

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND FOURTEENTH MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY  
RELATIONS COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> JULY 2020,  
VIA VIDEO CALLING SOFTWARE**

**2329/20      Closed Session**

- i) Heads Together – Dignity at Work Charter – Ms A Barratt
- ii) Pension/Pay Remit

**2330/20      Present:** Chair Mr M McDonald, Ms S McClelland, Mr M McDonnell, Ms A Simpson, Ms N Tandon, Ms M Braniff, Mr J McCallister.

**2331/20      In Attendance:** Ms J Irwin (CEO), Mr P Day (Engagement), Mr P Jordan (Funding & Development), Mr G McKeown (DFAP), Ms E Tomasso (IT), Ms F Dennison (Core Funding Officer), Mr D McNally (Evaluation Officer), Ms H George (PA).

**2332/20      Apologies:** Mr R Campbell, Ms C Harris.

**2333/20      Welcome**

The Chair welcomed the Board and staff to this special meeting to discuss the funding strategy for the coming year and a small number of other items that require decisions before the next ordinary meeting. He updated attendees on the closed sessions held at the beginning of the meeting.

i) Heads Together Session

The Chair informed the meeting that Ms A Barratt presented the Board with the updated Dignity at Work Charter during the closed session. He stated that it was good to see that the document had been co-produced by all staff members. A number of actions have emerged from this meeting.

The Chair added that the Board continue to have interest in resolving this issue and highlighted that the implementation of the Charter is key. He informed the meeting that staff will be holding the fifth session with Heads Together on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> July, which he will be attending, too. Following today and next week's sessions with Heads Together, an implementation plan will be drafted and shared with the Board.

The Chair stated that he would be keen for CRC to tender for external support to oversee the implementation of the Charter, advise and support the staff, and propose relevant training for CRC. The Charter and the implementation will be reviewed after six months.

The Board agreed to this proposal.

ii) Pension/Pay Remit

The Chair informed the meeting that Mr G McKeown drafted a Business case proposing how CRC will comply with recent guidance relating to the 6% pension uplift and Pay Remits. He stated that CRC are attempting to separate the two issues: the pension issue; and the pay remits. For these two issues to be addressed individually. The Chair and CEO met with TEO this week and raised this issue. He added that he would be meeting with Unite the Union on 3<sup>rd</sup> July to discuss this.

The Board agreed the paper from the Pension Sub-Group discussed during the closed session.

**2334/20 Standard Checks**

- (a) *Members should declare any conflict of interests in any discussions where decisions were required.*
- (b) *Members need to register any offers of gifts or hospitality since the last Council meeting*

Board members had nothing to declare

**2335/20 Minutes**

The Board review the minutes of the previous meeting, which took place on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020. The Board members agreed that the minutes were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

**2336/20 Chair's Update**

i) Meetings

The Chair updated the Board on a number of meetings attended following May's Board.

He informed the Board that on 3<sup>rd</sup> June he and the CEO met with the Equality Commission's new Chief Commissioner Geraldine McGahey. ECNI raised no equality issues in relation to CRC's funding schemes following The Executive Office Committee briefing.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> June the Chair and CEO met with TEO as a follow up to The Executive Office Committee briefing.

A meeting of the Funding Delivery Working Group took place on the 17<sup>th</sup> June. In attendance were a number of representatives from CRC funded groups, and a number of Board members.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> June the Chair and other members of the Pension Sub Group met, agreeing the proposal presented earlier during the closed session of the Board meeting.

The Chair attended a meeting of the LRA Project Implementation Group on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June. This meeting reviewed and agreed the draft Dignity at Work Charter.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> June the Chair recorded an introduction, promoting Good Relations Week 2020 and a separate video encouraging submissions from organisations to host events during the week.

The Chair informed the meeting that Mr A Cole has returned to his role in TEO, and that he and the CEO had a catch-up meeting with Mr A Cole on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> July the Chair attended a meeting of the Senior Management Team to discuss the Dignity at Work Charter.

#### ii) Board and Audit Committee Assessment

The Chair informed the Board that he drafted a form, which was circulated to members, for the assessment of Board member's performance. This form is a self-assessment which members will be asked to complete and return to CRC by an agreed date. He stated that this format allows Board members to complete quantitative and qualitative questions, asking about their individual performance. It will allow Board members to raise any issues and make suggestions.

The Chair added that he will follow up with Board members, holding individual meetings to review their responses.

Mr G McKeown added that he has made necessary changes to allow the form to also be used by Audit Committee members. These were passed on and approved by the Chair of the Committee, Mr R Campbell.

The Board agreed that self-assessment is a valuable process, and approved the form.

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with a paper setting out CRC's contingency arrangements set up to mitigate the Covid-19 regulations.

He advised the Board that the arrangements continue to work well. He stated that there have been a few IT issues, however, these have identified and dealt with by Ms E Tomasso and ECNI, as our IT support provider.

