

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTY THIRD MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS  
COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2022 2PM  
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING SOFTWARE**

**3829/22**      **Present:** Mr M McDonald (Chair), Ms N Tandon (Board Member), Ms A Simpson, (Board Member), Ms S McClelland (Board Member), Ms C Harris (Board Member), Mr M McDonnell (Board Member), Mr R Campbell (Board Member), Mr J McCallister (Board Member),

**3830/22**      **In Attendance:** Dr J Irwin (CEO), Mr P Jordan (Funding and Development Director), Mr P Day (Engagement Director), Ms J Adamson (Human Resources Manager), Ms S McMenamin (Finance Manager), Ms H George (PA to CEO and Board).

**3831/22**      **Observers:** Ms L Harley (Boardroom Apprentice)

**3832/22**      **Apologies:** Ms M Braniff

**3833/22**      **Welcome**

The Chair welcomed staff and Board members to the Annual General Meeting.

This meeting will receive CRC's final draft of the 2021/22 Annual Report and Account, which was reviewed and recommended for approval by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee this morning.

**3834/22**      **Minutes**

The minutes of CRC's 232<sup>nd</sup> Board Meeting, which took place on 30<sup>th</sup> September, were reviewed and approved by the Board.

**3835/22**      **Matters Arising**

The Chair presented the Board with two matters arising from the previous Board meeting.

He confirmed that the recommended changes had been made to the funding contracts.

The Chair updated the Board on the action to raise the external audit fee with The Executive Office. The Chair and CEO attended a meeting of TEO's Arm's Length Body Forum and raised this issue. Following this discussion TEO conducted an exercise, collecting details of the audit fee costs from each of their Arm's Length Bodies. TEO have written to the NI Audit Office to raise this issue.

The Board thanked the Chair and CEO for raising this issue.

3836/22

**Correspondence**i) Partnership Agreement

The Board were presented with correspondence from The Executive Office, setting out a number of technical amendments that have been made to CRC's Partnership Agreement.

The Board approved the updated version.

ii) Northern Ireland Audit Office 2022/23 Guidance

The CEO presented the Board with guidance from the NI Audit Office setting out changes to the audit process that will be implemented during the 2022/23 year's audit.

The fee is due to be increased between 10-20%. The audit will focus less on sampling and more on how the process is put together.

The Audit Committee met this morning and expressed their concern about the fee rate increase.

The Board noted the correspondence.

iii) Pension Tribunal

The CEO presented the Board with CRC's submission in response to the recent NIPSA pension tribunal correspondence. This is a collective case involving thousands of staff across the public sector in Northern Ireland and numerous Departments, Arm's Length Bodies, and other public bodies.

The response was approved by the Chair, as the delegated Board representative, prior to submitting.

The Board noted the correspondence and thanked the Chair and CEO for their work on it.

3837/22

**Annual General Meeting Business**i) Solvency and Liquidity

The CEO presented the Board with CRC's Solvency and Liquidity Report, compiled by Ms S McMEnamin.

She assured the Board that CRC continue to be solvent and liquid.

The analysis shows that, as of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, CRC has a deficit of £2,866,486.

£2,386,000 of this deficit relates to CRC's restricted pension reserve, which TEO provided a guarantee for in April 2019.

CRC is both solvent and liquid and that it can reasonable expect to remain so for the foreseeable future and at least for expenditure incurred until 31st March 2024.

The CEO ensured that expenditure is within budget, incurred to deliver CRCs business plan and Strategic Plan, which have been approved by TEO.

The Board thanked the CEO and Ms S McMenammin and noted that CRC are both solvent and liquid.

ii) Risk Register and Risk Depository

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mr J McCallister presented the Board with the Risk Register and Risk Strategy, which were approved by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Two risks remain rated red on the register. The 'Implementation of Pay DoF Guidance' remains red as there has been no progress on this matter. It was raised as a recommendation by the auditors, and will remain rated red on the register until progress has been made.

'Departure of Staff in DFAP Team' remains rated red. The committee asked for this to remain red as the new staff member has not yet started at CRC.

'Staff Morale', 'Freedom of Information Request', 'Audit Fee Increase', 'NILGSOC Pension' and 'North Belfast Grant Resources' remain amber as they are well mitigated but do require regular reviews.

iii) Annual Report and Accounts

The CEO presented the Board with CRC's 2021/22 Annual Report and Accounts. This Report has been audited by the NI Audit Office.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee reviewed the Annual Report and Accounts on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> December and recommended that the Board approve the document.

The Board approved the 2021/22 Annual Report and Accounts. The document will now be signed by the CEO and the Chair, and then submitted to NI Audit Office.

