

ECB Board Meeting – 13 February 2023

Video-call, 9.30am to 11am

Attending: Catherine Brown (CB) (Chair); Alan Cavill (AC); Ged Curran (GC); Althea Efunshile (AE); Jenny Watson (JW); Chris Nichols (CN); Marc Etches (ME).

Minutes

1. Welcome & declarations of conflict of interests.

CB welcomed all present and invited declarations of conflict relating to the agenda. No such conflicts were declared.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting – 18 January 2023

The minutes were accepted as being an accurate record, and the Board authorised publication on the ECB website.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

4. Board Members Updates

CB invited Board members to share insights, experiences and reflections gained in the period since the last Board meeting.

- JW reported on her time accompanying an enforcement agent (EA) operating in Norfolk, who is self-employed and wholly reliant on commission for income. The issues arising from the widespread use of self-employed EAs were discussed and noted.
- GC reported his recent discussion with representatives of Birmingham City Council (BCC), noting that BCC is currently at an early stage of internal deliberation regarding the merits of moving to 'in-house' contracting of enforcement services.
- CB reported on the various contacts, meetings, and media events, including:
 - HMRC
 - Mike Amesbury, MP
 - StepChange Debt Charity – parliamentary reception for 30-year anniversary
 - Cabinet Office - Government debt management forum
 - The Guardian newspaper [interview](#) – 26 January 2023

5. Establishment of ECB: progress report

The paper was taken as read.

- The Board noted that the ECB's first Stakeholder Engagement Forum will take place on **Thursday 23 February** 11am to 12.30pm at the offices of StepChange Debt Charity located in London. CB will chair this first meeting and the agenda will focus on agreeing the remit and full membership of the forum and a discussion on the currently drafted business plan.

CN will chair future meetings. Invitees to the first meeting are: Carole Kenney (CDER Group); Martin Johnson (Marston Holdings); Russell Hamblin-Boone (CIVEA); Alan J. Smith (HCEOA); Peter Tutton (StepChange); Matt Hartley (Money Advice Trust); Gareth McNab (CAP).

- CN reported that he was working with ME and an HR specialist to recruit a **Policy & External Affairs Manager** and planned to undertake interviews in March. CN also noted that he was in touch with the Ministry of Justice about a possible secondment, which the Board discussed and supported the proposal in principle, subject to CN's further advice.
- ME reported that arrangements have been made to establish the publication of a regular newsletter, which can be subscribed to. The first two editions (February 10 and March 6) can be accessed via: [Media and research - enforcementconductboard](#).

6. Business planning, budget, and levy implementation discussions

Board members spent time discussing in detail:

- Draft business plan and key priorities
- Draft budget for next year and the implication for the scale of levy required

ME reported that 48 letters were sent on 24 and 25 January to ask civil and high court enforcement businesses for details relating to annual turnover for the twelve months ending 31 December 2022. This will help to inform the emerging business plan for 2023-24 including the rate of the annual levy. At the time of writing, the response rate had reached 69%.

The Board agreed a further draft of the business plan and budget for 2023/24 to be shared with members of the newly formed Stakeholder Engagement Forum on 23 February.

7. Any Other Business

Pre-payment energy meters

Board members discussed the issues arising from the recent publicity about the installation of pre-payment energy meters via court warrants – see [Ofgem statement on British Gas prepayment meter installations | Ofgem](#).

The Board noted that its current remit relates to enforcement action arising solely in connection with taking control of goods under Schedule 12 to the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007. However, given the ECB's purpose is to ensure all those who are subject to enforcement action in England and Wales are fairly treated, the Board agreed to be open-minded if asked to broaden its remit to cover pre-payment meter installation under a court warrant, subject to appropriate funding arrangements.

8. Dates of future meetings

- March 20 (remote)
- May 4 and 5 – London
- June 26 (remote)
- July 26 and 27 - Wales
- September 4 (remote)
- Oct 4 and 5 – in person (location TBC)
- Nov 6 (remote)
- Dec 4 (remote)
- Jan 10 and 11 – in person (location TBC)
- Feb 5 (remote)