

**Minutes of Board Meeting No. 127 held on Monday 22 June 2026
at Marlborough House, Craigavon.**

Present:

Gerard McCurdy, Chief Commissioner (Chair)
Aoife Hamilton, Deputy Chief Commissioner
Kieran Donaghy, Charity Commissioner
Leanne McCullough, Charity Commissioner
Hugh McKeag, Charity Commissioner

In Attendance:

Frances McCandless, Chief Executive
Rossa Keown, Head of Compliance and Enquiries
Aubrey McCrory, Head of Corporate Services
Punam McGookin, Head of Charity Services
Ainslie McMullan, Head of Legal Services
Nicola Fisher, Finance and Admin Manager
David McGurk, Finance and Admin Officer
Caron Alexander, Independent Member (Audit and Risk Assurance Committee)

Apologies:

Alan Hunter, Charity Commissioner
Patricia Kelly, Legal Commissioner

The meeting commenced at 9.30am.

1. Minutes of Board Meeting 126, 11 May 2026

Following discussion, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 11 May 2026 were agreed, subject to a minor amendment, for publication on the Commission's website, as proposed by Aoife Hamilton and seconded by Leanne McCullough. The Board noted the progress of the Action Points from the last meeting.

AP1: Minutes of Board Meeting No 126, 11 May 2026 to be published on CCNI website.

2. Conflicts of Interest

The Chair asked Board members to declare any conflicts relating to agenda items. Previously declared conflicts of interest were noted by Leanne McCullough as member of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and her potential perceived conflict with DPOANI, and potential perceived conflict by Gerard McCurdy regarding Féile An Phobail. The Chair reminded Commissioners of their responsibility to recuse themselves from decision making in relation to any conflict of interests. Following a query the Chair confirmed this required the relevant individual to physically leave the meeting.

3. Chair's Business, Correspondence and Meetings

The Chair outlined the Minister's response to correspondence agreed at the last Board meeting and gave an update on a recent Arm's Length Bodies Chairs' Forum where he raised the issue of budget cover for new legislation. Commissioners noted the outcome of a recent meeting of the Performance Appraisal Committee and welcomed Ainslie McMullan, the new Head of Legal Services, to the meeting. It was noted this would be Rossa Keown's last meeting before he left the Commission in August.

4. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive introduced her report and updated Commissioners on recent discussion with Department for Communities (DfC) officials on their development of the Charities Bill. Commissioners noted that officials were responding to concerns regarding the operation of the proposed accounts derogation and statutory timescale. The Board discussed possible commencement scenarios, the range of associated costs, and DfC's intention to introduce the Bill during the current mandate. The Chief Executive also highlighted departmental plans for registration threshold regulations to be introduced after the summer recess.

Details of a recent meeting with the Victims & Survivors Commissioner and progress of the recruitment Head of Compliance & Enquiries recruitment process were noted.

5. Policies and Processes

a. Annual Report and Accounts

The Chair noted the cover paper set out a series of additions and amendments to the draft 2025-26 Annual Report and Accounts since the previous draft was considered at the May Board meeting. The Finance and Admin Manager addressed several queries. Following discussion, the 2025-26 Annual Report and Accounts were agreed, subject to minor amendment, as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Leanne McCullough. The Board noted the Chair and Chief Executive would sign a 'clean' copy for submission to the Northern Ireland Audit Office for certification, after which the document would be sent to sponsor team for laying in the Assembly in early July.

The Board expressed thanks to Shirley Kernan and Nicola Fisher for all their work preparing the report and to all involved in achieving a clean audit.

AP2: Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive to sign a 'clean' copy of the finalised annual report and accounts for submission to NIAO for certification.

AP3: Certified annual report and accounts to be submitted to sponsor team for laying in the Assembly.

b. Final strategic and business plans

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the final draft of the 2026-29 Strategic Plan, noting very minor amendment to the version brought to the Board in March 2026 following feedback from sponsor team. Following discussion, the final draft 2026-29 Strategic Plan was agreed for submission

to the Minister for approval at this time, as proposed by Aoife Hamilton and seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

The Head of Corporate Services highlighted additions to the draft 2026-27 Business Plan including performance indicators and service levels following feedback from sponsor team on assumptions. The Board noted sponsor team had asked that the plan assume a flat cash budget. Following discussion, the draft 2026-27 Business Plan was agreed for submission to the Minister for approval at this time, as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Aoife Hamilton.

