paid by the sponsor department.

The former Commissioner, Paul Uppal stood down from his role as Small Business Commissioner on 10 October 2019.

Suzanne Burke was appointed as Acting Small Business Commissioner from 11 October 2019 – 27 January 2020.

Philip King was appointed as Interim Small Business Commissioner from 27 January 2020 – 31 January 2021.

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest paid 'director' in their organisation and the median remuneration of the organisation's workforce.

The banded remuneration of the highest-paid director in the OSBC in the financial year 2019 – 20 was £120,000-£125,000 (bands of £5,000).

This was 3.4 times the median remuneration of the work force, which was £35,765. The work force includes staff seconded to the OSBC.

For the period ending 31 March 2020	
Band of highest paid directors' total remuneration (£'000) (bands of £5'000)	120 -125
Median total (£)	35,765
Remuneration ratio	3.4

Note:

- No remuneration range has been provided as this would disclose the salaries of individuals who work in the Commissioner's team.
- Total remuneration includes salary non-consolidated performance-related pay and benefits-in-kind. It does not include employers pension contributions, severance payments and the cash equivalent value of pensions.
- The seconded staffs' salaries will be included in the assessments of pay multiples at the OGDs they are employed by.
- No comparative figures for previous years are provided. This was because the Small Business Commissioner has no control over the remuneration of seconded staff. Comparative figures will be provided in future years.

Staff Report

There are no other Senior Civil Servants employed by the OSBC. The Small Business Commissioner is a public appointment, remunerated via the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy payroll.

Staff numbers and costs

All staff are seconded from a number of home departments to the OSBC, or in the case of the Commissioner himself, a public appointment on a fixed term contract.

From April 2019 to March 2020 the cost of Staff Remuneration was:

	Public Appointment	Other Staff	Total
Wages & Salaries	£78,639	£432,455	£511,094
Social Security Costs	£9,000	-	£9,000
Pension	£23,827	-	£23,827
Total	£111,466	£432,455	£543,921

Note:

- Home departments invoice the Small Business Commissioner for the employee's salary, ERNIC and Pensions contributions. These invoices do not contain a VAT charge as transactions between Government bodies are not taxable. The OSBC is not VAT registered.
The cost of the Small Business Commissioner is disclosed as permanent staff, the cost of all other staff working in the OSBC are disclosed under other staff.
- There have been no severance/retirement payments in the reporting year.

Staff composition

The composition of the Office of the Small Business Commissioner:		
	Female	Male
The Commissioner	0	1
Non-Executive Directors	2	1
SBC Staff	9	2

Sickness absence data

During the reporting period, the Commissioner has taken no sickness absence and all seconded staff's sick absences were recorded directly with their home departments.

Staff policies for disabled persons

Utilising the BEIS workplace adjustment policy has helped us ensure that employees can perform to their best ability and thrive in their careers. The framework sets out how we will identify challenges and barriers faced by people with disabilities or long-term health conditions – whether these are physical or mental – and make adjustments including changes to people’s working environment or working patterns, or providing IT equipment or software. Learning from the adjustments we make helps us to be a better employer and create a more inclusive workplace.

All the team have been encouraged to complete DSE assessments and as a result equipment has been ordered to aid them in their jobs.

All seconded staff will follow their home department’s policies and every government department has policies and procedures in place to help support disabled persons. The Small Business Commissioner offers a range of support, training and learning & development opportunities for all members of staff including disabled persons.

All employees are protected under the nine protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010 which are, Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage & civil partnership, Pregnancy & maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex and Sexual orientation. The OSBC also follows the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is a duty requiring public bodies and others carrying out public functions to have due regard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The Civil Service is committed to the employment and career development of disabled people. Under the Guaranteed interview scheme, we guarantee to interview anyone with a disability whose disability meets the criteria set within the Equality Act 2010 (subject to meeting the minimum criteria for the job vacancy).

All applicants are given the opportunity to identify accessibility issues prior to interview and are contacted on an individual basis to enable us to accommodate their needs. We are providing an environment that is inclusive and accessible for staff, clients and customers.

The Civil Service Workplace Adjustment Passport has been introduced to improve the ease with which employees with a disability or health condition can move jobs in the Civil Service. We have also delivered awareness sessions on Mental Health issues which were open to all staff.

