

Consumer Scotland Board Meeting
19 October 2021
Minute of Meeting

Attendees: David Wilson (Chair)
Nick Martin (Board Member)
Angela Morgan (Board Member)
James Walker (Board Member)
Sam Ghibaldan (Project Lead)
Neil Ritchie (Scottish Government Implementation Team)
Sue Bomphray (Scottish Government Implementation Team)
Andrew McConnell (Scottish Government Implementation Team)
Wendy McCutcheon (Scottish Government Implementation Team)

Apologies: Jill Rosie (Scottish Government Implementation Team)

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that Andrew was joining for agenda item five. He thanked Sue for joining whilst on leave. The Chair noted the apologies from Jill who has been seconded to work on COP 26 until 15 November.
 2. The Chair introduced Sam Ghibaldan. Sam has been appointed as Project Lead for Consumer Scotland and will see Consumer Scotland through to its vesting date in spring 2022. Sam is due to start formally in this role from 1 November and brings a wide range of consumer experience. He currently works for the Water Industry Commission and previous roles include working in the Consumers Futures Unit of CAS, various tidal power companies and the Scottish Government.
 3. Sam introduced himself, and said he was pleased to be given this opportunity, stating that Consumer Scotland had an important role in changing the thinking of the public and corporate sector and also ensuring that consumers are aware of how vital their role is.
 4. Neil gave an update on resources within his unit in light of Jill being seconded to work on COP 26 for six weeks. Consumer Scotland was the priority within his unit and Tanya Friel was now also working predominately on Consumer Scotland.
 5. The Chair formally recognised the consequences of Jill having had to move and suggested that Sam, within the first few weeks, should undertake a stock-take of available resource.
- **Action: Sam to undertake a stock-take of resource available to work on Consumer Scotland, and report to the next Board meeting.**

Agenda Item 2 – Minutes of Last Meeting

6. The minutes of the meeting of 21 September 2021 were agreed and an update on the actions provided.

7. Nick pointed out that an updated budget paper had not been provided and requested an update. Neil stated that the date for the draft Scottish Budget had been confirmed for 9 December. A bid for £2.5m has been made for direct funding to Consumer Scotland, in line with the Financial Memorandum.
 8. Neil explained that the £2.5m is distinct from the levy funding – the £2.5m is core funding from the Scottish Government and the levy funding is funded for consumer advocacy work, subject to the approval of BEIS for postal and energy work.
 9. He confirmed that a business case is required to highlight how this money will be utilised. This will subsequently be put for approval to relevant Scottish Government Ministers. Nick, Sam and Neil to discuss and take forward, in the context of the agreement with CAS to develop the proposals for levy-funded activities in 2022/23.
 10. The Board noted the issue of scope for additional funding and funding sources. This would be considered in future discussions.
 11. It was noted that Lewis Shand-Smith, Chair of the ECC will be attending the November Board meeting to discuss energy consumers and how he sees the future of the ECC as it becomes part of Consumer Scotland.
 12. The workplanner was briefly discussed. The Chair requested that Sam take stock of all the activities and discuss further with him prior to discussion at the next Board meeting.
- **Action: Nick, Sam and Neil to meet to discuss the required financial business plan.**
 - **Action: Chair to speak to Lewis Shand-Smith prior to November meeting.**
 - **Action: Neil and Sam to have catch-up with Lewis Shand-Smith, again prior to November meeting.**
 - **Action: Chair and Sam to meet to discuss workplanner further, ahead of the next Board meeting.**

Agenda Item 3 - Partnerships

13. The Chair provided the Board with an overview of his recent engagement with stakeholders. The two main meetings since the last Board meeting were with CAS – the monthly meeting between Consumer Scotland and CAS held on 5 October and the Transitional Governance meeting held on 12 October and chaired by the Scottish Government.
14. The Chair invited comments from the Board members who had attended these meetings. Nick, who had attended the 5 October meeting only, had the impression that there was a desire to work together but there were still issues to be resolved regarding funding. Angela who had attended both meetings agreed with Nick that in the short and medium term funding was a core issue that needed to be resolved. However longer term the focus would be on the edges between CS and CAS in terms of positioning and influence. Sue stated that she felt that the meeting on 12 October focused on the agenda of working out what functions would be transferring to Consumer Scotland. The Chair summarised the meetings stating

that a lot of hard work had gone into establishing the processes to allow such conversations to take place and be fully inclusive. The Chair reiterated that it is only levy-funded posts that are being considered for transfer from CAS to Consumer Scotland.

Agenda Item 4 - People

Vulnerable Consumers

15. Angela gave a verbal update on the vulnerable consumer work. A meeting had been held on 12 October between the Chair, Angela, Sue and Wendy (in Jill's absence). At that meeting it was agreed that there were a few steps that were needed to be taken prior to setting up the proposed Vulnerable Consumers Committee.
 16. In the first instance open conversations need to be held with key stakeholders to explain what it is that Consumer Scotland is trying to achieve and get them on board with this work. It was agreed who these key stakeholders were and the Chair and Angela will contact them.
 17. The Chair is working on a conversation brief as this will be a key point for communications. A contacts database will also be required to be established to maintain stakeholders' details.
 18. An early conversation is to be had with CAS officials to structure relationships between Consumer Scotland, CAS and CABx.
 19. Angela cited the SLCC report which had been circulated previously stating that the ethos and tone were excellent. It highlighted the need for Consumer Scotland to carry out a scoping and research exercise on what information is already available ie not just research documents but also products such as BSI Standards.
 20. Angela then provided an update on the Collaboration Network conference she had attended on 14 October. Overall she found it very useful and once established Consumer Scotland should consider some form of membership. In the meantime, it would be beneficial if Consumer Scotland could remain in contact with the Network. Angela and the Implementation Team will work together regarding membership of this Network.
 21. James cited a conflict of interest which was noted.
- **Action: Chair to circulate outline of the "Conversation Brief".**
 - **Action: Implementation Team to develop contact database of key stakeholders for vulnerable consumer work.**
 - **Action: Angela and Implementation Team to set up meeting with CAS to structure relationships between Consumer Scotland, CAS and CABx in relation to vulnerable consumer work.**
 - **Action: Sam and Neil to meet with Angela prior to her approaching CAS as part of the key stakeholder approach.**

