

Will Self

Deputy Chair, SBPP

By email

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Dear Will,

FCA ENGAGEMENT WITH THE SMALLER BUSINESS PRACTITIONER PANEL 2025-26

You will recall that we wrote around this time last year to set out the areas the FCA expected to prioritise when engaging with the Smaller Business Practitioner Panel (SBPP) during 2024-25. We are extremely grateful for the Panel's input on those topics and others during the past year. In particular, we welcomed your contributions which have helped the Board shape our [new strategy](#) for the next 5 years, which we published on 25 March, and our [work programme](#) for the coming year, which we published on 8 April.

In our work programme and strategy, we recognised the continued pressures on consumers, firms and markets, as well as our commitment to support the government's growth agenda as set out in our recent [letter to the Prime Minister](#). It therefore continues to be vital that we focus our efforts to ensure that we achieve the most benefit we can within broadly stable resource levels.

With this in mind, we have reviewed how and where we might get the most value from our Panels during 2025-26 and are writing to the Chairs of all our representative Statutory Panels¹ to set how we would like to engage.

Priorities for 2025-26

Reflecting our letter to the Prime Minister, we would particularly value the Panel's input on how the issues we discuss might best support growth in the wider economy. We would wish to prioritise the following policy and operational areas for our engagement with you, subject to unexpected events:

- Getting the right balance between growth, market integrity and consumer protection
- How the FCA can give greater transparency and predictability on regulatory priorities and outcomes

- Making authorisation and scaling up easier for innovative firms
- Proportionality, including using the consumer duty to reduce firm burden
- Data – and how we can make better use of it to reduce the reporting burden
- How we can provide clarity on the Advice/Guidance boundary in a way that expands the number of consumers who can be helped to make appropriate choices
- Redress reforms (which would include motor finance)
- Consumer credit reform (subject to necessary next steps by HM Treasury)
- Supporting the government’s objectives for the mutual sector

In all of this we fully recognise that the SBPP has an independent voice and has its own priorities to raise with the FCA, even if there is overlap between the two lists. Where there is capacity to do so, we would also value your input on other relevant issues.

Engaging with the FCA

We ask the Panel to operate, as always, as a “critical friend” to the FCA, providing advice and constructive challenge on current and future reform – whether through regulatory reform or policy development or changes to the ways in which the FCA operates.

We ask the SBPP – and will ask our own teams also – to engage on these topics at both a “strategic” level and to gather “on the ground” insights, including how measures are landing with smaller firms and the unique issues or challenges that they face. On matters of significant reform, we welcome your views on how we can best engage with external stakeholders and the varying needs of the wide range of smaller firms that we regulate.

We would welcome your input on cross-sector issues from across the whole Panel; and on more sector-specific issues from a sub-group of members with more directly relevant expertise, including, where appropriate, from across different Panels.

We will endeavour to engage with you from an early stage in our work wherever possible, to help inform our thinking before we consult more widely. The Panel Secretariat, together with Dominic Cashman as SBPP sponsor director, will work with the Panel and with relevant FCA teams to plan agendas and deliver our engagement, as part of the wider support it provides.

The role of ExCo and the Board

We expect that the Panel will continue to have access to and engage regularly with the FCA Chair, Board, Chief Executive and senior executives of the FCA, in line with the terms of reference agreed by the Board. A member of ExCo will always endeavour to attend each of your formal meetings.

We ask that you continue to submit a regular "Report to the Board" (which will also be considered by ExCo), which should focus on the two or three most important strategic themes that you wish to bring to the Board's attention. The Board and ExCo will also welcome sight of your annual report ahead of publication.

We will continue to have periodic Board lunches with the Panel Chairs. We will ensure there is at least an annual meeting between the FCA Chair and each of the Panel Chairs, one-to-one, to discuss the work of the Panel, to reflect on the previous year's interaction.

Concluding remarks

We look forward to continuing the constructive dialogue and close working relationships that we have built up with the Panel over previous years. We continue to value the advice and challenge from all of our statutory panels, which help us deliver our objectives more effectively and efficiently.

Yours sincerely

Ashley Alder

FCA Chair

Nikhil Rathi

FCA Chief Executive