NICS Board Meeting

Executive Room, Stormont Castle

Tuesday 31 March 2026 @ 9:15am

Minutes

Board Members

Jayne Brady, Chair (HoCS)
Moira Doherty (MD)
Patrick Magee (NEM)
Laura McKeaveney (NEM)
Frances Ruane (NEM)
Hugh Widdis (HW)
Louise Crilly (LC)
Mike Farrar (MF)
Declan McGeown (DMcG)
Emer Morelli (EM)
Ian Snowden (IS)

In attendance in an observing capacity

Grainia Long (GL)
Joanne McBurney (JMcB)
Mark O'Donnell (MO)

Aidan McMahon (AMcM) *(Item 4 only)*
Scott Wilson (SW) (*Item 5 only*)
Jill Minne (JM) (*Item 6 only*)
Mark Wishart (MW) (*Item 6 only*)
Toni Fitzgerald-Gunn (TFG) *(Item 8 only*)
Anna Gray (AG) *(Item 8 only*)
James McKay (JMcK) *(Item 8 only*)
Arlene Madden (AM) *(Item 8 only*)

Debbie Murphy (Secretariat)
Jayne Byrne (Secretariat)

(1) Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

HoCS welcomed Grainia Long attending the meeting as an observer in advance of commencing her Permanent Secretary appointment mid-April.

Apologies were received from Neil Gibson and Katrina Godfrey, Joanne McBurney and Mark O'Donnell respectively attended in an observing capacity. David Malcolm also provided apologies. HoCS advised that Laura McKeaveney had to leave the meeting around 12.45pm. There were no declarations of interest.

HoCS noted that this meeting marks three years since the Non-Executive Members first meeting, commending their input to date and welcoming the progress made over that time. HoCS advised MF and LMcK are supporting work on a reset of the Board considering progress to date and ambitions and aspirations for the future.

(2) Draft Minutes and Action Points from 27 January 2026

PM requested some minor amendments.

Action:
(1) HoCS Office to amend and publish the minutes of 27 January 2026.

Action Points from the minutes of 27 January 2026

Agenda item	Actions	Responsible officer	Status
(2) Minutes / actions	**PM provided a number of amendments to the draft minutes.**	HoCS office	Complete
	HoCS Office to publish minutes.	HoCS office	
(4) ISNI Committee	**Communication to issue to SROs requesting outstanding data to be returned by 12 February 2026 at the latest. All data to be signed off by the relevant SRO.**	S Wilson	Complete
(5) People Committee	**Board members to bring staff's attention to the email from HoCS to all staff in relation to the development of Job Families and Professions framing the work in the context of the people strategy. Appendix A refers.**	Perm Secs	Was left with Perm Secs to action.
(7.2) PfG	• **Circulation of the draft Programme for Government Delivery Plan 2025-2026** • **Review of the current ToR for the PfG Committee**	HoCS office PfG Cttee	Complete Mtg arranged for Monday 30.3.26
(7.5) Chief Digital Officer	**Draft job description for Chief Digital Officer to be shared with PS colleagues for consideration and comment.**	I Snowden	Discussed at PSS 13 Feb 2026

(3) Matters Arising – there were no matters arising.

(4) A Path to Fiscal Sustainability

@09:20 Aidan McMahon joined the meeting for this item only

4.1 HoCs provided a verbal update on the ongoing work on a path to fiscal sustainability. Discussion focused on budget, available avenues for efficiencies, income generation and key pressures and the levers available to address these. Members noted the need to ensure work is aligned with workforce planning.

@10:45 Aidan McMahon left the meeting.

@11:08 comfort break

(5) ISNI Committee

@11:20 Scott Wilson joined the meeting for this item only

5.1 HoCS welcomed SW to the meeting. PM provided a brief overview and introduced SW who updated the Board on the progress on the Enabling Action Plan. The Board provided comment, feedback and endorsement of the progress. PM noted the need for all information to be completed by SROs in relation to EA6 on DataMAP. Members considered the detail set out in Annex C regarding the current data gaps in the PAC reported projects and agreed to a course of action to ensure data is uploaded and signed off.

5.2 MD noted suggested action to arrange a meeting with Ministers and SW in relation to EA9 and progressing ISNI.

5.3 The Board were content to agree to the proposals relating to Phase 2 of Enabling Action 3: Business Case Process Improvements set out at Annex B, however it was suggested that the proposal to increase the reapproval threshold from 10% to 20% be subject to further discussion between DoF and SIB with the possibility of an increase to 15% with a focus on prioritising asset intensive operatives.

Actions:

(2) MD to consider action to arrange a meeting with Ministers and SIB re ISNI/EA9

(3) All Members to ensure SROs complete the information required to facilitate progress on DataMAP.

(4) HoCS to meet with DM and Chief Executive of Education Authority to identify a way forward in relation to completion of details for DE projects.

(5) Scott Wilson and Joanne McBurney to agree an alternative approach to amending limits for business case revisions

@ 11:50 SW left the meeting

(6) People Committee

@11:50 Jill Minne and Mark Wishart joined the meeting for this item only.

6.1 L McK welcomed JM and MW to the meeting and provided a high-level overview of progress on the People Strategy recognising the substantial collective work of all officials involved. JM provided a verbal update on the development of the People Strategy Masterplan.

6.2 The NICS Board noted the progress and echoed LMcK's recognition of the significant work undertaken to date. The Board also noted the DoF response to the NIAO Recommendations on Leading and Resourcing the NICS. Discussion focused on the need for clear communications and close monitoring of employee engagement to inform how members can drive this work forward across departments.

6.3 FR commended JM and her team and noted that the collective ownership and leadership of the People Strategy by NICS Board had led to significantly more buy in and the need to ensure this continues. JM noted the need to ensure the work continues to be led at a strategic level to ensure progress continues. It was noted the data and masterplan will be brought to the next meeting.

@12.20 JM and MW left the meeting.

(7) PfG Update

7.1 FR provided a verbal update on PfG which covered the Delivery Plan, budget alignment, and development of the first PfG annual report due in May 2026.

7.2 Members noted the proposed reporting schedule and the intention to develop KPIs to support the PfG. FR advised that for the next PfG it would be helpful for the PfG Committee to start considering their contribution to the development of the next draft PfG. A discussion at Board may be beneficial.

7.3 HoCS noted the intention to develop a NICS Board Annual Report to be reviewed at the May Board.

Action:

(6) HoCS office to develop NICS Board annual report seeking input as required from Committee Chairs and SROs.

@12:35 LMcK left the meeting.

(8) Overview of the Departmental Solicitors Office

@12.35 Toni Fitzgerald-Gunn, Anna Gray, James McKay and Arlene Madden joined the meeting for this item only.

8.1 HoCS welcomed the DSO Directors joining the meeting. TFG, AG, JMCK and AM provided an overview of the range of work undertaken by DSO, and the work at a corporate level to develop strong engagement structures with departments to facilitate a proactive approach in project delivery.

8.2 The Board noted the delivery targets included in the corporate plan and the importance of early engagement with DSO to ensure optimal outcomes. Members welcomed the proactive approach and the significant progress made to date.

Action:

(7) DSO to return with a future report on trends in claims and cases.

(9) AOB

Nothing was raised under AOB.

(10) Update from CCG NI meeting of 11 March 2026

The Board noted the update provided by CCPB following the CCG (NI) on 11 March.

(11) NICS Board Forward Workplan

The Board noted the proposed reporting schedule to the Board.

(12) Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 19 May 2026, HMP Maghaberry

Meeting ended 13:35