The Annual Report and Accounts were produced to comply with Companies House guidance, Charity Commission guidance, and Public Sector guidance.

The CEO thanked staff, and CRC's Board for their work over the year, which was presented in the Annual Report and Accounts. She also added her thanks to the Northern Ireland Audit Office and the internal auditors for their work.

### **3838/22      Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

#### **i) Update from Chair**

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee updated the Board on their recent meeting.

The Committee received the Report to Those Charged with Governance from the Audit Office. The accounts were unqualified, however a number of priority one and two recommendations were made. These related to the ongoing pension issue and the financial systems.

The Committee recognised that CRC had a number of vacant posts in the Finance directorate, which were filled by temporary staff members. Management responses were presented to the Committee and approved. The Committee have asked for assurances to be provided at the next meeting on the current year's financial management.

The Audit Committee received an update on a TEO investigation into a funded group. TEO have asked that all payments for this grant are suspended until the investigation is completed. The investigation does not relate to their work with CRC, it is related to other funding sources.

The Board thanked Mr J McCallister for this update.

#### **ii) Approved minutes of 1<sup>st</sup> September Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

The Chair presented the Board with the approved minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee which took place on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022.

The Board noted these minutes.

### **3839/22      Chair's Update**

The Chair provided the Committee with an update on events and meetings he attended following the previous Board meeting.

The Chair participated in the panel to recruit a new Director of Finance, Administration, and Personnel.

The Chair attended the launch of the Good Relations Award process. The awards will be hosted in partnership with The Executive Office in 2023.

The Chair and CEO attended the funeral of Dr Eamon Phoenix 18<sup>th</sup> November.

The Chair informed staff that Board members received correspondence from The Executive Office asking if they would approve an extension of their terms on the Board by a further six months. As there are currently no Ministers, a new Board cannot be appointed. Board members have all accepted the six month extension, which will see their terms extended to June 2023.

The Chair informed the Board that at the recent meeting of TEO's Arm's Length Body Forum a discussion was had about how the anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement could and should be marked. It was agreed that the Chair would work with CRC on how the Decade Principles can be used as guidance for this upcoming anniversary.

The Board thanked the Chair for this update.

## 3840/22

### Chief Executive Officer Report

The CEO provided the Board with an update on a number of matters.

#### i) Condolences

The CEO informed the board of the recent passing of Dr Eamon Phoenix and Baroness Blood. Both received the Good Relations Award and the next awards event will mark their contribution to good relations

#### ii) Strategic Plan

The CEO informed the Board that TEO agreed to extend CRC's Strategic Plan by one year. The Board had agreed to request this extension as the TBUC policy review is not yet complete and there are currently no Ministers.

The ideas discussed at the Strategic Planning Session will be incorporated into the Operational Plan for 2023-24 as they are still relevant to the current Strategic Plan.

#### iii) Staffing Update

CRC conducted a successful recruitment of a Finance, Admin, and Personnel Director. The successful applicant will begin work in January 2023.

The CEO thanked the Chair and staff who were involved in this recruitment process.

#### iv) House of Lords Committee

The CEO updated the Board on her presentation to the House of Lords Committee on Northern Ireland and the Protocol.

The CEO sat on a panel with a number of other bodies in the public sector organisations and charities.

The Committee were interested in the Peace Monitor Report. The authors may be invited to present to the Committee.

v) Government Departments and Committees

The CEO attended a meeting for all ALBs with the Head of the Civil Service in NI. The meeting set out the budget and shortfall position.

The CEO and Chair attended TEO's Arm's Length Body Forum on 8<sup>th</sup> December. A number of sub groups were set up to discuss common issues.

vi) Other projects

The CEO congratulated the Engagement Team for their work on Good Relations Week 2022, and ASG for their assistance.

The Good Relations Awards are currently open to nominations and will close on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

A meeting of the Peace Monitor Advisory Group took place in December. The authors are aiming to have a full draft report ready in January/February.

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

**3841/22**

**Engagement Sector Update**

i) Good Relations Week Evaluation

Mr P Day presented the Board with the evaluation of CRC's 2022 Good Relations Week.

The key points from the report showed:

- 264 events took place during the week, which is a 12% decrease from the previous year. This may be due to a number of events being cancelled on 19<sup>th</sup> September due to the death of the Queen.
- 172 groups hosted events, which is an increase on last year.

The report included a number of recommendations including collaboration with other funders; wider representation on the steering group; earlier launch date; a signature event during the week.

The Engagement Team and the Board accepted the recommendations.

The Chair recommended Mr P Day put the recommendations into an action plan to bring to future Board meetings with updates on their implementation.

**ACTION:** Mr P Day to put the Good Relations Week recommendations into an action plan to bring to future Board meetings with updates on their implementation.

ii) Sector Update

The team are beginning their work on the Good Relations Week 2023 business case which will go out to tender in February 2023.

