**Citizens Information Board**

**Board Meeting, Friday, 24 March 2023**

By videoconference

**Present:** Catherine Heaney, Seán Sheridan, Mary Doyle (from item 4), Teresa Blake, Ian Power (until item 4), Claire Byrne, Brid O’Donovan, Seamus Smith, Sarah Harte, Cearbhall O Meadhra

**Apologies:** John Saunders, Tina Leonard, Fiona Penollar

**In attendance:** Fiona Coyne, Chief Executive, Carmel Beirne, Adrian O’Connor, Graham Long (also taking minutes), Gary Watters (item 6); Pat Downes, Lionheart Consultants (item 7)

**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** | **Board Business and Agenda for the Meeting** |
| 2.1 | The agenda for the March meeting was adopted by the Board. |
| **3** | **Minutes of Previous Meeting** |
| 3.1 | The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2023 were proposed by Seamus Smith and seconded by Brid O’Donovan. |
| **4** | **Chief Executive and Chair’s Report** |
| 4.1 | It was noted that this would likely be the last report from the Chief Executive based on the previous strategy objectives.  Fiona Coyne spoke to a number of areas set out in her Chief Executive’s Report. Fiona Coyne and Catherine Heaney met with the Minister for Social Protection on 9 March in relation to the review of volunteering in the Citizens Information Services. BearingPoint is now working on the final version of the report.  Fiona noted that the draft Service Level Agreements with the Service Delivery Companies remain with the DSP for observations. Fiona also reported that CIB has been awarded funding under the Public Sector Innovation Fund (PSIF) for a project involving remote access to CIS from libraries. MABS Support attended the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance on 8 March to discuss non-bank lenders. CIB met with the MABS Chairs recently and is scheduled to meet the CIS Chairs in April.  The Board gave their congratulations on the PSIF award.  It was noted that draft Service Level Agreements were provided to the DSP in late 2022 for observations. The Board asked that the Executive follow up with the DSP in relation to the Department’s observations on the draft Service Level Agreements. |
|  | **Update on Periodic Critical Review (PCR) Actions** |
|  | A report on actions taken to address recommendations in the 2022 Periodic Critical Review (PCR) was circulated in advance of the meeting. The completion of the Service Level Agreements with the funded companies will be important to addressing some of the recommendations, as will the implementation of metrics. The Board asked that a further report on the PCR recommendations be provided in July. The committees of the Board will have a role in monitoring the actions stemming from the PCR. |
| **5** | **Committee Reports** |
| 5.1 | Standards and Development Committee |
| 5.1.1 | A briefing note on the committee meeting of 15 February 2023 was circulated in advance of the Board meeting.  At the meeting, two changes to the terms of reference for the Committee were agreed for submission to the Board. It was noted that two potential external members had been contacted, but that they had not yet responded.  The Committee discussed its high-level priorities for the next two years, including the development and implementation of metrics to measure and analyse performance, the application of Service Design principles in building on the MABS Quality Assurance Framework and the review of CIS service quality, and the evaluation of options for enhanced advocacy services.  Two amendments to CIB’s draft strategy were proposed for feedback to BearingPoint.  Rachel Downes provided an update on the review of volunteering in the CIS, noting that initial briefings had been held with groups in the CIS and that the response to the recommendations had been positive. |
| 5.1.2 | The Board approved the appointment of Joanne Geary and Emer Darcy as external members of the Standards and Development Committee. |
| 5.1.3 | The Board approved the two proposed changes to the terms of reference for the Standards and Development Committee. |
| 5.2 | Compliance and Reporting Committee |
| 5.2.1 | A briefing note on the committee meeting of 14 March 2023 was circulated in advance of the Board meeting.  At the meeting, it was noted that contact had been made with a potential external committee member, with a meeting due to be scheduled.  Carmel Beirne presented a report on the Service Delivery Companies’ cash budget plans, noting that eighteen cash budget plans have been received from the SDCs to date, with those plans currently coming in at €496,000 under the grant allocation as a result of rental provisions in two companies and pay savings across the companies.  Carmel Beirne presented on the activity reports for the Service Delivery Companies for 2022, noting the headline statistics for the different services.  Carmel Beirne also set out CIB’s roadmap to meet the target energy reduction (50%) and greenhouse gas reduction (51%) by 2030. A major component of this plan is improvement to CIB’s buildings. |
| 5.3 | Governance Committee |
| 5.3.1 | A briefing note on the committee meeting of 16 March 2023 was circulated in advance of the Board meeting.  An update was provided in relation to the review of volunteering in the CIS.  A revised draft of the strategy was discussed and some further minor changes requested ahead of the circulation of papers to the Board for the meeting of 24 March.  It was noted that Pat Downes of Lionheart Consultants will present to the Board on 24 March on the findings of the external evaluation of the Board.  Updates were provided from the Standards and Development, Compliance and Reporting and Finance, Audit and Risk Committees. Recruitment is underway for external members of these committees.  The Governance Committee agreed with the proposed changes to the terms of reference for the Standards and Development Committee for submission to the Board.  It was noted that sustainability is now a value of the Board and that this needs to be led by the Board, including in relation to meetings and the reduction of the Board’s overall footprint. All meetings of the Governance Committee will be held online.  The agenda for the Board meeting of 24 March was agreed. |
