



TERMS OF REFERENCE/STANDING ORDERS

COUNCIL

1.0 Status

1.1 The General Consumer Council's Terms of Reference/Standing Orders shall comply in all respects with the schedule of the General Consumer Council (NI) Order 1984.

2.0 Membership

2.1 Membership of the Council and appointment of the Chairperson shall be in accordance with the Order.

3.0 Quorum

3.1 Five members shall constitute a quorum. No business shall be transacted at any meeting of the Council that is not quorate.

3.2 If a meeting of the Council becomes inquorate by reason of its members leaving the meeting, the Chairperson shall declare that the meeting is closed and may adjourn it to another date.

4.0 Frequency and Notice of Meetings

4.1 Meetings of the Council shall be held regularly throughout each year and at such times and places as the Council agree.

4.2 A schedule of annual meetings will be produced at the end of each calendar year.

4.3 Additional meetings may also be called if a minimum of three Council members make a request in writing. The written request shall state the business to be transacted and the Chairperson shall hold a meeting within twenty-eight days of receiving the written request.

4.4 By the decision of the Chairperson of a meeting of the Council or a Committee, a meeting may be adjourned at any time to any other day, hour and place as the Council or Committee may decide.

4.5 Senior staff will normally be invited to attend Council meetings and if invited by the Chairperson may contribute to the discussion. Other staff may be invited to attend and contribute for specific items.

4.6 Individuals who are not employees may be invited to attend and contribute to Council meetings.

4.7 The Council may decide to meet without staff being present. In these circumstances the Chief Executive who is the Accounting Officer will be present at the meeting unless requested to leave.

5.0 Minutes

- 5.1 Minutes shall be prepared for the Chairperson's approval and circulated prior to the next Council meeting.
- 5.2 In addition to the business on the agenda, the Minutes shall include a record of those members and Council staff present, and actions arising from business discussed, with all paragraphs sequentially numbered.
- 5.3 The Chairperson shall sign the Minutes of the previous meeting once approved by the Council. Any agreed revision of the Minutes will be noted and changes made accordingly.
- 5.4 A signed copy of the Minutes shall be retained in a secure Minute Book by the Secretariat.
- 5.5 All Minutes of ordinary Council meetings shall be available publicly. Individuals who are not employees may be invited to attend and contribute to Council meetings.

6.0 Authority

- 6.1 The Council may make arrangements to delegate its authority. The Council may authorise a Committee, the Chairperson or the Chief Executive to act on its behalf. In such cases actions shall be subject to the restrictions and conditions as the Council thinks fit.
- 6.2 The Council will endeavour to reach a consensus on decisions but each Council member shall have the right to:
 - require that a vote be taken on any matter before the Council;
 - vote in any debate;
 - have his/her views recorded in the minutes.
- 6.3 In the event of no majority decision, the Chairperson of the meeting shall have a second or casting vote, whether or not he/she has previously voted on the matter.

7.0 Declaration of Interest

7.1 Council members shall declare any interest (financial or non financial) in any item on the Agenda in accordance with the Declaration of Interests section of the Code of Practice for Members of the General Consumer Council.

8.0 Duties

8.1 The Council has overall responsibility for the activities of the Consumer Council. In exercising its role it delegates executive responsibility for the performance of its functions to the Chief Executive. The role of the Council is to govern and not to manage, which is the responsibility of the Chief Executive and the staff.

8.2 The duties of the Council shall be:

- To establish, review and guide overall strategy to deliver the functions of the Consumer Council within the policy and resources framework agreed with DETI Minister and as set out in the General Consumer Council (NI) Order 1984;
- To ensure the Consumer Council acts within the limits of its statutory authority and any delegated authority agreed with DETI Minister and as set out in the General Consumer Council (NI) Order 1984;
- To oversee the activities of the Consumer Council to ensure that planning processes, project delivery, risk management, financial controls and performance measures align to delivering the overall strategy of the Consumer Council;
- To monitor the performance of the Consumer Council against achieving strategic and operational objectives;
- To review and approve the corporate plan, performance objectives, annual operating plan and quarterly operational performance reports;
- To review and approve the annual budget, quarterly management accounts and annual financial statements;
- To review and approve risk management strategies and quarterly risk register; and
- To approve and oversee the maintenance of sound systems of corporate governance.

9.0 Committees of the Council

9.1 The Council may set up committees to assist its governance. Committees shall be appointed by the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson and report to the Council. Committees shall act on behalf of, and with the authority of, the Council in accordance with specified Terms of Reference.

9.2 The Council may:

- amend the Terms of Reference of any of its Committees;
- constitute additional Committees; and
- establish temporary working groups of the Council to deal with specific matters subject to the decisions of such working groups being effective only if ratified by the Council.

9.3 The Council may co-opt individuals to serve on a Committee in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 1 paragraph 10(4) of the Order namely: they shall be less than the number of Council members on the Committee, they shall not be entitled to vote, and they may not chair the Committee.

10.0 Review of Effectiveness

10.1 The Council shall review its effectiveness annually, to ensure it is meeting its statutory remit as set out in paragraph 8.2 and providing good corporate governance.

11.0 Variations of Terms of Reference

11.1 These Terms of Reference/Standing Orders shall be reviewed by the Council in line with the corporate planning cycle or as required.

11.2 Variations to Terms of the Reference shall require the approval of the Council.