All employees are encouraged to make a self-declaration regarding their disability status on Oracle. This provides the option to indicate if they either have or do not have a disability but can also include an option that they would prefer not to say.

The Government has set out plans to see more disabled people in work-more information about this can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-sets-out-plan-to-see-more-disabled-people-in-work>

Flexible working

We offer flexible ways of working to help people manage their life in and outside work – including parenting and caring responsibilities – as well as to support their wellbeing. We encourage managers and employees to work together to agree arrangements that work for everyone, and we review to ensure requests are handled fairly and consistently.

Our positive approach to flexibility is supported by the results of our attendance management, through which we can see that a good work- life balance is one of the best things about working for us.

Other employee matters

There have been no employment issues, which include employee consultation and/or participation and recruitment practice within the reporting period. We have processes in place and follow our sponsor department policies to ensure the Health and Safety at work criteria is met. The building (Victoria Square House, Birmingham, B2 4AJ) tests the fire alarm every week and conducts a test fire drill at least once per year and records the results. Fire safety and evacuation plans and business continuity plans are in place.

The OSBC has qualified first aid trainers on the floor at all times during office working hours. The OSBC ensures all staff have completed their mandatory training on:

- Unconscious Bias
- Health & Safety Awareness
- Health & Safety Awareness (for managers)
- Responsible information
- Equality & Diversity Essentials
- Health & Safety Induction
- Display Screen Equipment Assessment
- Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption
- General Data Protection Regulation

Expenditure on consultancy

There was no expenditure on consultancy.

Non-Executive Directors

All the Non-executive Directors have fixed term contracts as follows:

- Laurence Milsted 7 January 2019 to 7 January 2023
- Heidi Rehman 7 January 2019 to 7 January 2023
- Yvonne Gale 1 November 2019 to 31 October 2023

2019/20

Non-Executive Board Members	Number of Board Meetings (Annually)	Annualised Fee	Actual Fee Paid in Year (Nearest £100)
Laurence Milsted	8	£2,800	£2,450
Heidy Rehman	8	£2,800	£2,450
Yvonne Gale	8	£2,800	£1,050

No benefits in kind were paid in year.

Either party may terminate the contract for any reason before the expiry of the fixed period by providing not less than 6 months' notice in writing.

The Secretary of State may terminate the Non-Executive Directors appointments immediately, by giving notice in writing, if they are in breach of any of the terms of their appointment or are unfit, or from any cause whatsoever have become unfit, to discharge duties as a member of if they:

- A. Have been absent from meetings of the Boards' for a period longer than six consecutive months without permission of the Board
- B. Have been declared bankrupt or made an agreement with their creditors (or, in Scotland, have had their estate sequestrated or have made a trust deed for their creditors or have and had accepted a composition contract)
- C. Are incapacitated by physical or mental illness
- D. Are otherwise unable or unfit to discharge the functions of the office

The Non-Executive Directors will receive no notice if their appointment is terminated early by mutual consent. No compensation is payable to Non-Executive Directors for early termination of their contract.

Further information on the Non-Executive board members can be found on page 53.

Expenditure on Temporary Staff

The OSBC has not employed any temporary staff during 2019/20 financial year.

Off – Payroll engagements

There have been no off-payroll engagements in the reporting period.

Exit packages

No exit packages were paid during the reporting period.

Prompt Payment Code

This section of the Annual Report covers the transfer of the administration of the Prompt Payment Code, formerly administered by the Chartered Institute of Credit Management (CICM), to the OSBC on the 9th March 2020.



Transfer of the Administration of the Prompt Payment Code

In the Government's response to its Creating a Responsible Payment Culture Call for Evidence in 2019, it stated its ambition to bring all late payment initiatives under a single umbrella.

This section of the Annual Report covers the transfer of the administration of the Prompt Payment Code, formerly administered by the Chartered Institute of Credit Management (CICM), to the OSBC on the 9th March 2020. Transferring the responsibility for the Code to the OSBC will unify prompt payment measures in one place,

Since its launch in 2008, the Code has played an important part in promoting a culture of prompt payment, committing its 2,500 signatories to pay 95% of invoices within 60 days and work towards 30 days as normal practice. In the last 12 months, signatories that have failed to honour those commitments have been suspended, and only re-instated when they have submitted a suitable remedial plan and achieved compliance with the Code as determined by the PPC Compliance Board.

