

Board Meeting

Friday, 27th September 2024 at 10:30 am

In-person – Georges Quay House.

Present: Catherine Heaney, Claire Byrne, Seamus Smith, Ian Power, Patrick Gibbons, Stephen Lycett, Orlagh Nevin, Sarah Harte, Fiona Ward, Mary Corcoran, Catriona Curtis, Seán Sheridan, Brid O’Donovan, Teresa Blake

In attendance: Graham Long, Adrian O’Connor, Rachel Downes, Carmel Beirne, Caroline Mitchell (minutes), Gary Watters (for items 5(a), 6, 7 and 8)

Apologies: Mary Dorgan.

Minutes

Item	Agenda Description
1.	Declaration of Interests
	The Chair invited Board members to declare any relevant interests.
2.	Board Business and Approval of Agenda
	Apologies were received from Mary Dorgan. The agenda was approved.
3.	Minutes of Previous Meeting
	The minutes of the meeting held on 26 th July 2024 were proposed by Claire Byrne and seconded by Mary Corcoran.
4.	Reports of Acting Chief Executive and Chair
	The Chair noted that she had spoken to the Minister and understands that the pay claims issue in the SDCs has been raised at Cabinet level. The Board hopes to see movement on resource issues and a sustainable process for pay claims into the future. The Acting CEO provided an update, noting there has been good work and progress in several areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new <i>Supports for Farmers</i> booklet was launched at the National Ploughing Championships by Minister for Agriculture Charlie McConalogue. This was an initiative between the Citizens information Board and Teagasc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIB had two projects shortlisted for the Ireland eGovernment Awards 2024 - these were <i>Informing and empowering our diaspora: The Returning to Ireland portal</i> and <i>A trusted voice: The Citizens Information Board's social media response to COVID-19</i> • Industrial relations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities: Following the last Board meeting, an agreement was reached with SIPTU members in NAS, with job evaluations forming part of that agreement. The agreement has been approved by ballot of the union members. 2. Citizens Information Services: On 12th September, a meeting was held with SIPTU, the DSP and representatives of the CIS Chairs. The meeting took place in the context of a ballot for industrial action. In consultation with the DSP, CIB has requested Kevin Duffy to intervene in the dispute and a further meeting is expected shortly with Mr Duffy to act as facilitator. 3. Sign Language Interpreting Service: SLIS has notified CIB of an invitation to a conciliation meeting in the WRC, including in relation to a pay claim for interpreters. Although CIB is not the employer in this instance, CIB has agreed to attend the conciliation conference. • SLA: CIB has continued to seek engagement from a MABS company regarding an unsigned Service Level Agreement. The Chair of the FAR committee noted that it had been discussed at length and agreed at the meeting, that notwithstanding the valuable work and service the company provides, it needs to be made aware that there is a possibility of withdrawal of funding if the service level agreement is not returned signed. The Board members discussed the matter and agreed that that was the next required step. The Chair noted that the Board agreed that a letter should be issued following FAR recommendation. • CIS Strategy: Following a query from a Board member it was noted by the acting CEO that a draft CIS strategy has been received which CIB will review. The draft strategy reinforces the CIB strategy in a number of areas including face-to-face services and impact metrics. • MABS: A request will be made to the DSP for approval to procure consultancy support to facilitate engagements with the eight regional MABS companies and MABS Support to further define roles and responsibilities and methods of working together. <p>The Chair noted the positive developments and progress made in a number of different areas since the last meeting.</p>
5.	<p>Committee Reports</p>
	<p>(b) Report from the Compliance and Reporting Committee, 11th September</p> <p>The Chair gave a brief update from the Committee meeting, noting volunteers have increased by 6 to 185. It was noted that following Covid, many people are more interested in project-based volunteering and not in long-term volunteer roles.</p> <p>A MABS company continues to retain a loan guarantee fund and has sought a letter of indemnity from CIB and/or the DSP before the fund is transferred to the DSP.</p>