| 5.4 | Finance, Audit and Risk Committee |
| 5.4.1 | A briefing note on the committee meeting of 8 March 2023 was circulated in advance of the Board meeting.  Susanna Britz from Mazars presented on the internal controls report for South Dublin MABS. The report included two medium findings and six low findings, with an overall audit opinion of “reasonable assurance”.  Susanna also presented on the audit of CIB’s internal controls. In relation to internal financial controls, the audit report includes one medium finding and three low findings. In relation to other internal controls, the audit report includes three medium findings and one low finding.  The Committee discussed the risk reports from the other committees and reviewed the risk register. In particular, the Committee discussed the rating and description for risks in relation to websites being down, data protection and ICT governance.  The Budget Monitoring Report for January was discussed, which showed a year-to-date excess of income over expenditure of €23,519. The Annual Financial Statements were approved for submission to the Board, subject to some minor changes.  The Committee approved the submission of the internal controls report and Mazars internal audit report to the Board.  The Committee approved the disposal of ICT assets totalling €53,058, with a net book value of €507. This disposal will be added to the Annual Financial Statements.  The Committee approved the commencement of a procurement process for insurance brokerage services. The Committee approved the non-competitive and non-compliant procurement reports for 2022, with the non-compliant figure to be included in the Annual Financial Statements. The procurement plan for 2023 was presented to the Committee.  Stephanie McKeown, CIB’s DPO, presented the draft retention policy to the Committee, including some of the mechanisms to implement the policy such as a rolling deletion of emails after two years. The Committee approved the policy. |
| **6** | **Finance Matters** |
| 6.1 | Budget Monitoring Report, February 2023 |
| 6.1.1 | In February, the excess of income over expenditure was €1.919m. Of that excess, €1.354m surplus funding was remitted to CIB from 17 Service Delivery Companies (SDCs) as at the end of February. A further €553,000 was due back from the SDCs in March.  The largest underspends were in ICT, Abhaile and in salaries. |
| 6.2 | Annual Financial Statements |
| 6.2.1 | The draft Annual Financial Statements for 2022 were circulated in advance of the meeting. The Board discussed the change in value of the pensions liability as a result of an increase of the discount rate applied. Non-compliant procurement was also discussed. The Board approved the financial statements to issue to the Comptroller and Auditor General and the DSP. |
| 6.3 | Internal Controls |
| 6.3.1 | The Mazars audit report on CIB’s internal controls was circulated in advance of the meeting, as was a summary of findings from CIB’s internal controls questionnaire completed by managers. In relation to internal financial controls, the audit report includes one medium finding and three low findings. In relation to other internal controls, the audit report includes three medium findings and one low finding.  Both documents were approved by the Board. |
| 6.4 | Risk Management |
| 6.4.1 | The risk register was reviewed by the Board. Two risks – one in relation to the Electronic Case Management System, the other in relation to adverse publicity – had been updated since the Board meeting in February. It was noted there would be significant changes to CIB’s risk framework in the coming months, and the Board agreed to dedicate time to risk management at their meeting in June. |
| 6.5 | Procurement |
| 6.5.1 | The Board approved the commencement of a procurement competition for insurance brokerage services. |
| **7** | **External Evaluation of the Board** |
| 7.1 | Pat Downes from Lionheart Consultants spoke to the overall findings of the external evaluation of the Board, which is required to take place every three years under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. The evaluation involved surveys, document and Board pack reviews, as well as interviews with Board members and the Chair. The conclusion of the review is that the Board is exercising its role effectively. Some areas for improvement will be put forward in the report, including in relation to stakeholder engagement, exit interviews with Board members, scheduled updates on developments in the regulatory and financial environment and business continuity planning. |
| **8** | **CIB Strategy 2023 - 2026** |
| 8.1 | The Board discussed the revised draft strategy for 2023 to 2026. Some amendments were proposed to the document and it was agreed that, following a short window for any further comments from members of the Board, the draft strategy would be submitted to the Minister for Social Protection. It was also agreed that the Executive would begin to implement the new strategy pending the Minister’s observations and the scheduled approval of the document at the Board meeting of 2 June. |
| **9** | **Climate Action Roadmap** |
| 9.1 | Carmel Beirne presented CIB’s climate action roadmap, which aims to achieve the 50% reduction in energy usage and the 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions mandated by Government. The plan has a particular focus on CIB’s buildings. The Board discussed sustainability as a CIB value in the new strategy and how the Board must lead in relation to sustainability, including in using sustainability as a lens in its actions and decision making. |
| **10** | **Closed Session** |
| 10.1 | In the closed session:   * Board was reminded of confidentiality requirements. * Board agreed that the actions arising from the external evaluation would be considered at the full-day board meeting in July. |
| **11** | **Date of the Next Meeting** |
| 11.1 | The next meeting of the Board is scheduled to take place on Friday, 2 June 2023. |