

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY
RELATIONS COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 5TH MARCH 2020, 1PM, BOARD ROOM,
6TH FLOOR, EQUALITY HOUSE, 7-9 SHAFTESBURY SQUARE, BELFAST, BT2 7DP**

2261/20 Closed Session

The Board held a closed session to discuss the pension and equal pay issue.

Staff joined the meeting

2262/20 Present: Chair Martin McDonald, Ms Nisha Tandon, Mr Michael McDonnell, Ms Audrey Simpson, Ms Máire Braniff, Mr John McCallister, Mr Rory Campbell.

2263/20 In attendance: Ms Jacqueline Irwin (CEO), Mr Gerard McKeown (DFAP), Mr Peter Day (Engagement), Mr Paul Jordan (Funding and Development), Ms Hannah George (PA to CEO).

2264/20 Observers: None

2265/20 Apologies: Ms Claire Harris, Ms Sheila McClelland

The Chair raised the issue of Ms S McClelland's attendance, and stated that he would speak to her. Her schedule has made it difficult to attend meetings, however, she provides a good contribution when she can attend.

ACTION: The Chair to speak to Ms S McClelland.

2266/20 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*

Board members had nothing to declare

2267/20 Minutes

The Board reviewed the minutes of the Board meeting held on the 24th January.

Ms A Simpson stated that she had raised, at a previous meeting, the inclusion of two Managers attending Exit Interviews. She confirmed that she had stated that this was excessive, and asked for the policy to include only one HR Manager to attend. It was asked that Mr G McKeown review the Exit Interview Policy to determine whether it had been amended to include this change.

ACTION: Mr G McKeown and Ms J Adamson to review the Exit Interview Policy to determine whether the policy has been amended to include only one HR Manager to attend Exit Interviews, rather than the proposed two.

The Board approved the January 2020 minutes.

2268/20

Matters Arising

i) North Belfast Scheme to presented at a future Board meeting

Mr P Jordan informed the Board that the North Belfast groups' evaluations are due and the contracts have been issued, subject to confirmation of budget from TEO. Once this awards process is complete, a presentation will be given to the Board on the Scheme.

ii) Workshop on Risk

The CEO reminded the Board that the Strategic Plan is currently out for consultation. Once the consultation is complete and the Plan is no longer in draft, CRC will hold a workshop on risk for Board members.

iii) Board appraisals

The Chair reminded attendees that CRC had spoken to TEO seeking clarity around when the Board's appraisals are due to be carried out. TEO stated that the appraisals are conducted once a year, but did not state when they should be completed. Therefore the Chair suggested that the appraisals should take place in June, one year from the new Board's start date.

iv) Suggestions to mark CRC's 30th anniversary

Mr P Day stated that planning for the 30th anniversary is ongoing, and an update would be provided later in the meeting.

2269/20

Pay Remit and Pension Subgroup

Following the Board's closed session, the Chair noted that the Pension Subgroup had instructed Mr G McKeown to provide background information on the pension and equal pay issue. Mr G McKeown presented the Board with this background information.

He highlighted that, since its inception, CRC had provided staff with an employee pension rate of 6%, which was compliant with NILGOSC's requirements. Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Scheme, however, required only 0.5% contributions from staff. CRC provided staff with the 6% uplift in their salaries to cover the cost of their employee pension contributions. In 2013 NI Civil Service employee pension contributions increased and The Department of Finance and Personnel published their 'No Better, No Worse Off' guidance. This guidance stated that no Civil Service employee or ALB employee should be better or worse off than their equivalent.

CRC were notified that the 2018/19 Pay Remit would not be progressed until progress had made on the 'no better no worse off' guidance.

The Northern Ireland Audit Office raise the 6% uplift during every audit, and CRC have been working with TEO over the years to rectify the issue.

Mr G McKeown added that the Pension Subgroup met in January 2020 and discussed the potential risks. The Chair met informally with staff in January, and then met with TEO on 25th February.

The Chair highlighted that The Executive Office is no longer asking CRC to resolve the issue by the 31st March, rather, they are asking for CRC to submit a Business Case with proposed solutions by this date. Consultations with staff and the Union will continue, CRC will carry out full due diligence, and seek legal advice.

Mr G McKeown stated that he would draft a paper to share with all staff and Unite the Union, seeking feedback on ways to proceed.

