

MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SECOND MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY  
RELATIONS COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON 5<sup>th</sup> November 2025 at 2PM ONLINE

**4213/25 Present:** Mr M McDonald (Chair), Mr J McCallister, Ms N Tandon, Ms C Harris, Mr M McDonnell, Mr R Campbell.

**4214/25 In Attendance:** Dr J Irwin (CEO), Mr P Day (Director of Engagement), Mr B McDonald (Director of Funding), Ms J Adamson (HR Manager), Ms H George (Governance Manager).

**4215/25 Observers:** None

**4216/25 Apologies:** Ms S McClelland, Ms A Simpson, & Mr P Garrity.

**4217/25 Welcome**

The Chair welcomed members and staff to today's meeting.

**4218/25 Standard Checks /-**

No conflicts of interest were raised, and no gifts have been received.

**4219/25 Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and approved.

**4220/25 Matters Arising**

The CEO presented the Board with the matters arising from the previous meeting.

The matters arising includes a reminder to members of a Carbon Literacy training opportunity. Ms H George will recirculate details of this training for members to respond to.

**ACTION:** Ms H George to recirculate details of Carbon Literacy Training to Board members.

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

**4221/25 Correspondence**

i) Board Terms

The CEO referred members to the email in their papers in which TEO informed her that Ministers have approved the extension of Mr R Campbell, Ms S McClelland, and Ms A Simpson's second terms to April 2026. Mr R Campbell stated that he had not yet received his correspondence from TEO on this.

The Board noted that this extension, while welcome, does not address the quorum issue that CRC is currently facing, and that TEO may struggle to complete a full recruitment exercise by April 2026. The CEO assured the

Board that she would be raising these concerns at the upcoming Accountability and Liaison meeting.

The CEO thanked Mr R Campbell, Ms S McClelland and Ms A Simpson for agreeing to this extension.

ii) Public Office Bill

The CEO informed the Board that, following a recent Arm's Length Body Forum meeting, The Executive Office circulated a presentation and details on the Public Office Bill, currently passing through Parliament. This was included in the Board papers for this meeting.

This Bill places a legal duty of candour on public servants. The CEO took members through the summary of the Bill which was one of the papers in the pack.

The CEO recommended members review all the papers related to this Bill. The Board asked that the CEO respond to TEO to ask what would be expected of CRC in relation to this Bill, and to invite a TEO colleague to speak to the Board at a future meeting on the Bill.

**ACTION:** CEO to ask TEO what the expectations on CRC would be in relation to the Public Office Bill, and invite a TEO colleague to attend a future Board meeting to speak on the Bill.

**4222/25**

**Chair's Update**

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

On 6<sup>th</sup> October the Chair attended the launch of Good Relations Week at Shankill Women's Centre.

The Chair, along with other Board members, attending a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> October. An update on this meeting will be provided later on the agenda.

The Chair attended a number of events during Good Relations Week, which ran from 13<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> October. He attended an event on 13<sup>th</sup> October in the Long Gallery run by TEO with Mr G Johnson in attendance on good relations. The Chair also attended the 17<sup>th</sup> October Belfast Health Trust Good Relations event, which was a living library session with those in the ethnic minority community who either work for the NHS or patients presenting their experiences. The Chair commended this insightful event.

On 20<sup>th</sup> October the Chair attended the Good Relations Award launch.

The Board thanked the Chair for this update.

**CEO's Update**

The CEO presented the members with her report, circulated with the papers for the meeting, updating on a number of issues.

i) The Executive Office

The CEO reminded Board members of the prior update on terms of office. The CEO continues to check the Public Appointments website, and she confirmed that CRC's Board member positions have not yet been advertised.

The TEO Funders Forum Working Groups have completed their reports and the co-chairs are now putting together a summary document to be presented to TEO. Due to changes in TEO staff, TEO's attendance at these sessions has reduced. When a meeting with TEO has been organised to present the summary report, the CEO and Andrew Walker, CEO of the Victims and Survivors Service will use this opportunity to seek assurance from TEO that they are still committed to this project.

CRC are still awaiting an update from TEO on its proposal to seek assistance from Strategic Investment Board to complete CRC's Pension Business Case. The CEO continues to raise this with TEO at all opportunities.

The Chair informed the CEO that he had recently been contact by TEO regarding the agenda for future ALB Forum meetings. He and the CEO will review the correspondence and respond.

**ACTION:** Chair to send CEO correspondence from TEO asking for feedback on the ALB Forum agendas. CEO and Chair to draft a response to the request.

ii) Funding

The CEO advised the Board that CRC have not yet received an update on the October Monitoring Round. It was agreed that if CRC's bids are unsuccessful then the Chair will write to TEO to ask for the remaining Pathfinder resource to be veered to the CRCD grant.

