

**Minutes of Board Meeting No. 106 held on Monday 26 June 2023
at Marlborough House, Craigavon.**

Present:

Gerard McCurdy - Chair (Interim Chief Commissioner)
Hugh McKeag, Charity Commissioner
Patricia Kelly, Legal Commissioner
Kieran Donaghy, Charity Commissioner
Séamus Magee, Charity Commissioner

In Attendance:

Frances McCandless, Chief Executive
Punam McGookin, Head of Charity Services
Aubrey McCrory, Head of Corporate Services
Rossa Keown, Head of Compliance and Enquiries
Emma O'Neill (Boardroom Apprentice)
David McGurk, Minutes.
Nicola Fisher, Finance and Admin Manager, item 5c.
Shirley Kernan, Communications Officer, item 5d.
Conor Creaney, Casework Manager, item 5g.
Samantha Murdock, Temporary Casework Manager, item 5g.
Colleen Gallagher, Legal Advisor, item 5i.

Apologies:

Alan Hunter, Charity Commissioner

The meeting commenced at 9.30am and the Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Minutes of Board Meeting 105, Monday 15 May 2023

Following discussion, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 15 May 2023 were agreed as a true and correct record as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Patricia Kelly. 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 105, Monday 15 May 2023 to be published on CCNI website.

2. Conflicts of Interest

The Chair noted no conflicts at this time.

3. Chair's Business, Correspondence and Meetings

The Chair updated the Board on recent meetings and correspondence, and it was agreed the Board would meet with SMT following the Board meeting in either September or November, depending on availability. The Chair noted sponsor department had confirmed a 5% cut to the resource budget and the Board noted the challenges that will come with this. The Chair noted this would be Séamus Magee's last meeting as member of the Board and also

noted this would be the Board Apprentice, Emma O'Neill's last Board meeting. Emma thanked everyone for the amazing opportunity and her board mentor Hugh McKeag.

AP2: Board to meet with SMT following Board meeting in September or November depending on availability.

4. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive introduced her report giving an update on work to assess the consequences of the recent confirmation of the resource budget cut and sponsor department's provision for litigation costs. The Chief Executive gave an update on litigation and outlined progress on the Report to those Charged with Governance. Arrangements for the Board Apprentice Scheme in the coming year were confirmed. An update on Board appointments which are being progressed by sponsor team was given.

AP3: Board Apprentice Scheme 'Buddy' to be appointed for the new Board Apprentice.

5. Policies and Processes

a. Strategic and business plans

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the updated draft strategic plan 2023-26 and business plan 2023-24 and provided an overview noting various assumptions and planned outputs based on information in agenda item 5b. The Board discussed the latest drafts and noted reductions in service activity of 30-40% in many areas reflecting both budget reduction and the need to resource priority recommendations from the Minister's Independent Review of Charity Regulation for the Commission to also progress. A range of comments on resourcing constraints were made and in light of the expected reduction in service levels and additional work to deliver recommendations amendments to the foreword were suggested. The Board commended the Head of Corporate Services on the draft strategic and business plans, which were agreed for submission to sponsor department, subject to minor amendments, as proposed by Séamus Magee and seconded by Hugh McKeag.

AP 4: Strategic Plan 2023-26 and Business Plan 2023-24 to be submitted to sponsor department subject to minor amendments.

b. Budget options paper

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the paper and highlighted the three strategic plan resource options previously considered by the Board. Following discussion of the 5% resource reduction this year a slightly amended option 2, where the Commission aims to deliver aspects of the change agenda with reduced service levels, was agreed by the Board as proposed by Séamus Magee and seconded by Kieran Donaghy. The Board also agreed to make clear in the cover letter to sponsor department that the Commission cannot deliver all the independent review recommendations that fall to it and maintain services due to the budget cuts falling across all government departments. In addition, sponsor department has the lead role to manage expectations in the charity sector about the extent and pace of change it has resource to deliver.

AP5: Cover letter to Department to reflect Board's views on delivery expectations.

The Finance and Admin Manager joined the meeting at 10.35am.

c. Annual Report and Accounts

The Finance and Admin Manager introduced the final draft 2022-23 Annual Report and Accounts, detailing a number of additions and amendments identified by external audit since the last meeting in May, and questions from the Board were addressed. The Head of Corporate Services highlighted several changes to the annual report arising from audit work. The 2022-23 Annual Report and Accounts were agreed, subject to a minor amendment, as proposed by Kieran Donaghy and seconded by Patricia Kelly. The Board noted the Chair and Chief Executive would sign a 'clean' copy of the Annual Report and Accounts following the Board meeting.

AP6: Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive to sign a 'clean' copy of the finalised Annual Report and Accounts.

AP7: Annual Report and Accounts to be submitted to sponsor team to be laid in the Assembly.

