**Citizens Information Board**

**Board Meeting, Wednesday, 15 December 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, Chief Executive, Graham Long (also taking minutes), Adrian O’Connor (item 4), Gary Watters (item 5)

**Minutes**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Agenda Description** |
| **0** | **Board Business and Agenda for the Meeting** |
| 0.1 | The agenda for the December meeting was adopted by the Board.  The Chair expressed sympathy to Fiona Coyne on the passing of her father. Fiona was also welcomed into her new role as Chief Executive. |
| **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** |
| 2.1 | The minutes of the Board meeting held on Wednesday, 17 November 2021 were circulated in advance of the meeting. The minutes were proposed by Mary Higgins and seconded by Nicola Walshe.  It was agreed that a more narrative format, in line with the November minutes, would be adopted for future minutes. This follows engagement with the Department of Social Protection (DSP) on the Periodic Critical Review. |
| **3** | **Chief Executive and Chair’s Report** |
| 3.1 | Fiona Coyne thanked the Board for their messages of condolence and for their good wishes on her taking up of the Chief Executive role. Fiona highlighted a number of areas of priority, including improved communications, a recalibration of the relationship with the Service Delivery Companies (SDCs), the raising of quality and consistency and the provision of evidence of this to the DSP as CIB’s funder. Fiona noted that there is a need for CIB to reorganise internally and to be agile in relation to technology and user demands.  In relation to ongoing work, Fiona noted that approval had been received from the DSP to provide grant allocations to the SDCs on a different schedule in 2022, with the December 2022 funding to be provided as a ‘float’ in January 2022. CIB can also make a business case for the retention of some surplus funding.  The Chair invited Ian Power to provide an update on the Periodic Critical Review process. Ian noted that the Steering Group had met and that a follow-up meeting had taken place with Board members. The Steering Group meeting had described next steps in the process and set out some themes, including a more narrative format for minutes, the issue of surplus funding in the SDCs, KPIs, communications, the oversight of the SDCs and the Service Level Agreement with the SDCs. The meeting with the Board members focused on CIB governance and oversight procedures in relation to the SDCs. Members of the CIB Executive are due to meet with the DSP on the Periodic Critical Review on 16 December 2021. It is expected that a draft report will be ready for review in February. |
| **4** | **Approach to CIB Strategy** |
| 4.1 | Fiona Coyne presented on the carryover of strategic actions into 2022 and on the development of a strategy that would represent the first step in realising the vision for CIB over the next three strategy cycles. Fiona noted that it is critical that CIB be responsive to changes and challenges in the wider environment. It is also very important that stakeholders, including staff, are involved in the process. A timeline for the strategy development was set out, with an environmental scan to take place in Q1 and consultation processes in Q2 2022. In relation to the digital strategy, short-term goals from the discovery phase of the project can now be progressed, while more widespread engagement is needed on progressing the medium- to long-term goals. Fiona also described how communications would underpin the new strategy and how there is a need to refresh CIB’s communications with society and with the SDCs.  The Chair invited Tina Leonard to provide a report on the first meeting of the Communications Sub-Group that took place on 2 December. Tina related that the group had discussed the context for effective communications, as well as the importance of auditing communications capacity and infrastructure and identifying how it can be improved. The group also discussed Government of Ireland branding for CIB materials and agreed a timeline would be provided to the DSP for its implementation.  The Board discussed a number of areas relevant to the strategy and the environmental scan, particularly the progress of Covid-19, digital developments, information and misinformation and potential difficulties in recruiting staff.  The Board approved the carryover items for 2022 and the approach to strategy development as set out by the CEO. The CEO will write to the DSP on developments on communications. |
| **5** | **Finance Matters** |
| 5.1 | 2020 Annual Financial Statements |
| 5.1.1 | Gary Watters presented on the draft Annual Financial Statements, which are complete and ready to be certified by the Comptroller and Auditor General. A note was circulated with changes to the statements since March, and the new item on the surplus issue in the Statement on Internal Control was highlighted. The draft Comprehensive Report to the Minister, part of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, was also discussed, with two amendments proposed.  It was noted that the surplus issue is prominent in discussions around the Periodic Critical Review and that it is important to continue momentum in addressing the issue. The Chair proposed that Mazars, CIB’s internal auditors, be invited to present in February on Board oversight of SDC budgets. The Chair also proposed that a sub-group of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee be established to review the budget setting process and the annual budgets allocated to the twenty-one SDCs. The Board approved both proposals. |
| 5.2 | Risk Management |
| 5.2.1 | There was no update required under this agenda item. |
| **6** | **Committee Reports** |
| 6.1 | Social Policy and Research Committee |
| 6.1.1 | The Committee met on 24 November 2021. Tina Leonard chaired the meeting of the Committee, which discussed the strategic framework and reports and submissions, with an emphasis on leveraging relationships with other organisations and tracking the impact of the work.  A discussion followed on the oversight of social policy activity. An initiative in development is to publish CIB data on a ‘data hub’ to allow wider access to statistical information. It was also noted that CIB’s legislation has provision for the Minister to request advice and that this could include social policy research. |
| 6.2 | Committee Review and Standing Orders for Sub-Groups |
| 6.2.1 | A survey will be distributed to the Board members who are engaged on committees. The survey is to review elements of the committees and to ensure they are fit-for-purpose.  Draft standing orders for the new sub-groups will also be brought to the Board for the February 2022 meeting. |
| **7** | **AOB** |
| 7.1 | A draft advert for new Board members is currently with the DSP to progress with the Public Appointments Service.  The process for the payment of Board fees in 2022 was described. Board fees will be paid in line with Category 3 in 2022.  The Chair thanked all the staff of CIB for their work in 2021. |
| **7** | **Date of the Next Meeting** |
| 7.1 | The next meeting of the Board will take place on Thursday, 10 February 2022. |