**Citizens Information Board**

**Board Meeting, Thursday, 2 June 2022**

Hotel Kilmore, Cavan

**Present:** Catherine Heaney, Seán Sheridan, Cearbhall O Meadhra, Mary Doyle, Tina Leonard, Teresa Blake (until item 6), John Saunders, Tim Duggan

**Apologies:** Nicola Walshe, Ian Power, Mary Higgins, Joan O’Connor

**In attendance:** Fiona Coyne, Chief Executive, Rachel Downes, Graham Long (also taking minutes), Gary Watters (items 5 and 6)

**Minutes**

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| **Item** | **Agenda Description** |
| **0** | **Board Business and Agenda for the Meeting** |
| 0.1 | Prior to the start of the meeting, Pat McInerney and Shane Costelloe from Holmes O’Malley Sexton Solicitors presented on the governance of the Citizens Information Board, including in relation to legislation, the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, CIB’s own Code of Practice, the Charities Governance Code, CIB’s Oversight Agreement and Performance Delivery Agreement with the Department of Social Protection and additional considerations such as conflicts of interest, data protection, Freedom of Information and the Ethics in Public Office Acts.  Once the meeting was convened, the Chair noted that Ian Power, who gave his apologies for the meeting, would be coming to the end of his term on the Board shortly. The Chair and the Board thanked Ian for his important contribution to the work of the Board, and in particular his diligence and commitment in relation to CIB’s Periodic Critical Review. It was asked that the Board’s appreciation be noted in the minutes.  The agenda for the June 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** |
| 2.1 | The minutes of the Board meeting held on Thursday, 24 March were proposed by Tina Leonard and seconded by Mary Doyle. The minutes of the special Board meeting held on Friday, 20 May in relation to the Periodic Critical Review were proposed by Tina Leonard and seconded by Teresa Blake.  It was asked that the Board be informed when the Periodic Critical Review is published by the Department of Social Protection. |
| **3** | **Chief Executive and Chair’s Report** |
| 3.1 | The Chair provided an update on appointments to the Board. Following the deadline for applications in May, a shortlisting committee is due to meet on 3 June with the intention of having a shortlist sent to the Minister by mid-June. There was a strong response to the advert for new Board members.  The Chair noted a number of pieces of correspondence received, including from a Service Delivery Company in relation to CIB’s strategic direction and meetings, from a politician in relation to the closure of a CIS office in Dublin and from a union official in relation to staff matters. The Chair noted that she typically consults with the Executive when she receives correspondence and it was asked that Board members notify the Secretary to the Board in the event they receive correspondence or representations related to the activities of CIB.  Fiona Coyne spoke to a number of areas set out in the Chief Executive’s report. Fiona noted that the new organisation structure is due to come into effect on 7 June. CIB has had an extensive exchange of correspondence with Fórsa in relation to the reorganisation and a meeting was held last week which has led to progress in addressing the issues raised. A further meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 7 June. A letter was sent on 1 June to all the Service Delivery Companies in relation to the reorganisation.  All staff are now working from offices again, with a blended working pilot underway pending the implementation of a formal policy. A recruitment competition for the Head of Division, Compliance and Reporting is now completed with the successful candidate due to start in CIB on 2 August.  A procurement competition for consultancy support in the development of the strategy for 2023 – 2025 is now complete with the contract to be awarded to BearingPoint and consultation to begin shortly afterwards.  Fiona noted that she is due to meet with the Chairs of the CIS companies on Tuesday, 7 June in relation to their proposals for volunteering in the services.  Fiona and Catherine Heaney attended at a meeting of the Management Board of the DSP and gave an update on CIB activities and priorities for 2022. The meeting was very positive. Fiona also noted that the Performance Delivery Agreement for 2022 was signed with the DSP on 23 May and reflected CIB’s 2022 priorities including the strategy and SLAs.  Work has begun with Carr Communications on a communications strategy for CIB. The communications function will move to the Corporate Services division under the reorganisation.  Work has also begun on the preparation of budget estimates for 2023.  CIB has been informed that the contract for the Patient Advocacy Service (PAS) has been awarded to the National Advocacy Service (NAS). A meeting is scheduled for 9 June to discuss the division of funding between NAS and PAS. Fiona also met the incoming Chair of the Citizens Information Phone Service, and in particular discussed digital developments and webchat.  A number of events have taken place recently including the start of the MABS 30th anniversary celebrations in Cork on 8 May, for which Fiona recorded a video message. Fiona also launched a guide for students produced by National Traveller MABS at a well-attended event in Dublin.  Fiona and Rachel Downes provided an update on re-opened Service Delivery Company offices. |
| **4** | **Annual Report 2021** |
