

A FREE & CONFIDENTIAL SERVICE

Information, Advice & Advocacy

Seán Fleming
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee
Silveracre,
Castletown
Portlaoise
Co. Laois

12 September 2018

Private & Confidential

Dear Mr Fleming,

As a Director of Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service, I am writing to request that you bring my correspondence to the attention of the Public Accounts Committee. I have already written to the Comptroller and Auditor General, Mr Seamus Mc Carthy to seek a meeting with him as a matter of urgency to discuss grave concerns which I have about the attempted enforced dissolution of our company by the Citizens Information Board at a great cost to the state, the exchequer and the citizens whom we serve.

Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service currently provides free Information, Advice & Advocacy services at exceptional 'Value for Money' to very large numbers of vulnerable and marginalised people in the north inner city. Our dedicated bespoke service supports approx. 40,000 clients per annum while managing with scarce resources. Our Board has written to the CEO and the Directors of the Citizens Information Board on a number of occasions to express the concerns of all stakeholders in relation to the proposed restructuring of our service, which will result in a greater cost to the state and a much reduced and diminished service for our citizens and non-citizens alike.

The majority of our correspondence has remained unanswered including a letter from our Board on 12th of July to the CIB Board Risk & Audit Committee outlining our very serious concerns. In response to this letter our Chairperson received a very threatening and intimidating phone call from the CEO on 17th July accusing her of wasting public money on stamps (letters were hand-delivered) and wasting public time and this was well in advance of the Board Meeting which was due to take place on 25th July.

I have been provided with absolutely no compelling 'Value for Money' argument and we have provided services at serious value for money with very limited resources to very large numbers of people for the last 20 years. I strongly believe that what CIB is trying to enforce on us would result in a huge waste of public money and would irreparably damage our service.

I am attaching one of the early submissions which our Board made to CIB and I would like to draw your attention to the sections on Centre of Excellence Page 5, 'Value for Money' Page 6 and 'Good Governance' on Page 7.

I understand that the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General is currently reviewing the CIB 2017 Financial Statements and in particular the implications of expenditure which was spent in defiance of the Dail motion of March 2017. I am sure that you are also aware of the Joint Oireachtas Committee Report of June 2017, which urged the CIB to halt the 'flawed and ill-considered MABS & CIS Restructuring' and the subsequent Joint Oireachtas Committee hearing on the Cost Benefit Analysis (requested by the JOC) in November 2017.

Please find attached a copy of the text of the JOC hearing on the Cost Benefit Analysis in addition to one of the early submissions that our Board made to the CIB, as mentioned previously.

As CIB is currently seeking to dissolve our company within the next two weeks, we are requesting that this matter be brought to the attention of the Public Accounts Committee at the next meeting, which I understand is due to take place on 20th September.

I am requesting that the Public Accounts Committee investigate this matter and that the Citizens Information Board should be asked to stall their attempts to merge our company and irreparably damage our service while this investigation is being carried out. If you require any further information, please let me know. Thank You.

I look forward to hearing from you.

P.P. 

Ken Mc Cue
Director



Citizens Information

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E: deirdre.casey@citinfo.ie
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A FREE & CONFIDENTIAL SERVICE

Information , Advice & Advocacy

Mr Seamus Mc Carthy
Comptroller & Auditor General
3A Mayor Street Upper
Dublin 1

5 September 2018

Private & Confidential

Dear Mr Mc Carthy,

As a Director of Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service, I am writing to seek a meeting with you as a matter of urgency to discuss grave concerns which I have about the attempted enforced dissolution of our company by the Citizens Information Board at a great cost to the state, the exchequer and the citizens whom we serve.

Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service currently provides free Information, Advice & Advocacy services at exceptional 'Value for Money' to very large numbers of vulnerable and marginalised people in the north inner city. Our dedicated bespoke service supports approx. 40,000 clients per annum while managing with scarce resources. Our Board has written to the CEO and the Directors of the Citizens Information Board on a number of occasions to express the concerns of all stakeholders in relation to the proposed restructuring of our service, which will result in a greater cost to the state and a much reduced and diminished service for our citizens and non-citizens alike.

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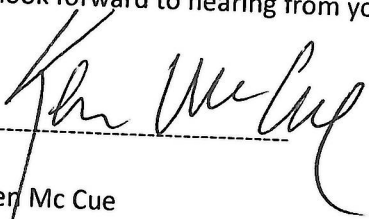
"I understand that your office is currently reviewing the CIB 2017 Financial Statements and in particular the implications of expenditure which was spent in defiance of the Dail motion of March 2017. I am sure that you are also aware of the Joint Oireachtas Committee Report of June 2017, which urged the CIB to halt the 'flawed and ill-considered MABS & CIS Restructuring' and the subsequent Joint Oireachtas Committee hearing on the Cost Benefit Analysis (requested by the JOC) in November 2017.

Please find attached a copy of the text of the JOC hearing on the Cost Benefit Analysis in addition to one of the early submissions that our Board made to the CIB, as mentioned previously.

As CIB is currently seeking to dissolve our company within the next three weeks, we are seeking to meet you as a matter of urgency to discuss our concerns in detail.

I am requesting that the Office of the C & A G investigate this matter and that the Citizens Information Board should be asked to stall their attempts to merge our company and irreparably damage our service while this investigation is being carried out.

I look forward to hearing from you.



Ken Mc Cue
Director

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Information, Advice & Advocacy

Ms Ita Mangan
Chairperson CIB Board
Citizens Information Board
George's Quay House
43 Townsend Street
Dublin 2

8 February 2017

Dear Ita,

The Board of DCC CIS has never had occasion to write to the Board of CIB in the last 20 years, however, this correspondence is prompted by the very serious concerns expressed by all stakeholders in our service regarding the detrimental effects that the dissolution of our company would have on our service and on our clients. We are therefore requesting that our correspondence and proposal be tabled for discussion and serious consideration at the upcoming Board Meeting.

We share the genuine concerns of the National Association of Citizens Information Services, who made a submission to the CIB Board and attended a meeting in October 2016 to present the views of CISs nationally regarding the restructuring proposal. However, due to our unique circumstances in DCC CIS, we have additional grave concerns about the far reaching consequences arising from the proposed abolition of our company and believe that our service will suffer even more seriously from the effects of this dramatic change.

As DCC CIS is the busiest service in the country with extremely high levels of activity and the largest number of paid staff of any CIS or MABS company in Ireland, we are absolutely convinced that it is necessary to retain a dedicated Board to oversee and support the service, look after the interests of our numerous clients and to ensure that we 'keep the citizen at the centre' of everything we do. Please see Figure 1 for DCC CIS Organisational / Activity Chart.

According to the current proposal before the Board of CIB, DCC CIS which deals with circa 40,000 clients per annum would become $\frac{1}{6}$ or $\frac{1}{7}$ of a company, while the 51 MABS companies who dealt with 17,773 clients in 2015 would become 8 companies and the National Advocacy Service, which dealt with 959 clients in 2015 would also remain as 1 company. Please see Figure 2.

- DCC CIS 40,000 clients > $\frac{1}{6}$ or $\frac{1}{7}$ of company
- All MABS 17,773 clients > 8 companies
- NAS 959 clients > 1 company

We do not understand the logic of this very serious anomaly

We understand the remit of the MABS & NAS services , however, it is important to note that the remit of DCC CIS is extremely broad and our services also provides advice and assistance on complex issues in addition to intensive advocacy support for many clients.

We respectfully suggest that it is necessary to have a 3rd Region in Dublin – ‘Dublin City Centre’ with a dedicated Board to oversee and support service provision. The current proposal which would result in DCC CIS becoming $\frac{1}{6}$ or $\frac{1}{7}$ of a company would not provide sufficient attention and support to a service which has such high levels of activity in addition to many unique aspects.

The Chairperson and Development Manager recently met with CEO, Angela Black and Fiona Coyne, Senior Manager CIB to highlight the important role of DCC CIS and the need to be treated in the same manner as the Citizens Information Phone Service in view of DCC CIS's unique position and array of services coupled with the fact that DCC CIS has been operating according to a Centre of Excellence model for many years.

The CEO of CIB has recognised the unique aspects of our service and this has also been acknowledged by Senior Management in CIB over the years. The granting of a Team Supervisor post to DCC CIS by CIB (the only position of its kind in the network) was recognition of the significant scale of client activity in this highly pressurised high street city centre service.

‘ The Citizens Information Board is very aware of how busy the CIS is, with the constant flow of customers into the service, the diversity of need, capacity and complexity of customer concerns, and the pressures that this puts on the staff. The service is the busiest in the country and this is reflected in the numbers coming into the main office.

*Dublin City Centre CIS is held in high regard, and any feedback to CIB on the quality of service provided is consistently positive.*¹

DCC CIS is essentially providing a national service and the O’Connell Street office is perceived by many clients as the main hub or headquarters. External national organisations frequently make this assumption which results in numerous requests to the service. DCC CIS is also frequently referred to as the ‘flagship’ service by CIB and within the wider CIS network and the current opportunity to extend the premises in O’Connell Street this year will enable the service to grow and develop to meet the huge demands from clients. The internal view is that it will be extremely difficult to continue to grow and develop the service or in fact do business effectively without the support and oversight of a dedicated board, which could include CIB nominated representatives to ensure alignment with other Citizens Information Services. This model has been proven to work effectively as is demonstrated by the Citizens Information Phone Service, which receives enormous support from the Citizens Information Board. We firmly believe that our service which is delivering an enormous amount with scarce resources deserves the same level of support.

We are very concerned about both the short and long term consequences of abolishing our company and becoming $\frac{1}{6}$ or $\frac{1}{7}$ of another company where we would no longer have a voice and would be extremely remote from the proposed governing body which may adopt a one size fits all approach. This would slow the decision making process and it is also highly unlikely that a Regional Board would take into account the unique aspects of our service. We would no longer benefit from the support, advice and guidance of a dedicated board which would be extremely demotivating for all involved. The benefits and opportunities which we currently

¹ Letter from Eileen Fitzgerald, Senior Manager, CIB March 2014

enjoy and have availed of as a clearly defined NGO would be lost and this would lead to a loss of creativity in service development and deterioration in the service in the long term.

As our staff are already under considerable pressure due to the very high volumes of callers and consequent workload, there are fears that the proposed abolition of the company would push staff to breaking point. It is very likely that consequent Transfers of Undertakings would lead to Industrial unrest and service disruption which would detract attention away from our clients and core mission and would be damaging for the service. We are conscious that the mergers of 5 companies into the National Advocacy Service in 2014 led to many disputes which lasted for several years and ended up in the Rights Commissioner and Employment Appeals Tribunal. This is a very costly exercise from a financial, human and service delivery perspective, which we wish to avoid at all costs as we would like to see all of our energies and any available funding invested in front line service provision. We are also concerned that the current proposals are leading to demotivation and demoralisation amongst staff and the expertise which has been built up over many years may be lost unnecessarily. The morale within the service has already been adversely affected by the proposals to disband the company.

We are attaching a detailed submission and considering the seriousness of the decision and the likely impact on our service and on our clients we would very much appreciate if you could give our proposal very serious consideration as we genuinely believe that it is in the best interests of our service and of our clients.

