

Consumer Scotland Board Meeting
19th May 2022
Minute of Meeting

Attendees: David Wilson (Chair)
Angela Morgan (Board Member)
Nick Martin (Board Member)
James Walker (Board Member)
Sam Ghibaldan (Programme Director)
Neil Ritchie (Scottish Government Implementation Team)
Sue Bomphray (Consumer Scotland Implementation Team)
Tanya Friel (Consumer Scotland Implementation Team)
Ifthakhar Eresh (Consumer Scotland)
Eleanor Mullan (Head of Analysis) – second half of meeting
Andy Denholm (Head of Communications) - second half of meeting

Apologies: Jill Rosie (Scottish Government Implementation Team)
Wendy McCutcheon (Scottish Government Implementation Team)

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Update

1. The Chair welcomed and thanked everyone for joining this meeting.
2. The Chair introduced Tanya Friel to the board.
3. Apologies were received from Jill Rosie and Wendy McCutcheon.

Agenda Item 2 – Minutes and Action from Previous Meeting

4. The minutes of the meeting 19 April 2022 were agreed.
5. The list of actions was then discussed:
 - A new pay and expenses claim form will be issued to Board Members to ensure pay and expenses are treated appropriately for tax and NI. Pay and expenses will be processed through Consumer Scotland Payroll from June.
 - Feedback was provided in relation to having a stand-in Chair for Board meetings.
 - It was suggested that good practice would be to confirm dates by when actions should be completed.
 - Reference was made to the appointment of a fifth Board Member. This is likely to happen in the coming months, although no date has been specified. The Public Appointment Process will be followed in appointing the fifth Board Member.
 - The Board was updated on the Minister attending the next board meeting. The location and timing will be shared with the board members in advance.

Action – Implementation Team – new pay & expenses claim form and monthly submission dates for payroll to be issued to Board Members.

Action – Chair and Implementation Team– to discuss and finalise the plan for the transfer of ECC members to CS.Action – to understand the recruitment process and timeline for fifth Board member.

Action – Chair and Programme Director – to discuss and plan the Minister’s attendance at the June Board meeting.

Agenda Item 3 – Programme Director Update

6. The Programme Director provided an update on the delivery of the phased implementation plan. The following points were highlighted:
 - a. The Framework Agreement is to be sent to Government for formal approval.
 - b. Smart PR have been appointed as our comms agency and are working with our newly appointed Head of Comms (Andy Denholm) to develop a launch strategy. Storm ID have also been appointed to design and implement the Consumer Scotland website and branding.
 - c. The office at Meadowbank House is up and running and discussions are underway with Registers of Scotland about use of office space in their Glasgow hub. Details, including any costs, are still to be agreed.
 - d. The TUPE of staff from Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) to Consumer Scotland was successful, with staff now in place with all required equipment. Our first payroll will be run at the end of May.
 - e. Recruitment is continuing apace, with interviews taking place for 8 roles, including a Director of Analysis.
 - f. The Chair provided an update on the recruitment process for a permanent CEO. Interviews took place 18 May 2022. there is a preferred candidate, and the required approvals are in progress before any appointment can be confirmed. It is expected that an announcement will be made week beginning 23 May 2022.
 - g. Work is underway to determine how to deliver the levy workplan, and the first meeting of the Consumers in Vulnerable Circumstances: Short Life Working Group is taking place on 23 May 2022.
 - h. The website build is underway, and the Consumer Scotland logo has now been created. This will have different colour palettes depending on the area of work.
 - i. A quick overview was given of the programme plan paper including the priorities and workplan.
 - j. The procurement process is underway in relation to data and research. In addition, travel services, stationery and printing services are all on single supplier or call off procurement frameworks, so no tender process is required

7. Board members were then invited to comment on the update provided. The main discussion points were as follows:
 - Investment in culture development would be beneficial as the body develops.
 - An up-to-date budget position separated by levy area was presented and it was noted that moving forward, the Board will need to see more detailed financial

information including actuals in relation to its budget, forecast and variances to account for expenditure as well as forecasting. The Board was assured that help from Scottish Government is available in relation to financial expenditure.

- The budget for the Big Energy Saving Network Campaign has been approved as part of the levy funding and a grant offer letter is being prepared for CAS, with the criteria which BEIS has set out.
- The Board was updated on the relativities of the separate levy funding streams and how this may evolve over the next couple of years. It was noted that it may be useful to discuss and develop a formal research strategy, determined by the workplan.
- Scottish Government mentioned that there are opportunities around cost saving through shared resources in the form of subscriptions e.g., Cornwall Energy. This will be dependent on licence conditions.

