

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTY FIFTH MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS
COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON FRIDAY 7TH APRIL 2023 10:30AM
HELD BY HYBRID METHOD**

- 873/23** **Present:** Mr M McDonald (Chair), Ms N Tandon (Board Member), Ms S McClelland (Board Member), Mr M McDonnell (Board Member), Mr R Campbell (Board Member), Mr J McCallister (Board Member).
- 3874/23** **In Attendance:** Dr J Irwin (CEO), Mr P Jordan (Funding and Development Director), Mr P Day (Engagement Director), Ms J Adamson (Human Resources Manager), Mr P Garrity (Temporary Finance Manager) Ms H George (PA to CEO and Board).
- 3875/23** **Observers:** Ms L Harley (Boardroom Apprentice)
- 3876/23** **Apologies:** Ms A Simpson, Ms C Harris, Ms M Braniff
- 3877/23** **Closed Session**
- The Board held a closed session to discuss a matter which arose at the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- 3878/23** **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 works at the same firm as CRC’s legal advisors, assisting with the FOI set out in the Risk Register, the tribunal case, and CRC’s Grant Management System. There is no conflict as Mr R Campbell was not involved in the procurement process and is not involved in these matters.
- 3879/23** **Welcome**
- The Chair welcomed Board and staff to today’s meeting. He welcomed Mr P Garrity, CRC’s temporary Finance Manager, to his first CRC Board meeting.
- The CEO informed the Board that Mr P Jordan has resigned from CRC and will beginning a new job at the Council. The Board congratulated Mr P Jordan, and thanked him for all of his work at CRC over the years. The Board and Staff will mark Mr P Jordan’s departure before his final day.
- 3880/23** **Minutes**
- The Board reviewed the minutes of the 234th Board meeting, which took place on the 24th February 2023. The Board approved these minutes.

3881/23

Matters Arising

The Chair presented the Committee with an update on a number of matters which arose at previous Board meetings.

CRC have heard nothing further regarding the NI Audit Office audit fee. It was agreed that this would be marked as complete as CRC can not progress this matter further.

The Chair confirmed that no honours nominations were received following the previous Board meeting, and that this matter can now be marked as complete.

The Chair informed the Board that two Board Evaluations and Appraisals are still outstanding. He asked those Board members to complete and send to Ms H George as soon as possible.

ACTION: Board members who have not yet completed their Evaluation and Appraisal should do so and send to Ms H George as soon as possible.

3882/23

Correspondence

The CEO informed the Committee that CRC had not yet received the opening budget for 2023/24, however, TEO provided CRC with an email allowing expenditure to be made based on 2022/23 budget with a 10% cut.

The Board thanked the CEO for this update. The budget will be discussed further later in the meeting.

3883/23

Chair's Business

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

The Chair attended the Good Relations Awards and TBUC Engagement Forum on 7th March in the Harbour Commissioners Office. The Chair commended the Engagement Team for this great event, their partnership with other organisations and the spread of the award winners.

On the 8th March TEO's Permanent Secretary convened a meeting of their Arm's Length Bodies to discuss the financial situation for 2023/24. Sub-groups were set up for ALBs to discuss where services can be shared and where efficiencies can be made.

The Chair attended an event for Heritage Lottery Board members on 29th March in the Ulster Museum. The Chair suggested that he, the CEO, and Mr P Mullan should meet in due course.

CRC's Finance and General Purposes Committee met on 31st March. An update on this meeting will be provided later in the meeting.

The Board thanked the Chair for this update.

3884/23 **CEO's Update**

The CEO provided the Board with her report and highlighted a number of matters.

i) Finance

The CEO reminded the Board that CRC are preparing for a 10% cut to the budget in 2023/24. Negotiations are ongoing between the Northern Ireland Office, the Secretary of State and the Treasury so the official budget has not yet been received.

The CEO informed the Committee that it was the view of the previous Board that the grants should face no greater cut than the overall cut made to CRC.

