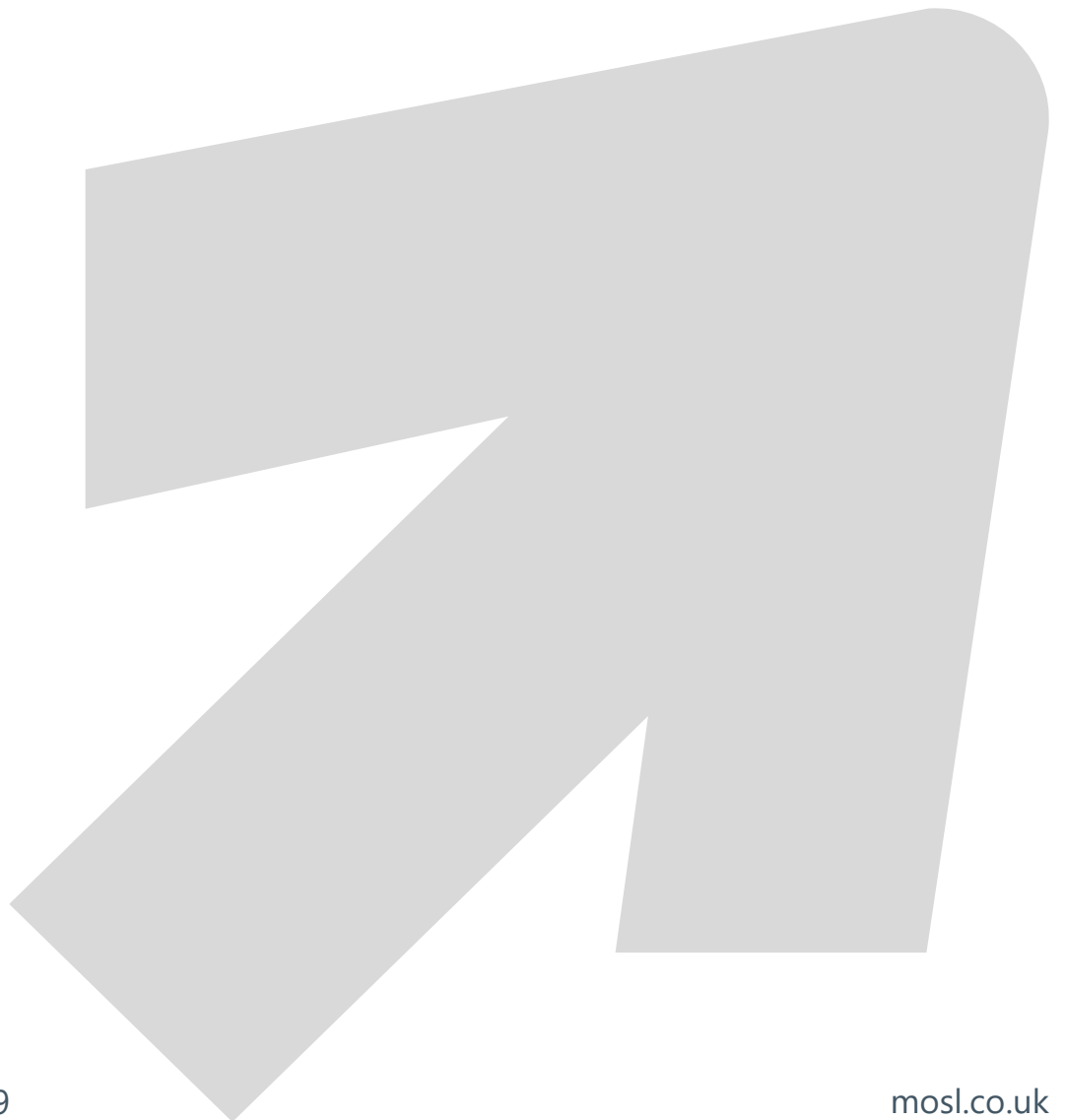


**Operational Advisory Group (OAG)**

**Date and time:** 18 October 2024, 1400 - 1500

**Status of minutes:** FINAL



## Meeting Minutes

### OAG members and guests

Name	(Initial)	Organisation	Name	(Initial)	Organisation
Ally Logan	AL	Business Stream	Durga Gurung	DG	Thames
Bryony Cameron	BC	Thames	Helen Bennett	HB	Southern
Charlotte Miles	CM	Thames	Jack Curtis	JC	Thames
Chris Williams	CW	Thames	Jacob Head	JH	Water2business
David Buchan	DB	Castle	Michael Floyd	MF	UU
David Moss	DM	Castle	Rosie Milsom-Dyer	RMD	Wessex
Deborah Bennet	DB	Thames	Sian Forward	SF	Northumbrian

