

## Chief Executive's Report, December 2023

### Introduction

1. The theme for this month has been expansion, as we have started to scope a number of additional projects in our workplan, including our work to develop ECB standards for enforcement work, development of our own complaints handling process and quarterly data returns. We have also made progress on existing work, with the notable highlight being the launch of the tender exercise for our body worn video research project.

### Current cash position

2. The cash position at the 27 November was approximately £732k. This includes the £176k loan from CIVEA, which is due to be repaid by March 2024.

### Accreditation and the levy

3. We have now issued requests for payment of the ECB levy for all ECB accredited firms excluding the largest 8 firms, who we issued requests for in July. Payment of the levy is one of four criteria firms must meet in order to be accredited by the ECB which funds our operation. We have already received a number of these levy payments and will ensure that we achieve full payment by the deadline that we have set.

### Research and evidence

4. Since the last Board meeting, the team has finalised and launched the invitation to tender (ITT) for the BWV research project to a number of research firms, with bid responses expected in late December.
5. Following the launch of the tender, we have issued communications to all accredited firms to update them on the process and timelines of the research. This is the first time we have been able to communicate direct to accredited firms, using the contact information provided through the accreditation process.
6. The team are continuing to work through GDPR considerations in collaboration with experts in the sector in advance to the Data Protection Impact Assessment going to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) once a research company has been selected. We plan to send this to all accredited firms when it has been finalised.
7. Separately, at its meeting on 4 December, the Board will take a paper on the framework for the new system of quarterly data returns from accredited firms from Q1 2024/25, on which we will be consulting over the winter.

### ECB Standards Development

8. Work has begun at pace on the scoping phase of the ECB standards project and the Board lead has been engaged in the process. A separate paper is on the agenda on initial scoping considerations and timelines.

9. Following Board approval on scope, a further, more detailed paper will be presented when the Board meets again in January.

### **Complaints handling**

10. As with the standards development, work has begun to scope our project on developing our approach and processes for complaints handling. Key work so far includes holding initial conversations with stakeholders and mapping out the current complaints system across all areas of enforcement. We plan to bring a scoping paper to the Board at its meeting in March.

### **Strategy, business plan and risk management**

11. The Board will be discussing a draft three-year strategy, business plan and budget for 2024/25 when it next meets in January. We have started work on developing the materials for this session. On 29 November the staff team will do a whole day workshop on this, which will include SWOT analysis, discussion of strategic themes and a first draft of the budget for 2024/25 (which in turn will inform the levy). We are lining up a Stakeholder Engagement Forum meeting for the end of January to discuss this after the Board's meeting in early January. We then plan to consult from February.
12. We have previously discussed with the Board the need to develop a risk management strategy and risk register. The strategy development process, including the SWOT analysis, will start this process off. We plan to discuss this further in January, with a view to developing the detail of our risk management strategy and risk register after this.

### **Governance**

13. The Head of Governance and Operations will be managing the production of the Strategy, Business Plan and the Budget for 2024/25. This will require a reprioritisation of current corporate policy development timetables, with full attention being given to the above until the first drafts are presented to the January Board, after which, alongside further development of this work, production of ECB policies will resume. The majority of 'priority one' policies have already been produced and approved with the disciplinary and grievance procedure due to be presented to the Board next.

### **Creditor engagement**

14. There has been further progress on engaging creditors over the last month. Highlights have included:
  - Delivering the first of the regional seminars on the future accreditation of local authority in-house enforcement services, hosted by Durham County Council for North East authorities. We plan further seminars over the winter.
  - Engaging with procurement organisations to include accreditation with the ECB as a condition for external firms applying to be on the next framework to supply enforcement services for councils.
  - Constructive meetings with energy companies on ensuring accreditation for firms providing their enforcement services.

## **Communications and engagement**

15. The main focus of our communications activity this month has been raising awareness of our upcoming standards and complaints projects. This has included social media posts, a special edition newsletter from Director of Policy & Oversight, Hannah Semple and articles in the trade press.
16. Work on the communications and engagement strategy presented to the Board earlier this year has been paused but will resume in tandem with the development of the ECB's wider corporate strategy and business plans. However, the team will continue to carry out the central tenets of the draft communications strategy and to seek out opportunities to promote the ECB's work across external and internal channels.
17. The team are currently developing a calendar of upcoming conferences, visits and events to identify meaningful opportunities for Board members to engage with the sector. This will come to the Board when they next meet in January.
18. In terms of wider stakeholder engagement, the last month has included the following highlights:
  - Visiting National Debt Line in Birmingham
  - Visiting a civil enforcement firm to discuss our upcoming standards and vulnerability
  - Visiting a High Court enforcement firm
  - Visiting an enforcement firm and spending time shadowing a civil enforcement agent and an arrest agent.

## **Upcoming engagement**

19. Over the coming month, we have the following engagements planned (across the team):
  - Hosting the next Stakeholder Engagement Forum meeting
  - Speaking at the Local Government Debt Recovery 2023 event on fair debt recovery
  - Speaking at the Enforcement Law Review Group in Parliament on 7 December.
  - Meeting with CIVEA and HCEOA complaints teams to discuss the current complaints system
  - Visiting an enforcement firm
  - Speaking at the IRRV London regional event.