

THREE HUNDRED AND TWENTY THIRD MEETING OF THE GENERAL CONSUMER COUNCIL FOR NORTHERN IRELAND HELD ON FRIDAY 16 DECEMBER 2022 AT 10.00AM IN SEATEM HOUSE, ALFRED STREET, BELFAST, AND VIA ZOOM TELECONFERENCE

ATTENDANCE

Ms Sheila McClelland	Chair
Mr Mick McAteer	Deputy Chair
Dr Joan Martin	Board Member
Mrs June Butler	Board Member
Mrs Lynne Crowther	Board Member
Ms Amanda Logan	Board Member (left the meeting at 1.15pm)
Mr William Leathem	Board Member
Dr Sinéad Furey	Board Member
Mr Alan O'Neill	Board Member (arrived at 11.30am)
Ms Noyona Chundur	Chief Executive
Ms Dervla Kearney	Director of Consumer Empowerment
Mr Scott Kennerley	Director of Financial and Postal Services
Ms Anne-Marie Murphy	Director of Strategy and Emerging Markets
Mr William Warke	Director of Corporate Services
Mr Raymond Gormley	Head of Energy Policy
Mr Richard Williams	Head of Transport
Ms Jenny Redman	Head of Financial Services
Ms Bernie Tolan	PA to the Chief Executive
Ms Julie Coulter	Administrative Officer
Ms Rachel Molloy (for part)	HR Advisor -Corporate Services
Mr Colin Neely (for part)	Senior Research and Insight Officer
Mr Andrew Shiels (for part)	Senior Policy Officer
Mr Terry Campbell (for part)	Head of Finance and Governance
Mr Richard Williams (for part)	Head of Transport
Mr Raymond Gormley (for part)	Head of Energy
Mr Graham Smith (for part)	Head of Water
Ms Michelle Kelly (for part)	Transport Policy Officer

323/1.1

Apologies

Mr Peter McClenaghan Director of Infrastructure and Sustainability

323/1.2

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The Chair advised Board Members that any conflict of interest relating to agenda items should be recorded at the beginning of Council meetings. Should a Board Member have a conflict of interest, they should leave the meeting at that particular agenda item, and the minutes could reflect this.

The Chair would have the ability to define a conflict of interest and requested Board Members' compliance if this arose.

No conflict of interest was declared, and this was noted.

323/1.3

Minutes of the last meeting

Energy Bills Support Scheme for Heat Networks

The Chief Executive advised the Consumer Council had been given emergency powers by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to act in a complaint handling and consumer advisory role on the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) for heat networks in Northern Ireland.

- This role would continue for as long as the EBSS was operational.
- Discussions were underway with BEIS, led by the Head of Energy and Head of Insight and Investigations, with support from the Director of Infrastructure and Sustainability and Director of Consumer Empowerment, regarding the number of enquiries and complaints, the costs of set-up and ongoing operating costs.
- The delivery timetable was still to be clarified although expectations were that people would receive the £600 payment from mid-January 2023.
- A non-disclosure agreement had been signed and the Consumer Council had also registered with the Office of Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) so it could receive details of the heat networks in Northern Ireland.
- Complaints are received from individuals regarding the payment not being passed on to them, would be passed on to BEIS for further investigation.

The Director of Consumer Empowerment highlighted:

- Discussions were also underway with the Energy Ombudsman who responsibility for heat networks min GB, as while Northern Ireland would be working to different processes there was the opportunity to learn from their experience.
- There is a communication vacuum which would impact on calls and enquiries received due to potential misinterpretation by consumers that the Consumer Council deals with all complaints regarding EBSS, and not just heat networks.

Members discussed the number of heat networks in Northern Ireland, how and to whom payments would be made, and the complexities of caravan parks, boats and individuals with second homes.

The Chief Executive advised Members would be updated on a weekly basis.

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 November 2022, having been circulated, were agreed as a true and correct record.

The Minutes were agreed by Members and signed.

323/1.4

Actions from the last meeting

The Chief Executive updated Members on the following:

- 1.7 The Consumer Council received confirmation from Queen’s University Belfast that a MSc student on its International Public Policy Programme would start on their dissertation on a Consumer Detriment Index for Northern Ireland in January 2023, until September 2023. This would be at no cost of the organisation and the project would primarily be desk-based research to inform a proposed specification for the index.
- 3.8 Insurance: Consumerline (Trading Standards Service NI) had advised they have not seen an increase in insurance contacts regarding cost. The Director of Strategy and Emerging Markets had also reached out to the Northern Ireland Civic Working Group of the Protocol, who confirmed anecdotal feedback around public liability, professional indemnity, employer’s liability and travel insurance for those travelling from the north to the south. It was agreed the action would be closed, and Members will be updated as appropriate.

