

**Minutes of Board Meeting No. 115 held on Monday 11 November 2024
at Marlborough House, Craigavon.**

Present:

Aoife Hamilton, (Chair) 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

Apologies:

Gerard McCurdy, Chair (Chief Commissioner)

The meeting commenced at 9.40am.

1. Minutes of Board Meeting 114, 16 September 2024

Following discussion, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 16 September 2024 were agreed as a true and correct record, subject to minor amendment, as proposed by Hugh McKeag 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 114, 16 September 2024 to be published on CCNI website.

2. Conflicts of Interest

Leanne McCullough declared a potential conflict and would leave the meeting for item 5e. Hugh McKeag noted a previously highlighted potential perceived conflict for Green Pastures.

3. Chair's Business, Correspondence and Meetings

The Chair outlined apologies from the Chief Commissioner and indicated the planned working lunch for the Board to consider committee structures would be postponed until after the December Board meeting. Details of recent correspondence and a positive meeting with the Minister were noted. The Chair mentioned the Chief Commissioner had asked her to join the Human Resources Committee until further notice and highlighted the upcoming Stakeholder Forum meeting would discuss appointment of a new Forum Chair.

4. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive introduced her report giving an update on issues covered when the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive met the Minister and senior departmental officials. Key points from the International Regulators' meeting attended by CEx and Head of Charity Services were highlighted. Details of ongoing litigation were outlined, and the Board noted the proposed dates for the annual public meeting next January.

5. Policies and Processes

a. Tribunal Reference re s24

The Chief Executive introduced the paper. Following discussion, the Board agreed to progress the reference to the Charity Tribunal on a broader basis, and to alert representative bodies of any opportunity to intervene, as proposed by Kieran Donaghy and seconded by Patricia Kelly.

AP2: Minor amendment to be made to wording in Charity Tribunal reference letter re s.24.

AP3: Commission to notify office holder representative bodies of any potential to intervene in Charity Tribunal reference.

b. First draft 2025-26 Business Plan

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the initial draft plan highlighting links with the 2023-26 Strategic Plan and midyear progress assessment by staff. Commissioners accepted that to ensure a proportionate programme of regulatory work continued, the Year 3 strategic plan commitments highlighted could be postponed. A further draft will be tabled at the December meeting for submission to sponsor department.

AP4: Revised draft business plan to be brought to the December Board meeting for submission to sponsor department.

c. Board effectiveness action plan

The Chief Executive introduced the updated action plan. The Board noted there would be a discussion of committee structures following the December meeting.

d. Board self-assessment plans

The Chief Executive asked that self-assessment forms be completed and returned by the end of December.

AP5: Commissioners to complete and return self-assessment forms by the end of December.

Leanne McCullough left the meeting at 10.20am.

e. Legal update

The Head of Charity Services introduced the update. Legal advice and approach in relation to ongoing litigation before the High Court was discussed. Based on legal advice the Board endorsed the Chief Executive's continued involvement in managing litigation.

AP6: Counsel instructions to be circulated to the Board.

AP7: Legal Advisory Group meeting to be arranged regarding regulatory cases.

Leanne McCullough rejoined the meeting at 10.30am.

f. Communications and engagement update

The Head of Charity Services introduced the paper and outlined a range of activities. Commissioners noted the low uptake of the monthly newsletter and discussed options to use charity contact information for regular updates with the sector.

AP8: Explore sending newsletter to charity contact emails and discuss options for developing regular communication with the sector with the Stakeholder Forum.

g. Review of hospitality register

The Board noted the past six months' worth of entries in the hospitality register.

6. Reports from Committees

HR Committee

Kieran Donaghy, Chair of the Human Resources (HR) Committee gave an outline of the committee's most recent meeting.

a. Minutes of meeting No 42 – 21 October 2024

Following discussion, the minutes of the HR Committee meeting held on 21 October 2024 were approved for publication, as proposed by Patricia Kelly and seconded by Alan Hunter.

AP9: Minutes of HR Committee No 42 – 21 October 2024 to be published on the website.

b. Review of Hybrid Policy

The Chair of the HR committee introduced the paper and key findings. Following discussion, it was agreed not to change to the hybrid working policy at this time and a review will be undertaken following office relocation, as proposed by Leanne McCullough and seconded by Alan Hunter.

AP10: A review of hybrid working policy to be undertaken following office relocation.

c. Succession Planning

The Chair of the HR committee introduced the paper and the CEx outlined key aspects. Following discussion, it was agreed to approve the Succession Plan as recommended by the HR Committee, as proposed by Alan Hunter and seconded by Patricia Kelly.

