

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

### **MINUTES**

Held at 10:00am on Tuesday 21st November 2023

9 Lanyon Place & Zoom

#### **PRESENT**

Duncan McCausland (DMcC)

Brett Hannam (BH)

Marie Therese McGivern (MTM)

Kathryn Thomson (KT)

Danny McSorley (DMcS)

Scott Wilson (SW) (ISNI report)

Sian Thornthwaite STh (AI/SBRI report)

#### **Introduction**

1. The Board agreed that Duncan McCausland would chair the meeting.
2. Gregor Hamilton was on annual leave and Helen McNeill would take the minutes.
3. BH gave apologies on behalf of Jacqueline Fearon who had been scheduled to present an update to Board members on Casement Park but who had been called to an urgent meeting.
4. There were no new declarations of interest. Previous declarations of interest were taken as confirmed.
5. The Board Terms of Reference were noted. Board members confirmed they had read the papers in preparation for the meeting.

#### **Chairman and Directors' Business**

6. MTM and DMcC had received written confirmation from TEO that their appointments to the Board will be extended for a further 12 months.
7. Initial findings are expected to be available for a Board discussion at the February 2024. It was agreed that, if this were the case, the Board would hold its Away Day on the day of its planned meeting.
8. The dates for 2024 Board and committee meetings were agreed by the Board.

## **Minutes of the October 2023 Meeting**

9. The minutes of the meeting held on 24th October were approved without amendment.

### **TEO Issues**

10. Speaking to his paper, BH reported that:

- An interim Chair is to be appointed from the current Board following a (paper sift) recruitment competition run by TEO.
- The Business case for the SLT proposals has not progressed any further and is not expected to do so until the formal review of SIB has concluded.
- He had met Jayne Brady, Head of the NI Civil Service. She had expressed a keen interest in the projects which SIB are supporting.
- The business case for the Social Value Unit to transfer to the NICS remains with TEO.

### **CEO Report**

11. The Board took the CEO report as read. In addition, BH noted that:

- He had met the Chief Digital Officer, DoH to agree future staff planning for the projects run by Austin Tanney.
- He would circulate a written update in December on proposals for significant changes to the SIB resources deployed in support of the development of Casement Park and associated Euro 2028 work.
- A useful meeting had taken place with the NIAO and BH. Mark Wishart also attended. The report into the root causes of delays and failures in capital projects is in the final stages of completion. It has been reviewed by DoF/CPD, and the findings have been broadly accepted. The forthcoming NIAO report (follow up to major capital projects report) will refer to the findings from Mark Wishart's report.
- He has received written notification from Properties Division that are no suitable NICS premises for SIB to move to. There is more work to be completed in securing a suitable private property outside of the NICS estate for SIB to relocate from 9 Lanyon Place by the end of March 2024.

12. Members made the following points:

- *SBRI*: DMCs sought clarification on SIB's role in the SBRI programme and wondered whether, in the interests of governance assurance, it may be prudent to ask for advice from internal auditors or to refer it to the audit committee in relation to risk management. SIB manage the process and promotion of the

scheme. Departments are responsible for decisions from any competitive tender process. It was agreed that the Audit Committee should consider this point.

- *Green Growth Programme*: BH confirmed that there is no confirmed schedule to complete the Climate Action Plan, despite progress being made by departmental officials.
- *Northern Regional College*: BH confirmed that in-year funding has been made available for this project.
- *MLK*: BH confirmed that Bryan Gregory remains in post as interim CEO.

13. The Board agreed that it would be useful to have a briefing on ARC21.

### **ISNI Update**

14. Scott Wilson (SW) spoke to his paper on the ISNI:

#### *Enablers*

15. There are four enablers, each with associated actions. The former are: (1) Increase funding capacity; (2) deliver decarbonisation; (3) reform planning and (4) improve investment planning and delivery capability.

16. Political support and direction, leading to new policies and legislation, will be required to address these issues.

#### *Timeline*

17. The draft ISNI will be ready to circulate to the CEO (BH) by the end of December 2023 and will be made available to the Board for review at its January meeting.

18. A copy will be sent for review to Permanent Secretaries and the NICS Board prior to their meeting in January.

#### *External Scrutiny*

19. SIB has proposed the creation of an Advisory Panel of 3 – 4 experts to scrutinise the ISNI. This idea has the support of the DfI Permanent Secretary. The panel will not be an Infrastructure Commission but will assist with an analysis of the current gaps in infrastructure and provide external assurance on the ISNI.

20. The Board gave its full support to SW for the approach the ISNI team have taken.

21. Board members agreed that it would be very useful to have the support of the DfI Permanent Secretary for an expert panel.
22. Board members noted that it would be helpful to 'deconflict' various elements of policies to provide a more consistent approach (DMcC gave the example of promoting gas boiler installations to reduce fuel poverty at the same time as reducing fossil fuel use)

### **AI in the Public Sector: Presentation by Sian Thornthwaite**

23. Sian Thornthwaite gave a presentation to the Board on the topic of SIB's management of the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) programme and the implications of AI in the Northern Ireland public sector on a wider scale.
24. She highlighted that:
  - The term AI can cover digitisation and data, process automation and cognitive computing.
  - SBRI is a pre-procurement mechanism which encourages private sector innovation across public sector.
  - SIB's role is not to prescribe the technology to be used. Instead, it is to promote the use of innovative solutions and explore the benefits of using AI or up to date data analysis techniques to provide cost effective solutions to public sector issues.
25. The Board discussed the identification of risks for SIB arising from its management of the SBRI process and the implications for the wider NI public sector arising from the use of new technologies.
26. The Board noted that the NICS takes a cautious approach to the use of AI and has published restrictive guidelines on its use. However, the rapid speed at which the technology is developing may require the guidelines to be reassessed.
27. DMcC suggested that one of the ways to raise the profile of AI across the public sector in Northern Ireland would be to brief the NICS Board on SBRI.

### **Finance Update**

28. The monthly accounts were noted.

### **Media Pack**

29. The media pack was noted.

**Action Points**

1. HMcN to confirm the change of date of the March 2024 meeting (from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup>) and circulate the other confirmed dates for 2024.
2. SW to provide the Board with the final draft of ISNI at its January meeting.
3. Sian Thornthwaite to consider engaging with the NICS Board on SBRI.

Date of next meeting: 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024