

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTY SECOND MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS
COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON FRIDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER 2022 10:30AM
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING SOFTWARE**

3805/22 **Present:** Chair Mr M McDonald, Mr J McCallister, Ms C Harris, Ms A Simpson, Mr R Campbell

3806/22 **In Attendance:** Ms J Irwin (CEO), Mr P Jordan (Director of Funding and Development), Mr P Day (Director of Engagement), Ms H George (PA to CEO and Board).

3807/22 **Observers:** Mr E Crothers (Boardroom Mentee), Ms L Harley (Boardroom Apprentice)

3808/22 **Apologise:** Ms M Braniff, Mr M McDonald, Ms S McClelland, Ms N Tandon

3809/22 **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*

Mr R Campbell informed the Board that he is employed at the law firm, from which CRC receive legal advice. However, there is no conflict as Mr R Campbell was not involved in procuring these services, nor is he involved in the cases CRC are seeking legal advice on.

3810/22 **Closed Session**

All staff members and observers left the meeting.

The CEO presented the Board with correspondence received and background detail to the correspondence related to a confidential matter. The CEO assured the Board that CRC have sought legal advice and presented the proposed next steps. The Board approved the next steps, and thanked the CEO for her work on this.

Staff and observers re-joined the meeting

3811/22 **Welcome**

The Chair welcomed Ms L Harley to her first meeting as CRC's new Boardroom Apprentice. CRC's previous apprentice, Mr D Johnston, contributed greatly during his time on the Board and learned a lot on how Boards function and the work of CRC.

The Chair encouraged Ms L Harley to get involved and ask any questions she has.

3812/22 Minutes

The Board reviewed and approved the minutes of the 230th and 231st meeting of CRC's Board.

3813/22 Purchase Orders

i) Accommodation

The CEO presented the Board with a purchase order for CRC's accommodation in Equality House. The Board reviewed and approved this purchase order for £24,286.43.

ii) Agency Pay

The CEO presented the Board with a paper relating to the pay procedures of CRC's current agency staff. She explained that the purchase orders have been under the threshold for Board approval, up until this point, and therefore have been approved by the CEO. However, one agency staff members pay has now exceeded this threshold and will require Board approval.

The Board reviewed the paper and approved the purchase order and the proposed process for approving these purchase orders in the future.

The CEO noted that this agency member applied for the Finance Manager position and was successful, and therefore will no longer be an agency member as of the 3rd October. CRC will then have only one agency member of staff.

3814/22 Section 75 Report

The CEO presented the Committee with CRC's Section 75 Report. She explained that the deadline for completion of the report falls in the summer, and therefore was submitted under the condition that Board approval would be sought in September.

The Board reviewed and approved the Report. The CEO thanked the Board and added that she would contact ECNI and inform them of this approval.

3815/22 Core Funding

Mr P Jordan provided the Board with a number of Core Funding materials for review.

i) Core Funding Materials

Mr P Jordan reminded the Board that the Core Fund Guidance Notes, Welcome Statements, Scoring Matrix and Application forms are reviewed each year.

He presented the Board with a number of updates, which have been drafted based on feedback from the Funding Sub-Group, the Board, and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

The Board reviewed and approved the following amendments:

- To update the Guidance Notes to ensure that there is clarity around of the types of work that the Core Scheme will support.
- The Guidance Notes should make clear that if an applicant submits their application in error they can withdraw it and re-submit it before the deadline.
- To review the scoring matrix so as to not disadvantage groups working in localised areas.
- For the 2022/23 Welcome Statements to continue into 2023/24.
- Application forms will include a copy of the Councils stated Values & Beliefs to which applicants should note their endorsement of.

ii) Funding Contracts

Mr P Jordan informed the Board that, following a meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, related to a funded group issue, the Committee made a number of recommended changes to CRC's Funding Contracts.

The Board reviewed and approved the following amendments:

- That a copy of the Councils Values & Beliefs should be included in all funding contracts and guidance notes, to which groups should note their endorsement of.
- That the following conditions should also be included in funding contracts which would cover the period for which funding has been awarded:
 - a) The Organisation must notify CRC at the earliest opportunity of any investigations instigated by the PSNI or any regulatory body in relation to the organisation or its staff.
 - b) The organisation must notify CRC at the earliest opportunity of any issues that may result in a reputational risk or breach related to CRC's Values and Objectives.