	<p>Twenty-six pension schemes in the SDCs are yet to be transferred to the master trust(s), with an estimated cost of €103,500 for the process to be completed.</p> <p>CIB has received and processed an Incremental Credit Assessment (ICA) application from a MABS company covering a number of years of salary. Noting the budgetary implications, the Committee recommended that incremental credit assessments be considered for a thematic audit in 2025.</p> <p>(a) Report from the Governance Committee, 19th September The Chair indicated that all points relate to closed session for discussion.</p> <p>(b) Report from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, 4th September The Chair of the Committee noted that a letter will have to issue to NT MABS if there is a lack of engagement following the forensic audit, outlining that this may result in withdrawal of funding.</p> <p>The revised mid-year profile was approved at the Committee meeting, and the fraud framework was discussed in detail. This will come back to the FAR once feedback has been incorporated. The Chair attended a recent IPA session, details of which were shared with the Committee. A new external member will join the FAR in October, bringing external members to four.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Finance Matters</p>
	<p>(a) Budget Monitoring Report, August 2024 The budget for 2024 is €61.988m, which is largely an Existing Level of Service (ELS) budget. This budget has changed from €61.713m since the mid-year review process. This increase is due to the 2023 carried forward surplus which DPENDR have approved for use in funding the costs of transferring the SDC occupational pension schemes to a master trust.</p> <p>By the end of August, income had totaled €47.332m, of which €47.214m was Government funding and €118,266 was “other income”. Total expenditure to the end of August was €46.184m, leaving an excess of income over expenditure of €1.148m.</p> <p>The revised profile was approved by the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee on 4 September 2024. In relation to the underspends, €109,445 relates to ICT across a range of different budget lines, €35,085 relates to an the Abhaile Vouchers budget and €61,654 relates to delayed receipt of the cyber insurance renewal invoice.</p> <p>(b) Budget Estimates (update) The Acting CEO said there is no update, which is normal at this time.</p> <p>(c) Procurement (for approval) The evaluation process for the digital strategy tenders was not completed before the FAR Committee meeting took place and so the award of this contract was brought to the Board for approval. It was approved by the Board.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Risk Management</p>

	<p>(a) Risk Register Considerable progress has been made on the risk register. Several changes were made before the last FAR meeting and after. The main changes were adding current mitigants and adding two new risks in relation to climate action and accounting expertise.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Charities Regulator</p>
	<p>(a) Compliance Record Form and Annual Report 2023 The 2023 Annual Report was approved for submission to the Charities Regulator. CIB is unclear if it is appropriate for the organisation to remain on the register and it was agreed that CIB would communicate again with the Charities Regulator in this regard.</p> <p>The Chair noted that correspondence had been received recently from the Committee of Public Accounts, which had been re-issued as it had been sent to a closed email account. The correspondence sought a note on retention of surpluses, which has been provided.</p> <p>The Board discussed governance in the SDCs and noted that a number of live issues should remain on the Board’s agenda. The Chair noted that these issues were of great concern to the Board. The Board agreed that it is accepted that the SDCs provide strong services but also noted that the Board must be accountable for funding issued.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Strategy Review</p>
	<p>The Chair noted the Board has committed to reviewing the strategy. This is the starting point of that review. There has been great progress, and a lot achieved by the executive to date. The values are and remain strong.</p> <p>There are key questions that should be examined at this juncture by the Board: What has changed? What needs to change? How can we be better? How do we position ourselves better?</p> <p>The Acting CEO presented a set of slides for the mid-point review of strategy 2023-2026. The following headings were covered, followed by a lengthy discussion by the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horizon Scan (April 2022) • Strategic Objectives (Service Accessibility & Delivery, Communicate & Engage, Technology & Supports, Oversee & Collaborate, Demonstrate Efficiency and Effectiveness) • Strategy 2023-2026: Progress • Service Development Budget Request for 2025 • Supports • Blockers • Considerations at the Strategy Mid-Point • Values <p>Following this high-level discussion, the Board noted that the organisation continues to be challenged in delivering its strategic ambitions and that there are on-going structural issues. The next steps will be to look discuss in more detail and to consider requirements in an external</p>

	review that will be carried out to assess the strategy and to offer considerations and recommendations to the Board. This will be on the agenda again at the next Board meeting.
10.	Closed Session
	<p>(a) Board Workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board discussed the issues that had been raised at the governance workshop with Dr Niamh Brennan (which took place after the July meeting). It was agreed that time during the next closed session of board was needed to fully consider some of the questions raised by Dr Brennan. <p>(b) CEO Recruitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chair reported on the establishment of the sub-committee on recruitment (comprising: Brid O'Donovan (Chair); Orlagh Nevin and Mary Dorgan. The handbook has now been finalised, with input from DSP. The chair reported on her direct communications with DPER in respect of the revised business case for an upgrade. The Board noted its disappointment with the manner in how the chair's communications had been dealt with by the PO official in this regard. The matter has been brought to the attention of the Minister. The Board agreed that it would await a final, written determination on the revised business case ahead of the commencement of recruitment. <p>(c) Acting CEO Check-in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board noted the verbal report by Brid in respect of the mid-year check in; and in particular the impacts which the temporary acting-up situations across the team (as a result of the CEO vacancy) is having on the organisation. <p>(d) Legal Services Regulatory Authority (LSRA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any Board colleagues with a real or perceived conflict exited the meeting. The Board noted the process for nominations to the LSRA was now completed, under the remit of the Governance Committee. The Board agreed that the conclusions of the process be brought to the attention of the Department of Justice for the Minister's consideration.
11.	Date of next meeting
	The next meeting will be held in-person on Friday, 8 th November.