| 4.1 | The draft Annual Report for 2021 was circulated in advance of the meeting. It was noted that the Annual Report uses CIB’s functions as its main structure and it was agreed that this structure and the overall layout worked well. Some small amendments were suggested.  The Board approved the Annual Report to be sent to the Minister in the course of June. |
| **5** | **Finance Matters** |
| 5.1 | Risk Management |
| 5.1.1 | There was no update to be provided in relation to risk. |
| 5.2 | Procurement |
| 5.2.1 | Requests to commence separate procurement competitions for Microsoft licences and for other software licences were approved. |
| 5.3 | Strategic Budgeting |
| 5.3.1 | The Board discussed the approach to estimates 2023 in light of the surplus issue that arose in 2021 and the surplus carried forward by the Service Delivery Companies into 2022. It was agreed that the Executive would develop a briefing paper to accompany the estimates 2023 which would set out steps taken in response to the surplus issue, the process for the preparation of estimates for 2023 and the context for business cases for capital projects. The paper should also include a request to engage with the DSP on the possibility of multi-annual funding for future capital projects including potential digital developments and set out the importance of contingency budgets where multi-annual funding is not available. |
| **6** | **Committee Reports** |
| 6.1 | Strategy and Governance Committee |
| 6.1.1 | The Committee met on 30 March 2022 and was chaired by Mary Higgins. Tina Leonard provided an update on the meeting, which included a presentation on CIB’s new Data Hub and a discussion on planning in relation to the social policy framework. |
| 6.2 | Communications Sub-Group |
| 6.2.1 | It was noted that Government of Ireland branding is now live on CIB assets including the website and stationery. It was also noted that CIB is now working with Carr Communications on messaging for CIB and that further work on branding is on hold pending that engagement. |
| 6.3 | Finance, Audit and Risk Committee |
| 6.3.1 | The Committee met on 4 May 2022. Mazars presented on the internal audit report on North Munster CIS, with an audit opinion of “reasonable assurance”. This report is the last of the seven reports commissioned in 2021. It was agreed that an audit of the risk framework would be added to the work programme for Mazars for 2022. This review is due to happen on a 3-yearly cycle.  A process and set of documents for the tracking of internal audit recommendations was circulated in advance of the meeting. The documents were presented to the Committee and agreed.  The budget monitoring report for April showed an excess of expenditure over income of €54,730.  The Committee discussed the Allocations Sub-Group meeting of 27 April 2022, which is covered in these minutes below.  Two requests to procure software licences were approved for circulation to the Board.  A presentation on the mitigants being put in place to address risks in the cyber risk register was provided. CIB’s Data Protection Officer (DPO) provided an update on the actions taken to address the issues raised in the recent internal audit report from Mazars, including the development of the Register of Processing Activities (ROPA) and updated staff training.  A note of the meeting was circulated to the Board.  The Board discussed that issues flagged with the Service Delivery Companies as common audit problems do not appear to be addressed until internal audit reports are completed. |
| 6.4 | Allocations Sub-Group |
| 6.4.1 | The Allocations Sub-Group met on 27 April 2022.  In relation to surplus, the Service Delivery Companies brought forward €2.27m in surplus funding into 2022. Of this, €2.263m has been returned to CIB, with the remainder still outstanding with SLIS.  An analysis of the Q1 expenditure in the SDCs was presented. Underspends on the salaries budget line are typical across the companies, as are underspends on the travel and subsistence budget line. It was noted that the underspends, at an average of approximately 10%, are significant. It was also noted that the SDCs will be asked to re-profile their budgets at mid-year and that this exercise should provide a more accurate view on likely expenditure during the second part of the year.  In relation to the impact of reduced funding, it was noted that the companies are currently underspent against profile and so it is difficult to assess the impact of the reduced allocation.  The timeline for the setting of budgets for the SDCs for 2023 was set out, including in relation to premises projects.  The Board discussed companies reporting negative net asset positions at the end of 2021 but it was noted that, due to their cash positions, this should not raise a going concern issue. |
| **7** | **Committee Structure to Support Strategy** |
| 7.1 | It was noted that CIB’s reorganisation takes effect next week and that strategy development will shortly be underway. The Board had a provisional discussion on changing the committee structure to reflect the four new divisions in CIB, and tasking these committees with monitoring risks in their areas of work. It was also discussed that the meeting of committee Chairs in advance of Board meetings would be formalised and that sub-groups would continue to be used for ad-hoc or short-term pieces of work that need specific Board oversight. |
| **8** | **Closed Session** |
| 8.1 | The Board held a closed session to discuss the annual internal evaluation of the Board, the possible new Committee structure and the process for the Chief Executive’s mid-year review. |
|  | **Date of the Next Meeting** |
|  | The next meeting of the Board is scheduled to take place on Thursday, 7 July 2022. |