

Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission Board

Summary Minutes of the Commission Board Meeting 21 April 2009

Members:

Janet Paraskeva – Chair
Deborah Absalom
Rosemary Carter
Stephen Geraghty
Bill Griffiths
Alan Hardy
Heather Jackson
Susan Park
Maeve Sherlock
Keith Woodhouse

Also attending

Justin Chamberlain (Item 5)

Paul Wright - Commission Lawyer
Brenda White - Board Secretariat
Maria Jobson - Board Secretariat

Apologies:

None

1 Minutes and Matters Arising from 24 March meeting

1.1 Minutes

1.1.1 Amendments were taken to paragraphs 2.4 and 4.2 of the minutes of the 24 March meeting.

1.2 There were no matters arising.

2 The Commissioner's Report

The report provided a detailed summary of progress and developments in key areas of the Commission since the Board last received an update on 24 March. Key points for the Board to note were highlighted as:

Welfare Reform - the White Paper

2.1 The Welfare Reform Bill has now been transferred to the House of Lords, with all child maintenance provisions intact.

2.2 The 2nd Reading in the Lords is due to take place on the 29th of April.

Corporate Plan

2.3 The Corporate Plan is ready for publication subject to agreement on Ministerial targets.

- 2.4 The Commission is planning a Stakeholder Briefing Event scheduled for May 7th to align with publication of the Corporate and Business plans.

Establishing the Commission – Recruitment and Organisation Update

Recruitment

- 2.5 The Commission has appointed Hays as recruitment partner for the remaining posts in the Commission Executive, following a commercial selection exercise.
- 2.6 By the end of June we will have recruited and welcomed most of the leadership team and the majority will be based in Leeds.

Financial Management

- 2.7 The Commissioner provided a schedule of the financial position against budget and forecast.

Commission Businesses

Child Maintenance Options

Rapid Survey

- 2.8 An in-house survey was conducted during March. Child Maintenance Options attempted to re-contact a sample of clients with whom agents had originally spoken. Agents asked them to participate in a survey about their child maintenance arrangements.
- 2.9 An estimated 30,000 children benefit from private arrangements established after contact with Child Maintenance Options services, based on this internal survey data.

CSA

- 2.10 The 3-year CSA Operational Improvement Plan concluded on 31/03/09 and has delivered significant performance improvements. Its objectives were:

- Year 1: Improving client service, building capacity and capability within the organisation
- Year 2: Resolving remaining IT difficulties and increasing compliance and enforcement
- Year 3: Consolidating improvements and collecting money for more children

Business Performance against Secretary of State Targets

- 2.11 Performance in March on all of the Secretary of State targets improved. Results will be published in the Quarterly Statistical Summary on 29 April.

Future Scheme IT approach update

- 2.12 The contract with Tata Consulting Services (TCS) was signed on 31 March.
- 2.13 The Commission's contract with Tata Consulting Services to supply the computer system for the future maintenance scheme was announced on 7 April.

Media Policy

- 2.14 In accordance with common Whitehall practice the Commission does not comment on, or provide details of, specific cases to the media.
- 2.15 Generally speaking however, our press office will comment whenever possible on the issues raised by individual cases in so far as they relate to child maintenance policies and practices and will adopt a revised form of words explaining that we do not comment on individual stories to protect the privacy of the other people involved in the case. This often helps to ensure that coverage is fair and balanced.

3 Update from Audit Committee on risk and governance

- 3.1 The constitution and role of Audit Committees in Government have developed significantly in recent years. HM Treasury (which mandates the role of Government Audit Committees) now requires Committees to give very explicit assurances. In particular:-

“The Audit Committee supports the Board and Accounting Officer by reviewing the comprehensiveness of assurances in meeting the Board and Accounting Officer’s assurance needs, and reviewing the reliability and integrity of these assurances¹.”

- 3.2 The Commission Audit Committee is reviewing the various assurances.

4 Corporate Governance

- 4.1 The Board agreed the main governance documents at the September and October meetings last year. As the Board has now been operating under these arrangements for 6 months, this was an appropriate time to review the arrangements in the light of operational experience.

5 Expenses Policy

¹ HM Treasury Good Practice Guide: the internal audit role in information assurance

5.1 This item was brought for Board discussion to agree a consistent approach in applying the policy across the Commission. It was agreed that the Commission would continue to follow DWP policy and wider Cabinet Office guidance.

6 Future Scheme Timeline

6.1 Current activity is progressing well.

7 Communications – Stakeholder Event May 2009

7.1 The Commission Board heard of the Communications activity that aims to engage stakeholders and MPs with the Commission's development and approach to achieving its overarching objective of 'maximising effective arrangements'. The first phase of this is currently planned for May 7th to launch the Commission's first Corporate Plan.

7.2 The objective of the briefing event is to promote the Commission's vision and strategy, reflect on the achievements of the CSA's Operational Improvement Plan and build understanding of, and support for, the change set out in the Commission's Corporate Plan.

8 Any Other Business

8.1 The next meeting of the Board will be on 19 May.