

**THREE HUNDRED AND ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE GENERAL CONSUMER COUNCIL FOR NORTHERN
IRELAND HELD
ON FRIDAY 25 JUNE 2021 AT 10.00AM VIA ZOOM CONFERENCE CALL**

311/1.1

ATTENDANCE

Ms Sheila McClelland	Chair
Mr Mick McAteer	Deputy Chair
Mrs June Butler	
Ms Lynne Crowther	
Dr Sinead Furey	
Mr William Leathem	
Ms Amanda Logan	
Dr Joan Martin	
Mr Gerry McCurdy	
Mr Alan O'Neill	

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms Noyona Chundur	Chief Executive Officer (Except agenda item 311/4.1)
Mr Scott Kennerley	Director of Financial, Communications and Digital Services (Except agenda item 311/4.1)
Mr William Warke	Director of Corporate Services (Except agenda item 311/4.1)
Mr Peter McClenaghan	Director of Sustainability & Infrastructure (Except agenda item 311/4.1)
Mr Raymond Gormley	Interim Head of Energy (Except agenda item 311/4.1)
Mr Michael Legg	Interim Head of Postal Services (Except agenda item 311/4.1)
Mr Graham Smith	Head of Water (Except agenda item 311/4.1)
Mrs Hannah Brown	Senior Policy Officer, Transport (Except agenda item 311/4.1)
Ms Tricia Mullan	Senior Policy Officer, EU Exit (Except agenda item 311/4.1)
Mr Michael Stevenson	Senior Policy Officer, EU Exit (Except agenda item 311/4.1)
Mrs Fiona Lavery	Personal Assistant (Except agenda item 311/4.1)

By Invitation

Mr Colin Jack	Department for the Economy
Mr Donal McDade	Social Market Research

APOLOGIES

There were no apologies received.

311/1.2

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 would reflect this.

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

Board Member Lynne Crowther had declared a conflict of interest via email on the SONI TSO Governance Consultation Proposals and joined the meeting at 10.10am after this issue was discussed.

311/1.3 **PRESENTATION COLIN JACK, DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT REGULATION, DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY**

The Chair welcomed Colin Jack, Director of Business and Employment Regulation for the Department for the Economy (DfE) to the Board Meeting.

Mr Jack stated that it was a good opportunity to welcome the new Board Members, and he also wished the Chief Executive well in her new role.

He informed Board Members that the Department had seen a draft of the Corporate Plan and hoped the Consumer Council would continue to keep up the good work.

Other issues discussed included increased workloads due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the NI Assembly and allocation of yearly budgets, cyber security and sustainable energy.

311/1.4 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 May 2021, having been circulated, were agreed as a true and correct record.

The Minutes were agreed and signed.

311/1.5 **ACTIONS FROM THE LAST MEETING**

The Actions from the last meeting were approved by Board Members.

311/1.6 **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

311/1.7 **CHAIR'S VERBAL UPDATE**

311/1.7.1 **Draft Response to SONI TSO Governance Consultation**

This item was discussed at the beginning of the meeting in the absence of Board Member Lynne Crowther who had declared a conflict of interest.

The Chair referred to the Draft Response to the SONI TSO Governance Consultation that had been discussed at the Policy Meeting on 24 June and Board Members approved the response subject to inclusion of a reference to monopoly and compromised governance.

Board Member Lynne Crowther joined the meeting at 10.10am.

311/1.7.2 The Chair welcomed Tricia Mullan and Michael Stevenson, both Senior Policy Officers, EU Exit, who were attending the Board Meeting as part of the diversity, equality and inclusion targets set for the accreditation of the Diversity Charter Mark.

311/1.8 PRESENTATION – IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ENERGY CONSUMERS

Mr McDade joined the meeting at 11.35am.

The Chair welcomed Mr Donal McDade of Social Market Research (SMR) to the meeting to discuss the findings of the research on the Impact on COVID-19 on Energy Consumers.

Board Members noted the research on the Impact of COVID-19 on Energy Consumers, and it was agreed that a copy of the presentation would be circulated to Board Members.

It was agreed that an Action Plan from the research would be brought back to Board.

It was agreed that any supporting data to the research on the socio-economic breakdown would be forwarded to Board Members.

The Chair left the meeting at 11.55am and the Deputy Chair presided over the rest of the meeting.

Having answered Board Members questions, Mr McDade left the meeting at 12.05pm.

311/2 ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

311/2.1 Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland: Consultation Response

The Director of Sustainability and Infrastructure presented the Consultation Response to the Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland for approval.

He informed Board Members that the response outlined the Consumer Council's vision for a sustainable energy future that works for everyone. He stated that it addressed the principles laid out by the consultation document from the DfE by focusing on four objectives, a just and fair transition, consumer protection, consumer behaviour, and prioritisation.

