

**Minutes of Board Meeting No. 122 held on Monday 10 November 2025  
at Marlborough House, Craigavon.**

**Present:**

Gerard McCurdy, Chief Commissioner (Chair)  
Aoife Hamilton, Deputy Chief Commissioner  
Hugh McKeag, Charity Commissioner  
Kieran Donaghy, Charity Commissioner  
Leanne McCullough, Charity Commissioner  
Alan Hunter, Charity Commissioner  
Patricia Kelly, Legal Commissioner

**In Attendance:**

Frances McCandless, Chief Executive  
Punam McGookin, Head of Charity Services  
Rossa Keown, Head of Compliance and Enquiries  
Aubrey McCrory, Head of Corporate Services  
David McGurk, Finance & Admin Officer  
Jame Walsh, Enquires Manager, Item 5a

**Apologies:**

None

The meeting commenced at 9.30am.

**1. Minutes of Board Meeting 121, 22 September 2025**

Following discussion, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 22 September 2025 were agreed as a true and correct record and to be published on the website, as proposed by Alan Hunter and seconded by Leanne McCullough. The Board noted the progress of the Action Points from the last meeting as highlighted by the Chief Executive.

**AP1: Minutes of Board Meeting No 121, 22 September 2025 to be published on CCNI website.**

**2. Conflicts of Interest**

None.

**3. Chair's Business, Correspondence and Meetings**

The Chair outlined a recent Chairs' forum event and an assurance meeting with John Smith, Deputy Secretary, Department for Communities (DfC). The Board noted sponsor department's commitment to provide capital funding for the new office accommodation lease. A report on the mid-year Performance Appraisal Committee meeting with the CEX was provided. The Board noted significant work already completed and following discussion of prioritising corporate resources, it was agreed that the HR Committee would be held twice yearly for a year, as proposed by Kieran Donaghy and seconded by Aoife Hamilton.

**AP2: TOR for HR Committee to be amended to reflect twice-yearly meetings until 2027-28.**

#### **4. Chief Executive's Report**

The Chief Executive introduced her report and noted current issues, meetings attended and circulars. Plans for a public meeting and speaker in January were agreed. The Board noted a recent Charity Tribunal determination on a reference made by the Commission. Following discussion of the risks and implications it was agreed to lodge an appeal, as proposed by Patricia Kelly and seconded by Alan Hunter. Plans to reexamine the Commission's baseline budget were discussed.

Following a briefing on the background to Section 167 of the Charities Act (NI) 2008 relating to charities operating in Northern Ireland but based elsewhere, the Board discussed sponsor department's proposals to amend and commence this section. The Board identified a number of concerns and asked the Chief Executive to write to the Department to express its views.

**AP3: CEx to share the DAO letter on judicial review with the Board.**

**AP4: Commission to commence appeal of Charity Tribunal decision on Commission reference.**

**AP5: CEx to write to DfC about Board's views on Section 167.**

#### **5. Policies and Processes**

James Walsh joined the meeting at 10.20am

##### **a. Concerns Risk Assessment Template Demo**

The Heads of Corporate Services and Compliance & Enquiries Manager outlined the development of the Commission's risk-based approach to regulation in recent years. James Walsh introduced proposed changes to how risk is assessed when a concern about a charity is submitted. Following a demonstration of how a concern would be assessed, the Board agreed to integrate the Concerns Risk Assessment Template and associated framework into the Board-approved Enquiries Manual, as proposed by Kieran Donaghy and seconded by Alan Hunter.

**AP6: Concerns Risk Assessment Template and associated framework to be integrated into the Board approved Enquiries manual.**

James Walsh left the meeting 11.00am

##### **b. Reasonable adjustments policy**

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the paper and gave an overview of handling requests for reasonable adjustments. Several queries were addressed and following discussion and noting this was primarily internal guidance for staff, the approach was agreed subject to minor amendments and further engagement by the Board as proposed by Aoife Hamilton seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

**AP7: Staff training to be undertaken and reasonable adjustments guidance for staff introduced.**

**AP8: Further enhancement of guidance to be discussed with representative groups.**

**c. Board Effectiveness Action Plan**

The Chief Executive introduced the updated action plan. The Board noted the actions following feedback from appraisals and, after discussion, agreed the amended plan as proposed by Leanne McCullough and seconded by Aoife Hamilton. It was further agreed that an external speaker would attend the February or March Board meeting, as proposed by Leanne McCullough and seconded by Hugh McKeag.

