

## **MEETING OF STRATEGIC INVESTMENT BOARD LIMITED**

### **Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 23rd March at 10:30am by Zoom Videoconference**

#### **Present**

Gerry McGinn (Chair)  
Danny McSorley  
Duncan McCausland  
Kathryn Thomson  
Brett Hannam  
Helen McNeill (Note taker)

#### **In attendance**

Jean Wylie (Engagement Strategy item)  
Martin Spollen (ISNI item)

#### **Apologies**

Marie Therese McGivern

#### **Declarations of Interest**

DMcC is a member of the MLK Board. He asked the Board to note that the MLK Board has not been formally reappointed at the end of its term of office.

#### **Board Terms of Reference**

The Board's Terms of reference were noted and remained unchanged.

Board members confirmed that they had read the papers for the meeting.

#### **Minutes of the February 2021 Board Meeting**

DMcS drew attention to item 13 regarding the Strule shared education campus. He clarified that the minutes should be amended to reflect a broader point about high value projects being subject to delay. Subject to this amendment, the Board approved the minutes of the February meeting.

The Board reviewed the of action points from the February meeting:

- Performance Assessments: GMcG will arrange individual meetings with Board members after Easter with a view to holding formal assessments, including the identification of training needs, by the end of April.
- GMcG will formally sign off all the Board meeting minutes, and any other documentation that requires his signature as Chairman, before the end of his appointment.
- The Green Growth strategy presentation is available to view on the Board portal.

## **Board Governance and Transition Update**

GMcG noted that the Chair Competition is expected to commence in the week beginning 12<sup>th</sup> April. Members of the recruitment panel have been confirmed.

DMcC reported that the internal auditors have recommended that committees should regularly review the frequency of their meetings.

The executive should prepare an induction pack for new board members by the end of June.

## **Senior Leadership Team update**

BH reported on the preliminary issues identified by DOF to TEO in respect of the proposed leadership allowance. GMcG has asked BH to prepare a paper for the April Remuneration & Personnel Committee setting out potential responses. The discussion will be continued at the Board meeting in April before a formal response is determined.

GMcG reminded the Board that the SIB review (2018) recommended the establishment of a senior leadership team.

## **Letter of Expectation**

GMcG reported that he had received the Letter of Expectation signed by FM and dFM.

Ministers had also confirmed SIB's financial derogations.

## **Corporate and Business Plan**

Board members were asked to note two points regarding the budget:

- SIB have not yet received confirmation of their annual budget for 2021-22.
- The Finance team had been asked to prepare three scenarios to plan for coming year. These showed the effects of reductions in the 2020-21 budget.

The Board was content with the Corporate and Business Plan.

## **Staff Survey**

BH made observations on the assessment of the staff survey, (prepared by Johann Gallagher):

- 1) There are no significant differences between the results of this survey and those from the similar survey carried out earlier in the year.
- 2) Since the last survey, a comprehensive Health and Wellbeing programme has been implemented. This has been well received by staff. The 'Dealing with stress and mental health for line managers' workshop had been very useful. The horticultural programme has also proven very popular.
- 3) The scheme that enabled staff to purchase items for home working (tables, screens etc.) had been well received. Many staff commented on how helpful this was for improving the home working environment.
- 4) It is difficult to identify staff members who may experience problems that are not work-related.
- 5) The experiences of staff members vary widely.

DMcS commended SIB's positive response to the pandemic. He asked why the response rate to the survey had dropped. BH offered two possible explanations: Staff may be broadly happy with the support that has been offered so do not feel the need to respond again. Alternatively, they may not have seen an adequate response to the first survey and not thought it worth completing a second.

KT suggested that future staff surveys could include questions on staff engagement and new ways of working in the future.

DMcC emphasised the importance of follow up and suggested a further survey should be conducted in the near future. Its focus should be on future working arrangements.

GMcG agreed with KT and DMcC that it would be helpful to survey staff on their views on post-pandemic working.

## **Engagement Strategy**

Jean Wylie, Communications Director, outlined her proposals for the development of the engagement strategy.

Jean pointed out that the pandemic, and planning for the post pandemic future, has caused many organisations to reflect on and reset their relationships and communications strategies. This was therefore a good time to be reviewing SIB's engagement strategy.

She noted that previous external engagement has centred on ISNI, but in recent years SIB has become involved in a wider range of projects, reflecting changed priorities for the NICS and the Executive. Recent examples of new work include 'Green Growth', regeneration and housing supply strategies. The engagement strategy will support the delivery of the Corporate and Business plan by building stronger relationships with a wider range of stakeholders.

The engagement strategy for the forthcoming publication of ISNI has been more comprehensive than before and had shown there is a strong appetite for such engagement from departments, the private and third sectors.

