Board Meeting

Friday, 27th March 2026 10:30am to 1:00pm
In person in George's Quay House

Present: Claire Byrne (acting as Chair), Seamus Smith, Stephen Lycett, Catriona Curtis, Orlagh Nevin, Bríd O'Donovan, Patrick Gibbons, Sarah Harte, Mary Corcoran, Fiona Ward

In attendance: Graham Long, Carmel Beirne, Elsa Flanagan, Rachel Downes, Caroline Mitchell, Katrina Bruna (minutes), Gary Watters (for items 6,7, 8 and 9)

Apologies: Catherine Heaney, Mary Dorgan

Minutes

Item	Agenda Description
1.	**Declaration of Interests**
	The Chair invited Board members to declare any relevant interests. None were declared.
2.	**Board Business and Approval of Agenda**
	The agenda was approved. Apologies were received from Catherine Heaney and Mary Dorgan. Claire Byrne chaired the meeting in the Chairperson's absence.
3.	**Minutes of Previous Meeting**
	The minutes of the meeting, subject to one addition in relation to the Board endorsing the revised internal audit plan, held on 20th February 2026 were proposed by Seamus Smith and seconded by Sarah Harte.
4.	**Report from the Chief Executive and Chair (for discussion)**
	The Chief Executive report was circulated in advance of the meeting. The report was taken as read and the Head of Division ICT, Digital and Data and Head of Division Standards and Development presented to the Board in relation to AskCI and reduction in CIS activity statistics. <u>Citizensinformation.ie Activity</u> • The Chief Executive outlined recent engagement with Google and Microsoft in relation to the use and interpretation of analytics, noting increased search impressions alongside declining click-through rate following the introduction of AI-generated overviews. • Going forward CIB will be including search impressions as a metric for reporting to the Board and DSP. <u>AskCI Pilot Review</u> • The Head of Division ICT, Digital and Data presented an analytics dashboard, emerging trends and accuracy measures since the tool's launch date on 23 December 2025.

	• Usage data indicates strong early uptake, with over 12,000 questions answered since launch and an average of 1.92 questions per session and content and system prompts are being refined on an ongoing basis. • The Board highlighted the opportunity to use AskCI data strategically to identify emerging trends and better understand user needs as usage grows, including more timely insights into query patterns and areas of demand. • The Board agreed that a potential launch date and communications plan should be finalised, alongside a defined development roadmap to support further rollout. July was noted as good timing for alignment with EU presidency. The Executive is progressing plans with the NLI and CSO, date is dependent on availability of keynote speaker/s e.g. Commissioner Michael McGrath. • The Board welcomed the progress to date and acknowledged the significant work delivered by the team. <u>Reduction in CIS Activity Statistics</u> • The Head of Division Standards and Development presented an update on declining CIS activity levels despite estimated unmet demand of 20%. A CIB project group has been examining the issue. A report will be presented at the next Standards and Development Committee meeting. • Contributing factors include inconsistent recording practices, under-recording of time, and increasing case complexity, with a shift from information provision to advocacy work, including language barriers and reduced access to other public services. The Board noted the need to ensure CIB's statistics reflect the increased complexity and time required to support clients. It was acknowledged that comparisons with previous years data are limited, as the service has evolved, with many individuals now accessing basic information (e.g. online or via AI) before engagement, increasing the amount of time information officers spend with the public.
5.	**Committee Reports**
(a)	**Report from the ICT Digital and Data Committee, 27 February** The Chair provided an update on the recent meeting, including a progress update on the Digital Help Service (DHS) project, appointment of new external member Lucas Jeanniot, discussion on approach to engaging audiences that CIB is currently not able to reach. A key discussion focused on the need to move from traditional website engagement measures to more hybrid metrics to better capture the impact of AI tools in search engines. The Chief Executive confirmed that CIB will continue to track existing measures and will include search impressions as an additional metric to provide a more balanced view of the position.
(b)	**Report from the Compliance and Reporting Committee, 4 March** The Chair provided an update on the recent meeting and report. Key items included defining priority areas for the 2026 workplan, progress update on NT MABS action plan to comply with internal audit recommendations, DMA data validation exercise undertaken by MABS as a result of

