

**Minutes of Board Meeting No. 114 held on Monday 16 September 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 5c

**Apologies:**

None

The meeting commenced at 9.45am.

**1. Minutes of Board Meeting 113, 24 June 2024**

Following discussion, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 24 June 2024 were agreed as a true and correct record as proposed by Kieran Donaghy and seconded by Hugh McKeag. 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 113, 24 June 2024 to be published on CCNI website.**

**2. Conflicts of Interest**

Hugh McKeag noted a potential perceived conflict in relation to the charity Green Pastures, which was mentioned in a paper for information.

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

The Chair welcomed Leanne McCullough, the new Commissioner with accounting background, to her first meeting.

The Chair updated the Board on recent meetings and correspondence and noted a forthcoming meeting with Tracy Johnston who is the new Grade 5 in sponsor team. Commissioners noted a demo of the new website would take place following the meeting and full discussion of committee structures would be deferred to November. However, Leanne McCullough was confirmed as a member of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee by the Chair.

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

The Chief Executive introduced her report giving an update on developments and meetings since June. Detail of ongoing litigation were outlined and the need to revise arrangements for responding were noted, due to the Chief Executive potentially having a conflict. An update on the office accommodation move was discussed. The Board noted the view sponsor department's premises and sponsor team should be in charge of scoping new premises, assessing options, engaging professional services to manage fit out including Health & Safety considerations, and handle lease negotiations rather than Commission staff due to resource and technical constraints.

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

##### **a. Update to Monitoring manual**

The Head of Compliance and Enquiries introduced the paper and outlined proposed changes to the Monitoring Manual in Annex A. The Board noted the changes incorporated previous Board decisions and more recent technical development of the charity register display. Following discussion, the Board was content to approve the changes to the Monitoring Manual as proposed by Aoife Hamilton and seconded by Leanne McCullough.

**AP2: Updated Monitoring Manual to be implemented.**

##### **b. Data & Research strategy 2024-26**

The Head of Charity Services introduced the paper highlighting various aspects of the strategy and noted budget and resource limitations impacting on it. Following discussion, the Board approved the 2024-26 Data & Research Strategy, subject to minor amendments, as proposed by Aoife Hamilton and seconded by Alan Hunter.

The Board noted the need to flag resourcing of a public trust & confidence survey in 2026-27.

**AP3: Progress reports on Research Plan to be provided to SMT and Board updates.**

Legal Advisor joined the meeting 10.35 am

##### **c. Legal update re Section 24**

The Legal Advisor outlined a range of advice received from Counsel in relation to sharing of information with office holders. The Board discussed various risks, the Commission's duties on transparency and previous judgements. Several queries were addressed by the Legal Advisor and after discussing differing observations and options the Commission decided on a majority vote to implement the proposed approach to section 24 pending clarification with the Commission. It was agreed to write to sponsor department setting out the Commission's intent pending further legal advice, and to ask the Attorney General to explore putting a question to the Charity Tribunal.

Considering the preceding discussion and decision, draft correspondence was reviewed and revised with input from the Legal Advisor. It was agreed to seek the same Counsel's input before the final draft was agreed by correspondence.

**AP4:** CEX to write to sponsor department setting out the Commission's intention in principle to share information under s24.

**AP5:** Board to ask the Attorney General to explore putting a question on sharing information with office holders to the Charity Tribunal.

**AP6:** CEX to seek further legal advice on a related matter.

**AP7:** CEX to seek Counsel's input on draft correspondence before a decision to issue is taken by correspondence.

Legal Advisor and Patricia Kelly left the meeting 11.50am.  
The meeting adjourned for a comfort break for 10 minutes.

Punam McGookin left the meeting at 12.00pm

**d. Report re data incident**

The Chief Executive introduced the report which outlined details of the event and subsequent investigation. Steps undertaken in response along with lessons learned were highlighted. The Chair of the A&RA committee outline the assurances received from Internal Audit and the Board welcomed management's response and reporting.

**AP8: Chair to write to sponsor department with a final update.**

Punam McGookin rejoined the meeting at 12.10pm

**e. MSFM compliance**

The Chief Executive introduced the paper and the Board noted there were no non-compliance issues.

**f. Update on review of records management policy and retention schedule**

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the paper highlighting various aspects to updating the policy and practical developments in other charity regulators.

**g. Stakeholder Forum note**

The Head of Charity Services introduced the report highlighting updates from the last Stakeholder Forum held on 10 June 2024 which the Board noted. The Board also noted that Aoife Hamilton was taking over from the Chair as the Commission's representative on the Stakeholder Forum.