We aim to build on the excellent work carried out by CICM during their management of the Code and look to increase the number of signatories, where good practice can be recognised by their customers and suppliers.

As we move through 2020, we plan to strengthen the Prompt Payment Code, making it a beacon of best practice and ensuring that signatories receive the recognition they deserve as responsible and fair businesses who pay their suppliers promptly. Equally, we intend to highlight businesses failing to adhere to the Code and removed them.

During 2019/2020, we prepared for the implementation of the PPC and the administration responsibilities included:

- Consulting jointly with BEIS on proposals relating to funding our PPC work
- Establishing a PPC administration team, with separation from other areas of our work in which OSBC may be involved
- Reviewing our conflicts of interest policy, introducing additional recording and reporting procedures to support the OSBC's annual obligation on staff and non-executive directors to declare any interests, and updating the policy to reflect the introduction of complaints about the PPC and mitigate the risk of real or perceived conflicts of interests arising in this work
- Arranging the transfer of case- handling knowledge from the OSBC, including case- handlers and Casework Manager, so we can benefit from existing expertise relating to the issues involved in these complaints
- Engaging with CICM and BEIS, helping clarify future arrangements and expectations to ensure a smooth handover of complaints and signatory action plans
- Developing our technologies to enable efficient handling of PPC complaints within our complaint- handing iCasework system

- Developing a distinct identity for our PPC work, including a separate page with online resources on the OSBC website, and providing a clear distinction between this area of our jurisdiction and others.

Strategic objective:

- Strengthen the Prompt Payment Code and drive significant further uptake

It is evident that the UK has limited appetite to promote the good work of large corporations as positive business news does not always make the headlines. We want to showcase, via the Duty to Report on Payment Practices and Performance data and possibly through the Prompt Payment Code, those companies that are: paying on time and engaging with their supply chain. Through our power to name, we will also use this to promote and praise companies via the OSBC website. We have identified that it is small businesses within lengthy or complex supply chains that suffer most from late payment.

As we move through 2020, we plan to strengthen the Prompt Payment Code, making it a beacon of best practice and ensuring that signatories receive the recognition they deserve as responsible and fair businesses who pay their suppliers promptly. Equally, we intend to highlight businesses failing to adhere to the Code and remove them.



Audit Report

THE CERTIFICATE OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Small Business Commissioner (SBC) for the year ended 31 March 2020 under the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000. The financial statements comprise: the Statements of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Financial Position, Cash Flows, Changes in Taxpayers' Equity; and the related notes, including the significant accounting policies. These financial statements have been prepared under the accounting policies set out within them. I have also audited the information in the Accountability Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of Small Business Commissioner's affairs as at 31 March 2020 and of net expenditure for the year then ended; and
- the financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with the Enterprise Act 2016 and the Secretary of State directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis of opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK) and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements of Public Sector Entities in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my certificate. Those standards require me and my staff to comply with the Financial Reporting Council's Revised Ethical Standard 2016. I am independent of the Small Business Commissioner in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit and the financial statements in the UK. My staff and I have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require me to report to you where:

- the Small Business Commissioner's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the Small Business Commissioner have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the Small Business Commissioner's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities, the Small Business Commissioner as the Accounting Officer is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000.

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Small Business Commissioner's internal control.
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Small Business Commissioner's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material

uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Small Business Commissioner's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my report. However, future events or conditions may cause Small Business Commissioner's to cease to continue as a going concern.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure reported in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

Other Information

The Small Business Commissioner Accounting Officer is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises information included in the annual report, but does not include the parts of the Accountability Report described in that report as having been audited, the financial statements and my auditor's report thereon. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. In connection with my audit of the financial statements, my responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact. I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion:

- the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with the Enterprise Act 2016 and the Secretary of State directions;
- in the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Small Business Commissioner and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified any material misstatements in the Performance Report or the Accountability Report; and
- the information given in the Performance Report and Accountability Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

Matters on which I report by exception

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept or returns adequate for my audit have not been received from branches not visited by my staff; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with HM Treasury's guidance.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.



