

CONSUMER SCOTLAND BOARD MEETING

Tuesday 16 August 2022

10.20 am to 12.00 pm

Via MS Teams

Minutes

Board Members Present

David Wilson, Chair

Angela Morgan, Member

Nick Martin, Member

James Walker, Member

Also In Attendance

Consumer Scotland:

Sam Ghibaldan, Chief Executive

Andy Denholm, Head of Communications

Eleanor Mullan, Head of Analysis

Hilary Tennant, Governance and Corporate Services Manager (secretariat)

Apologies

Sue Bomphray, Interim Director of Operations

1. Welcome and Declaration of Interest

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He extended welcomes to Hilary Tennant, who was taking the meeting minutes, and to Andy Denholm, Head of Communications and Eleanor Mullan, Head of Analysis.

1.2 There were no declarations of interest. James Walker advised that he had an amendment to make to his Register of Members Interest form and Hilary Tennant agreed to liaise with him to update the records.

2. Minutes from the Previous Meeting and Action Tracker

2.1 The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting on 21 June.

2.2 The Action Tracker was presented. The Board were advised that the publication of the Register of Members Interests on the website would be completed within the next few days.

2.3 Board members requested an update at a future meeting on the Learning and Development (L&D) plan for staff. It was noted that the L&D plan was being progressed in conjunction with the

introduction of the staff HR system and that all-staff meetings were being held online weekly, and in-person every month, the next of which would be a full-day event in September.

2.4. The Board heard that work was being carried out to ensure that a robust process for appointment and remuneration to the Energy Consumers Committee (ECC) was put in place, along with a revised terms of reference. The Chair highlighted the need for remuneration to be transparent and appropriate. It was anticipated that an update report would be presented to the September Board meeting.

2.5 The Board noted that the two standing items could now be removed from the tracker and text changes were required in relation to the ECC at items 113 and 120.

2.6 There was discussion on the requirements under the Model Publication Scheme (MPS) to publish Board minutes. It was agreed to circulate the MPS to the Board following the meeting.

**Action : Standing items to be removed from Action Tracker and items 113 and 120 to be updated
Copy of the Model Publication Scheme to be sent to Board members.**

3. Chief Executive's Update on Strategic Issues

3.1 The CE provided an update on current strategic issues for each area within Consumer Scotland (CS)

Operations Directorate

- The level 2 CS budget line was expected to be confirmed at the Autumn Budget Review
- A financial reporting template for presentation at future Governance Board meetings was being presented later in the meeting. A meeting with NM, SG, SB, and HT to discuss financial reporting to the Board would be arranged.
- The CS final Strategic Plan and Work Programme was due to be published in Spring 2023. Initial consideration of how to develop an active consumer advice referral tool for the website, to provide a simple consumer journey, was underway.

Analysis, Research and Investigations Directorate

- It was intended to use interim professional contracts to scope the resource and process requirements for Consumer Scotland to deliver its investigations and Consumer Duty functions prior to any permanent recruitment
- The draft Interim Data Strategy would be presented later in the meeting

Policy and Advocacy Directorate

- The draft Interim Communications Strategy would be presented later in the meeting
- Consideration of Consumer Scotland's approach to energy cost rises was underway

- The levy funded work programme for 2023-24 would begin development in September, and would be aligned with the core themes in the Interim Strategic Plan. The Scottish Government has extended an invitation to join the working group considering Statutory Instruments in relation to the Consumer Duty.

The following points were discussed:

- The desirability that the Strategic Plan should cover multiple years, and the benefit of synchronising the timetable for it with the statutory requirement to produce a Consumer Welfare report after three years
- The potential to integrate plans for levy and non-levy activity within a single annual work programme,
- The need to facilitate the Board's input with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to provide input to the Strategic Plan and Work Plan.
- Being clear on the required reporting and timeframes for these plans, while retaining the focus of the organisation on consumer benefit, and not losing that focus in operational processes.
- The need to create KPI's once the SLT were in place, while retaining the focus of the organisation on consumers.

4. Draft Interim Communications Strategy, Andy Denholm

4.1 The Head of Communications gave a presentation to the Board on the draft Interim Communications Strategy, highlighting its key themes:

- Consumer Scotland as an evidence-based organisation
- The need to build trust in our communications
- Communicate CS core messages
- The objectives and strategy of a Communications Strategy
- Collaborative working with stakeholders' communications teams
- Audience – methods and channels to share information
- Key milestones
- Success – how to measure progress
- Key considerations for future communications – reactive lines, use of CS experts, CE interviews

The Board discussed issues on publicity with purpose, communications which reached all stakeholders, and social media.

The Chair thanked the Head of Communications for creating and presenting a robust Interim Communications Strategy which had been welcomed by the Board, and noted the challenge of putting the strategy into practice.

5. Draft Interim Data Strategy, Eleanor Mullan

5.1 The Head of Analysis gave a presentation to the Board on the draft Interim Data Strategy. The Strategy had been developed by the CS Analysis team in consultation with other external data experts.

The presentation highlighting the four key pillars of the Data Strategy:

- Role and use of data
- Nature of and access to data
- Storage and analysis
- Dissemination

The Head of Analysis highlighted the requirement for data sharing agreements and memorandum of understanding to facilitate access to data from external organisations. Access to quantitative data is possible now, but access to qualitative data which may include personal, sensitive data will require an additional privacy framework in place.

The Board discussed the principles of good data sharing practices, and noted the risk prevention and associated mitigations required when holding and disseminating data.

The Chair highlighted that in order to develop analysis and recommendations CS needs to acquire and utilise data. The Interim Data Strategy recognised the scale of the challenge and provided a strategy to achieve its goals. The Chair asked whether external input or evaluation of the strategy would be beneficial and it was agreed to investigate this further.

The Chair thanked the Head of Analysis for her informative and interesting presentation.

6. Any other business

6.1 Financial Reporting template

The Chair asked that any feedback be submitted to Hilary Tennant

Action: ALL

6.2 Dates for forthcoming Board and ARC meetings

The Chair asked that any feedback on the proposed dates be submitted to Hilary Tennant.

Action: ALL

There being no other business the Chair closed the meeting and confirmed that the next Board meeting would be held on 20 September 2022 at 10 am in Meadowbank House, subject to any feedback relating to the timing of meetings.