Citizens Information Board

Board Meeting, Friday, 2 June 2023
By videoconference

Present: Catherine Heaney, Seán Sheridan, Mary Doyle, Ian Power, Claire Byrne, Brid O'Donovan, Seamus Smith, Cearbhall O Meadhra, John Saunders, Fiona Penollar, Stephen Lycett, Tina Leonard.

Apologies: Sarah Harte, Teresa Blake

In attendance: Fiona Coyne, Chief Executive, Carmel Beirne, Adrian O'Connor, Graham Long (also taking minutes), Gary Watters (items 6.5 and 9)

Minutes

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 June meeting was adopted by the Board.
	The Chair welcomed Stephen Lycett to the Board as CIB's staff nominee. It was also noted that Cearbhall O Meadhra and Tina Leonard would come to the end of their term on the Board in mid-June. Tina and Cearbhall were thanked for their contribution to the Board and to CIB.
3	**Minutes of Previous Meeting**
3.1	The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2023 were proposed by Cearbhall O Meadhra and seconded by Tina Leonard. It was asked that a line be added to the minutes in relation to the delay in progressing Service Level Agreements with the funded companies.
4	**Chief Executive and Chair's Report**
4.1	Fiona Coyne spoke to a number of areas set out in her Chief Executive's Report, which is now aligned with the objectives in the draft strategy. The BearingPoint review of volunteering in the Citizens Information Services was published on 14 April. The report has been issued to volunteers and the CIS are engaging with volunteers, as well as establishing a group to look at a new strategy for volunteering.

CIB also met with the CIS and MABS Chairs during April, with a particular focus on communications and collaborative working. A stakeholder engagement plan will be brought to Board in the Autumn.

Feedback on the draft SLAs has been received from the DSP. A planned meeting with the Management Board of the DSP has been postponed, while it is hoped that a memo for Government in relation to DMA/Abhaile will go to the Cabinet in July.

On 24 May, the CEO met with National Traveller MABS and on 30 May, CIB had a training session with Down Syndrome Ireland and has entered a partnership with the organisation to better assist people with Down Syndrome and their families.

The Board asked that timescales be included in the new format for the Chief Executive's Report.

5	**Committee Reports**
5.1	Standards and Development Committee
5.1.1	A briefing note on the committee meeting of 13 April 2023 was circulated in advance of the Board meeting. Joanne Geary and Emer Darcy have joined the Standards and Development Committee, which looked at volunteering in CIS, the Periodic Critical Review and the Public Sector Innovation Fund at its April meeting. The Committee also discussed service quality and observed that consistent processes across companies are lacking, as are adequate metrics. It was noted that it will be important for the Committee to capture the service user perspective and to produce a revised action plan for 2023 to dovetail with the objectives of the ICT, Digital and Data Committee.
5.2	ICT, Digital and Data Committee
5.2.1	A briefing note on the committee meeting of 19 April 2023 was circulated in advance of the Board meeting. Tina Leonard has agreed to stay on the ICT, Digital and Data Committee following the end of her term on the Board on 14 June. The Committee looked at its terms of reference and will aim to amend the TOR to place a greater focus on strategy and to reduce the quorum. The Committee discussed cybersecurity, risk and the digital strategy at their April meeting. A paper on the digital strategy will be brought to the July Board meeting. The Board discussed the growth of large language model artificial intelligence tools and noted that these tools represent both a risk and an opportunity for CIB. The Board approved Tina Leonard to become an external member of the ICT, Digital and Data Committee following the expiry of her term on the Board.
5.3	Compliance and Reporting Committee
5.3.1	A briefing note on the committee meeting of 18 May 2023 was circulated in advance of the Board meeting.

	At the meeting of 18 May, the Committee discussed the SDC Quarterly Financial Returns and staffing returns, along with service activity in Q1, SDC actions plans for 2023, the tracking of internal audit recommendations in the SDCs, working from home arrangements in the Citizens Information Phone Service and the division's risks. The Board approved Richard Deane to join the Compliance and Reporting Committee as an external member.
5.4	<u>Governance Committee</u>
5.4.1	A briefing note on the committee meeting of 25 May 2023 was circulated in advance of the Board meeting. At their meeting of 25 May, the Governance Committee agreed the agenda for the Board meeting of 2 June. The Committee also discussed risk management, with a special meeting of the Committee to be convened to review the draft risk framework. The Committee agreed that an agenda item on stakeholder engagement will be brought to the Board later in the year, as will the terms of reference for the internal auditors when this service is being procured later in the year. The Chair noted that PAS recruitment for the Board is still outstanding and the Board agreed that Brid O'Donovan could act in the Chair's place if the process commences in June. The Board also agreed to continue with the quorum for the Board at eight. A proposal is to be brought to the next Governance Committee meeting in relation to specifying roles for external committee members and advertising these when vacancies arise. It was asked that representatives from the CIS and MABS be invited to the next Board meeting to present on their work.
5.5	<u>Finance, Audit and Risk Committee</u>
5.5.1	A briefing note on the committee meeting of 17 May 2023 was circulated in advance of the Board meeting. At their May meeting, the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee approved a number of submissions to the Board including the reprofiled budget, the risk register, risk categories and risk framework, five procurement requests and the draft protected disclosures policy. The Committee also discussed the implementation of the data retention policy and CIB finance, as well as the CIS pay claim and the tracking of recommendations from internal and external audits. The FAR also approved new approval limits for expenditure by including the Payment Approvals Forms (PAFs), used to sign off on grants for the Service Delivery Companies, at the same levels as other expenditure. PAFs great than €65,000 now require sign-off at Principal Officer level. The Committee approved the terms of reference for a fraud risk assessment to be carried out by Mazars following the internal controls audit 2022. The Committee also approved retaining the €25,000