The Board asked that another amendment be made to the contract, asking the groups to provide proof of safeguarding training, rather than just confirming that a policy is in place.

ACTION: Mr P Jordan to add 'Groups should provide proof of safeguarding training' to the funding contracts.

3816/22

Media Grant

Mr P Jordan presented the Board with a paper on the Media Grant and what format it should take in 2022/23.

He explained that in 2021/22 the Media Grant format was refreshed, to provide funding to two film from up and coming filmmakers. NIScreen joined CRC and

provided mentoring support to one of the projects. This format worked well, and produced two very good pieces of work.

Mr P Jordan informed the Board that an organisation contacted CRC in August to highlight that the revised format excludes projects based on other, non-film, media methods.

Mr P Jordan asked the Board for their input on how the Grant should be formatted for 2022/23.

The Board discussed the issue and agreed that CRC should open the Media Grant scheme with no restriction on the media method. Applications can be made asking for small amounts of funding or the full budget. Applicants will need to provide justification for their budget and method, and will need to demonstrate community impact/working with communities. A panel can then meet and review all applications.

3817/22 Matter Arising

The Chair presented the Committee with an update on the actions/matters which arose at the previous Board meeting

Only one action remains live, this relates to CRC's NIAO audit fee. The Chair reminded the Board that at the previous meeting the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee members raised the issue of CRC's NIAO audit fee, and yearly increase in costs. The Committee were concerned that the increase was not commensurate with any additional service CRC would receive from the Audit Office, or the addition of extra hours worked. The Chair attended a meeting of The Executive Office Arm's Length Bodies Forum and raised the issue. Other ALBs in attendance were also concerned about this fee increase. TEO agreed to and completed an exercise, collecting details of ALB audit fees for the last five years. TEO plan to write to NIAO to raise this issue directly.

The Board thanked the Chair for this update and noted the Matters Arising Report.

3818/22 Correspondence

i) Rural Needs Act

The CEO informed the Committee that CRC had received correspondence from The Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs. The Department conducted a review of the Rural Needs Act and Schedule and agreed a number of organisations that should be added to the Schedule, including CRC.

The Department will now work on making the amendment to the Act, which will require Ministerial approval. Once this is complete CRC will be required to appoint a rural needs champion and report back on what the organisation is doing to review and respond to rural needs.

The Board welcomed CRC's inclusion in this Act.

ii) Peace Heroines Project

The CEO presented the Committee with correspondence CRC received regarding the Peace Heroines Project. The organisation contacted CRC to ask if they would provide written support for the project and attend project meetings which will take place over the year. CRC accepted the invitation and sent a letter of support.

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

3819/22 **Chair's Update**

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

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

3820/22 **Chief Executive Officer's Update**

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

i) Staffing

The CEO informed the Board that Ms S McMenamin has been successful in her application to the Finance Manger role. She will start as a full member of staff on 3rd October.

Interviews for the DFAP Director position will take place in October.

The Board noted the Staffing Report paper.

ii) Covid-19

There have been no further developments on the way CRC is currently handling the Covid-19 situation. The Audit and Risk Committee agreed to reduce the 'Covid-19' risk on the Register to 'green' as the issue is well mitigated.

iii) Planning

The Board will meet on 14th October to discuss CRC's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. Two TEO colleagues will be in attendance.

iv) TEO & Government Departments

The CEO and the Chair continue to attend TEO ALB Forums.

The CEO presented the Board with the up to date Partnership Agreement, which the Board previously approved. The Board noted this paper.

CRC and TEO held a shared learning event in September focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals and TEOs work on the minority ethnic strategic plan.

TEO met with CRC in August and asked for assistance with the District Council Good Relations Programme, specifically development support. A member of the Funding team will attend monthly update meetings with the councils and TEO. The Director of Funding and Director of Engagement will attend Shared Learning Forums, and the CEO will attend Programme Board meetings.

v) Events

CRC and TEO held a hybrid TBUC Engagement Forum on 20th September. This meeting focused on Sustainability Goals and Good Relations work. It had great input from the sector and sustainability experts.