The Board discussed the impact of the 10% cuts on CRC;s work and agreed that if the predicted 10% cut is included in the 2023/24 budget, then CRC would suspend the Media Grant and Publications Grant for the year. The Committee agreed that the Core Fund and North Belfast fund were the priority as they include salaries and the maintenance of Good Relations infrastructure. Pathfinder and CRCD grants may be affected.

The Board also agreed that the work of the Engagement Team provided a greater return than the small budget it uses, and therefore it should face no greater cut.

The CEO reminded the Board that CRC have faced year on year cuts, totalling 30% since 2013.

Mr P Garrity will be working on the close down of 2022/23 and drafting the 2022/23 Accounts.

ii) Staffing

The CEO informed the Board that CRC's new DFAP Director started work on 1st March 2023 on a part time/phased basis until she becomes full time in July 2023.

The CEO informed the Board that Mr P Garrity started work at CRC on 8th March.

iii) The Executive Office

The Chair attended a meeting of TEO's Arm's Length Bodies where a number of sub-groups were formed.

The Sub-Group prepared a paper seeking clarity from TEO on the scope of the work.

iv) Engagement

CRC held a Shared Learning Event with TEO colleagues on 24th March on sustainability. Belfast City Council presented their 'One Million Trees' project, and Ms H George presented CRC's sustainability pledges.

The Funding Team and Engagement Team held a 'Temperature Check' event for funded groups. The groups don't anticipate a difficult summer period, however many raised their concern about the effects of the cuts.

The CEO thanked the Engagement Team for their work on the TBUC Engagement Forum and Good Relations Awards on 7th March.

An event will be held on 11th May to mark the end of the Decade of Anniversaries Project. The event will commemorate the work of Mr E Phoenix. Board members are welcome to attend.

A meeting with Dervock community group has been postponed due to illness.

v) Audit Committee

CRC's internal auditors completed their three reviews and rated each as 'satisfactory'. The CEO thanked the teams involved in the audits for their work.

The risk associated with CRC's ongoing FOI request has now been downgraded as the case was resolved informally. It will now be removed from CRC's Risk Register.

The NILGOSC Pension case is unlikely to be heard until later in the year. It remains amber on the Risk Register.

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

3885/23 Engagement Report

The P Day presented the Board with an update on the work of the Engagement Team.

The Engagement Team held a joint Engagement Forum and Good Relations Awards. CRC worked in partnership with Volunteer Now, NICVA, Community Foundation, and NI Youth Forum. The event received positive social media attention. The team will engage with the same partners on the awards next year and work to engage new partners too.

The Engagement Forum received positive feedback on the panel discussion involving Gareth Harper from Peaceplayers, Angela Chada from Springboard, and AJ McMinn.

The next TBUC Engagement Forum will take place on 13th June 2023.

The Good Relations Week 2023 Steering Group met in March to discuss the theme and design concepts. There has already been tremendous interest in the event. CRC are working on an event during Good Relations Week to mark International Day of Peace. Good Relations Week will run from 18th September through to 24th September.

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

3886/23 Core Funding Minutes

Mr P Jordan presented the Board with the draft minutes of the Core Funding Decision Meeting that took place on 21st February 2023.

The Board reviewed and approved the minutes.

3887/23 Funding and Development Update

Mr P Jordan updated the Board on the work of the Funding Team.

The Community Relations Cultural Diversity Grants received more applications in 2022/23 than the previous year. All events related to this grant have been completed and the groups are now returning their evidence for vouching. The 2024/24 CRCD grant will open to applications on 17th April, however, no awards will be made until CRC's budget is confirmed. The two Project Officers are working closely with Good Relations Officers on mapping the work.

The groups unsuccessful with their Core Fund Application have now received feedback. No groups requested an appeal.

Mr P Jordan met with TEO and agreed the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme awards. These awards were agreed on principle, and will be approved when the budget is confirmed. The groups have been made aware that the fund is no longer ringfenced by TEO.

A Temperature Check meeting was held with Core Funded Groups and North Belfast Groups. TEO were also in attendance. The main issues raised at the meeting included the uncertainty around resources, cost of living, and succession planning. A number of the groups have already organised a series of summer diversionary programmes.