Yours Sincerely

Frances

Frances Soney-Ituen
Chairperson

c.c.: Angela Black, CEO Citizens Information Board
CIB Board Members

Encl. : Figure1 – Organisational Activity Chart
Figure 2 – Comparative Statistics
Letter from Eileen Fitzgerald, former Senior Manager, CIB.
Submission re Restructuring



(Figure 1)

Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service

Board of Directors

Frances Soney-Iluen – *Chairperson* (Womens' Integrated Network), Ken McCue – *Vice-Chair* (Sports Against Racism), Catherine Hickey – *Company Secretary* (Free Legal Advice Centres), Brenda Murphy – *Treasurer* (Macro Community Resource Centre), Beatrice Cronin (Treatir), Roughan McNamara (Focus Ireland)

Planning Subcommittee

Finance Subcommittee

Development Manager

HR Subcommittee

Premises Subcommittee

Team Supervisor

Administrator

Dublin City North West (North King Street)
 2 Information Officers
 3 Receptionist / Info Assistants
 Volunteer
 Specialist Immigration Advisor
 CAVA Accountant
 (Chinese Interpreter)

O'Connell Street
 2 Administration Assistants
 7 Information Officers
 3 Receptionist / Info Assistants
 2 Users (Bouncers) / Info Assistants
 Tax Advisor
 Family Law Advisor
 (Polish Interpreter)
 (Accountant)
 (Cleaner)

Dublin City North East (Sean McDermott Street)
 1 Information Officer
 2 Receptionist / Info Assistants

Information/ Advice

Discussion of options
 Benefit checks
 Leaflets and forms
 Form filling
 Letter writing
 Formalised referrals
 on
 Social Welfare
 Employment
 Housing
 Immigration etc

Advocacy

1. Once-off Advocacy
 2. On-going support
 in relation to a
 right/entitlement
 3. Representation or
 support at formal
 hearing /procedure
 4. Representation or
 support through
 submission or at
 formal tribunal

Community Education

Presentations
 Eg Trinity College
 The Irish Heart Foundation
 Caranua
 Shine
 ARC Cancer Support
 Epilepsy Ireland
 Eolas
 (for 2016 list see Appendix 2)

Social Policy

Member of:
 *Migrant Stakeholders Group
 *Migrant Consultative Forum
 *Immigration Information Network
 *ENAR
 Social Policy Tables
 Meetings with Central DSP Office

Specialist Services

FLAC x 3 – General, Family,
 Employment, Immigration
 Tax Clinic, Family Law
 Information Clinic,
 Sign Language Interpreting
 Service, Interpreters (Polish,
 Chinese), CAVA, Women's Aid,
 CASS, Employment Law Clinic,
 Immigration Clinic
 (for full list see Appendix 1)

Projects

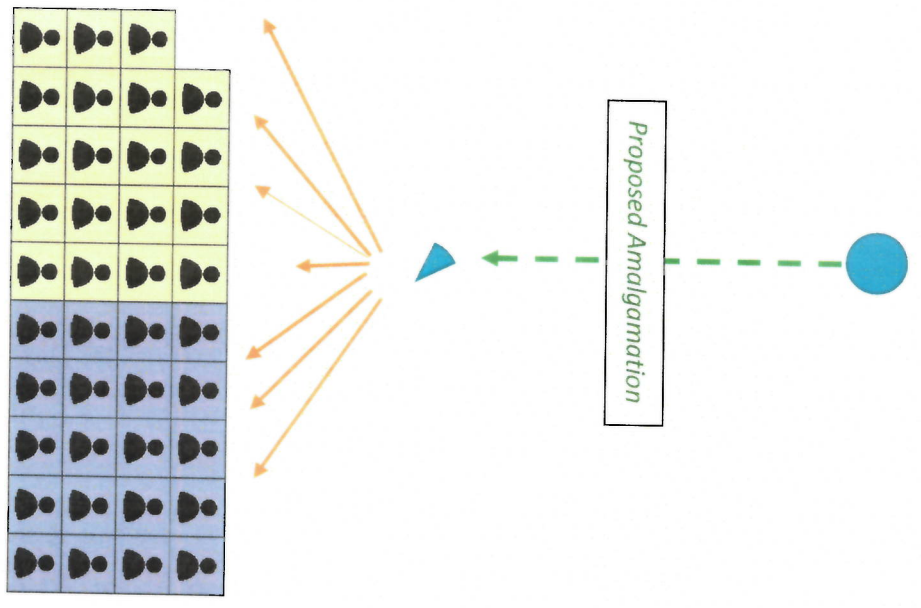
Multi-agency Direct
 Provision Information
 Sessions
 Update of "Find Your Way"
 – A Guide to Key Services in
 Dublin City Centre
 Contribution to "Making an
 Impact" – The Public Value
 of CISs in Ireland
 Triple A Project in Balkans
 20 Year review of DCC CIS

Development

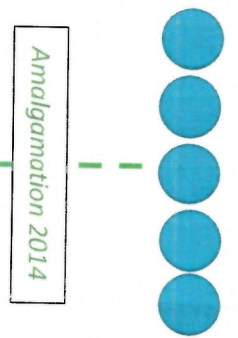
Refurbishment of
 O'Connell Street
 premises –
 *Design, drawings &
 specifications with OPW
 *Temporary relocation
 *Furniture
 *Negotiation of new
 licence

Dublin City Centre CIS

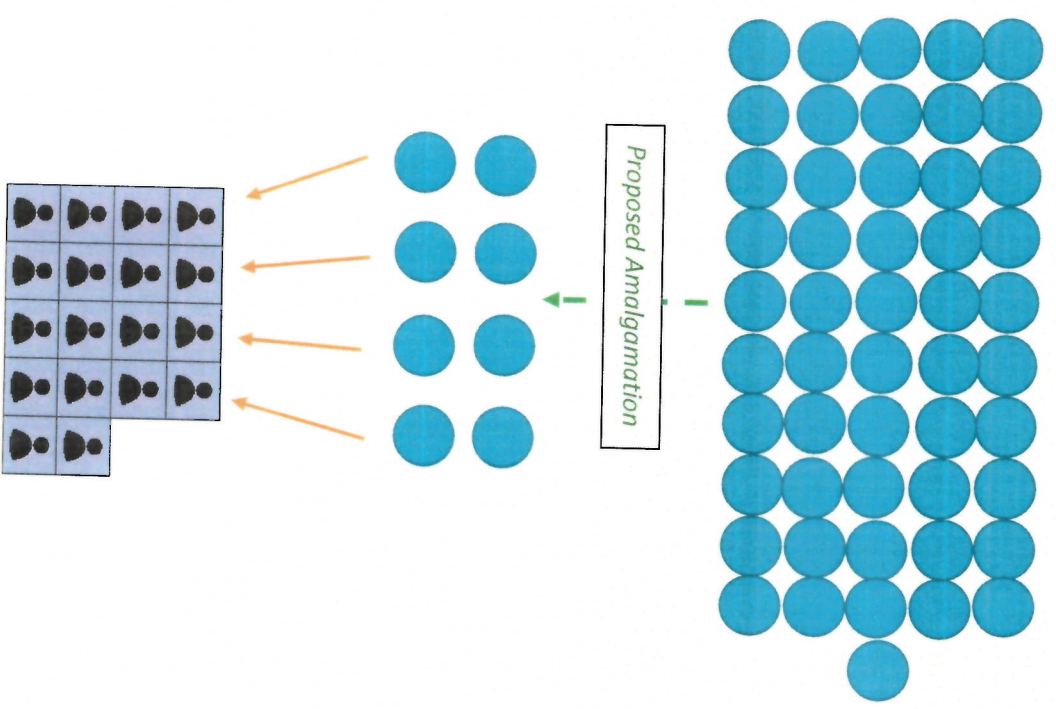
(Figure 2)




National Advocacy Service




Money Advice & Budgeting Services





LEGEND

 = 1/6 of a company

 = 1 company

= 1000 clients - advice/assistance/advocacy (2015 stats)

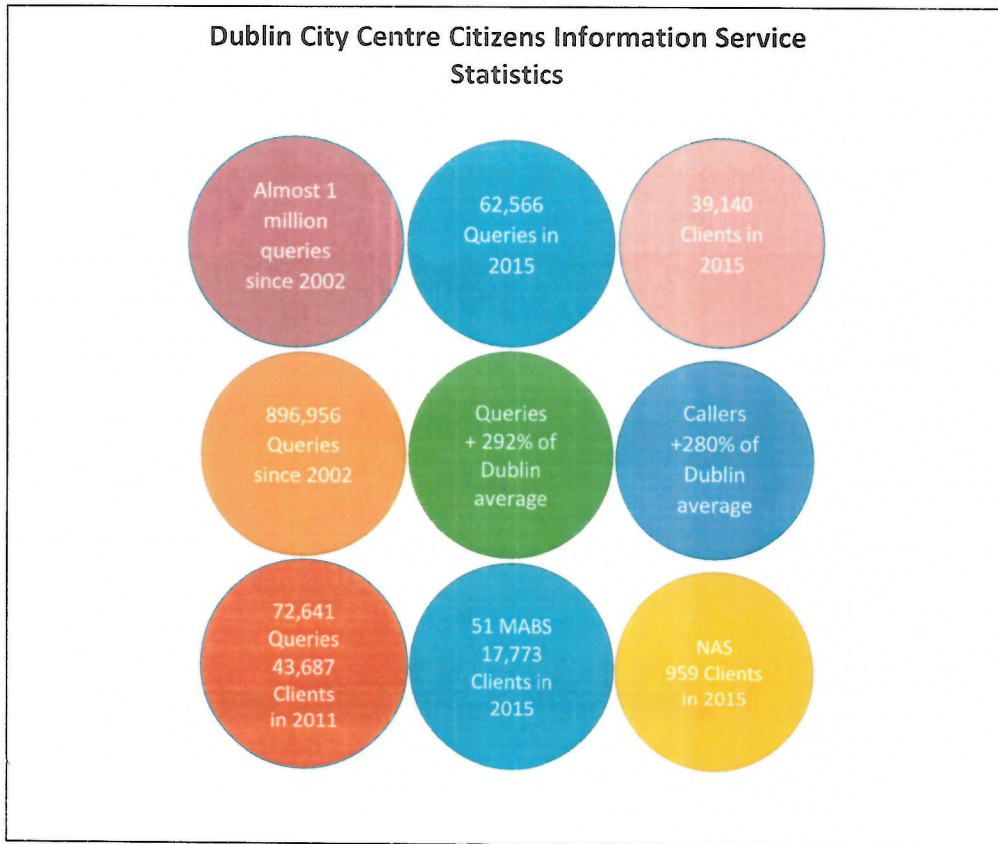
 

= 1000 clients – information (2015 stats)

Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service

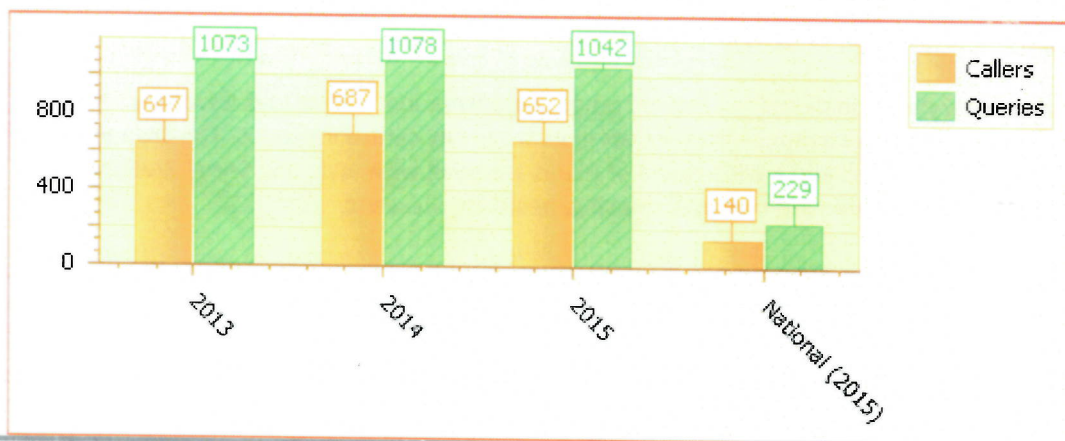


Final Submission re Restructuring - January 2017



Introduction

The CIB National Summary CIS Activity Reports indicate that Dublin City Centre CIS has consistently been the busiest Citizens Information Service in the country for many years with the highest number of callers at approximately three times the national average. As a high street capital, city centre service with the main office in O’Connell Street, the service attracts callers from all over Dublin and from many other parts of the country, which is evidenced by the most recent customer survey. DCC CIS is essentially providing a national service and the O’Connell St office is perceived by clients as the main hub or headquarters. External national organisations also frequently make this assumption which results in many requests and greater demands for talks and presentations. In 2015 DCC CIS dealt with 652 callers per 1,000 of population compared to the national average of 229.