### MOSL

Name	(Initial)	Organisation	Name	(Initial)	Organisation
Chris Dawson	CD	Chair	Katy Woodhouse	KW	Observer
Amy English	AE	Presenter	Sauda Dickinson	SD	Notes
Monica Falasca	MF	Observer			

<p><b>1.</b></p>	<p><b>Welcome</b></p>
	<p>CD welcomed members and gave an overview of the agenda.</p> <p>CD noted the next OAG meeting is on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October.</p>
<p><b>2.</b></p>	<p><b>Escalation for final review</b></p>
	<p>AE presented the high-level overview of the escalations proposal, noting that feedback from OAG members was taken onboard.</p> <p>DM queried if applicable to H1, F4, F5 referred only to the first round of escalations to be launched.</p> <p>AE confirmed it would only be in the first instance as there is a lot of testing involved, and escalation transaction can be tweaked for other processes.</p> <p>DM queried whether something will be written in the code regarding what should be happening with the escalations process and what the time frame for the escalation roll out would be.</p> <p>AE advised that the aim is to get escalations in place for the March release and if it is successful and there is a desire to have rolled out for other processes, it could potentially be a priority as part of BAU, but there is currently no timeframe.</p> <p>CD suggested that F7, F8 and F9 could potentially be used for other processes that aren't in the code, to add more flexibility.</p> <p>DB requested some clarity on the escalations process, having missed the last meeting and queried where the escalation from a retailer would go if the wholesaler is already mid-way through a process.</p> <p>AE advised it would be a flag on the landing page within the request and that more clarity will be provided further on in the meeting.</p> <p>DM confirmed that it would show up as an extra transaction on the case.</p> <p>SF confirmed that you would be able to filter on the landing page flags.</p> <p>SF queried whether it would be put in the code that escalations can only be raised by certain people in each trading party.</p> <p>AE advised that it could be put in the codes.</p>

**CD noted that MOSL would taking away for action, to add to the code that only designated people from trading parties are allowed to raise an escalation.**

JC queried the design and defining an escalation, having missed previous OAG meetings.

AE advised that the process design has been pulled together with reason and that more clarity will be provided further on in the meeting, with the slides presented.

BC queried if the info request timed out and the case closed, would the escalation close.

CD confirmed that it should not happen with the new functionality of recalling the info request, but that it technically could still happen.

BC advised that sometimes escalations may not be able to be worked immediately as there may be outstanding information needed, and it might hinder your SLA time.

DM advised there should be SME's for authorisation, who should have the level of information needed, otherwise there should be the ability to reject the escalation and re-add it with the necessary information.

BC noted that it would be fair to be able to reject an escalation if it is not valid.

DM advised that the add comment function could be used to confirm details before finalising an escalation.

AE presented a view of example screen designs for raising an escalation.

AE highlighted that there would be a pop-up box with the mandatory fields; reasons for escalation, service delay issue, target resolution date, additional information.

AE noted a question around whether providing evidence should be mandatory, there could be a warning banner or grey out the update button forcing the user to attach evidence.

AE raised questions for OAG feedback around the screen and process design.

DG advised that info request and outcome proposed should be included in the statuses of when an escalation cannot be raised.

DM advised that the context of what is being asked in information requests is sometimes immaterial and there are many grounds for escalation when there is a deferral instance or an information request, noting that until we can reject information requests, escalation and information requests need to work in tandem.

CD advised that a possible solution would be to add things to the code instead of adding complexity to the current solution presented, noting that there should be a point of contact and the ability for trading parties to easily discuss resolutions.

JC queried how having a retailer and wholesaler both escalating on a case would impact the flagging of the escalation.

AE confirmed that there could only be one escalation on a case and that the wholesaler would not be able to escalate the case back to the retailer if the retailer has already raised an escalation.

