**Citizens Information Board**

**Board Meeting, Wednesday, 23 September 2020**

By Videoconference

**Present:** Ita Mangan (Chairperson), Seán Sheridan, Mary Doyle, Joanne McCarthy, Ian Power, Nicola Walshe, Tina Leonard, Cearbhall O Meadhra, John Saunders, Tim Duggan, Niall Mulligan, Mary Higgins

**Apologies:** James Clarke

**In attendance:** Angela Black, Chief Executive; Fiona Coyne, Adrian O’Connor, Susan Shanahan, Graham Long (also taking minutes), Gary Watters (items 5 and 6.1)

**Minutes**

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| **Item** | **Agenda Description** |
| **1** | **Declaration of Interests** |
| 1.1 | The Chair invited Board members to declare any relevant interests. No relevant interests were declared. |
| **2** | **Minutes of Previous Meeting**  *(The minutes of the Board meeting held on Wednesday, 22 July 2020 were circulated in advance of the meeting.)* |
| 2.1 | The minutes were proposed by Joanne McCarthy and seconded by Tina Leonard. |
| **3** | **Advocacy** |
| 3.1 | Susan Shanahan presented a paper on the need for a set of standards that could provide an overarching framework for advocacy activities in Ireland, co-ordinated by CIB, which has the statutory remit to provide advocacy services. It was noted that there are many providers of advocacy but no common definition of what advocacy is. The Board requested a paper to provide additional details of the current advocacy landscape.  The final item on the agenda, a proposal to extend the term of National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities (NAS) Board members, was discussed under this agenda item. NAS requires members of its Board to be rotated every three years. The Board agreed that the NAS constitution could be amended to allow for an initial term of three years for members of the NAS Board, with a possible extension for a further one, two or three years. |
| **4** | **Staffing in Citizens Information Services** |
|  | At present, the Citizens Information Services (CIS) are providing a service without the benefit of 106 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) volunteers and with only a limited number of staff from Community Employment (CE) schemes. At the same time, there is particular pressure on the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS), which has seen demand increase by 50%. A critical need for nineteen WTE staff has been identified in order to sustain a minimum service offer across the Citizens Information network. The Executive will follow up on this request with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP). |
| **5** | **Finance Matters** |
| 5.1 | Budget Monitoring |
| 5.1.1 | The Budget Monitoring Report for August 2020 showed overall excess of income over expenditure of €2.8m at this point in time. This surplus is largely related to the receipt of the September tranche of funding at the end of August. |
| 5.2 | Risk Management |
| 5.2.1 | CIB’s Risk Management Framework has been revised to focus on strategic risks and to reference the new Finance, Audit and Risk Committee. The Board approved the revised document. |
| 5.3 | Negative Interest Rates |
| 5.3.1 | CIB has been informed by its bank that a negative interest rate of -0.5% will be applied to deposits held. An appeal has been lodged and was due to be heard on 17 September. No update has been received in relation to the appeal. |
| 5.4 | [This has been redacted.] |
| 5.5 | Procurement |
| 5.5.1 | It was noted that a number of requests to commence procurement competitions will be circulated shortly to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and to the Board. |
| **6** | **Committee Reports** |
| 6.1 | Finance, Audit and Risk Committee |
| 6.1.1 | The Committee met on 2 September 2020. It discussed the report of the first audit of a Service Delivery Company by Mazars, and heard that Mazars is on course to complete the 2020 audit schedule despite COVID-19 restrictions. The Committee reviewed CIB’s Risk Management Framework along with an assessment of the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the 2020 budget and scenario planning for 2021. [The final sentence of this note has been redacted.] |
| 6.2 | Social Policy and Research Committee |
| 6.2.1 | The Committee met on 8 September 2020. It discussed the updated Social Policy Framework, along with a recent submission to the Special Oireachtas Committee on Covid-19. Key issues for inclusion in the Pre-Budget Submission for 2021 were identified. |
| **7** | **Report of the Chief Executive** |
| 7.1 | The Report of the Chief Executive was circulated in advance of the meeting. |
| **8** | **CIB Nomination to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority (LSRA)** |
| 8.1 | CIB is a nominating body to the LSRA. The Board agreed to nominate Angela Black, Chief Executive, for a second term of four years. |
| **9** | **Corporate Services, HR and Governance Matters** |
| 9.1 | ICT Update |
| 9.1.1 | The Wide Area Network (WAN) rollout is progressing, with 112 of 135 sites now live. Two pilot sites now have new telephony equipment and this equipment is working well. The ICT team is taking a number of steps to improve security, including upgrading the Advanced Threat Protection (ATP) system used for email. The team has also rolled out software for electronic signatures and is moving CIB’s network services onto new firewalls. |
| 9.2 | Update on Staffing |
| 9.2.1 | One internal and five external recruitment competitions are now complete. One external competition is currently in train, for an Executive Officer on the Abhaile team.  It was noted that CIB is now working to 7 December as the earliest date for a return to offices. |
| 9.3 | Terms of Reference for the Strategy and Governance Committee |
| 9.3.1 | Draft terms of reference for the new Strategy and Governance Committee were circulated in advance of the meeting. Amendments from the Board will be incorporated into a new draft for presentation at the November meeting. |
| 9.4 | National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities |
|  | This agenda item was discussed at item 3.1 above. |
| **10** | **Date of the Next Meeting** |
| 10.1 | The next meeting of the Board will take place on Wednesday, 18 November 2020. |