The CEO thanked Ms C Harris for volunteering to take over the Funding Sub-Group Chair position.

iii) Engagement

The CEO thanked the Engagement Team for their work organising the 2025 Good Relations Week. She thanked staff and Board members for their participation in events during the week. The CEO was unable to attend as

many events as previous years due to illness in her family. As usual an evaluation of the week will be provided to the Board later in the year.

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

**4224/25**

### **Engagement Update**

i) Good Relations Award Guidance Document

Mr P Day informed the Board that, coming from the recent Internal Audit of the Good Relations Award procedures, a recommendation was made for a document to be produced setting out details of the procedures, including the scope of the awards, the data management procedures, and the communication strategy.

This guidance was presented to the Board. The Board reviewed and approved the draft Guidance.

ii) Good Relations Award Panel

Mr P Day asked three Board members to volunteer to sit on the Good Relations Award decision panel.

The Chair, Mr J McCallister and Ms N Tandon volunteered. Mr M McDonnell and Ms C Harris both volunteered to act as reserves, in the event that a panel member is unavailable.

iii) Engagement Report

Mr P Day presented the Board with a report updating on the work of the Engagement Team. This report was circulated prior to the meeting.

a) Good Relations Week

A report is currently being produced to showcase the highlights from Good Relations Week and to evaluate the project. Anecdotal feedback from participants at the events shows that the change of date was well received. Over 300 events were registered to take place as part of the week.

The Board congratulated Mr P Day and his team for their work GR Week.

b) Media/Social Media

Mr M McGlade has been working with CRC funded groups to produce a series of videos promoting the work they do. Board members were provided with a link to an example of this work, which is available on CRC's Youtube channel.

c) Good Relations Awards

The awards opened to applications on 24<sup>th</sup> October and will close on 19<sup>th</sup> December. Sported, a new award partner has come on board this year.

53 nominations were made in the last award process, so the team are hoping for even more this year.

The assessments will take place in February 2026.

d) Events

Mr P Day reminded the Board of CRC's upcoming Making a Difference Conference, taking place on 2<sup>nd</sup> December. Members will have received an invitation to attend and are encouraged to do so.

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

**2335/25**

**Funding Update**

i) Core Fund 2026/27 Decision Panel

The Board discussed the make-up of the 2026/27 Core Fund Decision Panel, and agreed that Mr J McCallister and Ms S McClland would be assigned to sit on the Appeals Panel, and all other Board members would attend the Core Fund Decision meeting.

ii) Funding and Development Report

Mr B McDonald presented the Board with a report updating on CRC's funding work. This paper was circulated prior to the meeting.

a) 2025/26

Following the lifting of the 45% spend cap, all groups received their first payments. Core, North Belfast and CRCD grant awardees have now begun submitting their claim forms.

The CRCD grant has now made awards totalling the full resource available. There are currently 40 CRCD applications submitted, which the team have scored but awards are unable to be made due to the lack of extra funding available. CRC await the outcome of the October Monitoring Round, to which a bid was made for additional CRCD funding.

A North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme grant recipient anticipate a £13k underspend. CRC are working with TEO decide how this resource should be redistributed.

b) 2026/27 Core Fund

The 2026/27 Core Fund opened to applications on 12<sup>th</sup> November. There are currently 40 applications in progress of being submitted.

c) CRCD Grant Refund

Mr B McDonald informed the Board that the Funding Team and the Finance & General Purposes Committee are currently pursuing a refund for a 2024 CRCD grant. A letter is soon to go out to the group from the Chair requesting that the refund be paid, and explaining that no future funding applications from the group will be considered until this matter is resolved.

d) Funding Sub-Group

Mr B McDonald thanked Ms C Harris for volunteering to take on chairing this sub-group. A meeting date is being considered to take place this quarter, and all members are welcome to attend.

The Chair asked that, at the future Funding Sub-Group meeting, a discussion take place on how CRC can pursue other avenues of funding outside of TEO. The CEO explained that CRC's Senior Management Team are already considering areas of development, and that a paper will be presented to the Board on this in due course.

The Board thanked Mr B McDonald for this update and noted the report.

**2336/25**

**Purchase Orders**

i) Accommodation

The CEO presented the Board with a Purchase Order covering the cost of CRC's accommodation up to the end of March 2026.

The Board approved this PO, and the Chair's signature will be added on behalf of the Board.

ii) IT SLA

The CEO presented the Board with a Purchase Order covering the costs of CRC's IT SLA up to the end of March 2026.

The Board approved this PO, and the Chair's signature will be added on behalf of the Board.