Funded groups suggested that a sub-group be created to decide the agenda of Shared Learning Forum going forward. This will ensure that the groups find the meetings as useful as possible.

Three groups received Media Grant awards in 2022/23. Northern Visions for their Good Relations Programming, Holywell Trust for their podcast series, and About Blank Media for their 'Disagreeing Well' project.

Mr P Jordan thanked the Board for their support over the last few years, this will be his final Board meeting at CRC.

The Board thanked Mr P Jordan for all his work.

3888/23 Pathfinder Grant

Mr P Jordan presented the Committee with a Pathfinder 2022/23 grant for review. Bloody Sunday Trust applied for £14,665 to support their schools programme. The Board reviewed the application and recommendation and approved the grant.

3889/23 Finance and General Purposes Committee

i) 31st March 2023 meeting

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

The Committee welcomed Ms U Kelly the new Finance, Admin, and Personnel Director and Mr P Garrity the Temporary Finance Manager to their first meeting.

The Committee asked the CEO to write to TEO regarding the Chair's Allowance and Board Member Attendance Allowance, and whether there would be an increase to this payment in 2023/24.

The Committee received CRC's Quarter Three Performance Report, which sets out the risks registered during that period, the objectives achieved, and a brief outline of CRC's financial position. A new report is currently being drafted for Quarter Four.

TEO informed CRC that the Charges related to a previous CRC Capital Grant can now be released. CRC will write to the affected groups to inform them of this outcome.

ii) 29th November 2022 F&GP Committee Minutes

The Chair presented the Board with the approved minutes of the previous Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting.

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

3890/23 Dignity at Work

Ms J Adamson provided the Board with a Report updating on the implementation of the Dignity at Work project.

As a suggestion from the Chair's check-in meetings with Staff, a new Performance Development Review pro-forma was drafted and approved by the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The draft will now be shared with the Union for consultation.

Ms J Adamson informed the Board that no issues have been raised following the previous Board meeting.

The Board discussed and agreed that the Dignity at Work project should continue, while reports to Committees and Board would only be necessary annually or when an issue has been raised.

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

3891/23 Staffing

Ms J Adamson provided the Committee with a report updating on CRC's staffing position.

The Board noted the report.

3892/23 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

i) 7th April 2023 ARAC Meeting

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee provided the Board with an update on the meeting which took place on 23rd March 2023.

The Committee were presented with the results of three internal audits: Finance and Complaints Handling; IT and Service Continuity Planning; and Grants Administration and Distribution. All of the reviews were rated 'satisfactory' and no priority one or two recommendations were made. Some minor recommendations were made, many of which have already been implemented.

A recommendation related to CRC's credit card has now been implemented and will be removed from the register.

Two recommendations related to the review of policies are scheduled to be completed in July 2023.

Two recommendations related to the preparation of the accounts and the upgrading of financial software can now be progressed as CRC have a new DFAP Director and temporary Finance Manager

ii) Risk Register

Mr J McCallister presented the Board with CRC's Risk Register Summary.

The Committee agreed that Staff Morale should be downgraded to green. It has now been removed from the register but will continue to be monitored by the HR Manager and Senior Management Team.

The FOI cases is now closed, the risk was downgraded to green and removed from the register.

The DFAP Staffing risk has now been adapted to note the recent resignation of a member of the Funding team. It is rated amber and will be reviewed at the next meeting.

Implementation of DOF Guidance remains rated red.

NIAO Audit Fee remains rated amber.

The Committee agreed a new risk to be added to the register titled '2023/24 Resource'. This relates to the potential cuts coming to CRC's budget in this financial year. It is rated amber and will be reviewed at the next meeting.

iii) 23rd March 2023 ARAC Meeting Minutes

Mr J McCallister presented the Board with the approved minutes of the previous Audit and Risk Assurance Committee which met on 23rd March 2023.

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

3893/23 Any Other Business

The Chair reminded Board members that the second six-month extension of Board terms will be coming to an end in June 2023. A decision will be required of The Executive Office in the next month.

3894/23 Date of Next Meeting

19th May 2023 10:30am in person.