The Actions from the last meeting were noted by Members.

323/1.5 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

323/1.6 Chair’s Business

The Chair briefed Members on the Department for the Economy (DfE) Partnership Event on 7 December, hosted by Permanent Secretary, Mike Brennan. Discussion followed regarding the challenges of the budget deficit and the impact on departments and arm’s length bodies (ALBs), and DfE’s 10X Strategy and how ALBs were connected to its delivery.

The Director of Strategy and Emerging Markets advised she met with DfE to discuss the Consumer Council’s activity, and how they were aligned to 10X, specifically around consumer support and protection, outreach and communications, and consumer monitoring and research.

Mr McAteer advised Citizen’s Advice had published a paper on how effective consumer protection regulation can drive innovation.

Action: Mr McAteer to share Citizen’s Advice paper on how effective consumer protection regulation can drive innovation.

323/2.1 Introducing our Employee Engagement Champions

The Chair welcomed, Rachel Molloy, Colin Neely and Andrew Shiels to the meeting.

The Director of Corporate Services noted that the Employee Engagement Champions Group was a suggestion from the 2022 Staff Away Day and would be chaired by himself, with Rachel Molloy, Colin Neely, Andrew Shiels, Rachel Goan and Lucy Cochrane volunteering to represent their respective Directorates. The purpose of the group was to act as the employee voice, represent the views of staff and encourage engagement from them.

Key areas of focus are to:

- encourage autonomy;
- engender trust and confidence;
- promote positive relationships;
- ensure employees feel valued and supported;
- ensure the Consumer Council invests in its people; and
- review and evaluation of activities and outcomes.

Members welcomed the Champions and their important role in making a positive difference towards employee engagement and the working environment. They raised the following points:

- To involve Members in activities with staff where appropriate.
- The need to ringfence a small budget to take forward suggested initiatives.
- Consider if the Consumer Council could go beyond the Northern Ireland Civil Service policy on discretionary days off, for example, follow the example of the charity Z2K.
- Flexible working is an important tool to provide staff with some control and flexibility over their working life.
- Importance of mental health champions, anchor days and staff feedback.

Action: Mr McAteer to share Z2K policies, for consideration and discussion with Sponsor Branch.

Rachel Molloy, Colin Neely and Andrew Shiels left the meeting.

3. ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

Finance and Governance

323/3.1 Management Accounts: October 2022

The Head of Finance and Governance of Corporate Services advised at end of October 2022, expenditure was £702k ahead of the same point last year, due to the budget and projects being profiled throughout the year, and it was expected the 1% tolerance target would be achieved. The Management Accounts also included details of the October Monitoring Round bid, and the outcome would be included in the November Management Accounts, with plans in place to spend the allocation.

Members approved the Management Accounts: October 2022

323/3.2 Draft 2022-2023 Budget Allocations

The Chief Executive advised 2023-2024 opening allocations were as follows:

- A standstill position to 2022-2023 with DfE Core, Department for Infrastructure (DfI) for Water and BEIS for Postal Services, where the Consumer Council would need to absorb pay uplifts, salary increments and increased operating costs.
- The NI Protocol budget was increased by 3% on the advice of the DfE Partner Team and DfE GB and EU Trade Team, who confirmed it would be included in the overall Northern Ireland bid for Business, Energy, Research and Development (BERD) funding to BEIS.
- The HM Treasury (HMT) and DfE Energy would include a modest uplift to the 2022-2023 opening allocation to cover pay uplifts and salary increments.
- The available budget for the Consumer Empowerment Directorate from DfE Core did not cover all proposed projects and would require a bid in the June 2023 Monitoring Round, although discussions were underway if these were deemed inescapable under the Consumer Council's minimum statutory duties.

The Head of Finance and Governance presented the Draft 2023-2024 Budget Allocations totalling just over £4.2m. He summarised the budget bids and corresponding apportionments, highlighting:

- There may be small adjustments before final submission to funders.
- Standstill position for some budgets resulted in a net reduction from 2022-2023.
- Salary progression and an in-year pay uplift of 2.5% based on 2022-2023 had been factored into the forecast.
- DfE Energy had indicated up to £90k would be available in 2023-2024 to continue with the Energy Efficiency Campaign, and this would be included as a stand-alone expenditure line.
- Following Board feedback at November 2022 Board Meeting, £50k for learning and development and this would be included as a stand-alone expenditure line.

