

**THREE HUNDRED AND THIRD MEETING OF THE GENERAL CONSUMER COUNCIL  
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND HELD WITH ZOOM TELECONFERENCE  
ON FRIDAY 26 JUNE 2020 AT 10.00AM.**

**303/1**

**ATTENDANCE**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr John French	Chief Executive (Except agenda item 303/11.1)
Mrs Sinead Dynan	Director of Regulated Industries (Except agenda item 303/11.1)
Mr Scott Kennerley	Director of Illegal Money Lending and Financial Services (Except agenda item 303/11.1)
Mrs Carmel McConville	Director of Brexit, Consumer Insight, Empowerment and Protection (Except agenda item 303/11.1)
Miss Paula McCann	Head of Finance (Agenda items 303/9.1-9.3)
Ms Kellin McCloskey	Head of Postal Services (Agenda items 303/10.1-10.2))
Mrs Fiona Lavery	Personal Assistant (Except agenda items 303/11.1)

**APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

**BY INVITATION**

Mrs Diane Dodds	Minister for the Department for the Economy
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Mr Colin Jack

Director of Business and Employment  
Regulation, Department for the Economy

**303/2**

**DIANE DODDS, MINISTER FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY**

The Chair welcomed Mrs Diane Dodds, Minister for the Department for the Economy to the meeting at 12.30pm, and thanked her for taking the time to join the meeting.

Introductions were made and the Minister thanked the new Board Members, and those Board Members who are now in their second term for looking after consumers in Northern Ireland.

She continued to discuss the work of The Consumer Council and in particular noted the organisation's response to the Covid19 emergency.

She stated that she, along with the Department, would continue to work with The Consumer Council and in particular said she would welcome The Consumer Council's papers on Brexit concerns.

It was agreed that the Brexit papers would be forwarded to the Director of Business and Employment Regulation.

Minister Dodds left the meeting at 12.50pm.

**303/3**

**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.

No Board Members declared a conflict of interest on any agenda item.

**303/4**      **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 May 2020, which had been circulated, were agreed as a true and correct record.

The Minutes were agreed and signed.

**303/5**      **MATTERS ARISING**

303/5.1      Recruitment

The Chief Executive informed Board Members that the current Head of Energy would be seconded to the Department for the Economy to assist with their Energy Strategy. He stated that The Consumer Council's HR Advisor was working with NIPSA around the processes for remote recruitment.

**303/6**      **NOTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM COVID19 CATCH-UP MEETING HELD ON 7 MAY 2020**

The Notes and Action Report of the previous Covid19 Catch-up Meeting held on 5 June 2020 which had been circulated, were agreed as a true and correct record.

**303/7**      **CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS**

303/7.1      Review of Brexit Negotiations

There were no Brexit issues discussed.

303/7.2      Any Other Chair's Business

303/7.2.1      Board Away Day

The Chair stated that Board Members should attend a Board Away Day in August to discuss Corporate Strategy.

After discussion, Board Members agreed to a Board Away Day in August 2020.

### **303/8**      **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS**

#### **303/8.1**      **The Chief Executive's Report**

The Chief Executive presented the Chief Executive's Report, and the Directors highlighted the key issues arising from their sections.

Following discussion, Board Members noted the Chief Executive's Report.

### **303/9**      **FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE**

#### **303/9.1**      **Final Annual Report and Accounts for 2019-2020**

The Head of Finance presented the final Annual Report and Accounts for 2019-2020 to Board Members, and stated that the report could be signed by electronic signatures and confirmations by the Chair and Chief Executive once the final assurances are received from NIAO regarding the IT audit.

Board Members approved the final Annual Report and Accounts for 2019-2020 subject to the final assurances from NIAO regarding IT audit.

#### **303/9.2**      **Papers to be approved following the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Meeting held on 16 June 2020**

Board Member Noyona Chundur and the Head of Finance presented the papers to be approved following the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Meeting (ARAC) on 28 June 2020 for approval by Board Members.

After discussion, Board Members noted and approved the papers following the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Meeting held on 16 June 2020.

### 303/9.3 Management Accounts for month ending 31 May 2020

The Head of Finance presented the Management Accounts for the month ending 31 May 2020 to Board Members and highlighted the key issues within the report.

Board Members approved the Management Accounts for month ending 31 May 2020.

## **303/10 POLICY/STRATEGY**

### 303/10.1 BEIS End of Year Report 2019-2020

The Head of Postal Services presented the BEIS End of Year Report for 2019-2020 for Board Members approval.

After discussion, Board Members approved the BEIS End of Year Report for 2019-2020.

### 303/10.2 EU Exit - Online shopping and parcel delivery for consumers

The Head of Postal Services presented the EU Exit, Online shopping and parcel delivery for consumer paper to Board Members and proposed the following recommendations for approval.

- The UK Government and EU must exempt items bought online by Northern Ireland consumers from GB retailers from any new rules, processes and procedures to avoid any consumer detriment.
- The Northern Ireland Executive to make the case to the UK Government that postal items with a final destination in Northern Ireland originating from GB online retailers be exempt from new rules, import checks and declarations.
- Ofcom and Postal Operators to review the postal operator handling fee to ensure the charge is fair, to introduce a cap on the amount that can be charged and to reduce the cost of the fee.

- The Consumer Council will raise its concerns with stakeholders to get clarification on what impact the Northern Ireland Protocol will have on postal consumers buying goods from GB retailers or having parcels sent from individuals located in GB. The Consumer Council will also raise consumer awareness of the issues.
- UK Government and Ofcom should consider what impact the arrangements outlined in the Ireland and Northern Ireland Protocol could have on the Universal Postal Service.

After discussion, Board Members approved all of the recommendations highlighted in the EU Exit, Online shopping and parcel delivery for consumer paper.

### 303/10.3 Proposed Annex to the Stakeholder Engagement Table

The Director of Brexit, Consumer Insight, Empowerment and Protection presented the Proposed Annex to the Stakeholder Engagement Table.

This item will be discussed during the Board Away Day in August 2020.

### 303/10.4 Brexit and the Views of NI Consumers

The Director of Brexit, Consumer Insight, Empowerment and Protection presented the Brexit and the Views of NI Consumer papers for Board Members to note.

Board Members concurred that it was an interesting paper and noted the report.

### 303/10.5 Satisfaction Report for May 2020

Board Members noted the Satisfaction Report for May 2020.

## **303/11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### 303/11.1 Review of the Meeting

The Officers left the meeting at this point.

Board Members discussed the agenda, papers and delivery, and requested more focussed detail on the cover pages of the report. They proposed that verbal briefings are additional to the written papers and that operational issues are reported via the papers.

Board Members commented on the quantity of writer material to be considered.

**303/12**      **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Friday 11 September 2020 at 10am via Zoom Conference or venue to be confirmed.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 1.00pm.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_