

**DRAFT**

## **CONSUMER FOCUS: MINUTES OF MAIN BOARD MEETING No.32**

**Draft minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2011, 11.00am – 2.30pm at Fleetbank House, Salisbury Square, London EC4Y 8JX**

### **Present**

Christine Farnish	(CF)	Chair, Consumer Focus
Anna Walker	(AW)	Board member/ Vice Chair
Stephen Locke	(SAL)	Board member/ Vice Chair
Enid Rowlands	(ER)	Board member / HR Committee Chair
Sharon Darcy	(SD)	Board member /A&R Committee Chair
Rick Hill	(RH)	Board member / Consumer Focus (Post) Northern Ireland Chair
Douglas Sinclair	(DS)	Board member / Consumer Focus Scotland Chair
Vivienne Sugar	(VS)	Board member / Consumer Focus Wales Chair
Roger Darlington	(RD)	Board member
Sukhvinder Kaur Stubbs	(SKS)	Board member
Dame Suzi Leather	(SL)	Board member

### **In attendance**

Mike O'Connor	(MO'C)	Chief Executive, Consumer Focus
Philip Cullum	(PC)	Deputy Chief Executive, Consumer Focus
Graham Clark	(GC)	Director of Finance and Operations
Marieke Dwarshuis	(MD)	Senior Director, Consumer Focus Scotland (by videoconf.)
Maria Battle	(MB)	Senior Director, Consumer Focus Wales
Adam Scorer	(AS)	Interim Director Reputation and Impact (open session)
Susannah Hughes	(SH)	Head of Secretariat
Gemma Bowen	(GB)	Head of CFI (item C)
Prashant Vaze	(PV)	Chief Economist (items C/D)

### **Observer**

Steve Warren	(SW)	BIS (open session only)
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### **Apologies**

John Bromley	(JB)	Director, NSMC
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**At the start of the meeting, there was a closed session for Board, SMT and Secretariat only. The minutes of the closed session are recorded separately.**

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## OPEN SESSION

### 1 APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 1.1 CF welcomed attendees to the first Board meeting at Fleetbank House.

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF RELEVANT INTERESTS

- 2.1 It was agreed that interests previously declared would be taken as read until such a time as members declared changes: none declared at this meeting.

### 3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 3.1 The Board APPROVED the minutes of the meetings held on 10 February 2011.

### 4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT (Paper 4)

- 4.1 The Board applauded the full and impressive report with a strong, solid set of achievements throughout the organisation. In particular the Board commended the quality, range and volume of work and the high performance of the organisation recently. The Board asked that a set of high impact achievements be compiled and circulated to Board Members in the form of key messages.

- 4.2 MO'C would check whether the devolved administrations had been involved in the fuel poverty discussions (paper item 1.1.31). PC would circulate to the Board the draft follow up work to the Stubbs report. AS would refresh a Key messages sheet and re-circulate to Board members.

- 4.3 A brief discussion took place about the content of Board agendas and whether the balance between policy issues and governance was right. A range of views was expressed and it was AGREED that there would be a session on this issue at the Board Awayday in May.

**Actions: MO'C, PC, AS**

### 5 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS (Paper 5)

- 5 GC spoke to the management accounts, highlighting the high volume of work, savings made and the expectation that by year end the full grant, which had been drawn down, would be properly spent in line with the overall budget. The Board thanked the team for the excellent progress made and NOTED the management accounts to end of February 2011.

### 6 ANNUAL PLAN 2011/12 (Paper 6)

- 6.1 SAL had chaired the sub-group and explained that the draft plan had been developed through wide consultation and significant scrutiny; it incorporated strong feedback from stakeholders and was designed to be flexible and responsive to changing needs. Board members made individual suggestions which were noted, and agreed that in reality this would become a two year plan. MO'C would respond to CitA and feedback on potential areas of collaboration.

**Action: MO'C**

- 6.2 The nation plans would be agreed by the nation Boards. The Board thanked SAL and the sub-group for producing a very solid work plan and AGREED the annual workplan for 2011/12.

## **7 BUDGET 2011/12**

7.1 The grant for 2011/12 had been confirmed as £12,588,000. This was in line with the discussion at the February Board and represented flat budgets for energy and post, and a significant cut for other work. GC spoke to the paper, highlighting in particular savings made and the re-balancing needed. In such challenging and uncertain times, the organisation would need to be fleet of foot and some contingency had been built in.