Members queried overhead assumptions given hybrid working, roll-out of regional hubs and the contract with the Department of Finance (DoF) for the building.

The Director of Corporate Services confirmed the Consumer Council's contract with DoF for Seatem House was until May 2024, and that staff were already working out of the regional hubs in addition to their agreed days in the office. He also highlighted that as the organisation was now at its full staffing complement, there was little flexibility in the operating budget.

Members approved the Draft 2023-2024 Budget Allocations as a starting position.

Mr Alan O'Neill joined the meeting at 11.30am

HR

323/3.3 HR Report: October 2022

The Director of Corporate Services presented the HR Report: October 2022 and invited questions from Members.

- Current resourcing of 54 staff.
- Year to date staff absenteeism rate was 2.05%.
- A total of 30 hours of learning and development was completed in October.
- Total organisational working hours for Q1 and Q2 was 36,803 hours.

Members approved the HR Report: October 2022

Mr Richard Williams joined the meeting at 11.40am

BUSINESS PLANNING

323/3.4 2023-2024 Business Case: Financial and Postal Services

The Director of Financial and Postal Services presented the 2023-2024 Business Case for Financial and Postal Services covering new and funded projects, business as usual and representations and partnerships. He highlighted the following to Members:

Financial Services: New and Funded Projects

- Priority Consumer Groups: Stranmillis Schools Education Project
 - Provision of Safer Borrowing training to approximately 1,000 young people in primary and secondary schools in Northern Ireland, with a service level agreement in place for three years.
 - The project would also mainstream into the education programme for student teachers and be included in a continuous development module for existing teachers.
- True Cost Campaign
 - Continuation of the True Cost promotional campaign on safer borrowing, help available for those in financial difficulty, and highlight sources of alternative credit.
- Access to Credit: Credit Union Loan Project
 - Provisional agreement of pilot areas with up to four Credit Unions.
 - Set up of Advisory Group with representative from Credit Unions, the advice sector, the housing sector, DfE and the Department of Communities (DfC).
 - Agreement on terms of loans and pilot delivery of child benefit linked credit union loan project, subject to agreement with Irish League of Credit Unions.
- Postal Services: New and Funded Projects
 - Regulatory Price Protection: Universal Postal Service Research Project
 - Research report examining the affordability issues for consumers in sending second class letters and small parcels.

- The project would investigate the proposed reduction of postal deliveries, giving a clear understanding of the possible impacts on consumers at regional level.
- The research would also inform the Consumer Council's response to Ofcom on the same, as well as stakeholder briefings and presentations.

The Chair enquired if the Consumer Council could come under pressure regarding that the organisation could do in relation to illegal money lending, in light of the BBC Spotlight programme.

- The Director of Financial and Postal Services advised the research programme was being quoted by stakeholders and the media, and the outreach and education programme continues with consumers and stakeholders.
- The Chief Executive highlighted the need to be more visible in reaching vulnerable groups, but it was challenging to identify and access them.

The Chair discussed the possibility of this being a potential environmental risk and suggested looking at what Co-operation Ireland are doing in this area.

Action: Chief Executive to contact Co-operation Ireland to seek information on what they are doing in this area.

Mr McCurdy highlighted all business cases reported on arrangements for internal success between the Consumer Council and the funding Department, but it was also important to get a sense of external success and where could this come from.

Action: Directors to discuss with funding Department re external success measurement.

Mr McAteer asked how the impact of the Stranmillis Schools Education Project was being evaluated and how would we know the shortfalls. The Director of Financial and Postal Services advised this would be achieved through a longitudinal study, developed by the independent Educational Advisor, on the impact on the educational work being undertaken, which will knit into the business case for next year.

The Chief Executive advised that an output from the new Policy and Research Advisory Group (PRAG) meeting on 15 December was to develop a set of outcomes that would provide a framework for measuring impact at research and policy level.

The Director of Financial and Postal Services confirmed business cases would be submitted to HMT and BEIS w/c 19 December 2022.

Members approved the 2023-2024 Business Case for Financial and Postal Services.