The CEO thanked the Engagement Team, ASM, the GR Week Steering Group, staff, and Board members for their work and participation in Good Relations Week 2022.

vi) Freedom of Information Request

CRC have not received any further communication from the Information Commissioners Office caseworker. The Caseworker is looking at the Report and CRC are hoping for an informal settlement, based on the Board's decision.

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

3821/22

Dignity At Work

The Chair, as Dignity at Work Champion, informed the Board that he held a series of meetings with the staff, management team, and a number of one-on-one meetings in August and September. A number of issues were raised, the majority not related to Dignity at Work but rather process and project issues.

The Chair presented the Board with a list of agreed actions, many of which are already being undertaken.

The Chair highlighted two particular issues: bureaucracy of certain procedures; and the deficiencies of the Flexi-grant system. These two items CRC was already aware of, and now that the audit of the Annual Report and Account is almost complete, work will begin to look at these.

He thanked the CEO and staff for their work. The Board noted the report.

3822/22

Quarter One Assurance Statement

The CEO presented the Board with CRC's Quarter One Assurance Statement. This Statement has already received approval from the Chair and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, and was submitted to TEO in July.

The Board noted this report.

3823/22 Finance and General Purposes Committee Minutes

The Chair presented, and the Board noted the approved minutes of the F&GP Committee which took place in January. Another meeting took place in June, the minutes for which will be presented at a future Board meeting, once approved by the Committee.

3824/22 Funding Update

Mr P Jordan provided the Board with a Report updating on the work of the Funding and Development Team.

The Team are reviewing the mid-year position of the CRCD grant, what is left in the budget, and how many more projects the grant can support.

Mr D McNally and Ms D O'Loan have been meeting with the Core Funded Groups and have produced a report on these meetings. This report will be presented at the upcoming Board Strategy Session.

The Team are keeping a note of funding demands that CRC are unable to meet due to a lack of resources.

Mr P Jordan informed the Board that TEO have not run any Monitoring Rounds in 2022/23 to date as there has been no approved budget, due to the lack of Ministers. This will have an effect on the North Belfast fund. CRC will review again following the 28th October deadline set by the Secretary of State. CRC are not the only ALB affected by this, and TEO are working on possible mitigations to this issue.

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

3825/22 Engagement Update

Mr P Day provided the Board with a Report updating on the work of the Engagement Directorate.

The Engagement Team have been focusing on Good Relations Week over the last number of months, and will now begin the evaluation of the project. This evaluation will be presented at a future Board meeting.

Due to circumstances CRC ceased the promotion of the festival one week before it began. The evaluation will show if this had any impact on the Week.

170 groups held events during the week and feedback has been very positive.

The Chair and Board commended the work of the Engagement Team and ASG on Good Relations Week 2022.

The Engagement Team will now begin working on the Good Relations Awards. TEO have asked that the awards be extended to incorporate the whole TBUC family. A number of additional awards will accompany the CRC award this year, including: Volunteer of the Year; Community Champion of the Year; Youth Award; and Award for organisation/persons Connecting Communities.

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

3826/22 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

i) Verbal Update from Chair

Mr J McCallister, the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, updated the Board on the work of the Committee.

The Committee reviewed and approved the Risk Register at the previous Committee, agreeing that 'Absence of DFAP Director' and 'Implementation of Pensions Guidance' remain rated red and 'Staff Morale', 'FOI', and 'Audit Fee' remain amber.

The Committee agreed to reduce 'Covid-19' to a green risk, as staff are attending meetings in the office in person again, and the issue is well mitigated.

CRC's draft Annual Report and Accounts are currently being reviewed by the Audit Office. The Committee is due to meet again the morning of the Board's AGM to review the final draft (24th Oct).

The internal audits will begin later in the year.

The Committee were presented with the Department's 2019-20 Annual Theft and Fraud Report. The publication of this Report was delayed by the department due of Covid. This Report looks at actual fraud, reported fraud and suspected fraud that took place in the Government Departments and their ALBs over that year.

ii) Minutes

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the Board with the approved minutes of the June 2022 Committee meeting.

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

3827/22 Any Other Business

None

3828/22 Date of Next Meeting

14th October 9:30am – Board Strategy Session – Lagan Valley Island Centre

23rd November 2pm – Board Meeting AGM