Gareth Davies

Date: 9 September 2020

Comptroller and Auditor General

National Audit Office

157-197 Buckingham Palace Road

Victoria

London

SW1W 9SP

Financial Statements for the year ending 31 March 2020

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure

For the year ending 31 March 2020

		Year ended 31 March 2020	Period ended 31 March 2019 (15 months)
	Note	£	£
Operating Expenditure			
Staff costs	2	543,921	566,104
Other expenditure	3	203,431	210,338
		747,352	776,442
Income			
Gifted asset		-	(20,000)
Net operating expenditure		747,352	756,442
Financial expense - bank charges		300	300
Net Expenditure for the period		747,652	756,742
Total comprehensive expenditure for the period		747,652	756,742

The notes on pages 81-88 form part of these financial statements

There was no other comprehensive expenditure.

Statement of Financial Position

As at 31 March 2020

	Note	As at 31 March 2020 £	As at 31 March 2019 (15 months) £
Non-Current assets			
Intangible assets	4	16,746	13,333
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	5	156,629	240,074
Prepayments		19,407	6,750
Total current assets		176,036	246,824
Current liabilities			
Payables and other liabilities	6	(197,039)	(238,204)
Provision	7	(39,883)	(52,245)
Total current liabilities		(236,922)	(290,449)
Total assets less current liabilities		(44,140)	(30,292)
Total assets less total liabilities		(44,140)	(30,292)
Taxpayers Equity			
General Reserve		(44,140)	(30,292)

The notes on pages 81 to 88 form part of these financial statements

The financial statements on pages 77 to 80 were approved by the Small Business Commissioner on 31 July 2020:



Philip King, Small Business Commissioner

8 September 2020

Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended 31 March 2020

		Year ended 31 March 2020	Year ended 31 March 2019 (15 months)
	Note	£	£
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net operating expenditure	SoCNE	(747,352)	(776,442)
Adjustments for non-cash expenditure		6,667	6,667
Increase/ (decrease) in payables and accruals	6	(41,165)	238,204
Increase/ (decrease) in provisions		(12,362)	52,245
(Increase)/ decrease in prepayments		(12,657)	(6,750)
Grant in aid	SoCiTE	733,804	726,450
Net cash inflow from operating activities		(73,065)	240,374
Cash flows from financing activities			
Bank charges	SoCNE	(300)	(300)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of intangibles	4	(10,080)	-
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents for the period		(83,445)	240,074
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	SoFP	240,074	-
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	SoFP	156,629	240,074

The notes on pages 81 to 88 form part of these financial statements

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers Equity

For the year ended 31 March 2020

	Note	Total reserves £
Balance at 20 December 2017		-
Net expenditure for the year	SoCNE	(756,742)
Grant in aid from BEIS paid		726,450
Balance at 31 March 2019		<u>(30,292)</u>
Net expenditure for the year	SoCNE	(747,652)
Grant in aid from BEIS paid		733,804
Balance at 31 March 2020		<u>(44,140)</u>

The notes on page 81 to 88 form part of these financial statements

Notes to the Accounts

1. Statement of accounting policies

The Small Business Commissioner is an independent public body set up by Government under the Enterprise Act 2016. It is classified as an executive non-departmental public body (NDPB) of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The Small Business Commissioner is registered at OSBC, Victoria Square House, Birmingham, B2 4AJ. The OSBC was launched on 20 December 2017 and the comparative figures are for the approximately 15 months period from 20 December 2017 to 31 March 2019.

The principal activity of Small Business Commissioner is to tackle late payment and unfavourable payment practices in the private sector.

1.1 Basis of accounting

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with direction from the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the 2019/20 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM). The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of Small Business Commissioner for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by the OSBC are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

The Annual Accounts have been prepared as directed by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and certified by the Comptroller and Auditor General, in accordance with the provisions of The Government Resource and Accounts Act 2000.

1.2 Accounting Convention

These accounts have been prepared on an Accruals basis under the historical cost convention. The Accounts Direction issued by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy provides that the Small Business Commissioner is required to prepare and publish a report describing what the Commissioner has done during the reporting period. The Commissioner must send a copy to the Secretary of State and it must be laid before Parliament.

1.3 Going Concern

The Small Business Commissioner has approval from the Secretary of State for grant in aid for 2020/21 that fully takes into account budgeted expenditure.

The OSBC will receive grant in aid for 2020/21 to fund its activities. It has been accordingly considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of these financial statements.