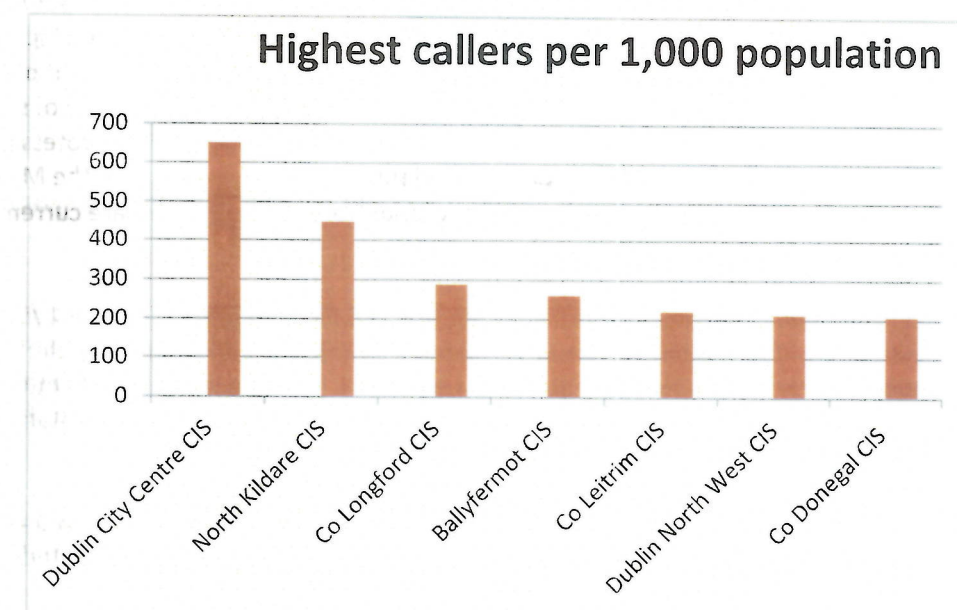
Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service

Final Submission re Restructuring - January 2017

'The services with the highest number of Callers were Dublin City Centre, followed by Donegal, Galway and Tipperary CISs. (See table below) This is consistent with CIS activity in previous years. Some of the busier services have seen a slight drop in caller numbers consistent with the overall national figures.'¹

Callers to CISs

CIS	Callers 2015	Callers 2014
Dublin City Centre CIS	39,140	41,224
Co Donegal CIS	33,523	32,764
Co Galway CIS	26,721	28,384
Co Tipperary CIS	26,067	26,378



Information, Advice and Advocacy

DCC CIS is a key player in delivering the full range of Information, Advice and Advocacy services in addition to a wide range of specialist services in its three city centre locations. The drop in service is open and available to all and a wide range of issues are dealt with including Social Welfare, immigration issues, employment rights, housing, health services etc.

¹ National Summary CIS Activity Report 2015 (pages 3 & 4)

Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service

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Specialist Services

- Free Legal Advice Centre (3 FLAC services including General, Employment, Family & Immigration Law) including pro bono services provided by Mc Cann Fitzgerald Solicitors
 - Immigration Clinic
 - Family Law Clinic
 - Employment Law Clinic (Community Law & Mediation Centre)
 - Tax Clinic
 - CAVA (Financial Advice)
 - Women's Aid (Domestic Violence)
 - Foreign language services (Polish & Chinese Interpreters)
 - Citizenship Application Support Service (New Communities Partnership)
 - Sign Language Interpreting Service (Deaf or hard of hearing)
- (See Appendix 1)

Advocacy

Advocacy has been an integral part of the service for many years and DCC CIS has a long history and commitment to the provision of advocacy services and has been involved in advocacy casework since its inception. The service works intensively with clients and supports them in resolving complex issues in relation to Social Welfare, Immigration, and Housing etc. As DCC CIS was the lead partner and employer of an Advocacy Resource Officer from 2005 to 2009 the advocacy capacity of staff increased considerably during this time and it also led to the development of a more professional and structured advocacy service. In 2010 DCC CIS received funding from the Office for the Minister for Integration to employ a part time Advocacy Project Worker for Migrants. There are currently 12 staff members involved in Advocacy Work and 1 specialist volunteer.

Stage 1

Despite the very busy nature of the city centre service there are a large number of Stage 1 /Once off Advocacy interventions. The number of Once off Advocacies has increased substantially almost doubling in 2015. These relate to a wide range of issues and include negotiation /representation to the DSP, HSE, DJELR, Utility Service Providers, Employers and Landlords. All Information staff are involved in this level of Advocacy.

Stage 2

All Information Officers are also involved in Stage 2 Advocacy and regularly write submissions for review/appeal of payments to the DSP, HSE and the Local Authority. Clients are also assisted in accessing redundancy payments, holiday pay etc.

Stages 3 & 4

Self- Advocacy is promoted and clients are supported in advocating for themselves if they have the capacity to do so. Clients are also represented at formal hearings / procedures such as Social Welfare Appeals and Employment Hearings and are assisted in writing complaints to the Office of the Ombudsman. Regular submissions are made to the Department of Justice for reviews / appeals in relation to visas or renewal of temporary leave to remain. Staff also represent clients through formal submissions and at formal tribunals. There are a considerable number of immigration issues in this category and submissions are made regularly to the Dept. of Justice to assist in regularisation of status and also family reunification.

Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service

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Talks and Presentations

DCC CIS provides regular Talks and Presentations to national and local organisations with specific information needs including Trinity College, the Irish Cancer Society, Focus Ireland, the National Learning Network, The Irish Heart Foundation etc. The service is also involved in organising and co-ordinating Multi-Agency Information sessions for residents of Direct Provision centres who have been granted refugee status or leave to remain in Ireland. Over 30 talks, presentations and training sessions were provided in 2016.

(See Appendix 2)

Social Policy

DCC CIS has been very proactive in recording Social Policy issues and in 2015 was responsible for the largest number of reports from any CIS in the country.

'The level of engagement in submitting Social Policy Returns varied significantly across the network. All CISs provided policy feedback to CIB in 2015, with a number showing a significant increase in their engagement with policy work.'

Over half (54%) of policy issues raised by services was provided by ten CISs, who reported between 97 and 258 policy issues. Dublin City Centre CIS reported most issues (258), followed by Co Donegal CIS (245), Galway CIS (241) and Kerry CIS (204). The remaining 46% of policy feedback was reported by 32 services. Feedback for these ranged from 89 SPRs down to five.²

CIS Social Policy Returns 2015	Social Policy Returns
Dublin City Centre CIS	258
Co Donegal CIS	245
Galway CIS	241
Kerry CIS	204
Co Longford CIS	140
Cork (West) CIS	139
Co Limerick CIS	123
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown CIS	102
Co Roscommon CIS	99
Cork City South CIS	97
Total for 10 services	1648

DCC CIS is a member of the Immigrant Information network which meets regularly with the Dept. of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to discuss issues of concern to migrants in addition to the Migrant Consultative Forum which meets regularly with the DSP. Regular meetings are also held separately with the central DSP office to discuss issues arising. DCC CIS involvement in all of these forums provides avenues and opportunities to raise and progress policy issue which arise through engagement with clients.

Dublin City Council invited DCC CIS to contribute to its Integration Strategy and DCC CIS has committed to carrying out joint actions with DCC to progress this strategy.

² National Summary CIS Activity Report p.20

Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service

Final Submission re Restructuring - January 2017

Meeting the needs of Migrants

DCC CIS has a large proportion of immigrant service users. Independent research carried out by Delve Research in 2008 indicated that the proportion was close to 60%. Data from the census day in March 2015 (Eustace Patterson) indicated that 66% of clients were from countries other than Ireland.

'Thirty four per cent were Irish. Twenty four were from other European countries and 42% were from outside the EU'.

As DCC CIS is incredibly busy the Nationality field is under- recorded on Oyster, however data from the national activity report indicates that DCC CIS

*'had the highest number of non-Irish nationals using their services.'*³

DCC CIS has put many supports in place for migrants over the years including Interpretation Services, Immigration Clinics, Citizenship Application Support Service, and Immigration Lawyers through FLAC in two locations. DCC CIS also developed a guide for migrants 'Find Your Way: A Guide to Key Services in Dublin City Centre', which has been widely used by both statutory agencies and NGOs

Centre of Excellence

The consistently high volumes of service users and the number of repeat callers who return with different issues indicate high levels of client satisfaction with service provision which is supported by positive client feedback from Customer Service Surveys. Service users from other parts of Dublin and other parts of the country have indicated that they use DCC CIS because they are assured of receiving a good service. They also value the anonymity and the convenience to transport links that the city centre service provides. There is in fact a bus stop in O'Connell Street named after the Citizens Information Service.

DCC CIS has worked within a Centre of Excellence model for many years and was a finalist in the Dublin Living awards for 'Outstanding Contribution to Dublin Life' in 2011. In addition to a Gold Star Service Excellence award in 2014 from the European Foundation for Quality Management, DCC CIS was also awarded a Role Model (EFQM) award in 2015.

The addition of a Team Supervisor in 2013 has enabled the service to achieve higher levels of consistency in service delivery. DCC CIS developed a Quality Matrix framework tool internally to ensure optimum service provision and best outcomes for service users. This tool was adopted by CIB and was subsequently rolled out and implemented by all CIS services in 2015. Due to the very high volumes of queries, staff have developed great expertise and are supported and coached by the Team Supervisor to provide a service of the highest quality.

DCC CIS has been involved in international work since the enlargement of the EU in 2004 and worked for several years with Polish Citizens Advice Bureaux to seek to resolve some of the difficult issues Polish migrants were experiencing. DCC CIS has also been involved in the Triple A Project (Access to Information, Advice and Active Help <http://tripleacitizens.eu/>) on behalf of the National Association of Citizens Information Services for several years, which has spread the Citizens Information / Advice model to the Western Balkans and Turkey and has helped many marginalised citizens in post conflict and post -communist countries to access their rights. DCC CIS involvement has included organising study visits for pilot projects and providing mentoring and capacity building support to projects in Bosnia Herzegovina and Albania.

³ National Summary CIS Activity Report p.6

Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service

Final Submission re Restructuring - January 2017

Economic and Developmental Benefits of being an NGO, Company Limited by Guarantee and Charity

Dublin City Centre CIS has benefitted hugely from being an NGO and Company Limited by Guarantee and has succeeded in attracting funding for various projects in addition to making huge financial savings.

- DCC CIS lodged a successful tender application to Dublin City Council for premises in Sean Mc Dermott Street in a competition for NGOs only in 2008. Dublin City Council subsequently remodelled the premises and covered all refurbishment costs of approximately €300,000. Our service has benefitted from a peppercorn rent of €130 per annum for the last 6 years for the sole use of this premises, which was refurbished to a very high specification to meet the needs of DCC CIS. The rental of these premises on the open market would cost a minimum of 15,000 per annum, which has resulted in savings to date of at least €105,000.
- In 2005 DCC CIS was faced with a rates bill of €60,000. As an NGO, DCC CIS received the support of the Voluntary Assistance Scheme of the Bar Council and Coolock Community Law Centre (CLM) who successfully challenged the decision of the Valuation Appeals Tribunal. This has resulted in savings of at least €260,000 to date.
- DCC CIS negotiated a peppercorn rent of €1 for the O'Connell St office with the Office of Public Works on the basis that DCC CIS is an NGO. No rent has ever been requested and DCC CIS has made savings of at least €50,000 per annum over 20 years which equates to 1 million Euros.
- DCC CIS has negotiated with the OPW to acquire the additional adjoining premises in O'Connell Street (rent free) to extend its existing premises. This has been agreed and the OPW has recently advised that the final grant of planning permission to extend has been approved. The OPW has agreed to fund the necessary mechanical and electrical works required.
- DCC CIS has received grants from various sources as an NGO and CLG including the Reception and Integration Agency, the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration and Dublin City Council. DCC has always supported our work as they recognise that it aligns with their mission, values and strategy for Dublin City.
- DCC CIS has always been innovative and creative and has succeeded in delivering services to very large volumes of callers with scarce resources. Becoming a joint CE Scheme sponsor with South Dublin Voluntary Groups in 2004 has assisted greatly in achieving that objective.