7.2 The Board AGREED the 2011/12 budget and NOTED that some detailed work would still be required once the 2011/12 work programme and GB structure had been agreed.

## **8 SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME**

8.1 The Board considered the Single Equality Scheme, noting that it had been developed over a period of change for both the legislation and the organisation. The final scheme had taken account of these factors but equality remains core to what we do and who we are and this was a key and living document for Consumer Focus.

8.2 The Board thanked SKS and the team for their work and AGREED the Single Equality Scheme 2011/13 be published and implemented.

## **9 EHU SUPPORT TO SMALL BUSINESSES**

9.1 The Board had previously agreed EHU support to small businesses. MD spoke to the paper, highlighting the need for support where small businesses were vulnerable consumers and indicating that Citizens Advice Scotland also provided support to vulnerable small businesses. MD would advise whether it was possible to collect data on which small businesses helped by EHU were third sector organisations.

### **Action: MD**

9.2 The Board AGREED that EHU should continue to support small businesses in line with the criteria set out in the paper.

## **10 CHAIRS UPDATES**

### **10.1 Nation Chairs**

RH, DS and VS had nothing further to add to their oral and written updates.

### **10.2 HR and Remuneration Committee**

The Board NOTED the minutes of the HR&R Committee meeting held on 24 February 2011.

### **10.3 Audit and Risk Committee**

The Board NOTED the draft minutes of the A&R Committee meeting held on 22 March 2011, which had been tabled.

## **11 NEXT MEETING**

11.1 The Board AGREED:

**23 May evening only:** a working dinner would go ahead, and an invitation would be extended to David Halpern at the Cabinet Office to discuss consumer empowerment.

**24 May Board meeting and Awayday:** this would be 9.30 - 4.00, offsite

Accommodation would be arranged for those living out of London. Sessions on Board agendas and policy issues; the supercomplaint pipeline and the draft Competition Policy Consultation response would be included in the Agenda, which would be circulated nearer the time. Martin Donnelly would be invited to attend a session for a discussion on BIS policy agenda.

**Action: MO’C/CF**

**12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

12.1 There was no other business.

**13 REVIEW OF MEETING**

13.1 The Board agreed that the meeting had got through a full agenda effectively and to time. The Chair would hold a meeting the following day to update all staff.

<b><u>Signatories</u></b>	
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Chair, Consumer Focus	Date
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Chief Executive, Consumer Focus	Date

## MINUTES OF MAIN BOARD MEETING: 30 March 2011

### ACTION POINTS:

Minute Item	Action	Owner	Timing
Ai.vii	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Northern Ireland:</b> approach Ministers re GB work</li> </ul>	CF/MO'C	April
Ai.viii	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Consumer landscape, competition and empowerment:</b> Sub-group to work up options and circulate to Boards and return to May Board  Respect sensitivity viz this further work  CF speak to John Gladwin</li> </ul>	MO'C CF/MO'C All CF	March April/May ongoing April
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>BIS competition consultation</b> Draft response for May Board</li> </ul>	PC	April/May
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Private Car Park Operators</b> submit supercomplaint</li> </ul>	PV/GB	April
Dii	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Individual Personal Pensions Market:</b> Agree with Board subgroup how the work should be handled and final report</li> </ul>	MO'C/ PC/PV	April/May
Diii	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Supercomplaint pipeline:</b> to May Awayday</li> </ul>	MO'C	May
4.2/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Check re fuel poverty and devolved administrations</b></li> <li><b>Circulate follow up to Stubbs report</b></li> <li><b>Re-circulate key messages</b></li> <li><b>Consider board agenda, papers at May Awayday</b></li> </ul>	MO'C PC AS MO'C	April " " May
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Annual plan</b> Feedback to CitA on consultation and joint project potential  Amend plan and publish</li> </ul>	MO'C SAL/AS	April April
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Single Equality Scheme</b> Publish and implement</li> </ul>	PC/ SMT	April onwards
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>EHU support to small businesses:</b> Advise on whether possible for EHU to collect data on which small businesses were third sector organisations</li> </ul>	MD	April
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>23-24 May</b> Organise dinner and Awayday Invite guests/speakers</li> </ul>	SH MO'C/CF	April