1.4 Standards not yet effective

IFRS 16 'Leases' replaces IAS 17 'Leases' and will be adopted by the public sector in 2021/22. IFRS 16 represents a significant change in lessee accounting by removing the distinction between operating leases and finance leases (on-statement of financial position financing) and introducing a single lessee accounting model. IFRS 16 requires the recognition of all leases with terms over 12 months as finance leases. This will result in the recognition of a right-to-use asset, measured at the present value of future lease payments, and a matching liability in the Statement of Financial Position (SoFP). Disclosure of operating leases is included in note 8. The Small Business Commissioner is currently unable to estimate the impact due to planned changes in property leases anticipated to occur by 2021/22.

1.5 Grant in aid

Grant in aid is paid to the Small Business Commissioner on an annual basis to cover the net cash revenue and capital requirements in the year. Grant in aid utilised in the settlement of its statutory and other obligations and is credited to the general reserve in the year in which it is received because it is regarded as a contribution from a controlling party which gives rise to a financial interest in the Small Business Commissioner.

1.6 Grant income

During the year, no assets were gifted to the OSBC. During the prior period, the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy gifted an intangible asset to the OSBC, relating to the Small Business Commissioners website. The cost of the asset transferred was £20,000 and this is shown as income in the SoCNE.

1.7 Expenditure & Staff Costs

All expenditure is recognised on an accrual's basis. Staff costs are recognised as expenses when the OSBC becomes obligated to pay them, including the cost of any untaken leave entitlement.

1.8 Financial Instruments

Financial instruments are initially measured at fair value.

The categorisation of financial assets and liabilities depends on the purpose for which the asset or liability is held or acquired. Management determine the categorisation of assets and liabilities at initial recognition and re-evaluate this designation at each reporting date.

The only financial instruments held by the OSBC are trade payables.

Financial assets

The OSBC hold financial assets, which comprise of cash at bank. These are non-derivative financial assets with fixed or determinable payments that are not traded in an active market. Since these balances are expected to be realised within 12 months of the reporting date, there is no material difference between fair value, amortised cost and historical cost.

Financial Liabilities

The Small Business Commissioner holds financial liabilities, which comprise of trade payables. Since these balances are expected to be settled within 12 months of the reporting date, there is no material difference between fair value, amortised cost and historical cost.

1.9 Intangible Assets

Expenditure on intangible assets consists of the Small Business Commissioners website and is capitalised where the cost is £2,000 or more and has an ongoing life of more than one year.

Intangible assets are reviewed annually for impairment and are carried at modified historic cost as a proxy for fair value.

The website is amortised on a straight-line basis over a period of 3 years.

1.10 General Reserve

The Commissioner accounts for the OSBC's accumulated surplus or deficit in the general reserve.

1.11 Provisions

A provision is recognised when it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will be required to settle a present obligation, that can be reliably measured and which results from a past event.

1.12 VAT

The OSBC is not VAT registered. The SBC is not part of the wider Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy VAT group therefore no VAT is recoverable, all VAT will be recharged back to the OSBC.

1.13 Operating Leases

Rentals are charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure on a straight-line basis.

2. Staff Costs

The cost of staff remuneration was:

	Year ended 31 March 2020	Year ended 31 March 2020	Year ended 31 March 2020	Period ending 31 March 2019 (15 months)
	£	£	£	£
	Permanent Staff	Other Staff	Total	Total
Wages and salaries	78,639	432,455	511,094	521,306
Social security costs	9,000	-	9,000	15,398
Other Pension	23,827	-	23,827	29,400
Total	111,466	432,455	543,921	566,104

The cost of the Small Business Commissioner is disclosed as permanent staff, the cost of all other staff working in the OSBC are disclosed under other staff.

There have been no severance payments in the year.

3. Other Expenditure

	Year ended 31 March 2020	Period ended 31 March 2019 (15 months)
		£
Advertising	34,703	39,259
Allowances	7,350	139
Amortisation	6,667	6,667
Audit	15,000	12,500
Business rates	52,867	33,664
Computer equipment & software	47,302	50,797
General expenses	11,180	7,223
Legal & professional	407	30,937
Travel & Subsistence	27,955	29,152
Total other operating charges	203,431	210,338

In the period from 20 December 2017 to 31 March 2018, £20,624 was paid by the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy in relation to expenditure incurred by the OSBC, this cost was not recharged. All expenditure incurred by the OSBC since 1 April 2018 has been recharged.