## **6. Reports from Committees**

### **Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

#### **a. Minutes of meeting No 61 – 24 June 2024**

Following discussion, the minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance (A&RA) meeting held on 24 June 2024 were approved for publication, as proposed by Gerard McCurdy and seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

**AP9: Minutes of A&RA Committee No 61 – 24 June 2024 to be published on the website.**

#### **b. Minutes of meeting No 62 – 4 September 2024**

Following discussion, the minutes of the A&RA meeting held on 4 September 2024 were approved for publication, as proposed by Gerard McCurdy and seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

**AP10: Minutes of A&RA Committee No 62 – 4 September 2024 to be published on the website.**

#### **c. Six-month Assurance statement**

The Chair of the A&RA committee introduced the paper which the Board noted the CEx had signed off. Following discussion of risks it was agreed the Chair would sign the statement for submission to sponsor Department subject to minor amendment, as proposed by Gerard McCurdy and seconded by Aoife Hamilton.

**AP11: Chief Commissioner to sign the Assurance Statement for submission to sponsor department.**

#### **d. 2024/25 Corporate Risk Register**

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the Corporate Risk Register and highlighted proposed changes which were discussed by Commissioners. The revised risk register was agreed by the Board as proposed by Kieran Donaghy seconded by Gerard McCurdy.

**AP12: Board agreed Corporate Risk Register 2024/25 to be implemented.**

#### **e. Review of finance procedures**

The Chair of the A&RA committee introduced the paper and highlighted proposed changes. Following discussion, the changes were agreed by the Board as proposed by Alan Hunter and seconded by Aoife Hamilton.

**AP13: Updated Finance procedures to be implemented.**

#### **f. Updated Internal Audit Plan 2024/25**

The Chair of the A&RA committee introduced the paper and highlighted the context to the proposed changes. Following discussion, the revised assignments were agreed by the Board as proposed by Gerard McCurdy and seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

**AP14: Internal Audit to be advised of Board agreement to updated Internal Audit Plan 2024/25.**

### **g. NIAO Report to Those Charged with Governance**

The report noted the clean audit and minor recommendations and thanked staff for their work.

## **Schedule 1 Decisions**

### **h. Three Commissioners Committee**

#### **Note of Schedule 1 Committee**

- 10 May 2024

Noted

### **i. Sole Commissioner Registration Decisions**

- 13 June 2024,

- 08 July 2024,

- 17 July 2024,

- 20 August 2024

Noted

## **7. Charity Services Report**

The Head of Charity Services introduced their report and outlined key aspects including reduced casework capacity until recruitment and training of new staff was completed. The Board noted communications from the charity sector in light of a related update provided on the website.

## **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. Commissioners remarked on the high volume of concerns and the current reduced level of resourcing with the Enquiries team.

## **9. Corporate Service Report**

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the report highlighting strategic issues, current challenges and progress on budget spend and business plan delivery.

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

The Chair noted the following items likely to be included at the next meeting on 11 November 2024:

- Draft business plan
- Legal update
- Comms and engagement update
- Board effectiveness action plan
- Issues from HR Committee

## **11. AOB**

None

Meeting ended at 12.50pm

The Board meeting was followed by a demo of progress on website development.

### 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>
114(1)	16/09/2024	1	Minutes of Board Meeting No 113, 24 June 2024 to be published on CCNI website.	Comms	Complete
114(2)	16/09/2024	5a	Updated Monitoring Manual to be implemented.	HoCE	Ongoing (Q3-24/25)
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(4)	16/09/2024	5c	Write to sponsor department setting out the Commission's intention in principle to share information under s24.	CEX	Complete
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	Ongoing (Q3-24/25)
114(6)	16/09/2024	5c	Seek further legal advice on related matters.	LA	Complete
114(7)	16/09/2024	5c	Seek Counsel's input on draft correspondence before a decision to issue is taken by correspondence.	LA	Complete
114(8)	16/09/2024	5d	Write to sponsor department to update and close off the data incident.	Chair	Complete
114(9)	16/09/2024	6a	Minutes of A&RA Committee No 61 – 24 June 2024 to be published on the website.	Comms	Complete

114(10)	16/09/2024	6b	Minutes of A&RA Committee No 62 – 4 September 2024 to be published on the website.	Comms	Complete
114(11)	16/09/2024	6c	Sign the Assurance Statement for submission to sponsor department.	Chair	Complete
114(12)	16/09/2024	6d	Implement the updated corporate risk register	HCorpsS	Complete
114(13)	16/09/2024	6e	Updated Finance procedures to be implemented.	HCorpsS	Complete
114(14)	16/09/2024	6f	Internal Audit to be advised of Board agreement to updated Internal Audit Plan 2024/25.	HCorpsS	Complete
112(7)	20/05/2024	5b	Organisational arrangements for ensuring data opt out to be confirmed.	HCS	Ongoing (Q1-24/25)
112(8)	20/05/2024	5c	Revised MOU with Fundraising Regulator to be implemented.	HCS	Ongoing (Q1-24/25)
112(9)	20/05/2024	5d	Board effectiveness review action plan to be amended and progressed.	CEx	Complete
112(10)	20/05/2024	5d	Consideration to be given to changing committee roles and structures following scheme of delegation.	CEx	Ongoing (Q2-24/25)
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 (Q2-24/25)
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

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)
90(8)	17/05/21	5d	Impact of the Stakeholder Forum to be measured via the Research Strategy.	HCS	Complete