A Unique Service

DCC CIS faces particular challenges due to its central and inner city locations and the fact that Dublin's North Inner city contains some of the worst unemployment black-spots in the country in addition to serious drug problems, increasing levels of homelessness and more recent gangland warfare. Many clients are particularly vulnerable and marginalised.

Particular issues include

- Pressure on staff due to large volumes and complexity of queries
- Larger numbers of services users with addiction issues
- Frequent incidents of Challenging Behaviour
- Larger proportion of service users with mental health issues

Dublin City Centre Citizens Information Service

Final Submission re Restructuring - January 2017

- Estimated 60% migrant service users with complex issues
- Larger proportion of homeless clients

Governance

DCC CIS provides a 'Value for Money' service. Overheads are low as outlined previously; however, DCC CIS has a substantial budget allocation of €630,500 (2016), which is approximately three times the average budget allocation for a CIS. The service is provided by 14 paid employees, 10- 12 CE participants and several specialist volunteers.

The Board of DCC CIS is efficient and effective and takes its corporate governance responsibilities very seriously, which has been evidenced by external audit in addition to regular annual audits. The members of the Board work in a positive and professional manner to oversee service delivery objectives, standards and service efficiency. The Board has the interests of the service users and all stakeholders at heart and has always advocated strongly to improve and develop the service.

The composition of the Board reflects and represents the diverse interests of our clients and includes representatives from Treoir, FLAC, Focus Ireland and Sports Against Racism amongst others. The current Board Members have skills and experience that demonstrate key competencies including finance, HR, legal, risk management and service delivery.

The support and advice provided by the professional Board is invaluable to the service and their contribution is particularly important due to the significant levels of client activity in such a highly pressurised environment. The volumes of clients, the high levels of activity and the number of staff generate sufficient issues to benefit from the undivided attention of a dedicated board who can provide timely responses and support to Management. The role of the Board includes

- Providing oversight over substantial budget and ensuring maximisation of resources
- Ensuring compliance with legal and reporting requirements
- Ensuring compliance with Quality Standards
- Supporting Management in dealing with challenges of exceptionally busy service

Conclusion

Due to the unique nature of DCC CIS, it is considered extremely important by all internal stakeholders that a dedicated Board is retained to support the further growth and development of the service. The current plans to extend the O'Connell St premises with the recent acquisition of the adjoining shop from the OPW, will enable DCC CIS to further enhance and develop its services to meet the needs of its clients. The retention of its status as an NGO will also support and drive that development.

The current model, which has been in place since the inception of DCC CIS has enabled the service to grow from strength to strength and to become the busiest Citizens Information Service in Ireland. The city centre service is not publicly advertised and has grown organically through word of mouth. Due to its very central location in the capital city, the service has an exceptionally high footfall and consequently has the greatest number of paid staff relative to other CISs. There are serious concerns within the service that the abolition of the Board and by extension the company would be extremely demotivating for staff and could have a detrimental effect on the service, which has been developed with great commitment and perseverance over many years. Fears have also been expressed about potential Industrial Relations issues arising from any Transfer of Undertaking (involving 14 staff members) which could seriously damage morale and service provision.

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The service very badly needs additional human resources to relieve pressures on staff and decrease waiting times for clients and there are concerns that available resources may unwittingly be diverted into expenditure on legal costs arising from the dissolution of the service rather than on improving service provision for clients.

The view of all of the Stakeholders within the service is that the current model is working very well as Dublin City Centre CIS has grown and developed considerably and has in fact thrived under this structure. DCC CIS is seeking to retain a professional Board and believes that it deserves the dedicated attention of a unique Board to look after the interests and the challenges of the busiest CIS in the country. There is a general consensus within the service that the unique circumstances and challenges faced by DCC CIS require the continued support and oversight of a local independent Board rather than a remote supervisory body.

DCC CIS recognises CIB as the competent authority to set policy and national standards, processes and practices and sees the benefit of having a unified approach to service delivery and a consistent customer experience. Dublin City Centre CIS would like to continue to work in partnership with CIB, other CISs and MABS companies to achieve better outcomes for all service users.

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Appendix 1 –Specialist Services

Dublin City Centre CIC

Address: 13A Upper O'Connell Street, Dublin 1

Telephone: 0761 07 7230

Fax: 01- 8783783

E-mail: dublincitycentre@citinfo.ie

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday 9.30am – 5.00pm (closed at 1pm on Wednesday & 1st Friday of the month).

SPECIALIST SERVICES (by appointment only)

* Polish Interpreter: Thursday mornings 10.00 – 1.00pm.

* FLAC (Free Legal Advice: Employment, General & Immigration Law): Wednesday evenings 6.45pm - 8.00pm

* Employment Law Clinic: Wednesday once a month. 10.00- 12.00 noon.

* Family Law Information Clinic: Thursday mornings 9.30 – 1.00pm.

* Tax Clinic: Tuesdays 11.00-1.00pm & 2.00-4.00pm

* Citizenship Application Support Service: Friday mornings 10.00-1.00pm.

* IRIS (Irish Remote Interpreting Service). Check with Admin before booking

Dublin City North West CIC

Address: MACRO Community Resource Centre, 1 Green St, Dublin 7
(off North King St)

Telephone: 0761 07 7270

Fax: 01- 8783511

E-mail: dublincitynw@citinfo.ie

Opening Hours: Monday to Thursday 9.30am – 1.00pm & 2.00pm – 5.00pm (closed at 1pm on Wednesday and Friday).

SPECIALIST SERVICES (by appointment only)

* FLAC (Family, General & Immigration Law): Thursday evenings 7.00-8.00pm

* Immigration Clinic: every Tuesday morning 10.00-1.00pm

* Chinese Clinic: Wednesday once a month. 10.00-1.00pm. (Check Google Calendar)

* CAVA: First Tuesday of the month from 7pm

Dublin City North East CIC

Address: Unit 4 Killarney Court, Buckingham St Upper, Dublin 1

Telephone: 0761 07 7260

Fax: 01- 8197846

E-mail: dublincityne@citinfo.ie

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday 9.30am – 12.30pm

SPECIALIST SERVICES (by appointment only)

* FLAC (General Law): Monday afternoons 2.00-4.00pm

* Women's Aid: Monday afternoons 2.00-4.00pm & Friday mornings 10-1.00pm

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Appendix 2 - Talks & Presentations 2016

Date	Group /Subject Matter	Type
01/02/2016	Immigration Training to 2,4,6 CIS <i>Basic immigration training provided to staff of Dublin 2,4,6 CIS.</i>	Provided Training
17/02/2016	HSE Adult Learning Group <i>Presentation on CIC services to HSE supported group with mental health difficulties.</i>	Presentation
17/02/2016	IBAT College, Wellington Quay. <i>Information session for international students on rights and entitlements.</i>	Presentation
25/02/2016 & 26/02/2016	Triple A Pilot Projects from Balkans 2 day Study Visit arranged with input from CIB, FLAC, CLM , Bar Council, Mc Cann Fitzgerald Solicitors etc.	Arrangement and Presentations
25/02/2016	Triple A Study Visit from Balkans Overview of the work of CISs in Ireland	Presentation
25/02/2016	Triple A Study Visit from Balkans The Information & Advice process	Presentation
25/02/2016	Triple A Study Visit from Balkans Sample Queries and Case studies	Presentation
03/03/2016	IBAT College, Wellington Quay. <i>Information session for international students on rights and entitlements.</i>	Presentation
12/03/2016	Caranua Information Day, Gresham Hotel. <i>Information stand covering CIC services and rights and entitlements for people who experienced abuse in institutions managed by religious congregations in Ireland.</i>	Stand
07/04/2016	Stroke Survivors Annual National Conference - Irish Heart Foundation, Croke Park. <i>Learning and information sharing for stroke survivors, carers and families.</i>	Stand & Workshop
14/04/2016	Eolas Info Session, HSE Project <i>Entitlements session for service users with a diagnosis of schizophrenia or bipolar disorder and their families and friends.</i>	Presentation
19/04/2016	Eolas Info Session, HSE Project <i>Entitlements session for service users with a diagnosis of schizophrenia or bipolar disorder and their families and friends.</i>	Presentation

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23/04/2016	New Communities Partnership, Information Event – Wood Quay. <i>Multi-organisation information event for people from migrant communities.</i>	Stand
07/06/2016	Eolas Info Session – 230 NCR, Dublin 7. <i>Entitlements session for service users with a diagnosis of schizophrenia or bipolar disorder and their families and friends.</i>	Presentation
08/06/2016	Basin Club, Blessington Street. <i>Presentation on CIC services to the Peer Support Group run by Shine mental health organisation.</i>	Presentation
23/06/2016	ARC Cancer Support Group, Eccles Street. <i>Entitlements session for people affected by cancer.</i>	Presentation
12/07/2016 - 15/07/2016	Mentoring & Monitoring Pilot Projects in Albania <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of Activities of Pilot Projects and Progress with Triple A Action Plan • Quality Standards for Triple A services -Tools to ensure quality service provision - Policies and procedures • Information & Data Collection • Case Management • Improving National Albanian Triple A Report 	Capacity Building
28/07/2016	Trinity College Dublin Talk <i>Information session for students participating in the Trinity Access Programmes.</i>	Presentation
21/09/2016	Direct Provision Information Session <i>Multi-agency information session for people granted refugee status & those granted leave to remain in direct provision with presentations from DSP, DCC, MABS, CIS etc.</i>	Organisation of Information Session & Presentations
28/09/2016	Immigration Training 1 <i>Basic Immigration Training Session for staff members.</i>	Provided Training
04/10/2016	Trinity College Information Day <i>Multi-organisation information event for TCD Staff Members.</i>	Stand
05/10/2016	Immigration Training 2 <i>Advanced Immigration Training Session for staff members.</i>	Provided Training

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08/10/2016	Epilepsy Ireland National Conference <i>Information stand covering CIC services and rights and entitlements for people living with epilepsy and their carers/families.</i>	Stand
13/10/2016	CIE Pensioners, Wynn's Hotel. <i>Presentation on CIC services and entitlements for over sixties for retired CIE staff.</i>	Presentation
20/10/2016	ARC Cancer Support Group, Eccles Street. <i>Entitlements session for people affected by cancer.</i>	Presentation
26/10/2016	FAS/SIPTU Retired Members Association, Teacher's Club. <i>Information session on Budget Changes affecting older people for retired FAS/ANCO staff members.</i>	Presentation
26/11/2016	Irish Missionary Union, Wynn's Hotel. <i>Information session on entitlements for returning missionaries.</i>	Presentation
28/11/2016	IOM – Migrant Information Fair, City Hall. <i>Multi-organisation information session for people from migrant communities.</i>	Stand
01/12/2016	Eolas – Family Programme, Goirtin, Rathdown Road. <i>Entitlements session for service users with a diagnosis of schizophrenia or bipolar disorder and their families and friends.</i>	Presentation
09/12/2016	ARC Cancer Support Group, Eccles Street. <i>Entitlements session for people affected by cancer.</i>	Presentation
13/12/2016	Eolas – Service User Programme Recovery Hub, 230 North Circular Road. <i>Entitlements session for service users with a diagnosis of schizophrenia or bipolar disorder and their families and friends.</i>	Presentation