The Board suggested that the Engagement Team consider any measurable impact outcomes could be built into the tender.

**ACTION:** Mr P Day to consider what measurable impact outcomes should be applied to the Good Relations Week project, and add them to the tender.

Mr P Day thanked Board members, staff and funded groups who attended events during Good Relations Week.

He thanked the Chair for his attendance at the recent Good Relations Awards launch. CRC will be working with TEO on the awards and have introduced a number of new categories, including volunteer of the year and youth volunteer award.

The next TBUC Engagement Forum is due to take place in early March 2023. The theme for this event will be the TBUC Strategy review.

CRC staff will be meeting with TEO colleagues on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December for a development session. Mr P Day thanked Ms N Tandon for her assistance planning and presenting at this meeting.

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

**3842/22**

**Funding and Development Update**

i) Core Fund Decision Meeting

Mr P Jordan informed the Board that the Core Fund Decision meeting will be due to take place in February 2023. He asked the Board to consider a number of dates for this meeting and they agreed for it to take place on 15<sup>th</sup> February.

The Board agreed that Mr J McCallister and Mr M McDonnell would be reserved to sit on the appeals panel, if any reviews are requested, and all other Board members would attend the decision meeting.

ii) Sector Update

Mr P Jordan presented the Board with an update on the work of the Funding and Development Directorate.

The Core Fund has received 42 bids, 34 eligible to be assessed.

The Media Grant received 14 bids.

As there have been no monitoring rounds this year there was no additional funding for the Community Relations/Cultural Diversity Grant. If any resources become available due to underspends in other grants, this money will be used for the CRCD grant.

CRC have been working with The Executive Office on the Council's Good Relations Programme. CRC representatives attend monthly meetings with Council representatives to discuss the Good Relations and grant issues that they are experiencing.

Mr P Jordan informed the Board that he would be bringing a paper to the next meeting regarding the challenges that groups are facing due to the cost of living, and CRC's proposal to assist with this.

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

**3843/22 Purchase Orders**

i) Accommodation

The Board were presented with a purchase order for CRC's accommodation in Equality House.

The Board approved this payment of £26,286.43 for quarter three of the financial year.

ii) IT SLA

The Board were presented with a purchase order for CRC's IT SLA costs in Equality House.

The Board approved this payment of £4,070.00 for quarter three of the financial year.

**3844/22 Dignity at Work**

Ms J Adamson presented the Board with a report updating on the implementation of the Dignity at Work actions, including those identified by the Chair during his recent check in with Staff.

She assured the Board that staff are given the opportunity to raise any issues at every staff meeting, team meeting, and at one on ones with the HR Manager or Dignity at Work Champion.

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

**3845/22 Staffing Update**

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

She informed the Board that a new DFAP Director has been recruited and will begin work in CRC on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

A member of staff in the Engagement Team is off on longer term sick, following a medical procedure. The Staff and Board sent their best wishes to the staff member while he recuperates.

**3846/22 Finance and General Purposes Committee**i) Chair's Update

The Chair provided the Board with an update on the work of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The Committee received CRC's quarter two delivery report. All outcomes are on schedule to be completed by the end of the financial year.

CRC's Microsoft 365 implementation is ongoing. The first two stages of the process are complete, and the team will now work on moving the files from the server onto the new cloud system. This will require the input of the new DFAP Director.

An audit of health and safety will be taking place in CRC's office in the New Year, along with a fire risk assessment and a Display Screen Assessment.

The Committee discussed two issues and the Chair agreed to raise them at a meeting with TEO in the future:

- The length of Board member terms. The Committee proposed that Board term lengths should be staggered to ensure that there are always returning members along with the new members on the Board.
- The Board Member and Chair remuneration fees. As there has been no increase in the rate since the Board's induction in 2019, the Chair will ask if a review/increase in the fee will take place.

ii) Finance and General Purposes Committee 28<sup>th</sup> June 2022 Approved Minutes

The Chair presented the Board with the minutes of the June Finance and General Purposes Committee which were approved at their 29<sup>th</sup> November meeting.

The Board thanked the Chair for this update and noted the minutes.

**3847/22 Any Other Business**

The CEO presented the Board with correspondence received from The Executive Office today.

TEO have confirmed that CRC are now approved to discharge all charges placed as part of a 2007-2009 Capital Grant Scheme.

CRC will work with TEO to establish the next steps in releasing these charges.

**3848/22 Date of Next Meeting**

Ms H George will be in touch with Board members to agree a date for the next meeting.

The Chair thanked the Staff and Board for their work over the year and wished everyone a happy Christmas and New Year.