

**Minutes of Board Meeting No. 116 held on Monday 16 December 2024  
at Marlborough House, Craigavon.**

**Present:**

Gerard McCurdy, Chair (Chief Commissioner)  
Aoife Hamilton, Deputy Chief Commissioner  
Alan Hunter, Charity Commissioner  
Hugh McKeag, Charity Commissioner  
Kieran Donaghy, Charity Commissioner  
Patricia Kelly, Legal Commissioner  
Leanne McCullough, Charity 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, Minutes  
Colleen Gallagher, Legal Advisor – Item 5b

The meeting commenced at 10.00am.

**1. Minutes of Board Meeting 115, 11 November 2024**

Following discussion, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 11 November 2024 were agreed as a true and correct record, subject to minor amendment, as proposed by Leanne McCullough and seconded by Alan Hunter. 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 115, 11 November 2024 to be published on CCNI website.**

**2. Conflicts of Interest**

Leanne McCullough declared a potential perceived conflict and indicated she would leave the meeting for item 5b. Patricia Kelly and Hugh McKeag noted previously highlighted potential perceived conflicts relating to organisations mentioned in papers that were for information.

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

The Chair noted the positive outcome of his recent appraisal by the head of sponsor team and gave an outline of a recent Arm's Length Bodies Chairs' Forum convened by Department for Communities (DfC) which covered risk, procurement and a board governance case study. Commissioners noted changes to the agenda running order following feedback and noted the Equality Commission will attend the next board meeting to give a presentation on governance and equality obligations.

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

The Chief Executive introduced her report highlighting correspondence from the Assembly Committee for Communities, pending steps within sponsor department regarding a scheme of delegation, and details of a new appeal to the Charity Tribunal. Work by sponsor team to identify suitable new Commission accommodation and option assessment were outlined. The Board welcomed the clean audit outcome from the first Internal Audit assignment and commended staff. Following a query the Chief Executive agreed to liaise with Counsel on outstanding advice.

**AP2: Legal advice related to tribunal appeal to be circulated.**

**AP3: Commission to provide assistance to DfC on potential accommodation options.**

**AP4: CEx to liaise with Counsel on outstanding advice.**

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

##### **a. Draft Business Plan 2025-26**

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the updated draft plan following Board feedback in November. A series of queries were addressed and, following discussion, it was agreed to submit the draft 2024/25 Business Plan to DfC as per the requirements of the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum, subject to minor amendment, as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Alan Hunter.

**AP5: Amended draft 2025-26 Business Plan to be submitted to sponsor department.**

Leanne McCullough left, and Colleen Gallagher joined the meeting at 10.45am.

##### **b. DPOANI – Legally Privileged**

The meeting held discussion in camera at this point. Commissioners agreed the initial recommendations in the paper and agreed to postpone two of the decisions.

Leanne McCullough re-joined, and Colleen Gallagher left the meeting at 11.25am.

##### **c. Records Management Changes**

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the update and outlined a series of proposed high-level changes to the records management and retention policy approach identified in discussions with Charity Commission for England & Wales and sponsor department. Following discussion, the changes in approach outlined were agreed, as proposed by Kieran Donaghy and seconded by Patricia Kelly. It was noted detailed work on the retention schedule would now be undertaken with staff, and a fully updated schedule would be brought to the February board meeting for approval.

**AP6: Retention schedule to be fully updated and brought to the February board meeting.**

**d. Stakeholder Forum update and review**

The Head of Charity Services introduced the update highlighting various aspects of the review which the Board noted. Following discussion of the operational focus of the forum, the recommendation to amend the Terms of Reference (TOR) was agreed as proposed by Kieran Donaghy and seconded by Aoife Hamilton.

**AP7: Stakeholder Forum TOR to be amended.**

**e. Policy Development Plan progress report**

The Head of Charity Services introduced the report and outlined various key aspects of the plan. The Board noted progress in the first three quarters of the current year.

**6. Reports from Committees**

**Audit & Risk Assurance Committee**

**a. Minutes of meeting No 63 – 26 November 2024**

Following discussion, the minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance (A&RA) meeting held on 26 November 2024 were approved for publication, subject to minor amendment, as proposed by Alan Hunter and seconded by Leanne McCullough.

**AP8: Minutes of A&RA Committee No 63 – 26 November 2024 to be published on the website.**

**b. Corporate Risk Register**

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the Corporate Risk Register and highlighted two proposed changes to risk ratings. Following discussion by Commissioners the revised risk register was agreed as proposed by Hugh McKeag seconded by Leanne McCullough.