The Finance and Admin Manager left the meeting at 10.50am

The Communications Officer joined the meeting at 10.55am

d. Comms Strategy

The Communications Officer introduced her report and gave an overview of the Communications Strategy 2023-26 and the annual Communications Plan 2023-24, highlighting various objectives for the three-year strategy and addressing questions from the Board. Following discussion, the Board were content to adopt the communications strategy and annual plan as proposed by Kieran Donaghy and seconded by Hugh McKeag.

The Communications Officer left the meeting at 11.05am

AP8: Update on Communications Strategy and action plan progression to October Board meeting.

e. Engagement Strategy

The Head of Charity Services introduced the strategy outlining various aspects and addressing queries. Following discussion the engagement strategy was agreed by the Board as proposed by Séamus Magee and seconded by Patricia Kelly.

f. Annual progress report to Equality Commission NI

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the report highlighting various aspects and a number of queries were addressed. The Board agreed the progress report, subject to minor amendments, as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

AP9: Annual progress report to be submitted to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

The Casework Manager and temporary Casework Manager joined the meeting at 11.35am

g. Religious designation component elements policy

The Casework Manager gave an overview of the policy approach in England, Wales and Scotland and addressed a number of queries. Following discussion the Board agreed the policy approach as proposed by Patricia Kelly and seconded by Kieran Donaghy. The Chair noted this was the Casework Manager's final day with the Commission and the Board expressed their thanks for all his service.

AP10: Religious designation component elements policy to be implemented.

The Casework Manager and temporary Casework Manager left the meeting at 11.45am

h. CEx performance objectives

Following discussion, minor suggested changes to the objectives for the year were agreed by the Chair and Chief Executive.

Legal Advisor joined the meeting at 11.50am

i. Legal advice re decision making

The Legal Advisor introduced her paper outlining various aspects of counsel's opinion on the potential Scheme of Delegation and gave a summary of how this could affect the Commission. It was noted the Board wanted as much certainty as possible on decision making and it was important to be aware of sponsor department's legal advice. The Board agreed to share the legal advice with DfC.

AP11: Sponsor department to be asked to share its legal opinion on a potential scheme of delegation.

Legal Advisor left the meeting at 12.10pm

j. Independent counsel action plan update

The Board noted the update.

k. Stakeholder forum update

The Board noted the update.

l. Review of hospitality register (last 6 months)

The Board noted the update.

6. Reports from Committees

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

a. Minutes of meeting No 56 – 9 May 2023

Following discussion, the minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance (A&RA) meeting held on 9 May 2023 were approved for publication, as proposed by Gerard McCurdy and seconded by Séamus Magee.

AP12: Minutes of A&RA Committee No 56 – 9 May 2023 to be published on the website.

b. Draft 2023-24 Corporate Risk Register

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the Corporate Risk Register related to the delivery of the 2023-24 Business Plan which was agreed by the Board as proposed by Séamus Magee and seconded by Gerard McCurdy.

HR Committee

c. Minutes of meeting No 37 – 15 February 2023

Following discussion, the minutes of the HR meeting held on 15 February 2023 were approved for publication, as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

AP13: Minutes of HR Committee No 37 – 15 February 2023 to be published on the website.

d. Review of the HR Committee Terms of Reference

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the outcome of the review of the committee's terms of reference, which was discussed and changes agreed by the Board as proposed by Kieran Donaghy and seconded by Hugh McKeag.

AP14: Amended HR Committee terms of reference to be implemented.

e. HR policy development Staff Handbook – Travel and Subs

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the proposal to develop the Travel and Subsistence policy, which was discussed and agreed by the Board as proposed by Kieran Donaghy and seconded by Hugh McKeag.

AP15: Amended travel and subsistence policy to be implemented.

Schedule 1 Decisions

Note of Schedule 1 Committee – 12 May 2023

Decisions were noted.

Commissioner registration decisions 10 May 2023

Decisions were noted.

Commissioner registration decisions 07 June 2023

Decisions were noted.

Schedule 1 committee June 2023

The Chair and Patricia Kelly declared potential conflicts of interest and recused themselves from discussion. Commissioners noted advice on communications had been received and this was accepted.

7. Charity Services Report

The Head of Charity Services introduced her report and highlighted a number of aspects. The Board discussed and agreed a minor amendment to the version control protocol which was agreed as proposed by Gerard McCurdy and seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

AP16: Amended version control protocol to be implemented.

8. Compliance and Enquiries Report

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the report and gave an update on various cases and complaints which the Board noted. Hugh McKeag recused himself from discussion on a particular case due to a potential conflict of Interest.

9. Corporate Service Report

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the report and gave an update on budget spend and various HR performance issues which the Board noted. Patricia Kelly noted the Recruitment & Selection Training on 23 June 2023 was very good and worthwhile.

10. Issues for next meeting

The Chair noted the following items to be included at the next meeting on 25 September 2023:

- Assurance statement
- Issues from A&RA
- MSFM Review
- Legal update
- Review records management, retention and disposal policy
- Legal manual review
- Update to M&C manual
- Annual review of Board Operating Framework, Code of Conduct, Standing Orders
- PSNI MOU

11. AOB

The Board acknowledged this was Séamus Magee's final Board meeting and thanked him for over eight years of service, including chairing the A&RA committee during this time. Séamus expressed his pleasure working with previous and current Board members and recognised the hard work and commitment of the Commission's staff team.

