

NICS Board meeting
Room 3.4 & 3.5 James House
Tuesday 25 November 2025 @ 9.30am
Minutes

Board Members

Jayne Brady (HoCS)	Hugh Widdis (HW)
Ronnie Armour (RA)	Colum Boyle (CB)
Louise Crilly (LC)	Mike Farrar (MF)
Neil Gibson (NG)	Katrina Godfrey (KG)
Brenda Henderson (BH)	Patrick Magee (PM)(NEMs)
Laura McKeaveney (LMcK) (NEM)	Denis McMahon (DMcM)
Frances Ruane (FR) NEM	Ian Snowden

In Attendance

Scott Wilson (SW) (*Item 4 only*)

John McKendry (Secretariat)
 Jayne Byrne (Secretariat)

(1) Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

DMcM chaired the meeting in the absence of HoCS who was attending an extraordinary Executive meeting. DMcM welcomed Board members and noted an apology from David Malcolm with Brenda Henderson attending as deputy. There were no declarations of interest.

(2) Draft minutes and update on action points from 30 September 2025

The minutes of the meeting of 30 September were agreed following a brief discussion on the information provided relating to the test and learn action and a minor amendment from LC.

Action: HoCS Office to publish minutes.

Action Points from the minutes of 30 September 2025

Agenda item	Actions	Responsible officer	Status
(2) Minutes / actions	Minutes – HoCS Office to publish minutes.	HoCS office	Complete

Agenda item	Actions	Responsible officer	Status
(4) ISNI Committee	ISNI Committee to continue to oversee the delivery of the Enabling Action Plan	PM / SW	Complete - Ongoing action for ISNI Committee
	NG to check position of SRO responsibilities with his officials regarding Enabling Action 3	NG	Ongoing
	SW to provide update on rescope of EA12 to November board	SW	Complete – Paper coming to November Board
(5) People Committee	Highlight report to be considered at the November Board meeting.	LMcK	Complete – Report on agenda for November Board
(7) Review of NICS Board	BER Action Plan to be updated.	J Byrne	Complete
	PM to draft minor amendments to ISNI Committee ToR	PM	Complete
	HoCS, MF and LMcK to discuss the next steps with regard the Board Development Plan and to include onboarding for new Board members.	HoCS, MF, LMcK	Complete – meeting 17/11/25
(8) Digital Maturity Assessment	Follow-up with DAERA officials to discuss interplay with cross-cutting digital aspects.	PG, KG	Ongoing – PG in contact with DAERA to arrange a date.
	PG to draft job description and team structure	PG	Ongoing. Job Description is drafted and intention to go to Transformation Board.
(9) Collaboration Test & Learn	CB / DM to circulate guiding principles of the collaborative test and learn.	CB, DM	Complete – Circulated 19/11/25

3 Matters Arising – None

(4) ISNI Committee

SW joined the meeting at 9.45am for this agenda item only

- 4.1 PM introduced the item and raised the frequency of ISNI reporting to the Board. He recommended the chairs of the committees meet with the SROs to discuss a quarterly reporting schedule to Board.
- 4.2 SW spoke to the update on the Enabling Actions and recommendations detailed in the paper circulated in advance. SW highlighted the importance of alignment between the ISNI 10 Year Investment Plan and the 4 Year Capital Budget and that Departments share their capital budget plans to inform the submission of the ISNI. The Board acknowledged the importance and noted Minister agreement required in advance of sharing budget information.
- 4.3 SW highlighted progress on SROs inputting MCP data input to DataMAP, with disappointing progress by some. He asked members of the Board who were Accounting Officers to consider issuing the suggested draft letter to their respective SROs to request they input the data. The Board provided views and agreed to support the suggestion that two letters should be issued, one generic and one detailing the specific projects with a definitive completion date of a week before Christmas. NG raised the importance of Accounting Officers having access to the data, the need to improve delivery and asked that Board members ensure their list of SROs is updated.
- 4.4 IS provided an update on EA11 and advised that the ISNI Committee have agreed to re-scope the action to include two-tier reporting to distinguish between actions with DfE control and those dependent on other NI Departments and those outside the control of NICS.
- 4.5 FR commented that the presentation of reports should sequence with how they are presented on the agenda.
- 4.6 SW updated on Enabling Action 12 and advised that a paper would be considered by the Climate Change Strategic Oversight Group this week prior to coming to the Board in Q1 2026.
- 4.7 The Board agreed that the sequencing of reporting from the three Committees should be discussed by Committee Chairs and SRO's with recommendations being brought to the Board Chair and agreed the recommendations in the paper with the additional requirements regarding the letters to SROs.

Actions:

- (1) Meeting to be arranged for Committee Chairs and SROs to discuss sequencing of Committee reporting to the Board.**
- (2) SW to draft two letters to Accounting Officers to request data input to DataMAP before Christmas and second letter to provide details of projects.**
- (3) Accounting Officers to ensure list of SRO's is up-to date.**