He stated that the response emphasised that the Energy Strategy must ensure affordability, security of supply and consumer protection, and that it highlighted the positive opportunities that the energy transition provided to engage and empower consumers. He stated that it would help consumers manage their energy demand, while noting the importance of effective modern regulation, and a collective openness to innovation.

Having discussed it in detail, Board Members concurred that it was very comprehensive report and approved the Energy Strategy Consultation Response in principle subject to including an example of where legislation has to be implemented following the use of incentives.

It was agreed that if Board Members had any further comments, they could respond to the Chief Executive by close of business, Monday 28 June.

It was agreed that Board Members would be kept informed of the timeframes regarding the Energy Strategy.

It was also agreed that Energy Strategy would be included in the agenda for the Board Away Day on 20 August with the Department in attendance.

Mr Colin Jack left the meeting at 11.15am.

311/2.2 2021-2024 Corporate Plan

The Chair presented the final draft of the Corporate Plan to Board Members, and thanked both Board Member, Mick McAteer and the Chief Executive for their contribution to the document.

Board Members approved the 2021-2024 Corporate Plan subject to details of the 10X strategy being added to the document.

It was agreed that if there were any delays with approval from the Minister, the report would be uploaded to the Consumer Council website as a draft.

311/2.3 2021-2022 Corporate Scorecard

The Chief Executive presented the new Corporate Scorecard developed to report progress against plan on a quarterly basis against the 2021-2022 Forward Work Programme. She explained that the scorecard was split into customer, people, process, and performance with a total of 24 key indicators having been identified across the four categories, each with annual targets based on the business plans feeding into the Forward Work Programme.

Following discussion, Board Members approved the 2021-2022 Corporate Scorecard with the process to be monitored and reviewed in a year.

311/2.4 Corporate Risk Register Template

The Chief Executive presented a new Corporate Risk Register Template for the Consumer Council which she stated had been approved by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at their meeting earlier in the month.

She informed Board Members that there were 10 new corporate risks captured in a Corporate Risk Log, with individual risk summaries, and a Directorate Risk Tracker of active operational risks, which, she pointed out, aligned with HM Treasury's Orange Book.

After discussion, Board Members approved the new Corporate Risk Register Template with it to be reviewed yearly and adapted if necessary.

311/2.5 Performance Report and Corporate Governance Report for 2020-2021 Annual Report and Accounts

The Chief Executive presented the Performance Report and Corporate Governance Report for 2020-2021 Annual Report and Accounts. She reminded Board Members that with the 2020-2021 Annual Report and Accounts delayed this year, this was the main non-financial sections of the document dealing with performance and governance. She stated that they had been approved by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on 15 June and were now brought to Board for approval.

Board Members approved the Performance Report and Corporate Governance Report and agreed that the final document, including Financial Statements, would be reviewed and signed off at the Board Away Day on 20 August 2021.

311/2.6 Management Accounts: Month Ending 31 May 2021

The Director of Corporate Services presented the Managements Accounts for month ending 31 May 2021 for Board Members' approval, and highlighted the key issues arising.

Board Members approved the Management Accounts for Month Ending 31 May 2021.

311/2.7 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Papers: June 2021

The Chair invited the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, June Butler, to present the committee papers from the meeting held on 15 June 2021 to Board for approval.

Board Members approved the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee papers from the meeting on 15 June 2021.

311/3 ITEMS FOR NOTING/DISCUSSION

311/3.1 Chief Executive's Report: May 2021

The Chief Executive presented the Chief Executive's Report to Board Members and highlighted the key issues arising.

Board Members noted the Chief Executive's Report.

311/3.2 NI Affairs Committee Briefing Paper: EU Exit, Parcel Deliveries and Consumer Insight Research

The Chair invited the Interim Head of Energy to present the NI Affairs Committee Briefing Paper on EU Exit, Parcel Deliveries and Consumer Insight Research.

Board Members noted the NI Affairs Committee Briefing Paper on EU Exit, Parcel Deliveries and Consumer Insight Research.

311/3.3 COVID-19 Research: Barriers to Transport Recovery

The Chair invited the Senior Policy Officer, Transport to present the key findings and recommendations arising from the COVID-19 Research on Barriers to Transport Recovery.

Board Members noted the COVID-19 Research on Barriers to Transport Recovery, and it was agreed that the KPIs would be shared with Board Members.

311/4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

All officers left the meeting at this point.

311/4.1 Review of the Meeting

Board Members reviewed the meeting and the following points were raised.

Board Members thought the Board meeting was very good and that some very significant policy and governance issues had been covered.

Board Members really appreciated the work the team had put in to producing papers but had two recommendations:

- i. To receive a form of executive summary for larger papers (slightly bigger than the Cover Papers currently circulated) and,
- ii. To ensure any major research reports were circulated sooner to give Board Members time to read and absorb the information, where possible.

Confirmation on the date of the Board Away was required.

311/5 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Friday 3 September 2021 at 10am via either Zoom Conference or physical venue, subject to COVID-19 restrictions.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 1.45pm.

Signed _____

Date _____