**2337/25**

**Management Accounts**

In the absence of the Interim Finance Manager Mr P Garrity, the CEO presented the Board with a summary report and the Management Accounts, prepared by the Finance Manager and previously circulated to members.

The Management Accounts show a £51k favourable variance due to TEO's overprovision to CRC's salaries, and an overprovision of resource for CRC's now closed Pre Action to Judicial Review.

The outcome of the October Monitoring Round remains outstanding. CRC made a bid for additional resource for CRCD grant and to assist with the completion of the Pension Business Case.

The CEO reminded Board members that, contained within CRC's Pension Business Case was suggested remedies for ending the 6% uplift some staff members receive, but also a 'no better no worse off' payment to staff members employed after the 6% uplift was ended. Based on guidance CRC received in discussion with TEO the No Better No Worse off aspect of the Business Case can be taken forward in the pay remit process and these payments can be made to the affected staff members. Back pay calculations will now include provision for the last three financial years to employees not in receipt of the 6% uplift. Full provision has been made in CRC's financial accounts for these payments.

The CEO stated that the Pension Business Case will now only need to deal with the options to resolve the 6% uplift. CRC await an update from TEO on their proposal to attempt to get the Strategic Investment Board to assist CRC with the Business Case.

The Board noted thanks to Mr P Garrity for his continued work on CRC's Pay Remits. The Board thanked the CEO for presenting and noted the report.

**2338/25**

### **Finance and General Purposes Committee**

i) Minutes of the 23<sup>rd</sup> June Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Chair presented the Board with the minutes of the June 2025 Finance and General Purposes Committee, for their information.

ii) Verbal update

The Chair updated the Board on the 7<sup>th</sup> October Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting.

The meeting saw the presentation of amendments to the Service Continuity Plan and the Privacy Notice, which the Committee approved.

The Committee approved a Purchase Order for the annual NI Audit Office fee on behalf of the Board, and received an update on the two agency workers purchase orders.

The Committee received a presentation on the September Management Accounts, and an update on the CRCD grant refund, summaries on which have been provided to the Board earlier in this meeting.

The Board received an update on CRC's Disability Action Plan, and approved the implementation of the Mental Health Charter. In addition, the Committee were informed that the Article 55 review was completed and no affirmative action is required.

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

**2339/25      Staffing Update**

Ms J Adamson provided the Board with a report updating on CRC's current staffing position. This report was circulated prior to the meeting.

The Board noted the report.

**2340/25      Pension Business Case Update**

Ms J Adamson provided the Board with a report on the current status of CRC's Pension Business Case. This paper was circulated prior to the meeting.

The Board noted the report.

**2341/25      Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

i)      Minutes of 22<sup>nd</sup> September Audit & Risk Assurance Committee meeting

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mr J McCallister, provided the Board with the minutes of the September meeting, for their information.

ii)      Verbal update

Mr J McCallister provided the Board with a verbal update on the Audit and Risk Committee meeting, which took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> October.

The Committee were presented with and approved an updated Internal Audit Charter, drafted by the Internal Auditors.

As instructed at the last Board meeting, CRC invited the currently internal auditors to extend the contract by one year, to include their review of the 2026/26 year. The internal auditors have accepted this extension.

The Committee were presented with the register of audit recommendations, which includes recommendations related to CRC's pension issue and DFAP staffing issue, on which an update has already been provided to the Board. A recommendation related to training of Board members remains on the register as the next action associated with this will take place once new Board members have been appointed. Following the presentation and

approval of the Good Relations Award Guidance at today's Board meeting, this recommendation will be removed from the register at the next Audit Committee meeting.

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee noted that the committee held a closed session with the Internal and External Auditors to review the work undertaken during the year and completed an evaluation of the Committee.

iii) Risk Register

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

The Pension Issue remains rated red. An update was already provided to the Board at today's meeting.

The Staffing issue remains rated red. The staff member who took up the temporary DFAP post has now begun her ATI course. Mr P Garrity continues to fill the Finance Manager role temporarily. CRC will go out to advertise this post again when the Pay Remits have been implemented.

The NILGOSC case risk remains rated amber. There have been no recent updates on this matter.

The 2025/26 Resource risk was reviewed and increased to a red rating. CRC have still not received the outcome of the October Monitoring Round, which is having an impact on the resource available for the CRCD grant.

Board member's terms risk was reviewed and downgraded to an amber rating. Those three members due to leave at the end of October 2025 have now been notified that Ministers have approved their extension to April 2026. TEO informed the Committee that they are seeking a meeting with HR Connect to begin the recruitment of new members.

The Board thanked Mr J McCallister and the Audit Committee for their work and noted the report.

2342/25

**Any Other Business**

None

2343/25

**Date of Next Meeting**

10<sup>th</sup> December 2025 at 2pm