Mr Raymond Gormley, Mr Graham Smith and Ms Michelle Kelly joined the meeting at 11.50am

323/3.5 2023-2024 Business Case: Infrastructure and Sustainability

The Chair congratulated the team on recent media engagements and congratulated the evidence session by the Director Infrastructure and Sustainability at the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, and the preparatory work undertaken.

The Head of Water, Head of Energy and Head of Transport presented the 2023-2024 Business Case for the Infrastructure and Sustainable Development Directorate, covering new and funded projects, business as usual and representations and partnerships. They highlighted the following to Members:

Head of Water

- Research into consumers' views of NI Water and make recommendations for improvements, with findings compared to England and Wales.
- Deliver water bill health checks for businesses and District Councils and expand portfolio with education authorities.
- Ensure NI Water and regulated energy suppliers deliver contractual obligations through RP7 price control, the SONI price control and issues relating to implementation of the GD23 and PC21 price controls.
- Represent consumers and make proposals relating to consumer matters to public authorities and service providers regarding consumer vulnerability policy development and standards.

Head of Transport

- Consumer attitudes survey for the Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Taskforce, and development of a consumer EV code of practice, including joint working with Consumer Scotland to the benefit of consumers in both jurisdictions.
- Influence the decarbonisation of transport, through the Energy Strategy, by working in collaboration with stakeholders including DfI, Translink and IMTAC; building on the 2022-2023 research on consumer views on decarbonising transport and the EV Consumer Priorities Paper; and develop a 'Priorities and Protection Consumer Charter' for transport decarbonisation.

Dr Joan Martin raised the issue of removal of disabled parking due to pedestrianisation within Belfast City Centre. The Head of Transport advised consumers views on this appear to be broad with some welcoming pedestrianisation and Belfast City Council keen to implement this, but Translink have some concerns regarding the impact on bus access into the city centre.

Mr McCurdy enquired if there was any interaction with car retailers in regard to consumer feedback on EVs. The Head of Transport advised the contact is through the EV Taskforce, and representatives from EVNI which represent EV vehicle owners.

Head of Energy

- Research to understand consumers' knowledge of, and engagement with, the circular economy, and build the evidence base to feed into public policy.
- Better understand consumers' experiences of the energy transition with an annual assessment of consumer experiences of the energy transition and renewable technologies, building on the first annual survey undertaken in 2022-2023, with a focus on consumers in vulnerable circumstances and those living in rural areas. The project will include joint working with Consumer Scotland to provide cross-jurisdictional comparative information.
- Understanding consumers' satisfaction with energy suppliers on satisfaction, trust and confidence with energy suppliers, and make recommendations for improvements to policies and procedures.
- Joint project with the Transport Team on the consumer attitudes survey for the EV Infrastructure Taskforce, and a consumer EV code of practice.
- Price controls for NI Networks, RP7, Gas GD23 and PC21, and ongoing tariff reviews with regulated suppliers and unregulated suppliers. With 42 price increases in the last 12 months, the demands on maintaining business as usual activity had been significant, including all online information and pricing tables.

Mrs June Butler requested if projects could be numbered for ease of reference.

Action: The Chief Executive advised projects would be numbered in the 2023-2024 Forward Work Programme.

Mr McAteer asked:

- If research showed consumers have reduced their energy consumption, as a recent analysis showed households in Germany, France and Italy had cut their consumption by 23%?

The Chief Executive advised there was no specific Northern Ireland research, but energy suppliers had advised consumption has reduced. The Head of Energy advised the Consumer Council had successfully negotiated for the minimum usage charge for gas to be suspended.

- Was there evidence that people were cutting energy usage to pay for food?

The Chief Executive advised the Consumer Council's Pulse Surveys confirmed this, with respondents reporting they were cutting back on energy usage. The Pulse Surveys also show increased use of food banks and mental health impacts.

- Was the Utility Regulator (UR) doing enough to support consumers?

The Chief Executive advised the UR was playing a proactive and supportive role within their statutory vires, including joint working on the Consumers' Energy

Charter, the rollout of the EBSS and the broader call for evidence for the future consumer protection regime.

Mr McCurdy suggested the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) may have research that could be helpful.

Action: The Chief Executive to contact NICVA regarding their cost of living research.

Members approved the 2023-2024 Business Case for Infrastructure and Sustainability.