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CIS Callers Jan - Dec 2015

CIS	Callers	Callers Per 1000
Dublin City Centre CIS	39140	651.83
Co Donegal CIS	33523	208.04
Galway CIS	26721	106.61
Co Tipperary CIS	26067	164.20
Co Limerick CIS	22675	118.22
Cork City South CIS	21734	135.41
Dublin North West CIS	21225	212.25
Fingal (North County) CIS	19777	109.67
Co Louth CIS	19447	158.24
Kerry CIS	19036	130.83
Co Clare CIS	17740	159.89
Tallaght CIS	17348	192.76
Co Wexford CIS	16563	114.01
Co Wicklow CIS	16247	118.90
Co Mayo CIS	15100	113.49
Co Meath CIS	14302	77.67
Clondalkin CIS	13916	125.94
Dun Laoghaire - Rathdown CIS	13445	65.18
Co Waterford CIS	13409	117.83
Co Monaghan CIS	13322	
Co Westmeath CIS	13196	153.15
Northside CIS	12204	162.72
Co Offaly CIS	11560	150.74
Co Longford CIS	11230	287.95
South Kildare CIS	10984	93.21
Cork (West) CIS	10878	108.39
Dublin 246 CIS	10625	
Co Laois CIS	10586	131.41
North Kildare CIS	10573	447.69
North & East Cork County CIS	9890	64.23
Kilkenny CIS	9529	99.93
Dublin 12 & 6w CIS	9496	128.32
Co Roscommon CIS	9453	161.04
Ballyfermot CIS	9258	261.79
Cork City (North) CIS	9000	92.69
Co Cavan CIS	8503	116.68
Co Sligo CIS	8383	137.67
Blanchardstown / Dublin 15 CIS	8089	78.53
Co Leitrim CIS	7011	220.62
Co Carlow CIS	6790	124.51
Dublin 8 & Bluebell CIS	5553	108.06
Dublin City North Bay CIS	3758	50.11

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CIS Queries Jan - Dec 2015

CIS	Queries
Co Donegal CIS	66290
Dublin City Centre CIS	62566
Co Tipperary CIS	59235
Galway CIS	36348
Dublin North West CIS	34395
Co Limerick CIS	33019
Cork City South CIS	32234
Co Laois CIS	32044
Kerry CIS	28142
Fingal (North County) CIS	27629
Co Monaghan CIS	27305
Co Westmeath CIS	26972
Co Clare CIS	26291
Tallaght CIS	25531
Co Louth CIS	24530
Co Wicklow CIS	24027
Ballyfermot CIS	22248
Co Roscommon CIS	22123
Co Wexford CIS	21807
Kilkenny CIS	21470
Co Mayo CIS	20824
Co Waterford CIS	20258
Co Meath CIS	20255
South Kildare CIS	18871
North Kildare CIS	18422
Cork (West) CIS	18295
Co Longford CIS	18146
Clondalkin CIS	17805
Dun Laoghaire - Rathdown CIS	17695
Co Offaly CIS	16002
Northside CIS	15887
Co Cavan CIS	14996
North & East Cork County CIS	14726
Dublin 246 CIS	14345
Dublin 12 & 6w CIS	14169
Co Sligo CIS	13362
Co Leitrim CIS	12823
Co Carlow CIS	11906
Cork City (North) CIS	11522
Blanchardstown / Dublin 15 CIS	11301
Dublin 8 & Bluebell CIS	9946
Dublin City North Bay CIS	4882

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An Bord um **Fhaisnéis** do Shaoránaigh
Citizens **Information** Board

Ms Frances Soney Iteun
Chairperson
Dublin City Centre CIS
13A Upper O'Connell Street
Dublin 1

20 March 2014

Dear Frances,

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with Deirdre and yourself on February 28th, and I appreciated the opportunity to have a full and frank discussion on the resource requirements for Dublin City Centre CIS and the current economic constraints impacting on CIB, notwithstanding our full commitment to the CIS.

The Citizens Information Board is very aware of how busy the CIS is, with the constant flow of customers into the service, the diversity of need, capacity and complexity of customer concerns, and the pressures that this puts on the staff. The service is the busiest in the country and this is reflected in the numbers coming into the main office.

Dublin City Centre CIS is held in high regard, and any feedback to CIB on the quality of service provided is consistently positive. I would like to thank Deirdre and all the staff for their hard work and commitment to the people they serve. Please convey CIB's appreciation to the Board also, and assure them of the continued support of CIB.

I am also pleased to inform you that the Team Supervisor pilot project can be extended and the post has been sanctioned a two year period. Seán Mistéil will write to you to confirm the details.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Fitzgerald
Senior Manager, Regional Services

Cc Deirdre Casey, Development Manager, Dublin City Centre CIS

Seán Mistéil, Regional Manager, CIB

Joint Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection debate - Thursday, 23 Nov 2017

Money Advice and Budgeting Service Restructuring: Discussion (Resumed)

Chairman

I welcome Ms Ita Mangan, chairperson of the Citizens Information Board, and Ms Angela Black, chief executive officer. I will shortly afford the witnesses an opportunity to make an opening statement, but before that I wish to draw the attention of the witnesses to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)(1) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. However, if they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and they continue to so do, they are entitled thereafter only to a qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. Witnesses are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

If people have mobile telephones, please turn them off. Ms Mangan will now make her opening statement.

Ms Ita Mangan

My understanding is that the committee wants to talk to us about the cost-benefit analysis which was published by the board and is on our website. All of the issues regarding the general principles of changing the structures of MABS and citizen information services, CISs, were thoroughly discussed in this forum last February. I acknowledge and accept that this committee does not agree with the decision of the Citizens Information Board. Nevertheless, the statutory responsibility for the delivery of the services and the manner of the delivery rests with the Citizens Information Board. Our decision of February stands and we are well into the process of implementing it.

The cost-benefit analysis we procured at the request of this committee is in my view a technical economic document which speaks for itself. While we never considered that financial considerations were the major reason for the reorganisation we intend to implement, nevertheless, this cost-benefit analysis as it happens provides backing in a financial sense for

the decision we have made but I would emphasise again that the decision was not based on financial considerations. As I have explained here previously, it was based on good governance, good value for money and the prospect of improving services. I am happy to take any questions.

Chairman

I thank Ms Mangan.



Deputy Willie O'Dea

I thank Ms Mangan for coming in today. Ms Mangan said that the report provides backing in a financial sense. I have many detailed questions on the financial side of it but I will leave those until later. I have some general questions to begin with. I understand Ms Mangan stated as her reason for not attending the previous meeting of this committee that she had come in, laid out the entire position and told us exactly what was happening. My understanding is that what is happening currently is that there is a huge reorganisation of the two services under way. I would imagine that we, as the relevant Dáil committee, should be kept informed about the progress of that reorganisation. I believe we are entitled to discuss it with Ms Mangan and for her to discuss it with us as to how that is going etc. I do not believe that is in any way unreasonable.

We are told that the consultants' report was endorsed by Ms Mangan's board. I am speaking for myself, and the other members can speak for themselves, but my interpretation is that when the committee requested this consultants' report, it did not imagine they were looking for the Ten Commandments or something like that, that it could be just handed down and that nobody would be in a position to discuss any aspect of it, interrogate it or question it in any way. My information is that at a meeting on 20 September, the report was presented to the board by the executive, that the board requested that it be discussed and interrogated - they had various questions on it - and that that was not allowed. Contrary to what we have been told, the ordinary members of the board did not endorse this report and they recommended that that fact should be stated when the report was published, which it was not.

I ask Ms Mangan to comment on the statement on page 6 of the report which, to paraphrase slightly without losing anything of the sense of it, states that the CIB has been requested by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to take action. That seems to fly in the face of the excuse we got from the Minister to the effect that she has no legal right to interfere with any deliberations of the board in this regard and that it is only a day-to-day matter, with which I disagree. She says she is legally precluded from intervening in any way, but according to the report itself, she is not in any way legally precluded from requesting a

massive, fundamental reorganisation. If we take what we are told, and if we take the Attorney General's advice, we are now in the position where, under the law, the Minister can request a huge and fundamental reorganisation. But if she changes her mind, she does not have power to revoke that. It is either a very peculiar law or a very peculiar interpretation of the law.

There are various references in the report to governance and oversight issues. They are not spelled out. I would have expected a report of this nature to spell out the alleged governance and oversight issues and how precisely they will be dealt with. I have read the report very carefully. I cannot find that. There is a good deal of confusion in the report, as I understand it. For example, there is reference to a principal agent problem and misaligned incentives between the board and the people on the ground.

The assumption is of course made straight away that the misalignment comes from the people on the ground. Broad, general statements are made such as those claiming that these local companies value their independence. It is not a question of local companies valuing their independence. The people for whom the taxpayers are providing this service value the fact that the present institutions are independent and this is where any misalignment comes from. The other thing I notice in this report is that the analysis is discussed as being opposed to a no-change option, a classic example of setting up a straw man just so as to knock him down again. There was no suggestion from any quarter, including from the organisations themselves, that a no-change option was the only alternative to reorganisation. The organisations themselves recommended very specific changes. What we are comparing here, then, are things there is no point comparing because nobody is in favour of a no-change option.

I have had communication from the trade unions representing some of the staff in these organisations. They have informed me that they have recently been contacted by KPMG in respect of the current reorganisation and requesting some detailed information which, according to the unions' legal advice, is contrary to data protection. The unions are very clear on this. If the legal advice is that this information is contrary to data protection, what steps does the board then propose to take in this regard? Will it withdraw this request? It has also been brought to my attention that views articulated at a recent board meeting seemed to indicate that development managers would not be expected by the board to carry out information provision. Part of the cost-saving mentioned in the report, in fact, is that information managers would do just that and yet the board is apparently not of this view.

I would like to have these preliminary matters clarified.

Ms Ita Mangan

First, Deputy O'Dea should not have any information about what took place at a board meeting on 20 September. If, as he suggests, he has such information then that means that a member or members of the board have spoken out of turn. The minutes of the board meeting will be published in due course and I do not intend to break the code of conduct for State boards by discussing the internal workings of the board of which I am chair just because some other board members may have done so. It is quite unacceptable for a board member to speak to anyone outside of the board with regard to what happened at a board meeting when

the minutes of that meeting have yet to be either approved or put up on the Internet. We put our board minutes up online within a week or so of approval and, as it happens, the minutes for that particular meeting are not yet online. The Deputy's information clearly comes from a source who ought not to have spoken to him. Let us be very clear on that to begin with.



Deputy Willie O'Dea

Is Ms Mangan referring to the meeting of 20 September? Are the minutes for that meeting not up yet?

Ms Ita Mangan

No, they are not, so I do not intend to discuss-----



Deputy Willie O'Dea

Why not?

Ms Ita Mangan

These minutes were only approved in the last few days because the subsequent meeting only took place last week. The minutes will be up shortly but are not up now. What I am saying to the Deputy is that it is unacceptable that he has been made aware of the internal workings of the board and that I will have to take some action on this basis. It is unacceptable to me as chairperson that anyone on that board should speak to somebody on the outside about the internal workings of the board.



Deputy Willie O'Dea

Might I just intervene here? Will Ms Mangan be prepared to come into us again to discuss those board minutes after they have officially been put up online?

Ms Ita Mangan

I do not know that I am prepared to come in here again, to be perfectly honest, because I do not see the point of this exercise. The committee will probably be able to see the minutes of that meeting within the next few days or so, though I am not exactly sure when.



Deputy Willie O'Dea

I will not be able to ask anybody anything about those minutes, however.