He informed the Board that the management team and staff teams have been meeting regularly, and that work updates have been provided weekly and included in the Staff Newsletters.

Mr G McKeown stated that a meeting of Equality House Premises Committee took place this week, looking at how to make the premises safe for staff. These preparations include hands free systems, hand sanitiser, and a one way system. Another meeting of the Premises Committee will be taking place in July, and CRC will have a better idea of the safety preparations then.

Mr G McKeown informed the Board that the Internal Auditors are currently conducting an audit of CRC's Covid-19 arrangements. The conclusions of this audit will be reported back to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in due course.

The Board asked if there was any sense of when staff will be able to return to the office. The CEO stated that, until the latest Government update, every stage of The Executive Office's Covid-19 restrictions advised staff who can work from home to continue to do so. However the most recent update speaks of 'sequencing and staged return'. She added that the CEO's in Equality House had meet via Zoom recently and agreed that the majority of work can be completed well and safely remotely, so consideration of a phased return to work would focus on those aspects of business which prove more difficult remotely. Issue remain around use of shared parts of the building including kitchens, lifts, and toilets. The Premises group are considering the risks and working on a controlled and safe response.

The CEO added that CRC is currently considering how to hold Good Relations Week, and the balance between face-to-face and online events.

The Board asked if one-to-one supervisions of staff are continuing. The CEO reassured Board members that the Covid-19 restrictions are not inhibiting that aspect of business. Line meetings are continuing via Zoom, as well as weekly Team Meetings, Management Team Meetings, and monthly Staff Meetings. She added that CRC staff complete appraisals twice a year, the end of year appraisals are currently being completed. .

The Chair asked Ms F Dennison for her experience of working from home.

Ms F Dennison stated that, as she had experience of working from home it has not been a difficult adjustment. However, she is having to adapt her day

around looking after her children. She stated that the team adapted quickly, and she is currently working on ensuring payments go out to groups, following their completion of the appropriate paperwork, and answering queries. She added that she would have to work harder to stay in contact with groups on development work.

Ms D McNally stated that working from home has allowed him to get the space, away from others, to complete reviews and evaluations. He commended CRC for getting the IT systems up and running seamlessly at the beginning of the Covid-19 restrictions.

The Board noted and thanked Mr G McKeown for this update.

### **2338/20 Community Relations Council: Annual General Meeting**

Mr G McKeown informed the meeting that CRC are due to hold an Annual General Meeting in October 2020, to review and approve the Annual Report and Accounts. He highlighted that CRC's current Articles of Association do not provide for an AGM meeting to be held remotely.

He advised members that CRC's legal advisor had informed him that there is currently an amendment to the Companies Act allowing for companies to hold their AGM's remotely. This amendment will expire on the 30<sup>th</sup> September.

Mr G McKeown stated that this amendment may be extended beyond September, and in that case CRC will be able to hold this AGM online. However, if the amendment is not extended CRC will need to amend the Articles of Association Standing Orders, to allow for its AGM to be held remotely.

The Board thanked Mr G McKeown for this paper.

### **3339/20 Funding and Development: Amendment to Core Funded Group's Contract**

Ms F Dennison presented the Board with a paper setting out a request for reallocation of a Core Funding grant by Early Years.

Ms F Dennison added that, if the Board choose to approve this funding reallocation request, written assurances would be sought in August to ensure that the group will be able to carry out the work they proposed to do.

The Board asked what would happen if they approve this amendment, and the group are not able to meet their projected expenditure. Ms F Dennison explained that CRC would only give them their payments if the group are able to evidence the expenditure.

The Board thanked the Funding Team for the paper, and approved the group's proposed funding reallocation.

Ms S McClelland left the meeting.

### **3340/20 Funding and Development: Funding Strategy Discussion**

Mr P Jordan presented the Board with a paper containing an overview of CRC's Core Funding group's work.

Mr P Jordan explained that at this time of year the funding team normally review the core scheme, map the work out geographically and by topic, and identify the gaps. This is the first stage of a bigger process. CRC plan to take this analysis and see how it relates to The Executive Office's Central Fund, and the Council's statistics. This analysis will be presented in the September Board meeting, with a view to informing the 'Welcome Statements' for 2020/21 Core Funding Scheme.

Mr D McNally talked the Board through this paper. He explained that CRC's Core Funding Grant Scheme for the 2019/20 year, funded 61 posts in 30 groups, 112 projects being delivered, which impacted 33,800 people across Northern Ireland.

He informed the meeting that over the last few years the funding team have identified gaps, whether geographic or by topic, and used these gaps to inform a 'Welcome Statement' on the Core Funding scheme. This statement lists the topics and areas from which CRC would particularly welcome applications.

Mr D McNally added that the gap analysis has been shared with The Executive Office and The Executive Office Committee.

He reminded Board members that the Core Fund is not a project fund, but rather funds the things that are core to running a Good Relations organisations.

