

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTIETH MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY  
RELATIONS COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON MONDAY 13<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2022 10:00AM  
VIA VIDEO CALLING SOFTWARE**

**3774/22**      **Present:** Chair Mr M McDonald, Ms M Braniff , Mr R Campbell, Mr J McCallister, Ms A Simpson, Ms S McClelland, Ms N Tandon,

**3775/22**      **In Attendance:** Dr J Irwin (CEO), Mr P Jordan (Director of Funding and Development), Ms J Adamson (HR Manager), Mr P Day (Director of Engagement), Ms H George (PA to CEO and Board).

**3776/22**      **Observers:** Mr D Johnston (CRC's Boardroom Apprentice)

**3777/22**      **Apologies:** Ms C Harris (Board Member), Mr M McDonnell (Board Member)

**3778/22**      **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*

No conflicts of interest were declared.

**3779/22**      **Welcome**

The Chair welcomed member's to today's meeting.

**3780/22**      **Minutes**

Attendees reviewed the minutes of the 229<sup>th</sup> Board meeting which took place on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2022. The Board approved the minutes.

**3781/22**      **Matters Arising**

The Chair presented the matters and actions arising from previous Board meetings.

A number of actions have been completed, including: circulating the TBUC review paper to Board members; a social media trend analysis to be added to future Engagement papers; Audit Committee chair to invite NIAO to upcoming meeting; CEO to seek assurances from TEO on CRC's impartiality in relation to the Peace Monitor Report.

One outstanding action relates to raising the increase in the NIAO audit fee with TEO. The Chair confirmed that he will be raised the issue at the upcoming TEO Arm's Length Body forum.

The Board thanked the Chair and noted the report.

**3782/22**      **Correspondence**

The CEO informed the Board that she recently received an email from TEO confirming that they are content with the measures in place to ensure CRC is impartial from the drafting of the Peace Monitor Report. Official confirmation may follow in a letter.

The Board thanked the CEO for this update.

### **3783/22 Chair's Update**

The Chair updated on a number of meetings attended following the previous Board meeting.

The Chair attended a meeting of CRC's Funding Sub Group on 27<sup>th</sup> May. He thanked Ms M Braniff for her work on the Sub-Group over the year.

The Chair attended the launch of Good Relations Week on June 6<sup>th</sup> at Springfield Dam.

An NVTV interview was filmed with the Chair and the winner of last year's Good Relations Award, Dr Eamon Phoenix. Another session with other past winners has been filmed and the full session will be broadcast in due course. A photoshoot took place with Dr Eamon Phoenix following the interview.

The Board thanked the Chair for this update.

### **3784/22 Chief Executive Officer's Report**

The CEO updated the Board on a number of items.

#### **i) Staffing**

CRC have procured temporary cover for the Core Funding Officer role. A previous member of staff, Ms D. O'Loan who worked in the CRC Peace Funding programme, has agreed to fill this role temporarily until Ms F Dennison returns from her career break.

The HR Manager is now working on the recruiting process for the Finance Manager role and the second attempt to recruit a Director of Finance, Admin and Personnel. The temporary cover for the Finance Manager role continues to work well.

The CEO thanked Ms S McMenamin and the DFAP team for continuing to complete all work in the current circumstances.

#### **ii) Covid-19**

The CEO informed the Board that the 'work from home' guidance has just been lifted by the Government. CRC will work on a phased implementation of the Hybrid Working Plan.

Staff can now hold meetings in person and in a hybrid method.

#### **iii) Strategic and Operational Plan**

CRC still awaits ministerial approval for the Operational Plan 2022-23 and for last year's plan 2021-22. Members were reminded the overall strategic plan for the

period 2020-23 which underpins the operational plans has been approved by Ministers.

iv) The Executive Office

The CEO informed members that there has been a recent change of staff within TEO. Mr R Cushnie has moved to the Urban Villages project, part time. Mr C Gardner has been promoted to head of Good Relations.

CRC is yet to receive feedback on the TBUC Strategy Review paper, however, Mr C Gardner did express his appreciation for the submission.

v) District Councils

The CEO and Mr P Day met with Mr G King, TEO on 8<sup>th</sup> June to discuss the District Council Good Relations Programme. TEO has asked CRC to become more involved in the project again. A follow up meeting will take place to discuss the specific areas of engagement.

vi) Funding

CRC held a temperature check meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> May. The groups expressed that they do not have the same concerns about unrest that they had last summer, however, they did raise a number of other concerns:

- Loss of networks/information sharing – mainly due to Covid-19
- Gaps in service provision where some NGOs have not returned since the pandemic
- Hostile political environment
- The role and functions of the new Commissions under New Decade, New Approach.
- Cost of living crisis

vii) Events

The TBUC Engagement Forum will be taking place tomorrow, 14<sup>th</sup> June. All Board members are welcome to attend.