323/3.6 2023-2024 Business Case: Strategy and Emerging Markets

The Director of Strategy and Emerging Markets presented the 2023-2024 Business Case for the Directorate covering new and funded projects, business as usual and representations and partnerships. She highlighted the following to Members:

- Impact of EU Exit and NI Protocol: Food availability and shorter shelf lives. Research exploring supply chain challenges affecting use-by dates, perishableness and availability of product lines in supermarkets.
- Northern Ireland Household Expenditure Tracker. Expansion of income and expenditure position into Quartiles 2 and 3 Northern Ireland households, including basic spending and discretionary income.
- Scoping study on feasibility of Northern Ireland Mortgage Rate consumer report with DfE Analytical Services Division to understand composition of the Northern Ireland mortgage market and Northern Ireland specific risks of rising mortgage rates and fixed rate deals coming to an end.
- How rising costs are affecting consumer sentiment across income brackets covering quantitative and qualitative research determine pressure on household food budgets compared to other essential costs (energy, housing and transport).
- Digitalisation: Broadband as an essential service. Using the Consumer Pulse Survey to the importance of broadband including contracts, affordability, customer support, focusing on vulnerable consumers.
- Business as Usual activities included extensive stakeholder engagement and consumer representation on EU Exit and postal issues with the Postal Services Team; ongoing analysis and reporting of the Northern Household Expenditure Tracker; working with the Office of National Statistics (ONS) on the Regional CPI to ensure more robust Northern Ireland results in partnership with DfE Analytical Services and the Northern Ireland Statistical and Research Agency (NISRA).

Mr McAteer asked:

- If the number of mortgage prisoners been identified in Northern Ireland.

The Director of Financial and Postal Services advised the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) had completed work with feedback from UK Finance some time

ago, identifying potentially 50%+ of mortgage prisoners in Northern Ireland. At that time this may not have impacted on consumers as this only became an issue when the mortgage deal ended, and more current data was needed.

- Can there be desk research completed with regarding the impact on Northern Ireland of the 2023 Sunset Clause on retained EU law in UK legislation.

The Chief Executive advised the Consumer Council had limited technical expertise in this area but was working closely with DfE who were building their team to identify and monitor risks relevant to Northern Ireland.

It was agreed Members would email the Director of Strategy and Emerging Markets any further questions.

Members approved the 2023-2024 Business Case for Strategy and Emerging Markets.

323/3.7 2023-2024 Business Case: Consumer Empowerment

The Director of Consumer Empowerment presented the 2023-2024 Business Case for the Directorate covering new and funded projects, business as usual and representations and partnerships. She highlighted the following to Members:

- The Directorate was preparing for a very busy year as come mid-December, the Consumer Council would have surpassed 10,000 contacts received during our busiest 'COVID' year.
- The Directorate was leading on three business critical technology projects:
 - Implement a new CRM system, including data migration and staff training.
 - Develop and launch a new website, moving more consumer information online (to reduce call/enquiry volumes) and meet new accessibility legislation by achieving AA++ standard as a minimum.
 - Design and launch a new internal Intranet.
- Secured an MSc student from Queen's University Belfast to undertake research into the feasibility of a new Northern Ireland Consumer Detriment Index, which will greatly improve knowledge of the consumer position in the region.
- Introduce two new contracts, for market research and advertising and media services, to reduce ad hoc in-house procurements under £30,000, and achieve greater cost savings and efficiencies regarding staff time.
- Extensive business as usual schedule of activity in all three team, including supporting other Directorates with their campaigns.

Mr McCurdy enquired about the service from NI Direct. The Director of Consumer Empowerment advised the new supplier, Circle, were in place and meeting agreed

KPIs, with quality of service checked monthly basis, and consideration now being given to how NI Direct can help with filter and triage calls to the Consumer Council.

Mrs Lynne Crowther advised it was useful for staff pictures were included in all the business cases as it helped Members identify individuals.

Members approved the 2023-2024 Business Case for the Consumer Empowerment Directorate.