4. Intangible assets

2019-2020	Website £
Cost or Valuation	
At 1 April 2019	20,000
Gifted in year	-
Additions	10,080
At 31 March 2020	30,080
Amortisation	
At 1 April 2019	6,667
Charged in year	6,667
At 31 March 2020	13,334
Net book value at 31 March 2020	16,746
Net book value at 31 March 2019	13,333

	Website £
Cost or Valuation	
At 20 December 2017	-
Gifted in year	20,000
At 31 March 2019	20,000
Amortisation	
At 20 December 2017	-
Charged in year	6,667
At 31 March 2019	6,667

5. Cash and cash equivalents

	As at 31 March 2020 £
Balance at 1 April 2019	240,074
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balance	(83,445)
Balance at 31 March 2020	156,629
The following balances were held at:	
Government banking service	156,629
Balance at 31 March 2020	156,629

6. Trade Payables and other liabilities

Amounts falling due within one year

	As at 31 March 2020	As at 31 March 2019
Trade & other payables	120,056	192,317
Accruals	76,983	45,887
Total	197,039	238,204

7. Provisions for liabilities and charges

A provision has been made for costs relating to staff on secondment to the OSBC, which have not yet been recharged from other departments.

	As at 31 March 2020 Seconded Cost Provision	As at 31 March 2020 Total
As at 31 March 2019	£ 52,245	£ 52,245
Provided in year		
Provisions utilised in the year	(12,362)	(12,362)
Provisions not required written back	-	-
Total	39,883	39,883

7.1 Expected timing of cashflows

	Seconded Cost Provision	Total Total
	£	£
Not later than one year	39,883	39,883
Later than one year but not later than five years	-	-
Later than five years	-	-

8. Capital Commitments

	As at 31 March 2020	As at 31 March 2019
	£	£
Website provider costs	13,366	24,860
Total	13,366	24,860

Capital commitments are payable between April 2019 and May 2021.

9. Commitments under leases

Total future minimum lease payments under operating leases for each of the following periods:

	As at 31 March 2020	As at 31 March 2019
	£	£
Buildings:		
Within one year	44,377	1,686
Within 2 to 5 years	10,478	-
Over 5 years	-	-
Balance at 31 March 2019	54,855	1,686

10. Financial Instruments

As the cash requirements of Small Business Commissioner are met through the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non-public sector body. The OSBC's financial instruments relate to cash, trade & other payables and trade & other receivables and therefore the Small Business Commissioner is exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

11. Contingent assets and liabilities

There are no contingent assets or liabilities to report.

12. Related party transactions

The Small Business Commissioner has had various material transactions with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, through the provision of payroll for staff and ICT services.

None of the OSBC's members or key managerial staff undertook any material transactions with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy during the year, except for remuneration paid for their services.

13. Events after the reporting date and Accounting Office declaration

Accounting Officer authorised these financial statements for issue on the date they were certified by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

There are no post-balance sheet events to report.

In accordance with the requirements of IAS10 'Events After the Reporting Period', post-Statement of Financial Position events are considered up to the date on which Accounts are authorised for issue. This is interpreted as the same date as the date of the Certificate Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General. There are no post-Statement of Financial Position events between the balance sheet date and this date.

Glossary

Complaints Handling Scheme Small businesses can complain to the [Small Business Commissioner](#) about payment problems they are encountering concerning their larger business customers, making non-binding recommendations on how the parties should resolve their disputes.

Larger Business (Medium or Large Business) Larger business means a business that is not a small business. A larger business will therefore have more than 50 employees and will encompass both medium and large businesses as defined by the [Companies Act 2006](#).
The full definition of a larger business in relation to the Small Business Commissioner complaints handling service can be found in [The Enterprise Act 2016](#).

Small Business For the purpose of determining who is in remit of the Small Business Commissioner complaints handling scheme, a small business is a business which has fewer than 50 employees.
The full definition of a small business in relation to those in remit of the Small Business Commissioner complaints handling service can be found in [The Small Business Commissioner \(Remit and Scheme\) Regulations 2017](#).

