

## Chief Executive's Report, October 2023

### Introduction

1. This month we delivered a major milestone for the ECB, in formally launching our accreditation scheme. We successfully opened for applications on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September, in line with the timetable previously discussed with the Board. The response from stakeholders has appeared very positive so far, with a large number of applications already received from enforcement firms (see further below). It has also been a very busy month of engagement, especially on the creditor side.

### Current cash position

2. The cash position at the 28 September 2023 was approximately £762k. This includes the £176k loan from CIVEA, which is due to be repaid by March 2024.
3. The Board has a separate budget reforecast paper on the agenda.

### Staffing and organisational matters

4. Our new Director of Policy and Oversight, Hannah Semple, will start at the ECB on 2 October. She will attend this Board meeting. We have planned an induction process that will involve time spent shadowing enforcement agents, visiting firms and debt advice providers. Hannah will be leading our work to develop new standards and our operating model.
5. Following successful completion of my probation, as agreed by the Board, I have now become a Board member. I have been added as a Director at Companies House and we will update the website shortly.

### Accreditation

6. Accreditation was successfully launched on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September, as planned. It was accompanied by the planned communications and engagement activity, including a themed CEO Blog. On the day of the launch, I attended the CIVEA Executive Council meeting in London and presented and answered questions on the accreditation scheme.
7. The early response has been very encouraging. As of 27 September, we have received 27 applications for accreditation, covering both civil and high court firms and large, medium and small businesses. We appear to be well on track for a very high uptake of accreditation, as we had planned for.
8. The initial deadline for applications is 18 October and we plan to publish the first online register of accredited firms on 25 October. We will update the Board on the overall take-up and coverage of accreditation once the initial window has closed.

## Research

9. Over the last month, we have continued to develop the methodology and approach to our planned research project, which will involve reviewing a large sample of body worn video. We have developed an initial powers and parameters briefing that we will now test with our expert panels. We have further developed our methodology and draft Data Protection Impact Assessment based on positive feedback from the ICO and discussions with stakeholders. And we have continued to develop and iterate the themes for exploration, taking account of the anonymised case notes that we are now receiving from the debt advice sector. There is a separate paper on research on the Board agenda.
10. In advance of the Board meeting, we will be hosting a Stakeholder Engagement Forum meeting where this research will be the main item on the agenda. At this forum, we will be seeking input on the methodology, approach to managing GDPR compliance and developing themes for exploration. We will be able to feed back from this session at the Board meeting.

## Creditor engagement

11. There has been real progress on engaging creditors over the last month. Highlights have included:
  - The Director of Creditors and Government addressing council leaders from the Welsh LGA in Llandudno and discussing how the WLGA could support the ECB's mission. There has been further productive engagement since which we can fill the Board in on at the meeting. We have also secured time with the English LGA's Resources Board
  - Further targeted engagement with individual local councils about requiring those that they contract with to be ECB accredited. We are planning of a number of regional workshops with local authority in house enforcement teams about the practicalities of extending accreditation to them in the new year
  - A successful programme of ECB talks in September at the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation regional events (eight in total), which is getting the ECB's message out to a key stakeholder group and helping to gain acceptance of the ECB's role in oversight of local authority enforcement.

## Communications and engagement

12. We have continued to grow our social media presence and engagement with the ECB on LinkedIn continues to grow, especially following the launch of accreditation. Through the accreditation application process we will build our own database of contacts at each accredited firm, which will allow us to send targeted updates, where necessary, direct to those that we oversee.
13. I spoke on a panel at the All Party Parliamentary Group on Debt and Personal Finance at the Houses of Parliament. The event was productive, with a broad discussion on the potential challenges the ECB could face alongside strong support from attendees. As a result of engagements with a member of the LGA at the event, we have been invited to attend a special session with the LGA's resources board to discuss the ECB's mission.

14. In terms of wider stakeholder engagement, the last month has included the following highlights:

- Speaking at the Institute of Money Advisers virtual conference, on a panel discussing government debt recovery. There were a large number of frontline debt advisers in the audience and there was a wide ranging and extremely informative discussion after the presentations
- The Chair and Director of Creditors and Government met with Clive Betts MP, who is Chair of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee. This followed on from the ECB submitting its written response, in July, to the Committee's review of Council Tax Collection
- Visiting a High Court Enforcement firm and arranging to spend time shadowing a enforcement agents executing High Court Writs.

### **Upcoming engagement**

15. Over the coming month, the focus will be on starting work on development of our own standards and code of practice, as well as further work on our research project.

16. Alongside this, we have the following engagements planned:

- Speaking at the Civil Court Users Association conference
- Speaking at the Wales Parking Conference
- Visiting more High Court and civil Enforcement firms.