Ms Amanda Logan left the meeting at 1.15pm

CONSULTATION RESPONSE

323/3.8 Response Framework to One Stop Shop Implementation Plan Consultation on Policy Options

The Chief Executive presented the Consumer Council's draft response framework for the One Stop Shop (OSS) Implementation Plan Consultation on Policy Options report. She highlighted the following to Members:

- The principles included, if acceptable to the Board, would form the basis of the Consumer Council's response to the consultation.
- The implementation of the OSS, as a pilot or in full, must ensure consumers are supported and due consideration is given to the behavioural change required.
- The Consumer Council will not be proposed as lead vehicle for long term delivery, however, will not rule out the organisation as a delivery partner in the interim.
- The Consumer Council will not be making any specific proposals in relation to the OSS model and its governance structure.
- The Consumer Council will reference its response to the Energy Strategy consultation and future Consumer Protection Regime call for evidence. In parallel, the Energy Team will explore with DfE Energy Branch what the theory of change for decarbonisation would look like.
- The next steps:
 - Draft consultation response will be circulated to Members for feedback and comment w/c 9 January with the final response developed w/c 16 January with submission deadline on 20 January.
 - Independent advice on legal vires on whether the Consumer Council can play a role in the OSS pilot, and supporting risk assessments, will be undertaken once DfE confirm their model for the OSS pilot, most likely to be in Q1/Q2 2023-2024.

Action: The Director of Infrastructure and Sustainability to circulate a draft consultation response to Members for consideration w/c 9 January.

Mr McCurdy asked about the of position of the Consumer Council regarding leading the OSS or being a contributor.

The Chief Executive advised the Consumer Council's position is not to lead but act only as a contributor, and one of multiple delivery partners, during the interim phase, as the organisation was out of scope in terms of delivering the wraparound service to consumers. She highlighted that although there may be in a role during the interim phase, this would also be dependent on the model chosen by DfE, and a number of other organisations delivering some of the services, for example, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Bryson Energy.

The Chair advised:

- If the DfE proposed that CCNI were to lead on the interim OSS, it would be unable to deliver some of the functions proposed.
- An initial 'Year Zero' might be an option where the period was utilised to establish existing providers and how they would work together to deliver existing and additional services.

Mr Alan O'Neill left the meeting at 1.30pm

Members approved the response framework for the OSS consultation.

4. ITEMS FOR NOTING

Research

323/4.1 Access to Banking Research Report

The key findings of this research were presented to Board on 11 November 2022. The Financial Services Team will seek to engage with the FCA and Post Office representatives on the issues identified in this research.

Members noted the report.

Operational

323/4.2 CEO Report: September 2022

Members noted the report.

323/4.3 City of Derry Airport and Stena Line Accessibility Audits

The Transport Policy Officer summarised the key points from the accessibility audits and invited questions from Members.

- On 15 November 2022 the City of Derry Airport's Accessibility Forum toured of the airport building. The Forum is made up of a range of organisations which represent consumers with a disability or reduced mobility.

- The Forum was very positive about the airport's facilities and, in particular the implementation of 17 recommendations made from the previous visit in November 2021. Significant work had gone into upgrading signage, car park call points, flight display boards and hand sanitisers, and the group also noted the progress on the implementation of a "changing places" type facility.
- Belfast International airport have adopted 43 recommendations made from last year's visit; this has led them to being awarded an independent audit rate of 'Very Good' by the Civil Aviation Authority.
- On 10 November 2022 there was a visit with Stena Line for a group from a range of organisations representing consumers with a disability or reduced mobility, to assess the effectiveness of the assistance services and infrastructure for consumers with a disability or reduced mobility. The report provided recommendations to enhance the special assistance available at the ports and on board the ferry.

Overall, participants commented it was a positive experience with the assistance provided being beneficial for passengers. Participants made a number of comments in the key areas of availability of information for passengers with a visual or hearing impairment, lack of disabled toilet facilities, lack of facilities for assistance dogs, and making passengers aware of the assistance that is available.

Members congratulated the Transport Policy Officer and noted the report.

323/4.4 British Standards Institute 2022 Assessment

The Head of Water presented the report to Members and advised the Consumer Council has successfully reaccredited for British Standard 18477 for the third time.

- Retaining BS 18477 is a commitment in the Consumer Council's 'Supporting Consumers in Vulnerable Circumstances policy'.
- BS18477 is being superseded by an ISO with the timetable for transferring to the new international standard is being developed.

Members noted the update.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair thanked all the staff for their hard work throughout the year and wished everyone a Happy Christmas.

The main meeting closed at 1.40pm and the Chair advised the meeting would continue in Closed Session.

323/5.1 Closed Session

The Chair advised the meeting would continue in CLOSED SESSION with Members.

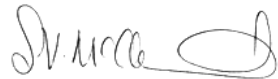
323/5.2 **Review of the Meeting**

The Board Members were content with the quality of papers and the presentations made.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next Board meeting will be held of Friday 03 February 2023 at 10am in Seatem House, with teleconferencing facilities also available.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. M. ...', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Date

3 March 2023