UNCONFIRMED

**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED & EIGHTY SIXTH MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 12TH DECEMBER AT 11.00AM IN THE BOARDROOM, EQUALITY HOUSE, 7-9 SHAFTESBURY SQUARE, BELFAST BT2 7DP**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**2801/16 PRESENT:**

Mr P Osborne (Chair), Mr R Campbell, Very Rev Dr N Hamilton, Ms D Close, Ms S McClelland, Mr N McKenna, Mr D Mackay, Ms R McGlone

**2802/16 APOLOGIES:**

Ms K Garbal, Mr B McAllister, Ms L Keys

**2803/16 IN ATTENDANCE:**

Ms J Irwin [CEO], Mr G McKeown [DFAP Director], Mr P Jordan [Funding and Development Director], Ms D MacBride [Cultural Diversity Director], Ms T Gibson [Admin Officer, Department of Finance, Administration and Personnel], Ms G Attwood [Policy Officer]

**2804/16 OBSERVER:**

None

2805/16 STANDARD CHECKS:

 *1****(a)*** The Chair reminded Members of the requirement to declare any

 conflicts of interests in any discussions where decisions were

 required.

*1****(b)***The Chair advised thatMembers need to register any offers of gifts or hospitality since the last Council meeting.

Mr R Campbell informed the Board that he had applied to be on the new Community Relations Council Board.

**2806/16 OPENING REMARKS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that the meeting was not presently quorate. He said some members would be arriving late and advised that he would change the agenda accordingly so that decisions could be made when the meeting was quorate.

The Chair referred to an email that had been circulated to members in relation to the changing of the Articles of Association. He said the meeting with the Charity Commission had not taken place yet and advised that this issue would be carried forward to a special meeting in January or to the February Board meeting.

2807/16 MINUTES:

Minutes dated 11th November 2016 having been circulated were taken as read.

[Paper CRC/186/12/16/**01** refers]

2808/16 MATTERS ARISING:

* Staffing Review

The Chair reminded members that The Executive Office had temporarily withdrawn this report to allow for the findings of the SIB Review of Good Relations Funding to be taken into account and the new Board to be in place.

The Chair said Mr R Campbell, Mr D Mackay, Ms L Keys and himself had attended the Community Relations Council staff meeting at the beginning of December. He said there was low morale amongst staff and that staff had indicated they would have preferred more information throughout the whole process. Mr D Mackay reiterated this comment saying that communication could have been better managed by The Executive Office. Mr R Campbell said staff had indicated that they would like to receive more practical information on pensions and the Voluntary Exit Scheme.

*Ms R McGlone joined the meeting at 11.15am*

 Mr D Mackay suggested it would be useful for the outgoing Board to meet with the incoming Board and also with staff. The CEO agreed that this would be a good idea and made reference to new guidance from Northern Ireland Audit Office, “Board Effectiveness” in relation to succession planning for Boards.

 *Mr P Jordan joined the meeting at 11.16am*

 The CEO said she and Mr G McKeown had met with The Executive Office in relation to taking the Voluntary Exit Scheme forward. The Department had advised that there was not enough information available to complete the necessary business case until the staffing report is issued so therefore it could not be taken forward at this point. The CEO will enquire with staff if anyone is interested in the Voluntary Exit Scheme in principle.

 The Chair agreed that it was a good idea to have a meeting between the outgoing Board and the incoming Board and said he would set the agenda for the meeting. He asked that members email him if they had any suggestions for items for the agenda. He added that he thought it was also a good idea for the new Board to meet staff as soon as possible.

**2809/16 THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE BOARD REVIEWS:**

* Summary of advice from Jones, Cassidy and Brett Solicitors

[CRC/186/12/16/**02** refers]

The Chair said this paper was a summary of the advice provided by Jones Cassidy Brett solicitors in relation to the changing of the Articles of Association. He informed members of the meeting with the Charity Commission, Community Relations Council and The Executive Office which is due to take place on 14th December. The CEO said she would report back to the Board any information that was received at the next meeting.

