

Chief Executive's Report, January 2024

Introduction

1. December was a busy month as we sought to get board papers on standards, strategy, budget and the business plan ready for this meeting, alongside significant ongoing work with creditors and some intensive engagement on the BWV research project.
2. Our offices were closed between Christmas and New Year. We had an on call rota in place but I am glad to report that there was no urgent business needed, meaning the team were able to get some well earned rest. We have now returned fresh and excited for what 2024 has in store for the ECB.

Current cash position

3. The cash position at the 2 January was approximately £848k. This includes the £176k loan from CIVEA, which is due to repaid by March 2024.

Accreditation and the levy

4. We have now received full payment of the levy from all accredited firms, following a request issued in November.
5. One new application has also been received and accepted for our accreditation scheme, with one pending application.

Research and evidence

6. 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 early January. The deadline has been extended from late December due to capacity constraints in responding research firms.
7. Interviews and presentations will be held with the relevant board lead following the deadline, and we expect to finalise the tender process and select a research company in late January.
8. The team are continuing to work through GDPR considerations in collaboration with specialist legal advice and experts in the sector to support the Data Protection Impact Assessment. The Director of Creditors and Government, David Parkin, presented on the BWV research project to the CIVEA Executive meeting on 8 December.

Quarterly data returns

9. After a helpful discussion at the ECB Engagement Forum on 6 December, the team have also been refining the ECB's requirements for the 2024-25 Quarterly Data Return system, which will go out for wider consultation in January.

ECB Standards Development

10. Following Board steers in December we have progressed work on the standards including speaking to facilitation specialists to support us in incorporating the views of individuals with lived experience of enforcement action into our work.
11. Following Board approval, we will publish the public scope of the standards project this month and will return to board in March with an initial paper on content of the standards.

Complaints handling

12. We have made progress this month on the complaints project, mapping out the existing system and having initial conversations with CIVEA and the HCEOA about their respective roles. The team has also met with a number of enforcement firms to discuss their approach to complaints to support us in developing the scope of this work and we intend to bring a scoping paper to board in February. Given the gap between Board meetings, we will aim to schedule a brief targeted session on this so that work can progress. We will be in touch to arrange a date shortly.

Strategy, business plan and risk management

13. In this meeting the Board will be discussing a draft three-year strategy, business plan and budget for 2024/25. Following Board's approval, we intend to discuss this with our Stakeholder Engagement Forum in late January/early February with a view to consulting in February.
14. 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.

Creditor engagement

15. There has been further progress on engaging creditors over the last month. Highlights have included:
 - The Director of Creditors and Government presenting on the work of the ECB to the Enforcement Law Review Group, chaired by Lord Lucas in the House of Lords on 7 December.
 - The Director of Creditors and Government speaking at the IRRV London Forum on 18 December.
 - Working with LB Southwark in planning for late January the next regional seminar on the future accreditation of local authority in-house enforcement services, following the North East event hosted by Durham County Council in November.

Communications and engagement

16. Our proactive communications activity this month has focussed on promoting the ECB's upcoming 2024 priorities, via a 'look back at a year of the ECB' blog from me and a targeted article in the Institute of Revenues and Rating (IRRV) publication by the Director of Creditors and Government.

17. In terms of reactive media work, Catherine Brown was interviewed by BBC Radio 4's *File on Four* programme which is due to be broadcast in January.
18. The communications and engagement team has also been involved in work on the organisational 3-year strategy – an accompanying communications and engagement strategy will be drafted once this has been finalised.
19. We have prepared a first draft board engagement calendar which will be shared for discussion at the Board meeting.
20. In terms of wider stakeholder engagement, the last month has included the following highlights:
 - Visiting two civil enforcement firms to discuss complaints and vulnerability
 - Meeting CIVEA and HCEOA to discuss the existing complaints system
 - A meeting of our stakeholder engagement forum.

Upcoming engagement

21. Over the coming month, we have the following engagements planned (across the team):
 - Visiting StepChange in Leeds
 - Meeting other oversight bodies and regulators to learn about their approach to complaints handling
 - Attending the fairness working group to give a presentation on the ECB, hosted by His Majesty's Treasury (HMT)
 - An event in later January (TBC) on ECB accreditation for London Councils with in-house enforcement services
 - Visiting an enforcement firm in Wales and shadowing an Enforcement Agent.