	duplicate and previously unreported cases, CIPS call abandonment rate leading to significant reputational and service risk, and a review of a health and safety audit findings. The Board acknowledged the excellent work of the Compliance and Reporting Division in progressing the NT MABS action plan, which is close to being resolved. <u>CIPS Call Abandonment Rate</u> The Board discussed the CIPS call abandonment rate. A formal root cause analysis has been requested by CIB from CIPS. The Chief Executive noted that over-subscription of the service without additional staffing and funding is the underlying issue and, while some improvements are possible, the service cannot meet its full demand at existing resource levels. There was a suggestion to direct users with simple queries to AskCI or the website. While this would not significantly change overall call statistics, it could serve as a constructive measure to support service access. <u>DMA Statistics</u> The Board noted the Compliance and Reporting Committee's recommendation to introduce Board sign-off of statistics but highlighted the need to ensure this is a proportionate response. The Board emphasised the importance of balancing stronger oversight with maintaining a culture where issues can be identified and corrected without adding additional layers of approval.
(c)	**Governance Committee, 19 March** The Chair provided an update on the recent meeting, which focused on reviewing Committee reports to ensure they are clearly framed for the Board, considering a draft schedule for rotating chairs for upcoming Board meetings following the end of the Chairperson's term, and reviewing progress on the Board evaluation action plan. Mary Dorgan has agreed to chair the Governance Committee and report to the Board on the Committee's activities in the interim period.
(d)	**Report from the Standards and Development Committee, 20 March** The Chair provided an update on the recent meeting and report. The Committee agreed its priorities for the year, noted positive progress and next steps for the impact metrics project and update on the NAS review. Sarah Harte and Catriona Curtis have joined the Committee. The Committee Chair outlined recent developments and ongoing challenges in relation to the NAS review, and reiterated the efforts made by the Executive and NAS to reach a resolution. The Executive is due to meet with NAS in April. If the issues cannot be resolved, mediation may be considered to support a way forward. The Chair relayed feedback from Joanne Geary in her role on the Data Governance Board under DPER, where citizensinformation.ie was mentioned. The Data Governance Board noted that the

	website is consistently regarded as an excellent resource, including content quality and its approach to data management.
(e)	**Report from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, 18 March** The Chair provided an update on the recent meeting and report, which focused on review and approval of internal audit reports, internal audit plan for 2026, Annual Assurance Report, Annual Financial Statements and Code of Business Conduct update. Further update will be provided by the Finance Manager under Item 6. The Committee will hold a special meeting to discuss risk management items on the agenda. The Committee will review the findings of the risk management formal review 2025 and present key matters and a roadmap to the Board in its next meeting.
6.	**Finance Matters**
(a)	**Budget Monitoring Report, February 2026 (for review)** CIB's budget for 2026 is €69.69m. The Finance Manager provided an update and explained variances. At the end of February, CIB had an excess of income over expenditure of €992k.
(b)	**Annual Financial Statements and Statement on Internal Control (for approval)** <u>2025 Draft Annual Financial Statements</u> • Draft 2025 AFS were presented to the Board for review and approval. The Finance Manager provided an overview and noted one change made after the March FAR Committee meeting. • The Board requested that the list of Standards and Development Committee members be updated to include the two new members. • Subject to the amendment above, the 2025 Annual Financial Statements were proposed by Seamus Smith and seconded by Patrick Gibbons. <u>Summary of CIB Management internal control questionnaire responses</u> • This document contains internal controls overall review by CIB management in response to internal controls questionnaires. <u>2025 Statement on Internal Control internal audit report</u> • 2025 Sumer NI report on the effectiveness of internal controls in CIB was presented to the Board for approval. This report contains no red findings, two orange findings and one green finding with an overall assurance rating of satisfactory. The findings covered the areas of purchasing and fraud awareness training. • The Board approved the 2025 Statement on Internal Control, noted the high quality of the report and commended the work of Sumer NI internal auditors. <u>2025 Annual Assurance Report</u> • The 2025 Annual Assurance Report was presented to the Board for review and approval. Overall, the report provided a satisfactory rating for CIB and a satisfactory rating for the SDCs.