8. The Chair asked Scottish Government about budget and resource spending for future years. A Resource Spending Review by Scottish Government is underway and Scottish Government will continue to keep Consumer Scotland up to date with budget announcements.

Action – Chair – to send Scottish Government Framework Agreement for approval.

Action – Scottish Government – to investigate shared subscription services between Scottish Government and Consumer Scotland.

Agenda Item 4 – Audit and Risk Committee

9. Minutes of the first Audit and Risk Committee meeting were shared with the Board for approval. The next Audit and Risk Committee meeting will be in June preceding the main Board meeting. The main item of discussion will be a plan for internal audit. The cycle of Audit and Risk Committee meeting will be every three months.

10. The minutes from the first Audit and Risk Committee meeting were agreed.

Action – Audit and Risk Committee team – minute to be amended to reflect updated date of the next meeting following board approval.

Agenda Item 5 - Memorandum of Understanding between Citizens Advice Scotland and Consumer Scotland

11. The Programme Director provided an overview of the MOU between Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) and Consumer Scotland, which was circulated to the Board for agreement.

12. Several drafts and adjustments have been made of the MOU, which has also been approved by both Scottish Government and external lawyers MacRoberts. Both CAS and Consumer Scotland are happy to sign.

13. This MOU is not a legally binding document but an agreement between CAS and Consumer Scotland to work constructively together and in a collaborative spirit. It is envisaged that CAS and Consumer Scotland will meet every 2/3 months to discuss topical and emerging issues.
14. The MOU should also be published on the Consumer Scotland Website once operational.
15. Consumer Scotland should consider other organisations where a MOU may be beneficial.

Action Point – Programme Director – to make minor changes in wording of the covering minute and send to the next CS and CAS meeting for formal approval.

Agenda Item 6 – Interim Strategic Plan

16. Eleanor Mullan and Andy Denholm (Head of Analysis and Head of Communications respectively) attended this part of the session.
17. An update on the interim strategic plan was presented to the Board for discussion.
18. The timetable for publishing the plan was discussed. It was hoped to publish to document and tie it into the formal launch however, this date would be dependent on publishing timelines from APS. It was agreed that it would be preferable to publish before Parliament's summer recess.
19. It was also noted that content was more important at this stage than the design of the document, although the document still needs to look professional. Consumer Scotland are working to explore a timetable with APS to publish the document.
20. The Board was provided with background to the document, including strategy and vision, with members asked to provide feedback. The main discussion points were as follows:
 - a. The plan needs to have a clear statement on what Consumer Scotland can do and what it does not do. It should be clear that it is not a front-line service, but the body will work with other organisations to deliver a full market approach.
 - b. The 'What Matters to Consumers in Scotland' section was described as an 'excellent piece of work' but is better located at the end of the plan.
 - c. The plan should have fewer words and needs to be more realistic about what Consumer Scotland will be able to achieve in its first year. As such, its first-year priorities and their order need to be considered. The plan can draw strength from the fact that the body is new and developing, with lots of exploration to be done and bedding in for the longer term.
 - d. The language used should be simple and upfront about the body's role in the public sector duty.

- e. Whilst Consumer Scotland is not obliged to publish this interim strategic plan, a balance needs to be struck whereby the body communicates clearly to the public what it intends to achieve but does not risk overstating its ambitions.
- f. The levy workplan will cover several key themes and its proposals to help solve problems. Reference was also made to the role the Consumer Network can play to helping to address key themes.
- g. It was confirmed that there is no formal process for the Minister to have sight of any documents.
- h. It was noted that further work is required on the plan before it is published, which includes improving the presentation of document, fixing the drafting, and considering where different sections fit within the plan.

Action Point – Board Members and Programme Director – to approve interim strategic plan once amendments have been made. Once approved Programme Director to liaise with APS to confirm date for publication.

- 21. The Chair then invited Eleanor and Andy to give their thoughts on the interim strategic plan. Both agreed with the points made earlier and confirmed that they were happy to continue to support drafting amendments as discussed.

Agenda Item 7 - AOB

- 22. There being no other business the Chair thanked everyone for their participation and brought the meeting to a close.

Consumer Scotland Implementation Team, May 2022