Ms Ita Mangan

Deputy O'Dea can certainly put down parliamentary questions or indeed ask us about them.



Deputy Willie O'Dea

I cannot do so if Ms Mangan and her colleagues are not here. Ms Mangan said that she might not come in here again.

Ms Ita Mangan

We cannot have a situation in which we are implementing a decision of our board while every single aspect of that decision is being questioned by a parliamentary committee. We have the statutory responsibility to implement the decision. The executive is bound by the decision of the board and it is currently implementing that decision. While I absolutely accept that this Oireachtas joint committee has an oversight role, I simply do not accept that it has a role in every detailed aspect of the implementation of that decision.

I will move on to the other issues. Deputy O'Dea drew attention to the fact that the cost-benefit analysis report points out that there was a request from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. Both this committee and the Minister can request that we do something but neither has the power to ensure that we do so. I happen to be a lawyer myself and my understanding is that the Minister does not have the power to intervene directly in the affairs of the Citizens Information Board, CIS, other than on very specific issues. It is the Oireachtas, however, that is the lawmaker. If Members of the Oireachtas decide, as lawmakers, to change the law then we as citizens and as members of boards will of course implement that law. It is the Members of the Oireachtas who make the law so if they wish to change the law on this matter, then by all means they can change it. It is not up to us to do so; it is up to them.

The Deputy is critical of a number of the terms in the report. I sympathise with this as I do not like some of the terms myself, but they are standard economic terms. This report was carried out by a professional economic organisation and uses standard economic terms that come from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform guidelines on how services are to be assessed. They simply are what they are: standard economic terms. I accept that they are not part of common language but when a professional economic body is asked to carry out this kind of exercise then it has to use the terms that are accepted in the economic sphere, be it lawyer-speak, doctor-speak or whatever else you might like to call it. What it is is economic-speak.

In response to the other issues raised, I want to say quite clearly that the people who are using the services of CIS and MABS will be in no way affected by this change, a point I made repeatedly the last time I was here. The only change taking place here is in governance and not in the delivery of services. I hope, in fact, that there will be a change in the delivery of services in the future, only because I hope to be able to improve that delivery. With regard to the no-change option mentioned by the Deputy, there was no agreement among the parties concerned as to what any other option might be. One can carry out economic analysis from here to eternity and we did in fact consider various options other than the one that we decided upon. I have never suggested that what we decided upon was the Holy Grail, but we have decided upon it and we are now going for it. We have carried out the economic analysis on that.

I agree that opposition to the reorganisation is coming from some of the boards rather than the staff of the organisation. These boards have not been in agreement on an alternative to what is currently in place. I am certainly not going to start getting involved in trade union negotiations but I make the point that what KPMG is doing at present is going through the

legal processes around what is known as the transfer of undertakings - protection of employment, TUPE, legislation and that this requires that it gathers all of the information on individual employees. I also point out that as all of the personal information involved here is redacted, there is no question of a breach of data protection. It would be impossible to carry out a transfer of any undertaking, be it in the area of commerce or of government, without going through the proper channels for TUPE. TUPE is the legal mechanism by which undertakings are transferred and it is a process that has to be gone through to change the structures. Many big companies in Ireland have gone through this process without data protection ever having been raised as an issue. It is not an issue in this instance.

Chairman

I thank Ms Mangan. I will now take the comments of a number of members together, so the witnesses may like to take a few notes. I call on Deputy Brady.



Deputy John Brady

I welcome Ms Mangan in this morning but I have to say that I am deeply concerned by her attitude towards this committee, particularly as displayed in the letter she sent to us in response to our request that she come in and talk about the cost-benefit analysis. She writes in the last line of that letter that she cannot see what benefit could be derived from the attendance either of herself or of the chief executive, Ms Black.

This attitude stinks. There was an exhaustive process carried out by this committee, with a thorough examination of the proposed changes. We published a comprehensive report, which seems to have fallen on deaf ears. I wish to put on the record that I think it is very concerning. The fact that the Citizens Information Board, CIB, could not or would not even submit an opening statement in advance of this meeting this morning is regrettable. In the contributions to us at this hearing, witnesses said that the opposition to these changes seemed to be coming from board members, not staff on the ground. That is totally contrary to the evidence that this committee has heard. It is also contrary to what I have found, particularly during my engagement with the Money and Budgeting Service, MABS, offices and staff across the State, who are not just concerned, they are fearful. We have heard evidence that volunteers have walked away from offices that had provided excellent services to the community. Ms Mangan must rectify this.

I wish to raise the issue of the last board meeting. It was said that the minutes of that meeting have only been signed off on in the last couple of days. Was the cost-benefit analysis signed off on by the board at its last meeting? Was there any opposition from board members to the cost-benefit analysis? Surely we do not need to wait for that information to be put on a

website. Surely our witnesses can provide information now on whether the minutes have been signed off.

I have a couple of specific questions on the cost-benefit analysis and I hope the witnesses can provide some answers. The rationale for the proposed re-organisation states that the CIB had been requested by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to come into line with best practice. What concerns did the Department raise with the CIB, and when were those concerns raised? The rationale also states that the current structures are resulting in a poor use of resources at local level. Where exactly is the evidence of that? If the witnesses have that evidence, can they please let us know?

There were also set-up costs of €1.9 million. That is an estimate. How can those set-up costs be justified, and how do they compare with initial estimates given to this committee in our hearings? In addition to the initial costs, I ask the witnesses for a breakdown of the additional annual running costs under the restructuring.

I have some more questions that I think are important, if the Chair will bear with me for a couple of minutes. The cost-benefit analysis projects costs over an eight-year period. It is very difficult to understand these projections, let alone make any sense of them. Is it now accepted that the restructuring will not be cost-neutral? Having regard to the substantial additional cost to the Exchequer, what additional benefits will accrue to the end user? Why did the consultants not consult with anybody other than the CIB? Consultations with existing service providers would have been very beneficial. Can the witnesses elaborate on how a figure of €14.97 million can be achieved and 50% of managers' time can be freed up through restructuring? What work are they doing now that they will not have to do? Will there be no requirement to manage the local offices?

The cost-benefit analysis suggests that the only additional cost will be the employment of 16 new regional managers, at yearly salaries of roughly €65,000 each, plus pay-related social insurance, PRSI, contributions and pensions, etc. Can the witnesses confirm that no additional staff will be required? Will these regional managers incur any additional costs other than their salaries? The cost-benefit analysis suggests that there will be no additional cost.

I will leave it at that for the moment. There are other questions that I will hopefully have an opportunity to raise.



Deputy Joe Carey

I welcome the witnesses. I absolutely respect their authority. They are bound by statute to implement the views and recommendations of the board. However, they are before this committee now. Has the voluntary aspect of these organisations, and the role that volunteers played over many years, been taken into consideration? Has that formed part of the cost-

benefit analysis? If voluntary input within the organisation is lost, how will the organisation replace those people? Has there been an analysis of those costs?

I think it would be fair to say that if the CIB rents offices, it is likely to get space at reduced rates to deliver services. Has an analysis been done on that? Renting in a changed environment, will the CIB have to pay the market rate? Has an analysis been done in that regard?

Ms Ita Mangan

The vast bulk of the questions that Deputy Brady has asked were addressed at the last meeting. We outlined all the background papers in detail and gave copies to the committee. This included all of the background details of how the decision was reached. We covered all the issues about regional managers. We covered more or less every question that has been asked by Deputy Brady here this morning. As I already said, I am not going to talk about the board meeting, because it is contrary to the code of conduct on state boards to talk about board meetings outside of the board meeting, and I do not intend to break that code. I have already explained that to Deputy O'Dea.

Addressing deputy Carey's issue on volunteers, I have no evidence that volunteers are walking away. There are two sets of volunteers involved in delivering our services. One of these groups consists of the volunteers who are members of boards. In the case of MABS, the service is entirely professional. The boards are voluntary, but the actual deliverers of the service are all employees. Some of those boards, I think about 4 out of 51, actually do the management themselves, in the sense of paying the staff and so on. In all the other cases, it is the staff who do the administration. One of the things that will improve when we undertake this re-organisation is that there will be centralised administration, so that the staff will be able to advise people on their money problems, rather than spending their time on administration.

The other group of volunteers that people are concerned about are those who volunteer to provide information in Citizens Information Board services. There are no similar people in the MABS services. In fact, tomorrow Ms Black and I, with the Minister present, will be presenting awards to volunteers of long standing, because we value their input. We have seen no evidence that any of the volunteers in that category are in any way concerned about the re-organisation because in general, they liaise with the staff of the Citizens Information Services and provide the services when required. The change in governance will not make any difference to them. They will simply be responding to a different voluntary board, because the new boards will all be voluntary as well. All we are doing, in effect, is reducing the number of boards from more than 90 to 16. The participants in those boards will all be volunteers. There will not be an affect on services, or and issue around volunteers at the Citizens Information Board losing out. As I have said, the volunteer staffing of MABS is entirely on the board side.

Deputy Carey was critical of our attitude.

I am absolutely sure that I cannot see the point of having a detailed discussion on what is a very technical document given that at the previous hearing, we provided all of the information and then commissioned this document because the committee requested it. As I said already, and I keep repeating, we were not doing this for financial reasons. We were doing it for other reasons, mainly governance and improved services. As the committee will see, the cost-benefit analysis actually provides that there will be a financial improvement for the Citizens Information Board when this reorganisation is implemented but there is a six to one benefits-cost conclusion in this report. We could discuss forever the details of whether the savings would accrue in year one or year eight but in all honesty, I do not really see the point of it.

Regarding Deputy Carey's point about the rent, we pay rent at commercial rates virtually everywhere. There are a few places where we have access to offices that are other public sector offices. We will still have exactly the same arrangement. There will be no change in any of that.

Ms Angela Black

The transfer of the leases-----

Ms Ita Mangan

The transfer of the leases will be transferred to the new boards and that will be it.

Chairman

Could Ms Mangan clarify one point for me because she touched on it a few times? She spoke about the cost-benefit analysis actually proving there would be a cost benefit, which was necessarily not what the Citizens Information Board set out to do but was pleasantly surprised. It relates to a point made by Deputy O'Dea. Is that effectively development managers providing front-line services? Is this the change in working roles?

Ms Ita Mangan

The report outlines all the places where the improvements will be. The managers will be providing better management at the front line but the-----

Chairman

Will they be providing front-line services? Will there be that type of change in role? Is that what this report is getting at?

Ms Ita Mangan

No, I do not think so. This report is about the entirety of the change and the entirety of the change involves reducing the number of boards from 93 to 16. All of the boards that currently exist cost money. The 16 boards will also cost money but, obviously, they will cost a great deal less than the 93 we have. I keep repeating that the real benefit is that the people who are currently providing money advice services, for example, which are very badly needed and needed on a far more widespread scale that we are able to provide at present, will be able to spend all their time delivering services not providing administration because the costs of administration will all be centralised and there will be significant savings in all of that.

Chairman

I need to bring in some other people. I will call on Senator Higgins followed by Deputy Smith.



Deputy Brid Smith

I may have to leave at 11.30 a.m.

Chairman

If Senator Higgins is happy-----



Deputy Brid Smith

I have very quick questions because I am brand new on the committee and do not know the history and legacy of all this. I often go on first impressions and my first impression is that there is a huge irony in having the chairperson of the Citizens Information Board being very reluctant to give information to those elected by the citizens. That is my impression of it. I understand what Ms Mangan is saying, which is that this KHSK document is very technical and that it is one of economic-speak, which is like lawyer-speak and doctor-speak. If that is the case, and I have not read it, I will have real difficulty reading it if that is what it is full of. An explanatory document attached to it would be very helpful not just to Deputies and Senators but to those at the front line of delivering the services. That is just my view. Could Ms Mangan tell me about KHSK because she also mentioned KPMG? Are they the same? Is KHSK a branch of KPMG? I have never heard of KHSK before and am just asking the question. It may have been asked of Ms Mangan previously by other Deputies in the past but it strikes me as quite an unusual selection. Did the Citizens Information Board put it out to tender? Why was KHSK chosen?