A meeting of the Decade Roundtable will be taking place on 30<sup>th</sup> June.

The CEO thanked Board members for attending the photo call that marked the launch of Good Relations Week.

viii) Peace Monitor Report

As mentioned earlier in the meeting the CEO wrote to TEO, as discussed at the last Board meeting, setting out how CRC maintains its independence in the drafting of the Peace Monitor Report and seeking to update the TEO confirmation that it is content with this arrangement.

A positive email response has been received.

ix) Committees

A meeting of CRC's Finance and General Purposes Committee will be taking place on 28th June. This meeting will receive the first draft of the Annual Report and Accounts, before it is shared with the NI Audit Office for review.

The CEO thanked Ms S McMenamin and the staff at the accountancy firm procured to assist with preparing the accounts section of the Annual Report. She thanked Ms H George for coordinating the update of other sections of the report, and all staff who have fed into the draft.

The Board thanked the CEO for her update and noted the report.

**3785/22**

**Purchase Orders**

The Board were presented with two Purchase Orders:

i) IT Services

The Board reviewed the IT Purchase Order and approved the cost of £4,070 for the first quarter of 2022/23

ii) Accommodation

The Board reviewed the Accommodation Purchase Order and approved the cost of £24,286.43 for the first quarter of 2022/23.

The Board asked for an update on the accommodation move.

The CEO reminded attendees that CRC are part of the Civil Service Belfast II project. CRC and other organisations in Equality House are in the second tranche of the project which is not due to take place until 2025. CRC's office needs will be assessed as part of this work, but a date or venue for the move have not yet been announced.

**3786/22**

**Dignity at Work**

Ms J Adamson presented the Board with a paper updating on the Dignity at Work Implementation Plan.

She highlighted that staff were to attend a team building session, however, due to current staff vacancies, it was decided that this would be postponed until the positions are filled.

The HR Manager contacts staff weekly and gives regular opportunities at all staff meetings to raise any issues with her, the CEO or the Chair. She confirmed that no issues have been raised.

The Chair suggested that he would hold another check in meeting with staff over the summer. He asked Ms H George to organise this meeting.

**ACTION:** Ms H George to organise a meeting for the Chair and all (non-Management Team) staff.

The Board thanked Ms J Adamson for this update and noted the paper.

**3787/22**

### **Staffing Update**

Ms J Adamson presented the Board with a paper updating on CRC's staffing situation.

She highlighted that CRC have procured a temporary Core Funding Officer to take on the role, starting 20<sup>th</sup> June.

The HR Manager and CEO are considering the next steps in recruiting for the DFAP vacancies. A paper will be taken to the Finance and General Purposes Committee on this issue.

The Board suggested that, if recruitment has been difficult, that aspects of the job specifications could be adapted. Ms J Adamson stated that all options are being explored.

The Board thanked Ms J Adamson for this update and noted the report.

**3788/22**

### **Pathfinder Grant**

Mr P Jordan presented the committee with three Pathfinder applications, his assessment of the applications and recommendation, for review.

St Columbs Park House requested £22K.

Shankill Women's Centre requested £24,832.

Forthspring requested £22,319.

The Board reviewed the applications and approved the three Pathfinder grants.

The Board asked that a condition of the grants be that the groups provide assurance that they have sufficient other sources of funding to complete the planned overall programme of work for the rest of the year.

**3789/22**

### **Funding Sector Update**

Mr P Jordan presented the Board with a paper updating on the work of the Funding and Development Directorate.

The Team are currently closing down the 2021/22 grants.

The Community Relations Cultural Diversity grant is currently open and has received 15 new applications, with another 28 in progress.

Mr P Jordan attended a meeting of the Belfast City Council's Bonfire Management Programme.

CRC hosted a Temperature Check with funded groups, to get a view of their concerns, coming into the summer period.

Mr P Jordan informed the Board that the Media Grant funded project 'Chirish' is now complete. A link to the film will be circulate to Board members today. The Engagement Team will work with Mr P Jordan on the launch of the film.

The Board thanked Mr Jordan for his update and noted the report.

### **3790/22 Funding Sub Group Meeting**

Mr P Jordan informed the Committee of discussions which took place at the recent Funding Sub Group meeting.