AP4: Draft strategic plan 2026-29 and draft business plan 2026-27 to be submitted to sponsor team for approval.

c. Annual review of Board Operating Framework, Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and Annual Agenda

The Chief Executive introduced the paper and the four appendices enclosed. A number of queries were addressed and, following discussion, the Board agreed the documents, subject to some minor amendments, as proposed by Aoife Hamilton and seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

AP 5: Board Operating Framework, Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and Annual Agenda documents to be finalised and implemented.

d. Annual progress report to Equality Commission NI

The Board noted the contents of the report and queries were addressed. The Board agreed to adopt the report, subject to minor amendment, for submission to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, as proposed by Aoife Hamilton and seconded by Hugh McKeag.

AP6: Amended annual progress report to be submitted to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

e. Revised 2026-29 Comms & Engagement comms and engagement strategy and annual plan

Commissioners noted the updated integrated communications and engagement strategy which had been brought to the May Board meeting. Comments and suggestions made by the Board at that time were included along with a 2026-27 action plan. Following discussion, the Board agreed the revised strategy and action plan, subject to minor amendment, as proposed by Aoife Hamilton and seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

AP7: 2026-29 Comms & Engagement strategy and action plan to be implemented.

f. Registration Manual update

The Head of Charity Services introduced the paper noting DfC continued to work on the registration threshold regulations and there was potential for further changes to these. Nevertheless, the Commission needed to amend the registration manual and relevant specific internal guidance in advance to incorporate DfC changes to date. Following discussion, the Board agreed

these amendments, as proposed by Leanne McCullough and seconded by Hugh McKeag.

AP8: Amendments to be implemented in relevant manuals following updated DfC exemption regulations.

g. Chief Executive performance objectives

The Board noted the objectives as agreed by the Performance and Appraisal Committee. The Chair agreed to review the composition of the PAC.

h. Feedback from LAG

Leanne McCullough gave a verbal update on the latest Legal Advisory Group meeting which the Board noted.

6. Reports from Committees

Schedule 1 Decisions

a. Three Commissioners Committee

- 22 May 2026 – noted

AP9: Chief Executive to update the TOR for Schedule 1 meetings to cover decision reviews where a commissioner has a previous involvement.

7. Corporate Services Report

The Head of Corporate Services introduced their report and gave an update on the office relocation project. Following discussion, the Board agreed to amend the corporate complaints procedure to enable a procedure to manage complaints under the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 as proposed by Hugh McKeag and Kieran Donaghy. A revision of the social media policy to enable uploading of low risk documents to the website was agreed as proposed by Leanne McCullough and seconded Hugh McKeag. The Board agreed the Chief Executive to sign off the final amended versions of complaints procedure and social media policy, as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Leanne McCullough.

AP10: Complaints procedure to be amended and implemented.

AP11: Social Media policy to be amended and implemented.

AP12: Chief Executive to sign off the final amended versions of the complaints procedure and Social Media policy.

8. Charity Services Report

The Head of Charity Services introduced their report highlighting various casework progress, trends and details of high-profile cases which the Board noted. The Head of Charity Services outlined the overall progress on the threshold project, noting the need for a temporary change to deprioritise organisations in the 'call forward list' process that would fall under the threshold when it comes into effect. Following discussion, the Board agreed to the temporary change in called forward list prioritisation, as proposed by Kieran Donaghy and Leanne McCullough.

AP13: Temporary change to registration prioritisation relating to threshold to be implemented.

9. Compliance and Enquiries Report

The Head of Compliance and Enquiries introduced their report and outlined details of a recent audit dispensation decision and issuing of regulatory guidance. Commissioners noted some Trustees had come forward to mentor charities following a recent advertisement, and Enquiries team had been making introductions.