	limit for Requests for Tenders to be published on eTenders. A recent circular had raised the mandatory limit to €50,000. It was noted that the FAR Committee had been working on reformatting papers for the Committee and also for the Board, including moving some papers to the 'Document Library' on Convene. Board members were asked to provide any feedback on the changes to the Secretary.
6	**Annual Report 2022**
6.1	A draft Annual Report for 2022 was circulated in advance of the meeting. With some minor amendments, the Board approved the draft Annual Report and thanked the Corporate Services team for their work on the document.
7	**Protected Disclosures Policy**
7.1	A revised draft Protected Disclosures Policy was circulated in advance of the meeting. The policy takes account of the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022. The Board approved the policy, and asked that training on protected disclosures be included with governance training for the Board in 2024.
8	**Finance Matters**
8.1	Budget Monitoring Report, April 2023
8.1.1	By the end of April, CIB income had totalled €29.768m, of which €29.676m was Government funding and €91,770 was "other income". Total expenditure to the end of April was €25.974m, leaving an excess of income over expenditure of €3.794m. The variance largely relates to grants to Service Delivery Companies, which have now been paid.
8.2	Budget Re-Profiling, Q1 2023
8.2.1	A draft re-profiled budget was circulated to the Board in advance of the meeting. The re-profiled budget includes changes to the premises, MABS CMS, cybersecurity, Abhaile, advocacy, management information systems, audit, procurement consultancy and pensions and lump sums budget lines. The Board approved the re-profiled budget.
8.3	Budget Allocation Letter from the DSP
8.3.1	The Budget Allocation Letter from the DSP for 2023 was noted by the Board. The letter sets out DSP funding of €60.858m in 2023, with that budget divided between pay (€6.848m) and non-pay (€54.010m). Two budget lines are ring-fenced for a single purpose and cannot be vired to other budget lines (Abhaile and DMA).
8.4	Annual Financial Statements: Letter of Representation
8.4.1	The Board approved the draft letter of representation to be signed and submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General.
8.5	Procurement
8.5.1	The Board approved the commencement of three procurement competitions: • For call centre technologies

	• For internal audit services • For PR and communications services The Board also approved the award of two contracts: • For media and creative services • For Total Facilities Management
9	**Risk Management**
9.1	Risk Register
9.1.1	The Risk Register was circulated in advance of the meeting. It was noted that the risk register is being updated at the moment as part of the actions stemming from the internal audit on risk management. This includes the updating of the descriptions to match the formula proposed by Mazars.
9.2	Risk Categories
9.2.1	A separate paper on proposed new categories was circulated in advance of the meeting. The risk categories will be incorporated into the revised risk framework.
9.3	Risk Framework
9.3.1	A draft revised risk framework was circulated in advance of the meeting. The Board noted that a presentation on the framework would be made to the Governance Committee and that the framework would be brought to the July meeting for final approval. The Board asked that risk be placed at the top of the agenda for each committee meeting.
10	**Strategic Budgeting for 2024**
10.1	The Board reviewed a paper setting out budget and expenditure trends in 2021, 2022 and 2023 to May, and discussed a broad approach to the estimates process for 2024. The proposed approach to the 2024 estimates is to take an Existing Level of Service base, as is required, and complete business cases for additional funding requests, particularly in relation to staffing matters and premises. A pay claim from the CIS companies is likely to be the largest request for additional funding from the Service Delivery Companies. It was noted that, particularly in the context of capital projects such as the digital strategy, a shift to multi-annual funding would provide the investment framework needed. It was also noted that sustainability, as one of the Board's values, needs to be to the fore in proposing service development cases.
11	**Date of the Next Meeting**
11.1	The next meeting of the Board is scheduled to take place on Friday, 28 July 2023 in the Hilton Hotel Kilmainham from 10:30am.