**AP9: Board Effectiveness Action Plan to be updated.**

**AP10: Chief Executive to identify potential speakers for February/March Board.**

**d. Strategic plan consultation report**

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the report and provided an overview of the twelve-week consultation on the 2026-29 draft strategic plan, noting the very positive feedback received. The Board considered each of the nineteen recommendations from the consultation in detail and agreed all but one, with related actions to be progressed in annual business plans, as proposed by Kieran Donaghy seconded by Aoife Hamilton.

**AP11: Strategic plan document to be developed reflecting Board decision.**

**AP12: Consultation report to be finalised for publication pending approval of the finalised strategic plan.**

**e. Initial Draft Business Plan 2026-27**

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the initial draft plan highlighting links with the 2026-29 Strategic Plan. The Board discussed the priorities and planning assumptions at this time and noted further drafting will be undertaken for Board consideration in February next year.

**AP13 Revised draft business plan to be brought to the February Board meeting along with strategic plan.**

**f. Communications and engagement update**

The Head of Charity Services introduced the paper and provided an overview of activities, including website and social media trends, which the Board noted. After addressing queries and discussing the implications of closing some of the Commission's social media profiles, the Board agreed to retain and apply a redirect message to one profile, and to review the overall position at the February Board meeting.

**AP:14 Report on social media usage to February Board meeting.**

### **g. Review of hospitality register**

The Board noted the entries in the hospitality register for the past twelve months. It was further noted that this report will be presented to the Board annually and to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) on a quarterly basis.

### **AP15: Finalise and publish the hospitality register on the website.**

### **h. Research strategy update**

The Head of Charity Services introduced the paper and outlined progress on various actions, which the Board noted. It was also noted that a small-scale follow-up survey of charities is being undertaken to gather additional information on charity income following the most recent register research report.

### **i. Stakeholder forum update**

The Deputy Chief Commissioner introduced the update from the last Stakeholder Forum held on 22 October 2025, highlighting various aspects discussed at the forum and the overall positive feedback received which the Board noted.

### **j. Update on scheme of delegation implementation**

The Head of Charity Services and Head of Compliance and Enquiries provided details of updating manuals and implementation which the Board noted.

## **6. Reports from Committees**

### **Schedule 1 Decisions**

#### **a. Three Commissioners Committee**

- 22 August 2025 Noted
- 19 September 2025 Noted

## **7. Corporate Services Report**

The Head of Corporate Services introduced their report highlighting various strategic issues and challenges. The Board noted the recent in-year bids made at short notice and overall budget spend. Contingency arrangements to ensure legal advice were noted, and progress on the business plan and piloting artificial intelligence welcomed.

## **8. Charity Services Report**

The Head of Charity Services introduced their report noting various casework progress, trends and details of high-profile cases, which the Board noted.

## **9. Compliance and Enquiries Report**

The Head of Compliance and Enquiries introduced their report and gave an update on current high-profile concerns. Following discussion, the Board decided that follow up from a case be brought to Schedule 1 committee as proposed by Kieran Donaghy seconded by Hugh McKeag.

### **AP16: Enquiries case follow-up to be brought to Schedule 1 for decision.**

**10. Issues for next meeting**

The Chair noted the following items are likely to be included at the next meeting on 15 December 2025:

- Legal update
- Registration manual update
- Update on retention and disposal
- Lease
- Potentially Threshold regulations.

**11. AOB**

None.