The Group discussed an action plan for the next few months, and allocated what work would be completed by the Sub-Group, the Board, and the staff team. Some work of the Sub Group will include: reviewing the Core Fund scoring matrix; draft examples of 'Good Relations and Everyday Life'; and drafting new Core Fund 'Welcome Statements'.

The Chair thanked Ms M Braniff for her work as Chair of this Sub-Group.

The Chair asked Ms H George to contact Board members with potential dates for the Strategy Session, to take place in September.

**ACTION:** Ms H George to contact Board members with potential dates for the Strategy Session.

### **3791/22 Engagement Sector Update**

Mr P Day presented the Board with a paper updating on the work of the Engagement Team.

The next TBUC Engagement Forum is taking place on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June. The theme is 'How Community Organisations Engage with Business'. A number of speakers are lined up from Business in the Community; Footprints Women's Centre; Jethro Centre; and Social Enterprise NI.

The Team are planning for the next Engagement Forum, taking place on 20<sup>th</sup> Sept, to be held in person, on the subject of 'Good Relations and the Environment'.

Mr P Day thanked Board members for attending the recent photocall, which marked the launch of Good Relations Week registration. There were 23 pieces of online and print media coverage on this launch.

Mr P Day thanked the Chair for participating in an interview for NVTV on CRC's Good Relations Awards. Mr P Day will send the Board a link to the interview, once it has been published. The Good Relations Awards will launch in September, be assessed in January, and an event will be held to present the awards in February 2023. Ms N Tandon suggested that, as part of this year's Good Relations Awards, there could be a separate category for volunteers. The Staff Team welcomed this idea.

CRC will work more closely with TEO on this year's awards, which will bring the whole TBUC family together for one presentation event.

The Board thanked Mr P Day and his team for their work on Good Relation Week. They agreed that the logo and theme were excellent and are looking forward to attending events.

The Chair suggested that CRC should have a presence on LinkedIn, to encourage better engagement with the business sector.

**ACTION:** Mr P Day to register CRC on LinkedIn.

The Board thanked Mr P Day for this update and noted the report.

**3792/22**

### **Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

i) 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022 ARAC Meeting

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mr J McCallister, provided the Board with a verbal update on May's ARAC meeting.

Ms S Walsh from the NI Audit Office attended the meeting. ARAC members expressed their concern around the continued increase in audit fee, and that CRC were not getting any extra service or time for that increase. Ms S Walsh explained that it was due to a 5% increase across all organisations. She agreed to look again at the issue and raise with her senior management team

Internal Audit presented their report on the audit of CRC's Communications and Engagement. It received a satisfactory rating, with only two priority three recommendations. All of CRC's 2021/22 audits have now received a satisfactory rating.

An Internal Audit Plan for 2022/23 was presented at the meeting. The plan proposes that the following areas are audited: grants administration; IT systems, information security and Business Continuity; and Finance & General Purposes Committee.

There were no changes to the risks on CRC's Register. The Committee asked for a new risk to be added, related to the continued increase in the NI Audit Office fee. This will be rated amber, and reviewed again in September

The Chair informed the Board that he will be raising the issue of the rising audit fee at the upcoming TEO Arm's Length Body Forum.

The Board asked for an update on the 'Staff Morale' risk. The Chair of the Committee stated that while the rating of the risks are reviewed at all ARAC meetings, this risk's rating will not be reduced until staff have taken part in team building training, and a temperature check has taken place. This will allow the Committee to have all of the information needed to determine if there has been a signification change in morale.

ii) 7<sup>th</sup> April 2022 ARAC meeting

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee presented the Board with the minutes of April's ARAC meeting.

The Board thanked Mr J McCallister for this update, and noted the paper.

**3793/22**

**Any Other Business**

i) Boardroom Apprentice

The Chair informed the Board that this will likely be Mr D Johnston's last meeting as CRC's Boardroom Apprentice. He thanked Mr D Johnston for his contributions at Board meetings and for his promotion of CRC on social media.

The CEO added that it was a privilege to work with him, and CRC have gained a lot from his involvement.

Mr D Johnston thanked the Board, noting that it was an honour and a privilege to be part of the Board and CRC for the year. CRC continue to do great work, and Mr D Johnston will continue to advocate for the organisation. He thanked the Chair, CEO and the Team for the welcome and opportunity to be part of the Board.

ii) Board Terms

The CEO thanked Board members for accepting TEO's offer of a six month extension to their first terms. Membership of the Board will be reviewed again by TEO after these 6 months when it is hoped that Ministers will have returned to post.

**3794/22**

**Date of Next Meeting**

23<sup>rd</sup> September 2022 10am