As somebody who is on the ground and has been talking to MABS services in Dublin South Central, my observation is that the concern about this restructuring goes beyond the members of the boards. It extends to the staff and is an issue about which the wider community which avails of the services is concerned. They are not kicking up a stink and will not have a revolution and I doubt they will upset the Citizens Information Board's plan but there is a concern that is wider than that indicated by Ms Mangan. If this concern runs deep and is widespread, naturally, information about minutes will leak. We do not live under Joe Stalin and people do talk.

Chairman

Does Ms Mangan wish to answer briefly?

Ms Ita Mangan

I am not reluctant to give information I can give in the public domain. We came in here in February and gave every background document. This has been going on for years. We gave every background document to it. This committee disagrees with our decision to ahead with the reorganisation. I accept that. This committee is entitled to disagree with it. However, we have the statutory responsibility and are going ahead with the reorganisation. This committee asked us to have an economic or cost-benefit analysis done. We went out to tender in the normal way. This company, which, to be perfectly honest, I had not heard of previously, tendered for this contract. It is not part of KPMG. It is a reputable firm of economic consultants and this is the form that a cost-benefit analysis takes. I accept that it is difficult enough to understand. I think I understand it myself but it is not an easy read, any more than any other cost-benefit analysis would be an easy read. However, it is what this committee asked for, it was properly procured, the normal procurement considerations were taken into

account and the company in question won the tender. It is as simple as that. I cannot say any more about it than that.

The interaction between Citizens Information Board staff and the staff of the various services would suggest to us that, in general, the staff are actually quite well-disposed towards this - although I am sure there are some who are not - because, among other things, it greatly enhances their career prospects. They will be able to have opportunities to progress through the different services. At present, each member of staff is employed by a small organisation. When this is implemented, they will have a much wider possibility of progressing through the organisation so all in all, this is very good for staff. There is no question of any staff being changed from their current position if they do not want to be changed so it is a good option for staff.



Deputy Bríd Smith

We are concerned. Staff do have concerns. They would not be coming back to us if they did not. We are not lying to Ms Mangan. Staff have concerns and I do not know how they will be addressed and how they are being addressed. I am a trade unionist and there are ways of negotiating but I do not think they are concerned about their own jobs. I think they are concerned about the delivery of the MABS services. That is my impression.

Ms Ita Mangan

Okay, if the Deputy says so. I accept what she says.



Senator Alice-Mary Higgins

I do not want to go over the same ground. I would simply note that it is not a matter of the committee simply disagreeing with the decision of the Citizens Information Board. It is that we raised concerns about the public interest, including the concern that an appropriate cost-benefit analysis had not been done. I will only touch on the two other issues because Ms Mangan has raised them. They are the questions of good governance and improvement in

services. It seems that the only area where any potential improvement in services is being posited is if there is a freeing up of local managers to carry out more front-line work. I will come back to the question of whether that improvement in services might have been agreed in others but that is a very narrow proposal in terms of improving services. In terms of governance, the beginning of this cost-benefit analysis stated that concerns were raised by internal sources such as the Department of Social Protection, which, again, seemed to be a major influencer, and the Comptroller and Auditor General that this is a highly inefficient structure that does not optimise the use of available resources. We did request and were provided with documentation and I thank the Citizens Information Board for sharing documentation with us. We saw nothing from the Comptroller and Auditor General that suggests that office had a concern with the existing structure. It was very clear that anything we saw from the Comptroller and Auditor General related to the under-resourcing of internal compliance at the Citizens Information Board. That seemed to be reinforced by the comment in Ms Mangan's introduction to this new document where she spoke about difficulties coming to the fore as the number of staff in the Citizens Information Board reduced in recent years. It seems that it was the issue of internal capacity that was being flagged by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Even though the terms were no-change, something nobody has looked into, there is a little bit of moving around. The report's cost benefit analysis talks about no-change but then throws in a hypothetical compliance unit that would cost €433,000 as something that could be done. This is no change plus a compliance unit. When one says there is to be no-change, and then adds in a change, one is actually talking about an alternative. It is described in a couple of places as an alternative. Let us put the €433,000 compliance unit as an alternative. It is mentioned in the beginning of the report in respect of the costs but disappears in terms of the benefits. It really should have been followed through if it is an alternative. It should have been followed through as an alternative to which the restructuring should be compared, throughout this full document. Let us keep that €433,000 compliance unit figure in mind.

I want to dive in to the figures. I do not believe we have a problem with the language. I do not believe that we are intimidated by the economics. We have a concern around the fact that the logics in place here are flawed and inconsistent, and a real concern with the fact that the figures double up and sometimes do not add up. I shall not going to spend time on the key point at the beginning but I might come back in later on the wider question of accountability, which I believe is crucial. I shall dive in to the figures. The section on costs shows a figure for set-up costs of €1.94 million. Within that there is some talk-----

Ms Ita Mangan

To which page is the Senator referring?



Senator Alice-Mary Higgins

On page 13, in respect of the assignment of premises, a figure of €727,545 is given but it does not really address the concern that Deputy Carey rightly raised that there are cases where the organisation is not paying a market value rent and a very significant example is the extraordinary high value that is given in the discounted level for the premises in Dublin for the Dublin citizen information services, and in particular the very high profile property in O'Connell Street. There is a concern there about whether the board assume these favourable and preferential rates and costs for property will be carried through in the new structure. This seems to be an assumption. If this was not the case it will be a further significant cost in set up. I do not want to spend too much time on that.

I will now turn to the running and operational costs. The operational costs are estimated in the report at €7.47 million over eight years. That is €1.25 million additional operational costs every year. Added in is the €9.4 million cost for the proposed restructuring. It is not an inconsiderable amount. It is quite reasonable that this committee - and perhaps other committees in the future such as the Committee of Public Accounts - would want to know how this money is being allocated and spent. This €1.25 million is the cost of the proposed restructuring, but the board has previously told the committee that a compliance unit, which would do the minimum, would cost €433,000. The board's proposed restructuring is costing three times the cost of introducing a compliance unit that would satisfy governance concerns.

When we consider the costs that are not figured, with regard to the 16 new regional managers the report states "it is assumed ... that no travelling or other expenses would arise". Will these regional managers never visit local offices? Is it good governance if we have no travelling expenses and no assumption of travelling from these regional managers to all of the local offices? Can we say that is good governance? Will the board members of these companies not travel for longer distances?

The section of the report that deals with the cost, to reduce the €1.25 million, we see a very extraordinary assumption. I need to know about this because it is a very unusual move. On figures for the HR bill, which may be a certain amount, we see that income tax, PRSI and USC are to be taken out. Is it the case that miraculously, these items that go from payroll are suddenly no longer costs, that they are in fact benefits as it goes back to Revenue and the Exchequer? We do not know what tax reliefs or tax allowances people are using. It is a very unusual practice to take a direct payroll cost and just try to subtract it from the equations. This is very important because it appears a number of times in the report; costs become benefits, benefits become costs and they are swapped around. This is what I meant by doubling up on how things are calculated.

In the final calculations the report puts a compliance unit, not required, in as a saving but it is not happening at the moment. If we remove that cost, and do the calculations properly, and even allowing for the savings on board member expenses, audit fees, legal and professional fees, this restructuring is still costing €923,000 per annum. This is still more than twice the cost of a compliance unit.

There are a number of concerns but I want to move to the section of the report on the benefits of the restructuring. It is extraordinary, highly unusual and not normal economic practice that when the report looks at the benefits it switches to an entirely new economic frame. The report looks at the reorganisation from a socio-economic frame. It is an extremely unusual practice to have two completely different methodologies for each half of an equation. I wonder if Ms Mangan can answer this when we come to it. It is extraordinary. If the report was to use this socioeconomic frame when it looked at the costs I imagine that there would be many, many socioeconomic costs - which this committee has heard outlined and raised as concerns - that could be brought through. The report looks at three key figures within this socioeconomic frame. I refer the committee to page 25. The three key benefits under the socioeconomic frame, and the case being made for value for money and the cost benefit, are extraordinary. Ms Mangan was asked about volunteers. A reference to volunteers does appear in the report because the time given by volunteers - which anybody can see is a benefit to the organisation in respect of board members - is now flipped around. The report says it will be a benefit to society in not having volunteers and by losing all these volunteer hours. There is absolutely no capacity to say - and the report authors are in no position to say - what may happen to the people who are volunteering when they go out in to the world, freed from the arduous duties of contributing to the important work they do. We do not know what they will do and they may, for example, never volunteer again because they may be disheartened by their experience. That is not the main concern. It is, however, useful that the report quantifies the value of board members' voluntary contribution. That quantified value is €4.92 million, which is lost. We need to go right back to the section of the report on costs and say that now there is a cost - the loss of €4.92 million - in voluntary contributions by volunteers board members. It might not be as full as that because there will potentially be some board members in the new boards. If we leave it, however, at the €4.92 million per annum - or even €5 million - we are suddenly right back to a situation where the restructuring is costing us close to €2 million. In that case we would nearly be at four times the cost of a compliance unit.

I will address my final two points. It is crucial because we are here to discuss the cost benefit analysis.

Chairman

I want to get some answers to the questions.



Senator Alice-Mary Higgins

I want to come to the conclusion. I will be briefer when addressing the other two questions, but they are important. The reduced volunteer time is a key issue. On the new salaries, it is

really unusual that having first of all said the payroll does not count the report says that by paying people it is somehow a benefit to society.

As a result, those who compiled the report have managed to make some of the €7 million cost of the new salaries disappear on the basis that the money is paid to people. If I buy something in a shop, it is of benefit to the owner but I have less money because I have paid for what I bought. Extraordinarily, the new salaries are included as a benefit even though they represent a cost.

In the conclusion to the report, it is noted that the position needs to be monitored and reference is made to the 50% increase in front-line availability and an information provision availability on the part of development managers. That is the only solid figure provided. The €14.9 million figure assumes 50% new availability but the narrative of the report says that we could look at other assumptions. In other words, it could be 30% or there might be no efficiency gain and there will be no freeing-up of time in the context of the provision of front-line services. The 50% can be questioned because it is envisaged that 16 regional managers will take up the work of 50% of 42 posts - namely, that of 21 people - and deal with any compliance issues for Citizens Information Board centrally. There is a huge amount of work that is supposed to be taken on by these new regional managers. Then there are the terms and conditions of the existing development managers. Is information provision included in their terms and conditions? I know that Ms Mangan does not manage them directly but she cannot assume that this work will be taken on by them. There is a concern in this regard. How solid is the figure of 50%? Can Ms Mangan confirm whether she expects that 50% of front-line time will be freed up?

A huge amount of front-line work is currently being done by volunteers. As we discussed earlier, 1,080 volunteers are delivering services. We do not have to guess or speculate about these people because we have the figures. Very conveniently, the Citizens Information Board produced a report in 2010 which indicated that volunteers on the front line were contributing 2,700 hours per week. Using the board's estimate of volunteer time at being valued at €22.25 per hour, this means that volunteers are making an annual contribution to the value of €24 million in respect of front-line services. If even 20% of those volunteers leave, we lose €5 million worth of front-line service delivery. It seems that this missing figure should be in the mix. Giving the volunteers awards is all very well but we have not seen a risk assessment and concerns have been expressed, not only by the boards but also by staff representative organisations that have spoken to us.