Board meeting stopped for a break at 10.55am

Board meeting recommenced at 11.25am

Schedule 1 Decisions

d. Three Commissioners Committee

Note of Schedule 1 Committee

- 14 June 2024
- 19 July 2024
- 23 August 2024
- 20 September 2024
- 11 October 2024

Noted

e. Sole Commissioner Registration Decisions

- 12 September 2024,
- 09 October 2024.

Noted

7. Charity Services Report

The Head of Charity Services introduced their report and outlined recruitment of staff and plans for training which could impact on business plan targets. The Board approved the proposed addition of information security aspects to manuals pending a full review of the manuals when legislative changes are in place. Details of high-profile cases and research into the potential impact of a registration threshold was noted.

8. Compliance and Enquiries Report

The Head of Compliance and Enquiries introduced their report and gave an update on outstanding cases and high-profile concerns which the Board noted. The Board noted previous Commissioner declarations of potential perceived conflict of interest related to Feile an Phobail. Details of work and plans for consultation in connection with the development of the new Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) were discussed.

9. Corporate Service Report

The Head of Corporate Services introduced their report highlighting strategic issues, current recruitment activity and progress on budget spend and business plan delivery. A paper outlining online forms replacement options was considered and a number of queries addressed. Following discussion, the Board agreed to adopt the strategic approach option 3 to procure new on-line forms software noting the assurance provided by the ICT Strategy Board's consideration and input to the options paper as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

AP11: Procurement process for online forms software to be progressed.

10. Issues for next meeting

The Chair noted the following items likely to be included at the next meeting on 16 December 2024:

- Issues from A&RA Committee
- Further draft business plan
- PDP progress report
- Stakeholder forum update

- Board meeting to be followed by a working lunch for the Board to consider committee structures.

11. AOB

None

Meeting ended at 12.00pm

Register of Outstanding Action Points

| Board Meeting and Action Point Number | Date Raised | Agenda Item | Action | Owners | Status (target) |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|---|---------------|------------------------|
| 115(1) | 11/11/2024 | 1 | Minutes of Board Meeting No 114, 16 September 2024 to be published on CCNI website. | Comms | Complete |
| 115(2) | 11/11/2024 | 5a | Minor amendment to be made to wording in Charity Tribunal reference letter re s.24. | CEx | Complete |
| 115(3) | 11/11/2024 | 5a | Commission to notify office holder representative bodies of any potential to intervene in Charity Tribunal reference. | CEx | Ongoing (Q3 24/25) |
| 115(4) | 11/11/2024 | 5b | Revised draft business plan to be brought to the December Board meeting for submission to sponsor department. | HoCorpS | Complete |
| 115(5) | 11/11/2024 | 5d | Commissioners to complete and return self-assessment forms by the end of December. | Board | Ongoing (Q3 24/25) |
| 115(6) | 11/11/2024 | 5e | Counsel instructions to be circulated to the Board. | HoCS | Complete |
| 115(7) | 11/11/2024 | 5e | Legal Advisory Group meeting to be arranged regarding regulatory cases. | HoCS | Ongoing (Q3 24/25) |
| 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(9) | 11/11/2024 | 6a | Minutes of HR Committee No 42 – 21 October 2024 to be published on the website. | Comms | Complete |

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| 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 (Q3 24/25) |
| 114(2) | 16/09/2024 | 5a | Updated Monitoring Manual to be implemented. | HoCE | Complete |
| 114(3) | 16/09/2024 | 5b | Progress reports on Research Plan to be provided to SMT and Board updates. | HCS | Ongoing (Q3-24/25) |
| 114(5) | 16/09/2024 | 5c | Board to ask the Attorney General to explore putting a question on sharing information with office holders to the Charity Tribunal. | LA | Complete |
| 112(7) | 20/05/2024 | 5b | Organisational arrangements for ensuring data opt out to be confirmed. | HCS | Ongoing (Q4-24/25) |
| 112(8) | 20/05/2024 | 5c | Revised MOU with Fundraising Regulator to be implemented. | HCS | Complete |
| 112(10) | 20/05/2024 | 5d | Consideration to be given to changing committee roles and structures following scheme of delegation. | CEx | Ongoing (Q3-24/25) |
| 104(2) | 27/03/2023 | 3 | Litigation to be progressed in line with legal advice. | Chair/CE x | Ongoing (Q2-24/25) |
| 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) |

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| 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) |
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