Hugh McKeag sent his apologies for the next Board meeting on 25 September 2023.

Meeting ended at 12.35 pm

Register of Outstanding Action Points

Board Meeting and Action Point Number	Date Raised	Agenda Item	Action	Owners	Status (target)
106(1)	26/06/2023	1	Minutes of Board Meeting No 105, 15 May 2023 to be published on CCNI website	Comms	Complete
106(2)	26/06/2023	3	Board to meet with SMT following Board meeting in September or November depending on availability.	CEx	Ongoing (Q3 23/24)
106(3)	26/06/2023	4	Board Apprentice Scheme 'Buddy' to be appointed for the new Board Apprentice	CEx	Complete
106(4)	26/06/2023	5a	Strategic Plan 2023-26 and Business Plan 2023-24 to be submitted to sponsor department subject to minor amendments.	HCorpS	Complete
106(5)	26/06/2023	5b	Cover letter to Department to reflect Board's views on delivery expectations	HCorpS	Complete
106(6)	26/06/2023	5c	Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive to sign a 'clean' copy of the finalised Annual Report and Accounts	CEx	Complete
106(7)	26/06/2023	5c	Annual Report and Accounts to be submitted to sponsor team to be laid in the Assembly.	HCorpS	Complete
106(8)	26/06/2023	5d	Update on Communications Strategy and action plan progression to October Board meeting	HCorpS	Complete
106(9)	26/06/2023	5f	Annual progress report to be submitted to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.	HCorpS	Complete
106(10)	26/06/2023	5g	Religious designation component elements policy to be implemented.	HChS	Ongoing (Q2 23/24)

106(11)	26/06/2023	5i	Sponsor department to be asked to share its legal opinion on a potential scheme of delegation.	HChS	Complete
106(12)	26/06/2023	6a	Minutes of A&RA Committee No 56 – 9 May 2023 to be published on the website.	Comms	Complete
106(13)	26/06/2023	6c	Minutes of HR Committee No 37 – 15 February 2023 to be published on the website.	Comms	Complete
106(14)	26/06/2023	6d	Amended HR Committee terms of reference to be implemented.	HCorpS	Complete
106(15)	26/06/2023	6e	Amended travel and subsistence policy to be implemented.	HCorpS	Complete
106(16)	26/06/2023	7	Amended version control protocol to be implemented.	HChS	Complete
105(5)	15/05/2023	5b	Monitoring and Compliance Manual to be updated with four new compliance failure themes and related scenarios	HC&E	Ongoing (Q3 23/24)
105(7)	15/05/2023	5e	Option 2 to phase out the Combined list to be progressed	HChS	Ongoing (Q2 23/24)
104(2)	27/03/2023	3	Litigation to be progressed in line with legal advice.	CEx	Ongoing (Q2 23/24)
104(4)	27/03/2023	3	Commission to write to Assembly Communities Committee members regarding future plans.	Comms	Ongoing (Q2 23/24)
104(7)	27/03/2023	5a	Amendments to be made to values and Consultation Feedback Report prior to publication.	Policy Manager	Complete
104(10)	27/03/2023	5c	Further training on equality for staff and Commissioners to be arranged.	HCorpsS	Ongoing (Q2 23/24)
104(18)	27/03/2023	6f	Draft HR Committee minutes to be circulated for agreement by correspondence going forward and brought to subsequent Board meeting.	HCorpS	Complete
104(19)	27/03/2023	6h	Hybrid working pilot to be extended by 6 months	HCorpsS	Complete

104(22)	27/03/2023	7	Publication policy version 7.0 to be implemented going forward	HChS	Ongoing (Q2 23/24)
102 (8)	19/12/2022	5e	A review of accommodation to be undertaken in early 2023.	HCorpS	Underway (Q3-23/24)
102 (9)	19/12/2022	5e	Resource returns and a strategic resource business case to be prepared and submitted to sponsor team based on option 3.	HCorpS	Complete
102 (10)	19/12/2022	5f	Action plan including disposal schedule to be implemented.	HCorpS	Underway (Q4-23/24)
100(10)	26/09/2022	6d	Risk Workshop to be planned for later this year or early next year.	HCorpS	Underway (Q2-23/24)
99 (8)	27/06/2022	5d	Identify unit cost of registrations	HChS	Complete
98 (7)	16/05/2022	5e	Training in complaint handling and dealing with trauma to be arranged.	CEx/ HCorpS	Trauma element Complete
94 (3)	15/11/21	5a	Corporate Social Responsibility policy to be developed as part of the next strategic planning process.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q4-23/24)
90(8)	17/05/21	5d	Impact of the Stakeholder Forum to be measured via the Research Strategy.	HChS	Ongoing (Q4-23/24)
90(10)	17/05/21	6b	Information on other regulators' risk register approaches to be collated for Board risk workshop.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q2-23/24)