The Chair reiterated his concern regarding the timeline suggested by The Executive Office in relation to the recruitment of the new Board. He emphasised that he would prefer to get the process correct rather than keep to the suggested timeframe. Board members agreed.

* Letter to Secretary of State from Community Relations Council

[CRC/186/12/16/**03** refers]

Members were provided with a copy of the letter which was sent to the Secretary of State. The response letter was tabled at the meeting which confirmed that the Secretary of State (SOS) was content for Board recruitment role to change in line with the governance review.

**2810/16 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES:**

* Management Accounts

[CRC/186/12/16/**05** refers]

Mr G McKeown, Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel, presented the management accounts up until 31st October 2016. He said the budget allocations were in line with the Central Procurement Directorate and The Executive Office. He said there was a projected underspend of £39,000 which was 1.12% of the budget but it fell within the 1.5% tolerance. He added that the management team have met since the accounts were drawn up and they have reviewed how the underspend can be allocated. It has been decided that this money will go into grants and programme work.

* Addendum to Procurement Policy

[CRC/186/12/16/**06** refers]

Mr G McKeown explained that this change came out of a recommendation from internal audit. He said one of the changes to the policy included sending the CEO a report monthly on purchase orders with a value of less than £1000.

 Members approved the addendum to the Procurement Policy.

* Addendum to Finance Manual

[CRC/186/12/16/**07** and **08** refers]

Mr G McKeown said he would like to be able to use the Government Procurement Card for other goods and services apart from travel which currently is its sole use.

In relation to Budgeting Procedures, Mr G McKeown said this was also a recommendation that came out of internal audit. He said this was in relation to the annual budget setting process.

Members were content to approve the addendum to the Finance Policy in relation to the Government Procurement Card and Budgeting Procedures.

* HR Update

Mr G McKeown said there were no health and safety incidents to report. He added that a Fire Risk Assessment had been carried out. He said he had received the preliminary report and would bring the final report to the next meeting of the Board.

* Sickness statistics

The Chair asked Mr G McKeown about the sickness statistics that were reported at the last Board meeting. Mr G McKeown reported that there had been an error in the calculation. The Chair asked that the correct statistics be brought to the next Board meeting.

**2811/16 REPORT FROM AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE:**

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, Mr R Campbell, provided a verbal update on the Audit and Risk meeting which took place on 8th December.

* Report to Those Charged with Governance:

Mr R Campbell highlighted the Priority 1 recommendations which included the following:

* Employee superannuation contributions
* Bulk transfer of Pension assets
* The Form of Financial statements
* Errors (adjustment to the accounts)
* Drawdown of grant aid in advance of need

Mr R Campbell went through each of the recommendations explaining what each one was. The Board had a short discussion about each of the recommendations.

Ms Irwin highlighted the fact that this was the first year in some time that there was no “emphasis of matter” on the accounts. She said the Report to Those Charged with Governance would be included in the papers for the next Board meeting along with the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting which was held on 8th December.

**ACTION: CEO**

* Review and consideration of CRC Risk Strategy

[CRC/186/12/16/**10** refers]

The CEO explained that the Risk Strategy and the full risk register come to the same meeting as the Annual Report and Accounts. She said the Risk Strategy in the Risk Register hadn’t been changed apart from the inclusion of the 3x3 Matrix as a result from a recommendation from internal audit. She added that the Matrix shows how the risk is calculated.

* Review and consideration of CRC Risk Register

[CRC/186/12/16/**11** refers]

The CEO reported that there were 2 amber risks associated with “resources” and “new policies”.

 In relation to the “new policies” risk, the CEO said she had received correspondence from Mr P Robinson, The Executive Office, confirming that the Equality and Good Relations Commission was not being taken forward *“I can therefore confirm that no agreement was reached with regard to the draft legislation to establish the Equality and Good Relations Commission before the Assembly Elections in May 2016 and the draft legislation is not currently under consideration in the new legislative mandate”.* She added that she would update the risk register to reflect this change. In the same correspondence, Mr P Robinson suggesting amend the wording in relation to the staffing review – from “withdrawn” to “temporarily withdrawn”. The CEO confirmed that she would also make this change.

