

Executive Team – for assurance

Meeting agenda title: **Update on the work of the Communications and Engagement Board**

Meeting date: 20 October 2022

Time required: 10 minutes

Presenter: Angela Balakrishnan

Approved by: Paul Arnold (pending)

1. Objective

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the work of the Communications and Engagement Board and gives the Executive Team an opportunity to provide guidance on future work.
- 1.2. The Board continues to co-ordinate strategy, tactics and content that enables our communications to deliver on its purpose. This is to raise awareness and understanding of the value and impact of the ICO and its work. This in turn also helps us deliver our business objectives (protecting the public; empowering innovation and growth and supporting transparency and accountability).

2. Key achievements over the last 6 months

The key achievements of the Board over the last 6 months have been:

Input into the development of the Relationship Management Service operating model

The Board have provided useful feedback to develop the stakeholder operating model. This was additionally spurred by learnings from the Commissioner's Listening Tour, a project run by RMS and Comms, with assurance from the Board. This included ensuring that there is clear collective understanding of the feedback received and how we plan to address it, including breaking this down into smaller sections for the different roles of the organisation; being clear on what we mean by "unmet need" or other similar terminology; any organisational changes that might emerge to address the themes. The Board suggested a "you said, we did" approach to stakeholder engagement. The stakeholder activity helped inform our ICO25 work.

Communities of unmet need stakeholder engagement

The Board have provided some initial oversight to our outreach to new vulnerable stakeholder groups. Since the listening tour, the Parliamentary team have contacted 40 civil society organisations to draw attention to the ICO and our strategic plan. They have held a roundtable event to encourage conversation amongst individual unmet needs groups about their experiences with regulators, including the ICO. These meetings will help to shape the model of engagement going forward.

A paper will be submitted to ET/SLT outlining the key issues found from the research and to discuss how we prioritise our engagement to deliver results for those in need.

The Board has ensured that the work is being joined up with our EDI objectives, the research work that has been initiated and some of the regulatory investigations work underway.

Oversight and application of ICO research and insight.

The Board surfaced the difference in ratings for services provided by the telephone and via letter or email as part of the Institute for Customer Services research. It recognised that although it is the same members of staff dealing with customers either by phone or by email, the messages and language may differ across the two mediums and there is a complex range of factors to take into consideration.

There is a need to use the right language in the letters for the right audience. They agreed that the corporate narrative and tone of voice is fundamental to improvement within this area. This is feeding into the Keeping It Clear project focussed on our language and tone.

The Board has agreed an approach for continuing the website research presented this year – either every year or twice a year for consistency to help identify trends with web traffic and how we use this to inform the development of our website. We also need to expand the user profiles for FOI users of our website.

Keeping it Clear campaign

The Board gave early input into the next phase of our training to improve our use of plain English and tone of voice. This included looking at tailoring sessions around different types of writing both internal and external. These insights formed some of the foundations of the Keeping It Clear project work that is currently underway. This includes editorial checklists to make it easier for staff to follow key pointers around the use of plain English and tone of voice. The new campaign also incorporates the user personas from the website research presented to the Board. It

will also include a refresh of the Keeping it Clear Guide, more ET/SLT engagement and some further external training in addition to our in-house provisions.

Development of the DPPC

The Board provided assurance and helpful steers for this year's DPPC. Going forward the Board has agreed the DPPC can build on its external impact by better leveraging ICO staff across the the organisation. To achieve this a cross-office DPPC panel is being set up so that the planning and delivery of the ICO's flagship data protection event is embedded throughout the ICO.

Cross-office strategic planning and engagement group

The Board has input into a new cross-office group to ensure that we are co-ordinating and delivering key priority work together for maximum impact in support of ICO25.

The Board helped to formalise the terms of reference and representation for the new SCOPE group and ensure it is aligned with the PMO work around delivery of ICO25 portfolio work.

Strategic approach to international events

This is developing area for the Board to consult on events that stretch across the ICO. The Board has provided advice on immediate events – considering attendance at RightsCon2 and proposals for IAPP Europe.

The International Team set out proposals for a 12-month pilot programme to proactively identify key international engagement events aligned with ICO25

The Board discussed the importance of striking a balance between ICO-led panels at these events and collaborating with other organisations, including links to work carried out through MoUs. It also suggested how we can raise our profile through international fora beyond the privacy and data protection circuit.

3. Key challenges over the last 6 months

The key challenges for the Board over the last 6 months have been:

- 3.1. Cross over with other Boards – how work of RDB and Policy Board and EDI sub-groups feeds into considerations of CEB, sometimes there is duplication or not enough read across.
- 3.2. Horizon scanning and planning – whether the role of the Board will shift as our Strategic Communications beds in via planning

and comms business partners within the comms team and new groups such as SCOPE. It may be that SCOPE is the more practical application of strategic thinking and approaches outlined in CEB.

4. Key areas of activity over the next 6-12 months

- 4.1. Evaluation – this will be a growth area for communications as we work with the organisation to show the impact of our comms and engagement and drive up awareness of the ICO. The Insight and Evaluation role within the comms team is now filled will help further develop this. This will include examining the cut through of our corporate narrative/message book and training to support its adoption.
- 4.2. Refreshed strategy – the Board will continue to provide oversight of newly developed comms and engagement strategy and how we bring together the work across the various comms and engagement functions at the ICO.
- 4.3. Language campaign – reviewing the implementation and impact of our Keeping It Clear training.
- 4.4. Research – continued input into the development of this work.
- 4.5. Internal Comms – continue to feed into the development of a refreshed intranet and Knowledge Service strategy.

5. Areas for challenge

- 5.1. ET may wish to consider whether the role of the Communications and Engagement Board is clear and whether the level of assurance that the Board provides to the Executive Team is sufficient.
- 5.2. Timeliness of some of our work has an impact on how we can effectively use comms as a lever to raise the profile and impact of the ICO. ET may wish to consider how we drive the use of communications (and our risk appetite) across the organisation and be clear to our teams about the parameters in which we work.
- 5.3. Are there any areas of focus that ET would expect to see in the Board's future work which are not covered in this report?

Author: Angela Balakrishnan

Consultees: Communications Team.

Publication consideration: Report can be published internally and externally redactions.