JC confirmed that the wholesaler could close the escalation raised by the retailer and then raise their own escalation advising that additional information is needed in order to progress with the initial escalation from the retailer.

DG advised that 'submitted' should be included in the statuses of when an escalation cannot be raised.

CD advised that from previous discussions it was noted that there would be some scenarios where an escalation might be required on submission and that there will be assurance in the fact that there would be authorised people from each trading party raising and handling escalations.

AE advised that that would be the reason why providing evidence would be made mandatory, to reaffirm that it cannot be escalated for no reason.

DM assured that Castle only has four escalation handlers and that many escalations are rejected internally before they are sent to other trading parties and advised that there currently are no difficulties with the ability to escalate and formalise and communicate between trading parties.

AE noted a comment from JH in the chat – 'Would like to be able to escalate settlement issues on submission if possible. Eg if a high F read is added on the last day of the month we'd want this resolved the same day. (has happened to us once or twice before)'

AE queried that if trading parties agreed that this would be useful for settlements, what timeframes they would suggest.

CD advised that it should probably be at least one day.

CW queried whether the target resolution date would be reportable and subject to fines if it is not met, if not it should be quite flexible.

AE confirmed that meeting the target resolution date is not proposed to be finable and that it could just feed into reporting.

CD advised that a RWG good practice guide could potential be used in this instance.

DM advised that there has been attempts to get target resolution dates from other trading parties for escalations, with no success, and advised that target resolution dates should be mandatory but also flexible. Wholesalers should be able to respond or update resolution dates.

AE presented a view of example screen designs for an accepted escalation and queried views or suggestions from OAG members.

AE queried what timescales in the code should be used to ensure that escalations are responded to in a timely fashion.

CD suggested five working days and queried views from OAG members.

DM advised that Castle currently allows 15 business days for a response as part of an escalation and only the response is tracked.

DM further advised there does not have to be a time frame as we would want to give the wholesaler as long as they need to resolve, as long as the wholesaler provides complete details and a resolution date. Setting the targets too low could affect performance as some escalations could be quite complex.

CW queried whether acknowledgement of an escalation warrants the escalation being closed or if the escalation would remain open while the case is still open and being actioned.

AE confirmed that the closure of an escalation is not the closure of the case.

SF advised that a response to an escalation should be a lot sooner than 15 days and should include a target resolution date and advised that an escalation should not be closed until it is fully completed.

AE presented a view of example screen designs for resolving an escalation.

**AE highlighted that if initiating trading party believes the escalation is not resolved, escalate again using 'reason for escalation' code 'escalation resolved disputed'.**

**CD advised that trading parties may treat resolution escalations differently and noted that it may need to be a good practice guide or out into the code and that should be further discussed.**

	<p>AE highlighted that trading party initially accepts an escalation and then realises that they are unable to resolve it, there could be a transaction call 'escalation feedback transaction' and the option to note 'not resolved'.</p> <p>DM advised that the initiator should be in the position to state whether it was resolved and not the wholesaler.</p> <p>JC advised that the complexity of the design is potentially allowing excessive back and forth between trading parties and suggested that there should be a flag marking the case as escalated and only have the case closed once the escalation has been closed, the bilateral should be handled as an escalation case throughout its journey.</p> <p>JC further advised that a wholesaler should be able to accept or reject an escalation, and that there should be a need for a 'resolve escalation transaction', the escalation flag should remain on the case until both parties agree and the case is closed.</p> <p>CD advised that it could possibly become an 'update transaction' instead.</p> <p><b>AE advised the slides presented would be emailed to OAG members along with the key questions on the slides.</b></p> <p>SF advised that discussions should be had around the process being mandatory to avoid escalations going through a backdoor process.</p> <p>DM advised that trading parties have different arrangements and there may be instances where Castle would send a bulk of issues to higher management of a trading party.</p> <p>CD noted that an escalation should be the first step.</p>
3.	<b>AOB</b>
	As no AOBs were raised, CD closed the meeting.

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Action date</b>
1.	Slides to be shared with OAG members offline requesting feedback from OAG members on key questions	AE	
2.	Review of appointed individuals who can raise escalations to possibly be noted in the code	MF	

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