**Citizens Information Board**

**Board Meeting, Wednesday, 17 November 2021**

By Videoconference

**Present:** Catherine Heaney, Seán Sheridan, John Saunders, Cearbhall O Meadhra, Mary Doyle, Nicola Walshe, Teresa Blake, Joan O’Connor, Mary Higgins, Tina Leonard, Ian Power, Tim Duggan

**In attendance:** Fiona Coyne, Acting Chief Executive, Graham Long (also taking minutes); Rachel Downes, Adrian O’Connor (item 4), Gary Watters (items 4, 5.2)

**Minutes**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Agenda Description** |
| **0** | **Board Business and Agenda for the Meeting** |
| 0.1 | It was agreed that ‘for information’ Board papers will be issued between meetings in order to reduce the number of papers associated with each meeting.  The agenda for the November meeting was adopted by the Board. |
| **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 September 2021 were circulated in advance of the meeting.)* |
| 2.1 | It was agreed to move a reference to a departing Board member to an earlier point in the September minutes. With this amendment, the minutes were proposed by Mary Doyle and seconded by Tina Leonard. |
| **3** | **Chief Executive and Chair’s Report** |
| 3.1 | Fiona Coyne highlighted a number of areas in the Chief Executive’s report, including that discussions with the DSP are ongoing in relation to the issue with surplus in the Service Delivery Companies. CIB has been asked to put forward a proposal to retain some projected surplus for premises projects in 2022.  The results of the discovery phase of the digital strategy were presented last month to the Strategy and Governance Committee. Given budget constraints, it may be difficult to progress digital projects in 2022.  CIB’s return to offices went ahead on 1 November, but the offices will be closed again from 19 November following updated public health guidance. |
| 3.2 | The Chair noted that she had addressed the launch of two reports by the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities.  The Chair also advised the Board that she had met with the DSP to discuss communications, Board vacancies and the surplus issue. It was proposed to form a sub-group of the Board to look at communications prior to the next Board meeting. Ian Power and Tina Leonard agreed to take part in the sub-group.  The Chair had circulated a draft letter to the Minister for Social Protection for discussion at the Board meeting. The letter noted a number of developments, including in relation to service delivery, CIB’s digital strategy, the Periodic Critical Review of CIB and the reduced budget allocation for 2022. It concluded with a request for an extension of the current organisational strategy to the end of 2022 in order to allow for a wide-ranging consultation on the new strategy.  The Board agreed that the Chair should write to the Minister to seek an extension of the strategy. |
| **4** | **Surplus in Service Delivery Companies and Budget Allocation for 2022** |
| 4.1 | An update was provided in relation to CIB not fully implementing Circular 13/14 in its oversight of the Service Delivery Companies, and in particular allowing the retention and expenditure of surplus funding without authority from the DSP and DPER. CIB has withdrawn permission for the Service Delivery Companies to spend from surplus funding and has met with twenty of the twenty-one Service Delivery Companies. The surplus funding brought into 2021 has been returned to the DSP through reductions in CIB’s October and November grants. The October and November grants to the Service Delivery Companies have been reduced by a similar amount overall, taking into account spend to date on premises projects. CIB is now in discussions with the DSP on revised grant procedures for the Service Delivery Companies for 2022. |
| 4.2 | CIB’s budget allocation for 2022 is €60.27m, a reduction of just over 3% on the 2021 allocation. A proposal was presented to the Board for the breakdown of this budget allocation. The Executive was asked to monitor the impact of budget cuts in 2022, particularly in relation to service users, communications and digital channels. ICT risks are also to be monitored during 2022.  The budget proposal was agreed, with discretion given to the Executive for further adjustments under the main budget headings, if required, prior to the December Board meeting.  The Chair agreed to speak with the Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee in respect of budget approvals going forward. |
| 4.3 | It was agreed that a second letter would be sent to the Minister acknowledging the surplus issue and setting out the Board’s considerations in relation to CIB’s budget for 2022. |
| 4.4 | There was a further discussion of the Service Level Agreements (SLAs) between CIB and the Service Delivery Companies.  Taking into account the developments previously noted by the Chair, it was agreed that CIB would seek to extend the current SLAs. |
| **5** | **Committee Reports** |
| 5.1 | The Chair recommended that a questionnaire be developed for each of the committees to examine governance arrangements and workloads. It was also suggested that external committee members should be subject to similar requirements as Board members, including in relation to papers, terms of office and membership of other public sector boards. |
| 5.2 | Finance, Audit and Risk Committee |
| 5.2.1 | The Committee met on 10 November. CIB’s internal auditors, Mazars, presented on an audit report for South Connacht CIS and confirmed that the audit schedule remains on track. The revised risk register was discussed by the Committee, as was the cyber risk register and the procurement pipeline for 2022. The budget monitoring report for October, the re-profiled budget for 2021, the budget proposal for 2022 and the draft letter of representation for 2020 were presented to the Committee. The annual assessment of the effectiveness of the Committee will be carried out shortly. |
| 5.2.2 | Given that the Chair began her term of office in 2021, John Saunders and Seán Sheridan will sign the financial statements and letter of representation for 2020. |
| 5.3 | Strategy and Governance Committee |
| 5.3.1 | The Committee met on 20 October. A presentation on the discovery phase of the digital strategy was provided, as was an update on the Periodic Critical Review. The Committee agreed the approach to a number of aspects of CIB’s annual report to the Charities Regulator and also agreed to recommend to the Board that CIB’s Service Level Agreements with the Service Delivery Companies be extended.  Following a discussion on the Board’s succession plan, it was agreed to recommend that CIB progress a recruitment process for new members, based on the priorities identified. |
| 5.3.2 | The Executive will draft wording for an advert for Board members to reflect the Strategy and Governance Committee’s recommendations. This wording can be shared with the DSP for discussion with the Public Appointments Service. |
| 5.4 | Social Policy and Research Committee |
| 5.4.1 | The Chair asked Board members to make contact if they had an interest in the vacant Chair position on the Social Policy and Research Committee. |
| **6** | **Closed Session** |
| 6.1 | Following an external recruitment competition, the Board agreed to recommend Fiona Coyne to the Minister for appointment to the role of Chief Executive. The Board agreed that the terms and conditions outlined in the handbook would apply to the offer. The Board asked the Chair to convey their congratulations to Fiona. |
| **7** | **Date of the Next Meeting** |
| 7.1 | The next meeting of the Board will take place on Wednesday, 15 December 2021. |