Annex A: Events attended from 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020

Month	Event
Apr-19	Forum Event - Micro is Magic
Apr-19	ISG Meeting 6
Apr-19	Meeting with MPs in Westminster
Apr-19	NHF / NBF Community Awards
May-19	Santander Event
May-19	4Networking's An Evening with the Small Business Commissioner
May-19	Altrincham and Sale Chamber of Commerce Networking Event
May-19	Meeting with Kelly Tolhurst
May-19	BBC Radio Interview
May-19	Excel Business Show
May-19	ACT annual conference
May-19	MANSFIELD AND ASHFIELD 2020 NETWORKING MEETINGS
May-19	SME Panel payment group
Jun-19	Amazon Event
Jun-19	CEO Talks Interview with Davinder Singh Bal of Sikh Channel
Jun-19	Santander event in Belfast
Jun-19	Event with Local authority best practice contracting with SMEs
Jun-19	Stoke Prior Business Networking Breakfast
Jun-19	SEC Board Meeting
Jun-19	Amazon Event
Jun-19	Event with Local authority best practice contracting with SMEs
Jun-19	Santander event in Belfast
Jun-19	4th Annual BEIS/PO KIM Conference
Jun-19	Event with Local authority best practice contracting with SMEs
Jul-19	The Hair Industry and Social Mobility Event
Jul-19	FSB Event Wolverhampton
Jul-19	Networking lunch in Stratford
Jul-19	Coventry, Warwickshire & Solihull Annual Small Business Engagement Lunch
Jul-19	Cicero Breakfast event
Jul-19	Sky News Interview
Jul-19	The Konsortia Business Briefing
Jul-19	Peritus Event
Jul-19	Black Country Business Event
Jul-19	VWV and F4B Event
Jul-19	BCRS networking event
Jul-19	Leeds Work Cafe Launch Event & Ribbon Cutting
Aug-19	Event - Indian Independence Day
Aug-19	Freelancers Club - Collective Meeting #2
Sep-19	Event - MK Accelerator
Sep-19	Enterprise Nation podcast
Sep-19	Merry Hill metro bank opening
Sep-19	Small Business Summit at Labour Party Conference
Sep-19	Black Country Growth Hub Event
Sep-19	Midlands Business Expo
Sep-19	The Professional Accountancy Show

Sep-19	ICCII Bank networking even
Sep-19	Convention of the North
Sep-19	UK Association of Translation Companies Annual Conference
Oct-19	BDO Breakfast seminar - Payment Practices and Performance reporting
Oct-19	Freelancer Round table
Oct-19	Lichfield and Tamworth Chamber AGM & Annual Celebration Business Lunch
Oct-19	Tackling Late Payment Lords Roundtable
Oct-19	Festival of Enterprise
Oct-19	Ealing Business Forum
Oct-19	BDO Breakfast seminar - Payment Practices and Performance reporting
Oct-19	Small Business Clinic – Lloyds
Oct-19	Hammersmith & Fulham LEP event
Oct-19	Breakfast event at Blythe Valley
Nov-19	Black Country Radio Interview
Nov-19	CBI SME Council Meeting
Nov-19	Barclays National Enterprise Network
Dec-19	Meeting with Jamie Hepburn MSP
Dec-19	Metro Bank Opening
Jan-20	Presentation on PPRS and the OSBC to Home Office Commercial
Jan-20	Telford 2020 - Finding Finance for your Business
Jan-20	FSB Event SURREY
Jan-20	Barclays Business Banking Breakfast Meeting
Jan-20	Microbiz Matters
Feb-20	CICM Think Tank
Feb-20	Lending Standard Board's 10th Anniversary
Feb-20	Amey Presentation
Feb-20	Sikh TV interview
Feb-20	Micro Biz Rugby
Feb-20	The Micro Business Show
Feb-20	Late Payment Workshop - Stoke Staffs LEP
Feb-20	Wiltshire FSB and Wiltshire Council
Mar-20	BCC Annual Conference
Mar-20	Enterprise Nation webinar
Mar-20	Business Finance Round Table
Mar-20	Harborough FM interview
Mar-20	ICAEW/SBC webinar
Mar-20	FSB Coronavirus webinar
Mar-20	CBI Webinar: Policy briefing on supporting SMEs impacted by the coronavirus – Employment, Tax and Getting Paid
Mar-20	BBC Radio Leicester
Mar-20	Mutual Value webinar
Mar-20	Helping small businesses through uncertain times - CBIL, Funding Exchange and Experian
Mar-20	RETHINK AND RESET: GROWING AND THRIVING IN THE NEW NORMAL
Mar-20	Live Briefings - National Enterprise Network x2
Mar-20	IoD Policy Voice Podcast
Mar-20	Call with Jamie Hepburn MSP