The CEO reported that members of the Audit and Risk Committee had suggested changing the format of the Risk Register columns. The CEO confirmed she would make this change also.

A discussion ensued in relation to the controls put in place to mitigate against the risks. Members were reassured that the Audit and Risk Committee monitor the risks and the effectiveness of the controls that are in place.

The Risk Strategy and the Risk Register (included the suggested changes) were approved.

*Ms G Attwood joined the meeting at 12.15pm*

* Internal Audit Investigations into Funded Groups

Mr R Campbell reported that there were two groups on the register.

Funded Group 1 – Mr R Campbell said written correspondence had been received from the former Chair of the group in which he confirmed the following:

* the group formally closed in Feb / Mar 2015
* all members of the Board were contacted in writing to advise them that the group had ceased operation and that they may wish to seek legal advice
* Danske Bank had written off the debt
* the Chair is unaware of any other outstanding debts to funding agencies

Mr R Campbell said that members of the Audit and Risk Committee had a discussion in relation to the £25,000 that CRC held back in case this would need to be paid to the group. He said the Audit office said this should have been dealt with as soon as CRC knew it wasn’t going to be paid to the group. He added that CRC only received the letter from the former Chair to confirm the status of the group prior to the Audit and Risk Committee meeting. Mr R Campbell confirmed that the Northern Ireland Audit Office was considering adding some narrative to the Report to Those Charged with Governance in relation to this matter.

Funded Group 2 – Mr R Campbell stated that CRC are still waiting to hear from the administrators in relation to this group.

* Board Effectiveness

As mentioned earlier in the meeting, reference was made to the new Northern Ireland Audit Office guidance on “Board Effectiveness”, particularly in relation to succession planning. The CEO said she would draw this to the attention of The Executive Office.

* Minutes – 27th October 2016

[CRC/186/12/16/**12** refers]

 The Chair said these minutes were for information.

**2812/16 CHAIRS BUSINESS:**

 The Chair provided members with an update on events he had attended and forthcoming events he planned to attend.

 Events attended:

* Chaired the Interfaith Panel in the Synagogue
* Launch – Sinn Fein Reconciliation Event
* Ards and North Down Conference on Brexit
* BME Event
* Canadian High Commission Event
* CRC Staff meeting
* Reconciliation event in Stormont Presbyterian Church
* Human Rights Commission – Annual Statement
* CEO & Chair attended the Executive Committee

Upcoming events:

* David Stevens Memorial Lecture and presentation of the Exceptional Achievement Award – Rev Dr Norman Hamilton will be giving lecture on reconciliation
* Holocaust Memorial Committee – 26th January in Armagh
* Presentation of Awards in Fermanagh – 13th February
* T:BUC Community Engagement Forum – date to be confirmed

**2813/16 FUNDING:**

* Grants Update Report

[CRC/186/12/16/**13** refers]

Mr P Jordan, Director of Funding and Development, provided an update on the various grant schemes. A full list of all grants was tabled at the meeting.

*Ms S McClelland joined the meeting at 12.40pm – the meeting was now quorate with seven members present*

The Chair said as the meeting was now quorate decisions could be made in principle regarding the items where a decision was needed. He asked members to agree in principle and added that more detailed discussion would be had on each of the items later in the meeting if members wished.