SW left the meeting at 10.25am

(5) People Committee

- 5.1 LMck referred to the Board papers circulated in advance. She updated the Board on the outcome of the People Committee meeting held on 5 November. The main focus of the meeting was the enhanced governance arrangements which were approved by the People Committee and the Board is now asked to approve the recommendations laid out in the papers.
- 5.2 The Board was advised of the appointment of Mark Wishart (SIB) as Delivery Director for the People Strategy.
- 5.3 The Board was also asked to endorse the development of an overarching masterplan and delivery plan to include a revised reporting framework setting out clear objectives, interdependencies, and detailed pathways allowing for further prioritisation.
- 5.4 LMck stressed a key deliverable is the need for clear measurable outcomes for the Board and staff.
- 5.5 The Board provided feedback on the papers including an endorsement of the new Programme Delivery Board whose remit is to provide operational governance for day-to-day delivery of the People Strategy.
- 5.6 In addition, LMck raised the importance of change management and a comprehensive communication approach so that all employees can be made aware of the progress of the people strategy and the impact on them. Currently resourcing at the required level has yet to be achieved to have the type of impact required for such a significant program. NG is further discussing this with HoCS, Jill Minne and Mark Wishart.
- 5.7 NG referred to the good progress detailed in the Highlight Report and thanked those involved in the programme workshops. He informed the Board of the following:
 - the People Committee had approved a recommendation to utilise the Corporate Services Director Group as the main forum for HR and transformation matters following the dissolution of the FHRAG.
 - Critical aspects of the deliverables are dependent upon the Integr8 program which will be presented for an update at the next Board meeting.
 - NG advised the Board that a people hub had been developed that would allow for communications to all staff on the progress of the people strategy. He agreed to circulate demos of the people hub when available.
 - NG advised the AO recruitment pilot in the North-West was due to take place on Wednesday 26 November 2025 and noted there was interest in the event and assurances sought on its effectiveness.

- 5.8 NG recommended that briefing and discussions on Budget and People Strategy are included at future SCS Events.
- 5.9 PM stressed the importance of addressing performance issues across the service.
- 5.10 The Board agreed the recommendations in the paper and are keen to see how KPIs and Outcome measures are developed.

Action: NG to circulate people hub demo when available.

The Board took a comfort break for 15 minutes

(6) Programme for Government (PfG)

- 6.1 FR introduced the item and advised progress is being made on the establishment of the Committee.
- 6.2 BH spoke to a presentation and advised that the draft Delivery Plan (Plan) is currently under consideration by Ministers prior to being considered by the Executive. Of the 44 actions in the draft plan, 35 are rated green and 9 amber, BH highlighted positive outcomes in Childcare, Health waiting lists and EVAWG. Funding for Social Housing starts remains a concern.
- 6.3 BH detailed the proposed reporting cycle of bi-monthly updates to the PfG Committee, mid-year updates to Ministers and Executive and an Annual Report to Ministers and Executive that will be published.

HoCS joined the meeting at 11.35am

- 6.4 The Board discussed the presentation, the need for strategic comms and the critical need for the Board to receive KPIs and metrics to be used to measure success and the alignment of budgets to priorities.

CB left the meeting at 11.45am

- 6.5 BH suggested a future update to NICS Board on the Wellbeing Framework which seeks to capture the longer-term impact of the PfG priorities.
- 6.6 The issue of forward planning for the next PfG Delivery Plan was raised and BH advised that the new Director will be in post from December and will take this forward.
- 6.7 The Board noted presentation and offered to provide support.

Action: BH to bring update paper to future Board.

(7) Public Sector Transformation Board - Update

- 7.1 HoCS provided a verbal update on the Public Sector Transformation Board and reported that she had recently attended the programme board meeting for the Speeding Up Justice project that was funded in the first tranche. HoCS was reassured by the progress being made.
- 7.2 The first tranche of projects have been funded and progress is being monitored. A second call for proposals closed on 8 August resulting in 25 proposals with a total value of c.£286m against available funding of c.£102m. 17 proposals were shortlisted to present to the Board who noted a marked improvement in the quality of the proposals. Nine were deemed fundable, three requiring further clarification and four digital and data proposals which would benefit from a more collaborative approach. The Transformation Board was finalising the recommendations to the Finance Minister with consideration on how to proceed in the absence of clarity on the multi-year budget position.
- 7.3 NG provided further detail around the potential funding envelope for Transformation and stressed the need for innovation and decisiveness if projects are identified to not be delivering.
- 7.4 The Board commended the update.

(8) AOB

8.1 Civil Contingencies Update

HoCS referred to the paper that was circulated in advance and included an update on the Covid Inquiry report. HoCS advised the report is currently being considered and an update will be provided in due course. The paper also provided updates on Energy Supply, Winter Preparedness, Storm Eowyn Lessons Learned, NI Civil Contingencies Risk Register and Exercise PEGASUS.

The Board collectively noted the four recommendations in the paper.

8.2 Revised Procurement Policy Note

NG referenced the papers that had been circulated via correspondence. The Public Procurement Policy Governance Arrangements were approved by the Executive in June 2025. The revised Public Procurement Note was included in the papers and NG sought endorsement and feedback from the Board.

The Board were content to endorse subject to the opportunity for any final comments by COP next day.

8.3 Expert Panel - Review of Public Procurement Governance Arrangements

NG provided the background to the establishment of this Expert Panel and that meetings with key stakeholders are currently underway.

Action: Perm Sec colleagues to provide any comments to CPD Director by COP 26 November.

7.4 **Votes of thanks**

HoCS thanked DMcM for chairing the meeting and noted that this would be the last NICS Board meeting for DMcM and CB and thanked them for their advice and support over their time on the Board.

(8) For Noting

8.1 DMcM brought the Board's attention to the one paper for noting: NICS Board Forward Workplan.

(9) Date of Next Meeting

9.1 Tuesday 27 January 2026, Executive Room, Stormont Castle

Meeting finished at 12.35pm