10. Legal Services Report

Leanne McCullough left the meeting at 11.35am.

The Head of Legal Services introduced their report noting the closure of several legal cases and progress of others, which the Board noted. Plans to develop reporting going forward were discussed and agreed.

Leanne McCullough rejoined the meeting at 11.40am.

11. Issues for next meeting

The Chair noted, in addition to committee business, the following items are likely to be included at the next meeting on 21 September 2026:

- Potential visit from HMRC
- Partnership Agreement compliance
- Stakeholder Forum update
- Research strategy
- Incorporations manual
- Updated internal evaluation guidance on registration
- Expansion of Privacy Notice
- Scheme of delegation update

12. AOB

The Chair thanked Caron Alexander for attending. On behalf of the Board the Chair thanked Rossa Keown for all his work over the years, noting his expertise and experience and the way he conducted his work on behalf of the Commission. Commissioners wished Rossa well in his new role at the Utility Regulator.

Meeting ended at 11.50am

Register of Outstanding Action Points					
Board Meeting and Action Point Number	Date Raised	Agenda Item	Action	Owners	Status (target)
127(1)	22/06/2026	1	Minutes of Board Meeting No 126, 11 May 2026 to be published on CCNI website.	Comms	Complete
127(2)	22/06/2026	5a	Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive to sign a 'clean' copy of the finalised annual report and accounts for submission to NIAO for certification.	CEx	Complete
127(3)	22/06/2026	5a	Certified annual report and accounts to be submitted to sponsor team for laying in the Assembly.	HCorpS	Complete
127(4)	22/06/2026	5b	Draft strategic plan 2026-29 and draft business plan 2026-27 to be submitted to sponsor team for approval.	HCorpS	Complete
127(5)	22/06/2026	5c	Board Operating Framework, Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and Annual Agenda documents to be finalised and implemented.	HCorpS	Complete
127(6)	22/06/2026	5d	Amended annual progress report to be submitted to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.	HCorpS	Complete
127(7)	22/06/2026	5e	2026-29 Comms & Engagement strategy and action plan to be implemented.	Comms	Complete
127(8)	22/06/2026	5f	Amendments to be implemented in relevant manuals following updated DfC exemption regulations.	HCS	Q2 26/27
127(9)	22/06/2026	6a	Chief Executive to update the TOR for Schedule 1 to include decision reviews.	CEx	Complete

127(10)	22/06/2026	7	Complaints procedure to be amended and implemented.	HCorpS	Complete
127(11)	22/06/2026	7	Social Media policy to be amended and implemented.	HCorpS	Complete
127(12)	22/06/2026	7	Chief Executive to sign off the final amended versions of the complaints procedure and Social Media policy.	CEX	Complete
127(13)	22/06/2026	8	Temporary change to registration prioritisation relating to threshold to be implemented.	HCS	Complete
126(7)	11/05/2026	5c	Revised approach to managing with SIRs and MOMS to be implemented going forward.	HC&E	Complete
126(8)	11/05/2026	5d	Amended jurisdiction step out process to be implemented in relevant manuals.	HCS	Complete
125(9)	23/03/2026	5h	Arrangements to be made for a Board 'Away day' in Quarter 2.	FAO	Ongoing (Q3 26/27)
125(16)	23/03/2026	7	Agreement to lease and lease agreement to be approved by correspondence and signed by the Chief Executive.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q1 26/27)
125(18)	23/03/2026	8	Section 37 publications approach to be implemented.	HCS	Ongoing (Q2 26/27)
125(19)	23/03/2026	8	Updated Closures Manual to be implemented.	HCS	Complete
123(5)	15/12/2025	5c	Records Management Policy and Retention Schedule to be updated in 2026/27.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q3 26/27)
123(6)	15/12/2025	5d	Updated Registration manual to be implemented.	HCS	Ongoing (Q2 26/27)

115(10)	11/11/2024	6b	A review of hybrid working policy to be undertaken following office relocation.	HR Cttee	Ongoing (Q3 26/27)
104(2)	27/03/2023	3	Litigation to be progressed in line with legal advice.	Chair/CE x	Ongoing (26/27)