The following papers were approved:

***2015/16 Annual Report and Financial Statements***

Agreed

Proposer: Ms R McGlone

Seconder: Rev Dr N Hamilton

***The Executive -Draft Programme for Government Consultation***

Agreed

Proposer: Mr R Campbell

Seconder: Rev Dr N Hamilton

***Education Authority – Providing Pathways 2017-2020***

Agreed

Proposer: Mr R Campbell

Seconder: Rev Dr N Hamilton

***Core Funding Underspends***

Agreed in principle for virement to the budget headings

*Rev Dr N Hamilton left the meeting at 12.45pm*

* 2015/16 Annual Report and Financial Statements

[CRC/186/12/16/**04** refers]

Mr G McKeown continued his presentation of the 2015/16 Annual Report and Financial Statements to the Board. He highlighted various sections of the report namely the Strategic Report, Performance Analysis, the Governance Statement, the Balance Sheet and the overview of grants.

He said the accounts would go back to Northern Ireland Audit Office for sign off by the Comptroller and Audit General and then would be filed with Companies House. A copy would then be given to the Assembly Library. He said the publication of the Annual Report and Accounts needed completion within eight weeks of being presented to the Assembly.

* The Executive -Draft Programme for Government Consultation

[CRC/186/12/16/**15** refers]

Mrs G Attwood provided some background on this paper. Members suggested a few amendments to the paper.

Members approved this paper subject to the changes being made.

* + - * Education Authority – Providing Pathways 2017-2020 – Regional Area Plan for Education

[CRC/186/12/16/**16** refers]

Ms G Attwood provided some background information for members on this paper.

No changes were requested to this paper.

*Ms R McGlone left the meeting at 1.35pm*

* Feedback paper on draft definition of reconciliation

[CRC/186/12/16/**17** refers]

The Chair provided some background information on this paper. Members discussed next steps. Members decided to take Professor B Hamber, University of Ulster, up on his offer of doing some more work on this paper. The paper will be refined and updated and will come back to the Board in February.

*Ms G Attwood left the meeting at 1.50pm*

*Mr R Campbell left the meeting at 1.50pm*

**2814/16 FUNDING (continued):**

* Grants Update Report (continued)

[CRC/186/12/16/**13** refers]

Mr P Jordan highlighted an exceptional issue at the end of the Grants Update Report. The issue was in connection with a core funded group, Charter NI, that has attracted considerable publicity over the past number of weeks relating to public comments made the groups CEO.

Mr P Jordan said he had been in touch with the group and provided members with copies of correspondence that had been sent to the group and that had been received from the group. A discussion ensued amongst members. Mr P Jordan said discussions were ongoing with the group and he would update members as to their outcome.

*Ms D Close left the meeting at 2.05pm*

* Core Funding Underspends

[CRC/186/12/16/**14** refers]

Mr P Jordan asked members to consider changing the rule to allow core funded groups to request allocation towards all of the eligible costs of the core funding scheme rather than those within their individual contracts.

Members had a lengthy conversation about this and decided to continue to use the current procedures for 2016/17 – bring forward reallocations to the Board and transfer underspends to the Community Relations Cultural Diversity Grant Scheme. Members agreed to consider the changes for the 2017/18 scheme. Mr P Jordan will do some more work on the criteria and information on the conditions where variations would take place. He will present a paper to the Board at the February Board meeting.

**2815/16 CEO’S REPORT:**

[CRC/186/12/16/**14** refers]

The CEO highlighted the following items from her report:

* Meeting with The Executive Office Funding Transition Working Group on 8th December – Community Relations Council was told that it would be administering the North Belfast fund for 2017-18, subject to Ministerial approval.
* District Council Training / Information Sessions – four Councils have booked dates but Newtownabbey and Antrim have now had to postpone due to lack of numbers. There has been some concern in relation to the time it has taken councils for this training to be organised.
* Community Relations Council will be working with SOLACE and TEO on a small scoping project in relation to bonfires. Appropriate liaison will also take place with the Flags, Identity, Culture and Traditions Commission.

**2816/16 SECTOR REPORT:**

* Policy

[CRC/186/12/16/**19** refers]

* Funding and Development

[CRC/186/12/16/**20** refers]

The Chair said the Sector Reports were for information purposes.

**2817/16 AOB:**

None.

**2818/16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

Thursday 2nd February 2017 @ 1pm