	• The Board acknowledged the significant improvement and efforts by the SDCs to achieve these outcomes and the work of the Compliance and Reporting Division in supporting them. <u>2025 Letter of representation</u> • A draft letter of representation based on the C&AG template updated for 2025 was presented to the Board for review and approval. This will be submitted to the C&AG during the 2025 audit process and will come to the Board for review again. The Board approved the letter of representation. <u>Pensions Disclosure Explanatory Note</u> • Pensions disclosure note outlining the movement in the overall CIB pension liability and asset was provided to aid the review of the AFS.
(c)	**Procurement (for approval)** The Board's approval was sought for the following procurements: • Approval to award contract for Dynamics Support for 4 years and budget of €2.088m through an OGP mini competition at OJEU level. • Approval to award contract for shortlisting, temporary placement and related services for 7 years and budget of €350,000. Following a query regarding the company's use of AI, the Executive assured the Board that human intervention is essential, and approach to AI had to be outlined in the tender process. The Board approved both requests.
7.	**Risk Management**
(a)	**Strategic Risks (for review)** Updates to CIB's strategic risk register, containing eleven risks, were presented to the Board for review. Comments were added to four risks, and a mitigant was added to the adverse publicity risk as requested at the February Board meeting. The Board discussed how they can ensure Risk can be given specific focus at a meeting. The FAR Chair noted that this was part of the Risk Management Review which is being brought to the FAR at the Risk specific FAR meeting on April 21. An update will be provided at next Board meeting. There was a suggestion that where comments are added on a risk, a link to the relevant risk could be included, similar to the approach used in the summary slides. The hyperlinks inserted into summary slides leading to relevant documents in the Document Library were noted as very helpful.
(b)	**Risk Register (for review)** The Finance Manager provided an overview of the top organisational risks as well as changes since February 2026.
8.	**2027 Estimates (for discussion)**

	This item was discussed after Item 9. The Board discussed the proposed approach to strategic business cases for the 2027 budget request, and the Chief Executive provided an overview of the previous budget request. It was noted that the ELS was achieved for 2026 and business cases for two premises relocations were approved. Other requests for additional funding were not successful. CIB has made progress on a number of fronts ahead of Budget 2027, including in having no management letter for 2025, 0.09% underspend in 2025, and improvements in SDC audit ratings and compliance. The structure for the 2027 budget request will consist of: • Executive Summary • Existing Level of Service (ELS) • CIB business cases • SDC business cases Feedback from the Board included: • The need for a clear narrative and roadmap that sets out a coherent, multi-channel approach and highlights CIB's role as a trusted source of information • Clear alignment with Government strategies and wider budget priorities • The need to present strong evidence bases and to clearly outline the impact of previous funding constraints, including projects that could not proceed and the impact this had on service delivery, ability to meet objectives and deliver mandate • Business cases should be grounded in operational and financial realities and clearly articulate the expected benefit
9.	**Board Governance (for approval)**
	This item was discussed after Item 7.
(a)	**Code of Business Conduct: various updates** The Executive presented an updated version of the Code of Business Conduct based on legislative changes and governance best practice since the previous review in 2022. The Code was reviewed by the FAR Committee on 18 March, and key changes relate to strengthened governance and conflict of interest procedures. The Board approved the revised Code of Business Conduct. It will be circulated to all staff to highlight changes.
(b)	**Code of Practice for Board Members, Chairperson, Chief Executive and Secretary: Staff Nominee Role** Good progress was noted in implementing the action plan arising from the recommendations of the external Board evaluation conducted by the Institute of Directors Ireland (IoD). The Executive presented the following draft documentation:

	• Role specification for the CIB Staff Nominee on the Board • Nomination and election procedure The Board discussed the participation of the Staff Nominee on Committees. It was noted that, given the nature of the Committee structures and their functions, such participation would give rise to an inherent conflict of interest, as the Committees' remit includes elements of evaluation and review of performance across CIB divisions and respective Heads of Division. The Board requested that the section be clarified. The section will be amended to set out the rationale, namely, to protect the individual in their capacity as a staff member and nominee, to safeguard members of the Senior Management Team, and to maintain the independence of Committees. The Board approved the documentation subject to the amendment outlined above and noted that this documentation represents a positive development from a good governance perspective. <u>Update on Board Recruitment</u> CIB has received confirmation from the DSP that an update on the recruitment of Ordinary Members and the Chairperson through PAS will be available shortly.
	Date of next meeting
	The next meeting with take place off-site. Date and location TBC pending confirmation of the Minister's availability. <u>Strategy Development Follow-up Meeting with Grant Thornton</u> It was agreed that the meeting will take place online on 14 April from 8:30am to 9:30am.