Mr D McNally presented the Board with a table setting out the geographic spread of CRC's Core Fund. It showed that there is a lower number of core funded groups based in: Mid and East Antrim; South Belfast; Fermanagh and Omagh; and Newry, Mourne & Down.

He added that an eye needs to be kept on Antrim and Newtownabbey as an organisation previously funded and working there has now come out of the Core Funding Scheme.

Mr D McNally then presented the Board with a table setting out the number of core funded groups broken down by TBUC theme. This showed that 'Our Safe Community' comprises 13% of Core Funding. 'Our Cultural Expression'

comprises 26%, 'Our Children & Young People' comprises 29%, and 'Our Shared Community' comprises 32% of Core Funding.

He added that CRC will consult with TEO to compare the spread across their funding streams.

Mr D McNally then presented the Board with a number of tables, breaking down the geographic location of the specific TBUC themes. He highlighted in red the areas where 'welcome statements' were applied during the 2019/20 application process.

Mr D McNally stated that he will complete this analysis for the CRCD small grants funding scheme, and review the District Council's Good Relations Plans, along with TEO's Central Fund.

The Chair thanked the funding team for their very incisive piece of work. He stated that it is good to reflect across the grant awards. He highlighted two points:

- The lack of investment in 'Our Safe Community' – He stated that Covid-19 has had unintended consequences in some areas, where paramilitaries have taken advantage of the restrictions by gaining influence in communities.
- CRC have been asked to speak to The Executive Office Committee again in September. He stated that this paper, and Mr D McNally's future analysis will help inform this briefing.

The Board asked whether CRC could use GSI to map this data. Mr D McNally stated that CRC plot this data on Google Maps. He added that the data is shared with TEO, which is working on a mapping system, however, CRC have not been updated on this.

The Board stated that a comprehensive database with information on all funders, funding, and what has been funded would be very useful. The CEO stated that TEO, in the past, had proposed to set up a Funders Forum, however this has not been taken forward. She added that a number of funders and organisations deliver good relations work across Northern Ireland, and it is important for CRC to see its work in the context of what others are doing. The CEO stated that the collection of this information could be considered as part of the Peace Monitor.

Mr P Jordan stated that the Covid-19 restrictions have brought challenges, but also brought out the strengths of the funded groups. The investment in relationships CRC made has helped groups work in collaboration during this time. This information has become clear during the Funding Delivery Working Group meetings from which the following key issues emerged:

- How do we respond to the everyday needs of communities?

- How do we become more intentional in terms of identifying and responding to need?
- Can we begin to write-up models of good practice taking place in the current crisis?
- Is there a need to update funding criteria or should we provide greater clarity on the types of work we will be supporting during this Covid-19 period and the subsequent community recovery.

Mr P Jordan stated that the issues raised will be considered more fully in the next part of the discussion in September. He suggested that CRC could present some 'Guiding Principles' for funding, in order to address some of these issues. He proposed the following Principles:

1. The support from CRC should aim to address the common good for the benefit of all communities.
2. The support offered by the CRC should be intentional and based on identified need.
3. That support take account of the differing needs of communities in both rural and urban settings particularly in relation to the availability of on-line resources.

Mr P Jordan added that if approved by the Board, these guiding principles would be added to CRC's website and grant application guidance.

The Chair stated that making Good Relations part of everyday life was discussed at the Funding Delivery working group . Funded organisations raised a number of examples of the intersectionality of Good Relations with other matters, including mental health, social isolation, and the environment. These have been identified as issues of 'common concern', issues that would have community relations outcomes and would bring communities together.

The CEO added that investment in areas of 'common concern' will support the next stage of peacebuilding and mainstreaming good relations across Northern Ireland. She added that a number of CRCD funded projects already cover areas of 'common concern' and social cohesion, and there are examples of this approach on which to build.

The Board thanked Mr P Jordan and Mr D McNally for presenting this work. They agreed that it was a very valuable discussion. The Board approved Mr P Jordan's proposed guiding principles and asked Mr P Jordan to relay them to funding applicants.



**ACTION:** Mr P Jordan to add the agreed 'Guiding Principles' to funding guidance and CRC's website.

**3341/20      Any Other Business**

The CEO informed the Board that she has been contacted by the Northern Ireland Office asking if CRC would be willing to join the UK's Centenary Advisory Group. She explained that this invitation comes from CRC and National Lottery Heritage Fund's work on the Decade of Centenaries. The National Lottery Heritage Fund has also been invited to join the group.

The Chair stated that it is important that any advisory group on this topic has representatives who can present Northern Ireland's perspective.

The CEO reiterated that they have not yet received a formal invitation, but she was checking whether the Board would approve of CRC's involvement, if a formal invitation is issued.

The Board agreed to CRC sitting on this advisory group if an invitation is issued.

**3342/20      Next Meeting**

The Chair thanked the Board and staff for attending the meeting today. He stated that, unless something urgent emerges, the next ordinary meeting will be held in September.