Meeting ended at 12.40pm

### Register of Outstanding Action Points

Board Meeting and Action Point Number	Date Raised	Agenda Item	Action	Owners	Status (target)
122(1)	10/11/2025	1	Minutes of Board Meeting No 121, 22 September 2025 to be published on CCNI website.	Comms	Completed
122(2)	10/11/2025	3	TOR for HR Committee to be amended to reflect twice-yearly meetings until 2027-28.	HCorpS	Complete
122(3)	10/11/2025	4	CEx to share the DAO letter on judicial review with the Board.	CEx	Complete
122(4)	10/11/2025	4	Commission to commence appeal of Charity Tribunal decision on Commission reference.	CEx	Ongoing (Q3 25/26)
122(5)	10/11/2025	4	CEx to write to DfC about Board's views on Section 167.	CEx	Complete
122(6)	10/11/2025	5a	Concerns Risk Assessment Template and associated framework to be integrated into the Board approved Enquiries manual.	HCE	Ongoing (Q3 25/26)
122(7)	10/11/2025	5b	Staff training to be undertaken and reasonable adjustments guidance for staff introduced.	HCorpS	Complete
122(8)	10/11/2025	5b	Further enhancement of guidance to be discussed with representative groups.	Policy Manager	Ongoing (Q4 25/26)
122(9)	10/11/2025	5c	Board Effectiveness Action Plan to be updated.	CEx	Complete

122(10)	10/11/2025	5c	Chief Executive to identify potential speakers for February/March Board.	CEx	Ongoing (Q3 25/26)
122(11)	10/11/2025	5d	Strategic plan document to be developed reflecting Board decision.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q4 25/26)
122(12)	10/11/2025	5d	Consultation report to be finalised for publication pending approval of the finalised strategic plan.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q4 25/26)
122(13)	10/11/2025	5e	Revised draft business plan to be brought to the February Board meeting along with strategic plan.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q4 25/26)
122(14)	10/11/2025	5f	Report on social media usage to February Board meeting.	Comms	Ongoing (Q4 25/26)
122(15)	10/11/2025	5g	Finalise and publish the hospitality register on the website.	Comms	Complete
122(16)	10/11/2025	9	Enquiries case follow-up to be brought to Schedule 1 for decision.	HCE	Ongoing (Q3 25/26)
121(2)	22/09/2025	3	Commissioners to discuss common points from recent appraisals at a future meeting.	Commissioners	Complete
120(9)	23/06/2025	7	AI Pilot Policy to be implemented	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q4 25/26)
120(10)	23/06/2025	7	Commission to seek to participate in SIB and DfC AI Pilots.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q3 25/26)
118(5)	24/03/2025	5a	Amended manuals and related SIG to be implemented.	HCS	Ongoing (Q3 25/26)
118(6)	24/03/2025	5a	Scheme of Delegation assurance checks to be implemented.	HCS	Ongoing (Q3 25/26)

117(4)	03/02/2025	5d	Additional proportionate process to be put in place to identify and address any open amendment clauses relating to registered charities.	HCS	Ongoing (Q3 25/26)
116(6)	16/12/2024	5c	Retention schedule to be fully updated and brought to the February board meeting.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q3 25/26)
116(9)	16/12/2024	6c	Staff to be briefed and updated information security to be implemented.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q3 25/26)
115(8)	11/11/2024	5f	Explore sending newsletter to charity contact emails and discuss options for developing regular communication with the sector with the Stakeholder Forum.	Comms Officer	Ongoing (Q3 25/26)
115(10)	11/11/2024	6b	A review of hybrid working policy to be undertaken following office relocation.	HR Cttee	Ongoing (Q4 25/26)
104(2)	27/03/2023	3	Litigation to be progressed in line with legal advice.	Chair/CE x	Ongoing (32-25/26)
102 (10)	19/12/2022	5f	Action plan including disposal schedule to be implemented.	HCorpS	Underway (Q4-24/25)
98 (7)	16/05/2022	5e	Training in complaint handling and dealing with trauma to be arranged.	CEx/ HCorpS	Trauma element Complete Complaint handling (Q3 25-26)
94 (3)	15/11/21	5a	Corporate Social Responsibility policy to be developed as part of the next strategic planning process.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q4 25/26)