- **Action: Sam and Neil to meet next week to discuss the vulnerable consumer work re research needs.**
- **Action: Neil and Wendy to bring forward proposal for Consumer Scotland to become a partner of the Collaboration Network.**

HR Update

22. Sue provided an update to the Board on a variety of HR matters she has been working on.
 23. The tender document will be issued imminently for the CEO post and will be out for tender for between four and five weeks. Sue continues to work on the structure and remaining job profiles and detailed proposals will be discussed at November's meeting.
 24. Sue met with the Scottish Government unions as trade union recognition will be a requirement for Consumer Scotland. The Chair stated that he would attend the next meeting of this group.
 25. Sue and Wendy have been meeting with various teams in Procurement regarding utilising shared services. The More Powers team have agreed to work with us and discussions will continue.
 26. Nick suggested that, in the interim at least until Consumer Scotland has staff, Consumer Scotland could outsource work such as research citing Queen Margaret University as an example of where research could be commissioned from. He also suggested that the Implementation Team speak to organisations such as ESS and WICS to gain an insight into how they have utilised shared services.
 27. Angela noted that she has a meeting scheduled with Carol Brennan who chaired the SLCC report while she was a Professor at QMU. Although she is now retired from that role Angela will ask her about the range of QMU activity in areas of interest to us.
 28. The Chair agreed that having a mechanism in place to get research outsourced would be a good tool to have in the toolbox. He also re-iterated that Consumer Scotland staff will be civil servants but will mirror where possible and practicable Scottish Government practices.
 29. Sue informed the meeting that several meetings have already taken place with a variety of organisations that are working in a shared service environment. Sue agreed to circulate notes of these meetings.
 30. Sam and Nick to be involved in discussions going forward on shared services.
- **Action: Implementation Team to circulate notes from meetings held with organisations around shared services.**
 - **Action: Sam and Nick to be involved in ongoing discussions with Implementation Team around shared services.**

Agenda Item 5 – Finance & Governance

Framework Document

31. Nick led the discussion on the Framework document which had been circulated with the minutes. His immediate thought was that the focus of this standardised template lent itself more to NPBDs rather than NMOs highlighting that Consumer Scotland takes its direction from the Scottish Parliament rather than Scottish Ministers. There needs to be clearer information on Consumer Scotland's interaction with the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament and how both of these organisations interact with one another in relation to Consumer Scotland.
32. Angela noted a concern to ensure that the appraisal process for the Chair aligned with the independent status of Consumer Scotland.
33. The Chair, whilst understanding Nick's comments, stated that overall it is the legislation that drives the Framework and that Consumer Scotland needs to ensure that this document sits within what Consumer Scotland will do as an organisation.
34. Nick highlighted the ESS Framework as one that could be useful for Consumer Scotland and offered to circulate it round the Board. The ESS Framework can be accessed at [ESS-Framework-Document-1-October-2021.pdf \(environmentalstandards.scot\)](#).
35. The Chair summarised the discussion by stating that there was fine tuning to be made to the Framework but it was up to the Board to develop a shared understating of what the document means.
36. Neil and Andrew will take on board all comments received and update the Framework accordingly.

Accommodation

37. The Implementation Team had prepared a paper outlining the three main models of accommodation which Consumer Scotland could go into – namely a stand-alone office; hubs; and a hybrid office in a shared building. The paper discussed advantages and disadvantages of each option. After a detailed discussion the Board agreed that some form of flexible, hybrid, shared building would be best suited for the requirements for Consumer Scotland.
38. Meeting rooms and break-out rooms will be important in the office space to encourage team working and collaboration within and outwith Consumer Scotland. The Chair offered to meet with Neil and Wendy to discuss requirements in more detail.
39. The Implementation Team will work with the Scottish Government Estates and come up with suitable accommodation options for the Board to discuss.

- **Action: Implementation Team to update the Framework with comments received.**
- **Action: Implementation Team to work with Scottish Government Estates to provide accommodation options for Consumer Scotland following on from meeting held with Chair.**

Agenda Item 6 – Strategy

40. James had prepared a detailed strategy paper on how Consumer Scotland describes itself, including the need for marketing and branding. This paper will be the basis on which Consumer Scotland positions itself going forward and it was agreed that a strategy half-day was needed to discuss in much more details.
41. As part of that day, time would also be spent considering research that had been carried out into current consumer thinking.
42. This day needed to be held as near around the next Board meeting on 16 November as possible.
43. Implementation Team to consider further with James, including the need for an external facilitator.
- **Action: James and Implementation Team to work together to draft an outline of a strategy away day.**
 - **Action: Implementation Team to look at venues and possible facilitators and keep Board Members updated on progress.**

Agenda Item 7 – AOB

44. James confirmed that he was leading on the Consumer Scotland response to the CMA - Call for Input – on *Environmental sustainability and the competition and consumer law regimes*. Neil suggested that he and James discuss this response.
45. The Chair thanked everyone for their participation stating that really good progress was being made.
46. The date of the next meeting is 16 November at 2 pm, and will be held on Teams.
- **Action: Implementation Team to organise call between James and Neil to discuss CMA Call for Input.**

**Consumer Scotland Implementation Team
October 2021**