Ms Ita Mangan

As I said at outset, this is a technical, economic analysis done in accordance with the standard economic analysis techniques. It accords with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform method of evaluating services. Although I do have a degree in economics, I do not consider myself qualified to question the report in the way that Senator Higgins does. This is not an analysis done by the Citizens Information Board, it is a technical analysis that was requested by the committee and paid for by the board. We could argue from here to eternity--

Chairman

I will interrupt Ms Mangan for a moment because I do not like where this is going. This document was not produced for no good reason. It may be technical in nature but there is an onus on all of us to understand it. If we do not understand it, we have to find somebody to explain how it works and what it is trying to drive at. It is not an academic exercise that was done to keep the committee happy and then to be parked. The purpose of today's meeting is to challenge and understand the assumptions that were made, the analysis that was carried out and the findings that were reached. That is what this meeting is about. I do not want there to be an argument that the committee made a recommendation and the Citizens Information Board had to do the analysis. The report was undertaken for a purpose, and the purpose of today's meeting is to analyse it, examine its assumptions, understand where it is going and assess whether the committee is satisfied that its recommendations represent the best way to proceed. The outcomes in the report are based on a range of assumptions of which we are quite well aware. We want to know whether they are real, whether this is a report that was done only to be parked and whether we are wasting our time. The committee is of the view that the analysis of this report is important.

Ms Ita Mangan

I accept that but it is a technical analysis. We could argue about every one of the assumptions in it. We could argue about the outputs in all cases but I do not know if we would ever reach any consensus. What I consider to be important is the best services that we can provide. I will address the matter of establishing a compliance unit. The Citizens Information Board was told by the Comptroller and Auditor General that it would have to carry out 31 audits annually on its 93 services. If we were to do that, we would need a compliance unit. I would regard a compliance unit as an incredible waste of money. All it would do would be to visit individual services to ensure that each was doing its accounts properly. A far better way would be to have a much smaller number of companies, we have opted for 16, which would require five audits annually, according to the Comptroller and Auditor General, and then we would not need a compliance unit because we could do that from existing resources.

On the use of the local managers' time and so on, as I said earlier in the case of MABS, the money advisers are doing some of the administrative work. That will not happen under the new structure. They will be providing money advice on a full-time basis, which is what they are qualified to do. The regional managers, the administration, the back-up, the HR and so on will be centralised so that the staff who deliver the services - including the volunteers who provide services within the citizens information services - will all be freed up to do nothing other than deliver those services. That is the thinking behind all of it. I keep repeating that we never did this for financial gain, but to improve governance and services. We provided the committee with our estimated costs in February. There are some minor differences between those and the figures contained in this cost-benefit analysis but we did not outline benefits in any financial sense because we did not consider that to be the major issue. All the other reports, including the Pathfinder report, dealt with these issues but I cannot see the value of our getting into the minutiae of the benefits of having regional managers available to do

front-line work and so on. I do not see how the members of the committee or I can challenge all the figures without merely substituting our assumptions for those made by the professionals. This is a professionally produced report. Members can criticise it - I can criticise it myself - but the overall finding is that there are financial benefits, although, as I keep saying, we are not unduly concerned about that. Our focus is on the governance and delivery of services.



Senator Alice-Mary Higgins

I am not making any assumptions here. All of the facts and figures I have put forward reflect the facts and figures contained in the Citizens Information Board's 2010 report and other reports. I do not believe that the committee or the board should be intimidated by professionals having produced a report. We need to take this issue very seriously. The figure relating to front-line staff is the only one that indicates any potential benefit or that matters. It is interesting that we have obtained some clarity, particularly in view of the fact that the Comptroller and Auditor General wants 31 audits to be carried out annually.

That could be done by a compliance unit for €433,000, but the Citizens Information Board is proposing to spend three to four times that amount. It has not shown any wonderful efficiency. The only other efficiency it proposes is the potential freeing-up of front-line staff, which is, therefore, a key issue. Will the witnesses address the issue of volunteers? It is of concern if the witnesses are not interested in the detail of the report or the way figures regarding volunteers were moved around in respect of the report. Will the witnesses address the questions in terms of volunteers on the board and among front-line staff?

Ms Ita Mangan

As I explained, volunteers in MABS are on the boards. They do not produce outcomes for citizens but staff do. In four of the 53 cases, those who serve on the boards do the accounts or administration or whatever. In all other places, the staff do that work and provide the service to the citizens. The boards of the MABS or CIS companies do not have a direct output to the citizen but the volunteers who work in CIS do, and I accept that. They will continue to provide that service in the same way they always have. Many of the assumptions in the report are not ones with which everyone would agree, but it is a technical professional report and I cannot second-guess it.

Chairman

I call Deputy Collins.



Deputy Joan Collins

My questions have been addressed.

Chairman

I fully understand where Ms Mangan is coming from in terms of the report, but in its executive summary it says:

The reorganisation involves the expenditure of public funds to provide a service to private citizens. Consequently, it is necessary to identify a rationale for the expenditure. The proposed change must constitute a feasible proposition and any proposed expenditure must be viable in that it can reasonably be expected to have a positive impact.

That is what we are trying to underpin and need to understand. I understand that the process was not begun as a cost-saving mechanism because the executive summary says:

There is currently a clear market failure in the form of a principal agent problem that has resulted in a poor alignment of the objectives of the CIB and local service delivery companies. This provides the rationale for the proposed change.

I accept and understand that the rationale for the change is to have a top-down organisation instead of independent companies introducing their own programmes and workloads and so forth. However, the financial consequences, implementation, staff positions and so forth are of concern to the committee. That is why the report was commissioned and why we must understand the assumptions made therein.



Senator Alice-Mary Higgins

Although Ms Mangan does not see a direct value in terms of the contribution of board members, in her own report the value put on that voluntary time is estimated at €4.92 million.

Ms Ita Mangan

I want to be clear that this is not our report. It is a professional report that has been procured. It is not the report of the Citizens Information Board. It is a professional production.



Senator Alice-Mary Higgins

Ms Mangan may take issue with the figures in the report but they are what have been provided and what we are using.

Chairman

I do not want Ms Mangan to go into detail but has the report been explained to board members and do they understand it?

Ms Ita Mangan

I expect they do, yes.



Senator Alice-Mary Higgins

In terms of volunteers and their concerns, the 2010 CIB report from which I took the figure about the 2,700 hours contributed weekly pointed to the fact that community ethos was a key motivator for volunteers. A concern has been raised in respect of the restructuring regarding community ethos. As was mentioned by the Chair, the attachment of local services to independence, which is of concern to the witnesses and was called market failure and misalignment of goals, is very much valued not only by staff and volunteers but also by users.

There is a question about whom the CIB is accountable to. I will leave that aside and choose another point from those I have.

The witnesses said they answered members' points on the other report, but one very important concern was that this does not relate solely to service delivery for the CIB or to its internal governance but also to the governance of 93 independent companies. Do the witnesses agree that the restructuring proposes that the CIB should exert financial and other pressures on those 93 independent companies to change their internal governance structures? This issue was raised in the initial report, 4.41, and was not answered by the CIB in its response.

Chairman

Does Deputy O'Dea wish to come in?



Deputy Willie O'Dea

I would like to hear Ms Mangan's response.

Ms Ita Mangan

Inevitably, the result of the reorganisation will be that the individual local boards will be dissolved. However, we will retain local advisory committees and all those currently involved in the boards can be on those committees if they so wish.

I think I have already addressed Senator Higgins's point regarding volunteers. Volunteers in Citizens Information Service centres will not be affected by the reorganisation. They will continue to provide their services in Bray, Cork or wherever they are based. Their community ethos will not be affected because they will still be working with the same people in the same place providing services to the same people. The only difference will be that their current

board will no longer exist but there will be a local advisory committee in which they may wish to take part.

I am becoming confused. Another point was made, possibly on community ethos-----



Senator Alice-Mary Higgins

Deputy Collins may want to come in. I do not want to take up more time.

Ms Ita Mangan

The question was to whom the CIB is accountable. We are under the aegis of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, as members know, but are accountable to the Comptroller and Auditor General, who has made it very clear that we need to exercise much greater control and compliance on the various companies. Those companies are entirely State-funded. They are not separate voluntary organisations that raise funds from other sources. It would be open to the CIB to cease funding them all in the morning. We have no intention of doing that but could theoretically do so and transfer their functions to other organisations. That is the reality of life. They are entirely State-funded. However, because we value matters such as volunteers and community ethos and must comply with the compliance requirements of the Comptroller and Auditor General, we have come up with this reorganisation which we believe is the best available option in the circumstances. It is not perfect. I made clear last February that it is not the perfect solution but it is much better than what we have.



Senator Alice-Mary Higgins

The CIB could cease funding the local organisations.

Ms Ita Mangan

Theoretically, yes.



Senator Alice-Mary Higgins

Ms Mangan has said that financial pressure is ultimately the key point in requiring the boards to dissolve themselves. Would she see-----

Ms Ita Mangan

I cannot accept that-----



Senator Alice-Mary Higgins

Does she envision a point at which private providers, for example, may be asked to deliver these services?

Ms Ita Mangan

No. We are not considering private providers. I recognise that many services throughout the country have been privatised. We are not considering private providers, nor are we considering changing providers. The providers of services will be exactly the same as those providing them today.

We are changing the model of governance to ensure that the State funds that they get are properly spent.



Deputy Brid Smith

Excuse me.

Chairman

I call on Deputy O'Dea.



Deputy Willie O'Dea

The fundamental point is that the chairperson said that the Comptroller and Auditor General wants more control. One way to do that would be a compliance unit. However, this is a much better way to do it because they now have fewer companies in that there will be regional companies. The local element is going to be lost. That is the problem. It is going to be centralised. There is great confidence in the system as it operates at the moment. That does not seem to be taken into account. I do not believe the witness nor the cost benefit analysis clearly explains what benefits are going to ensue and how exactly they are going to ensue to the end users. That is why we are all here. It is why this was set up. I do not understand what is happening.

The witness also stated that she thinks that the board members have all read this report, understand it and, I presume, are all in full agreement with it. However, I have been advised that is not the case. I have been reliably informed that the majority of the board do not agree with the conclusions of this report. I take the witness's point about not discussing board meetings when the minutes are not on the website. However, when the minutes are on the website we should have another discussion on this.

This is fundamental. I refer to the points I wanted to make about the benefits and cost. If we are estimating what this is going to cost we deduct tax and PRSI. Put that against what it is costing at the moment, including tax and PRSI, and the loss of volunteers is supposed to be a benefit. Nobody can understand that. This needs careful analysis, which it has not got to date.

Ms Ita Mangan

We are keeping the local connection by means of the local advisory committees. We are keeping the community ethos. We are keeping the people who are working in the same place delivering the services to the same people. I think spending money on a compliance unit would be a terrible waste of money. I would much prefer to spend the money on improving services. There are many parts of the country that do not have MABS or CIS services and they badly need them. That is where we want to get to ultimately, where everybody has services nearby.

Chairman

Before I thank Ms Mangan for attending it is in the context that as a committee we produced a report which is at variance to what you are doing. That report identified concerns. It will be part of the committee's programme to oversee how you are doing and ensure that the concerns that were in the report do not materialise. A number of times you referred to what has been called the "no-change option" and that there was no agreement. However, there was no agreement because there was not a process to make that agreement happen. From the committee's point of view, concerns have been raised at the way the cost benefit analysis document was produced and the assumptions on which it was based. You have heard some of those today.

Ms Ita Mangan

I do not regret that no attempt was made to find out whether there would be agreement on the part of the service providers. Long before I became the chair, there was extensive consultation. As I outlined at the last meeting, between 2014 and 2016 all the service providers were consulted but there was no consensus. That is the reality.

Chairman

We have moved to where we are today and to the implementation aspect. As a result of our report Ms Mangan understands this committee's concerns, mainly around volunteers and the outcome. However, I would like to thank you and Ms Black for attending today. That concludes the business of today's meeting.

The joint committee adjourned at 12.04 p.m. until 10.30 a.m. on Thursday, 7 December 2017.