

ECB Board Meeting – Monday 4 September 2023

Venue: Zoom meeting

Member attendance: Catherine Brown (Chair), Gerard Curran, Althea Efunshile, Jenny Watson

In attendance: Chris Nichols, Jen Prior (minutes)

Apologies: Alan Cavill

Minutes

Item 1: Welcome, apologies and declarations

1. The Chair welcomed all present and noted apologies from Alan Cavill.
2. There were no new declarations of interest to report.

Item 2: Minutes of the previous meeting

3. With minor drafting adjustments for the sake of clarity on publication, the minutes of 26 July 2023 were **agreed** as an accurate record of the meeting.

Item 3: Matters arising

4. The Board discussed the possibility of publishing papers for Board meetings either prior to the meeting or with the minutes, to further increase transparency. The Board debated both the benefits of increased transparency and the potential risks (such as a tendency to self-censor when drafting papers to be presented to the Board). It was agreed in principle that the organisation should work towards increasing transparency and although at this stage it was decided not to publish papers this decision would be revisited in six months' time (at the March 2024 Board), once the ECB was closer to "business as usual".
5. The Chair relayed a report from Alan Cavill that the Leader of Blackpool Council had agreed to bring a paper to the Council's executive seeking a decision for the Council to only use accredited enforcement firms.
6. The Board **noted** the action tracker.

Item 4: Chief executive's report

7. The Chief Executive talked to the report. The following points were raised in discussion:

- i. Levy update: the eight largest enforcement firms had all paid the agreed levy amounts. The Head of Governance and Operations will discuss introducing a treasury policy with the ECB's accountants (**ACTION**).
 - ii. Research project: The research project to establish baseline data for the ECB must take into account GDPR issues. Following initial discussions with officials at the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), we are developing a methodology whereby researchers would be live-viewing footage on site at the enforcement agency. While this will be a relatively costly option it would avoid the researchers having to take possession of personal data. An update paper on the research project would be presented to the Board in October.
 - iii. ECB logo charges: The ECB is required to charge VAT on the use of the accreditation logo. The advice received suggested a flat fee of £500 however the Board agreed that a multi-tiered fee based on turnover would be preferable, in recognition of the different size and scales of the business that the ECB expects to accredit. The executive will finalise and publish the fee scale, which is likely to range from around £100 for the smallest firms to £750 for the largest. The team would develop a system to monitor firms' use of the logo. It was acknowledged that for some of the smallest firms the cost of the logo would be greater than the cost of the levy, but this was not considered to be a major issue given that the payment for the logo is optional and not a pre-requisite for businesses to be accredited (**ACTION**).
 - iv. October Board stakeholder session: The Board agreed that it would be good to engage with the Local Government Authority (LGA) at the next Board stakeholder session. Gerard Curran would contact the Deputy Chief Executive at the LGA and investigate the possibility of her attending (**ACTION – completed**).
8. The Board **noted** the Chief Executive's report.

Item 5: Board leads proposal

- 9. The Head of Governance and Operations introduced a paper on a Board leads system which proposed that Board members would help to shape and steer work at a strategic level in allocated areas, outside of the Board meeting structure.
- 10. The Board discussed the advantages such a system would provide the Executive but noted that it would be important to ensure that such 'out of meeting' engagement would not impinge on the early and robust plenary Board discussions currently in practice.
- 11. The Board **agreed** the Board leads proposal and agreed the following allocation of work areas:

Area of work	Board member lead
Standards (including vulnerability)	Althea Efunshile
Complaints handling	Alan Cavill
Creditors and scope	Gerard Curran
Evidence	Jenny Watson
Communications and engagement	Jenny Watson

Item 6: Gifts and hospitality policy

12. The Head of Governance and Operations presented the ECB's draft gifts and hospitality policy. It was drafted by the Head of Governance and Operations with input from the ECB's external HR advisor. The aim of the gifts and hospitality policy is to guard against the risk of allegations of impropriety against Board members or staff.
13. The Board discussed the draft policy, and the following points were raised:
 - i. The limits regarding accepting and declaring gifts and hospitality needed to be simplified and streamlined. There should be a single limit of £50.
 - ii. It should be clarified that the policy is limited to hospitality and gifts received and given in relation to ECB work only. Members and staff are not required to declare gifts and hospitality received for unrelated work.
 - iii. It should be clarified that the register only requires the names of ECB members and staff receiving corporate hospitality.
14. The policy would be updated to reflect the amendments requested by the Board and then approved via circulation (**ACTION**).

Item 7: AOB

15. The Board discussed the need for early discussions on the ECB's definition of vulnerability and how it will be accounted for in the ECB's work. The CEO will investigate the possibility of securing an expert for an upcoming stakeholder session for the Board (**ACTION**).

Private session

16. The Board met for a private session.