**c. Review of Information Security policy**

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the paper and the key changes being proposed. Following discussion, the Board agreed the changes to the existing information security policy, subject to minor amendment, as proposed by Hugh McKeag seconded by Alan Hunter.

**AP9: Staff to be briefed and updated information security to be implemented.**

**d. Review of Concerns about the Commission policy**

The outcome of the review which recommended no change to the existing policy was agreed as proposed by Hugh McKeag seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

**Schedule 1 Decisions**

**e. Three Commissioners Committee**

None

#### **f. Sole Commissioner Registration Decisions**

- 15 November 2024
  - 24 November 2024
- Noted

#### **7. Corporate Services Report**

The Head of Corporate Services introduced their report highlighting results of recently completed recruitment exercises, progress on budget spend and business plan trends. Additional information regarding staff complement and strategic issues was welcomed by Commissioners.

#### **8. Charity Services Report**

The Head of Charity Services introduced their report noting casework progress and key developments relating to DfC's planned legislative programme and timetable. Following discussion, it was noted a paper would be brought to the next meeting on the likely contents of a Charities Bill. The Board noted the development of a networking opportunity for legal staff with counterparts in CCEW.

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

The Head of Compliance and Enquiries introduced their report and gave an update on cases and high-profile concerns which the Board noted. Preparations for the January annual return filing peak and an initiative to improve use of the online concerns form to report Serious Incidents and Matters of Material Significance were outlined.

#### **10. Issues for next meeting**

The Chair noted the following items likely to be included at the next meeting on 3 February 2025:

- Potential legislative amendments
- ECNI presentation
- Legal update
- Board self-assessment
- New website demo

#### **11. AOB**

None

Meeting ended at 12.20pm

The meeting was followed by a discussion of Committee Structures involving the Board and Chief Executive.

### Register of Outstanding Action Points

<b>Board Meeting and Action Point Number</b>	<b>Date Raised</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owners</b>	<b>Status (target)</b>
116(1)	16/12/2024	1	Minutes of Board Meeting No 115, 11 November 2024 to be published on CCNI website.	Comms	Complete
116(2)	16/12/2024	4	Legal advice related to tribunal appeal to be circulated.	CEx	Complete
116(3)	16/12/2024	4	Commission to provide assistance to DfC on potential accommodation options.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q4 24/25)
116(4)	16/12/2024	4	CEx to liaise with Counsel on outstanding advice.	CEx	Complete
116(5)	16/12/2024	5a	Amended draft 2025-26 business plan to be submitted to sponsor department.	HCorpS	Complete
116(6)	16/12/2024	5c	Retention schedule to be fully updated and brought to the February board meeting.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q4 24/25)
116(7)	16/12/2024	5d	Stakeholder Forum TOR to be amended.	Policy	Ongoing (Q4 24/25)
116(8)	16/12/2024	6a	Minutes of A&RA Committee No 63 – 26 November 2024 to be published on the website.	Comms	Complete
116(9)	16/12/2024	6c	Staff to be briefed and updated information security to be implemented.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q4 24/25)

115(3)	11/11/2024	5a	Commission to notify office holder representative bodies of any potential to intervene in Charity Tribunal reference.	CEx	Ongoing (Q4 24/25)
115(5)	11/11/2024	5d	Commissioners to complete and return self-assessment forms by the end of December.	Board	Complete
115(7)	11/11/2024	5e	Legal Advisory Group meeting to be arranged regarding regulatory cases.	HoCS	Complete
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.	Policy Mgr	Ongoing (Q3 24/25)
115(10)	11/11/2024	6b	A review of hybrid working policy to be undertaken following office relocation.	HR Cttee	Ongoing (Q3 25/26)
115(11)	11/11/2024	9	Procurement process for online forms to be progressed.	HoCorpS	Ongoing (Q4 24/25)
114(3)	16/09/2024	5b	Progress reports on Research Plan to be provided to SMT and Board updates.	HCS	Ongoing (Q4-24/25)
112(7)	20/05/2024	5b	Organisational arrangements for ensuring data opt out to be confirmed.	HCS	Ongoing (Q4-24/25)
112(10)	20/05/2024	5d	Consideration to be given to changing committee roles and structures following scheme of delegation.	CEx	Ongoing (Q4-24/25)
104(2)	27/03/2023	3	Litigation to be progressed in line with legal advice.	Chair/CE x	Ongoing (Q4-24/25)
104(10)	27/03/2023	5c	Further training on equality for staff and Commissioners to be arranged.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q4-24/25)
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 (Q1 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)