A stakeholder engagement database is being maintained which will document all the engagement meetings.

JW will carry out one to one meetings with all Board members to take their views on stakeholders and the content of the engagement strategy.

JW undertook to give a progress report to the Board at their meeting in May.

KT supported the proposed approach. It is important that those who may have previously misunderstood the remit of SIB are included in conversations with the aim of improving their understanding of what SIB does.

DMcS considered whether the Strategy might include the views of top decision-makers such as Ministers, as this might encourage a closer relationship and allow for the expedition of decisions, which would be helpful in avoiding delays to projects.

The Board endorsed the proposed approach to the development of the Engagement Strategy.

## **CEO Report**

BH highlighted items that had arisen since the report had been drafted.

The Executive has announced a programme for regional NICS workplace hubs. This project is being managed by Derek Kennedy.

The Planning Appeals Commission had issued a preliminary ruling that would halt the construction of the A5. The infrastructure minister had announced that the application would be revised, updated and resubmitted.

GMcG suggested that a more formal way of raising attention to project delays should be considered, given the capital investment risks involved.

The Board reviewed the position of those projects with a RED delivery status.

## **ISNI Update**

Martin Spollen joined the meeting. He reported that meetings have taken place with nominated staff from all the NICS Departments. Further meetings are taking place with departmental and council officials at which more detailed capital investment plans will be collected.

Meetings will take place next week with major external stakeholders and asset holders (e.g. Belfast Harbour and the Universities).

The draft timeline for the ISNI is being prepared in partnership with the PfG team and is currently as follows:

- First drafts in May/June.
- Public consultation to be run in June/July/August
- Final document and presentation to Ministers by early autumn.

Martin shared the draft document format with the Board.

There are three principal themes or megatrends which will challenge infrastructure investment: climate change; technology developments and demographics.

The ISNI will be closely aligned to the outcomes from the PfG. This would mean emphasising the creation of a prosperous and thriving economy and tackling disadvantage and creating a more equal society.

The work being undertaken by John Green on hydrogen use in public transport and town centre regeneration programmes are examples of how projects might be used as case studies for contributing to PfG outcomes and addressing megatrends.

ISNI is not an infrastructure audit. Instead the focus will be on explaining the rationale behind investment decision making.

A section on financing infrastructure will also be included. The ISNI will also link to Asset Management Strategies.

Some stakeholders have expressed the view that the ISNI tracking system should be improved.

An ISNI Executive summary will be brought to the SIB Board in May.

DMcS and KT commended Martin and the ISNI team on their thorough preparatory work.

MS reminded the Board that ISNI is not intended to provide advice or options to individual Ministers. The Executive will be the 'owner' of the document.

Given the current global pandemic, GMcG noted the importance of infrastructure being robust enough to cope with future 'black swan' events with major impacts.

### **Update from Audit Committee**

The Chair of the Audit Committee (DMcC) reported to the Board on the audit committee that had been held before the Board meeting.

Delays in the progression of major projects has been added to the Risk Register. The risk of not being able to implement the proposed senior leadership team had been highlighted.

A new addition was made to the Covid-19 risk register in relation to further waves of the pandemic.

The risk appetite had been reviewed.

The external auditors would pay particular attention to FTC loans.

Three internal audit reports and their recommendations had been reviewed by the committee.

1. Payroll governance
2. Business Continuity Planning and the response to the pandemic
3. Business Planning

All three reports had gained SATISFACTORY assurance ratings and all recommendations had been accepted.

There had been an external review of Access NI staff checks clearance procedures. It had made no recommendations.

The Committee had considered one whistleblowing incident, DAO letters and the IT Assist annual risk statement. No fraud issues were reported.

The draft annual report and accounts will be ready for review by May 10th and will be considered at the 18th May meeting.

The auditors' report will be ready by the 15th June. All Board members will be invited to the Audit Committee meeting at which this will be reviewed. The Board will then, if content, approve the financial statements at its meeting on the same date.

## **Finance**

Staff annual leave in-year balances have been reduced, so the cost is now significantly lower and within budget.

End of year expenditure is on target.

## **Media Pack**

The Board noted the contents of the Media Pack.

## **AOB**

None.

Chair

## Actions

### Actions from previous meetings

Reference	Action	Responsible	Expected Completion
1/20/3	Record training by board members in personal logs	Board members	March 2021

### Actions from March 2021 Meeting

Reference	Action	Responsible	Expected Completion
3/21/1	Amend Minutes to reflect DMcS concerns accurately.	CEO	April 2021
3/21/2	Prepare Board Induction Pack	CEO	June 2021
3/21/3	Remuneration & Personnel Committee to discuss DoF Preliminary Issues in respect of the reorganisation.	CEO	April 2021