ACTION: Mr G McKeown to draft a paper on the pension and equal pay issue, to share with staff and Unite the Union, seeking feedback on ways to proceed.

The Pension Subgroup is due to meet again on the 12th March and the full Board will meet on 20th March.

2270/20

Finance and General Purposes Committee – Terms of Reference

The Chair presented the Board with draft Terms of Reference for the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The Board asked for an amendment to be made to the Terms, allowing for the Committee to meet four times a year, rather than the proposed six times a year.

ACTION: Mr G McKeown to amend the Finance and General Purposes Committee: Terms of Reference, to allow the Committee to sit four time a year, rather than six times.

The Board agreed the Terms of Reference with the proposed change.

2271/20

Purchase Orders

i) Good Relations Week

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with a purchase order for £25k awarded to ASG to provide their services for Good Relations Week.

He explained that the procurement panel met and reviewed the two bids CRC received. All procurement was conducted in line with CPD and CRC procurement guidance.

The Board approved this purchase order.

ii) Stationery Order

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with a purchase order for up to £15k to Banner for their stationery goods. He explained that if CRC have resources

available at the end of the financial year, costly, necessary items such as toner can be purchased.

The Board approved this purchase order.

2272/20 Date of Next Board Meeting

The Board noted that the proposed date of the next Board meeting takes place during Easter week, and therefore should be rearranged.

The Board agreed that the next meeting should instead take place on the 21st April at 11am.

2273/20 Correspondence

i) Charity Commission Registration

The CEO informed the Board that the Charity Commission have completed their assessment of CRC and concluded that it should be registered as a charity.

Mr G McKeown explained that previously, CRC would submit the Annual Report and Accounts to Companies House only. Now that CRC is deemed a charity, the Annual Report and Accounts will be submitted to the Charity Commission too.

The Board asked if CRC would now set up a charity bank account. Mr G McKeown agreed to look into this.

ACTION: Mr G McKeown to review the possibility of CRC setting up a charity bank account.

The Board enquired as to whether this opens CRC up to receive funding from other bodies, other than TEO. The CEO explained that this was already the case as CRC is currently funded by Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for the Peace Monitor Report and in the past by SEUPB and International Fund for Ireland. Any changes to funding under the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum, would normally be discussed and agreed in partnership with The Executive Office.

The CEO added that Board members are now Trustees of CRC as well as Directors and should familiarise themselves with the responsibility of Trustees, set out in the Charity Commission documents and on their website.

ACTION: Board Members to familiarise themselves with trustees of a Charity's responsibilities, details of which are included in the Charity Commission papers in the Board pack, and on their website.

The Board suggested inviting a representative from the Charity Commission to speak at a future Board meeting on the responsibilities of a trustee.

ACTION: An invitation to be sent to the Charity Commission, seeking a member of staff to attend a

future CRC Board meeting to present on the roles of a trustee.

The CEO stated that if the Board have any other suggestions for information to be circulated or training for the Board, to let Ms H George know.

ACTION: Board members to consider any training or information CRC needs and inform Ms H George

ii) Correspondence from The Executive Office Junior Ministers

The Chair presented, and the Board noted, correspondence from The Executive Office Junior Ministers regarding their attendance at the TBUC Engagement Forum.

The Chair added that Mr A Cole and the Department's Ministers asked to be kept informed of any CRC events or announcements that would be of interest to Ministers.

2274/20 Chair & Board Members Report

The Board noted this report.

2275/20 CEO's Report

The CEO informed the Board that there has been no further correspondence from TEO regarding CRC's Strategic Plan or Operational Plan.

CRC has asked to speak to TEO regarding the 2020/21 budget, however, no response has been received.

The CEO explained that, following the completion of the Charity Commission registration, there is now only one outstanding item from the Governance Review, which will be discussed later in the meeting.

The CEO drew the Board attention to her involvement on the panel assessing the Urban Villages applications. This meeting was scheduled over three days, however, due to a funeral the CEO was unable to attend on the 26th February. Her assessments were completed and noted in her absence.

She notified the Board that she and the Chair have begun a series of stakeholder meetings, including a meeting with the Director of Community Planning from Mid and East Antrim Council, and the Director of the Human Rights Commission. The remainder of these stakeholder meetings are depended on public guidance on Covid-19 and may be put on hold depending on the advice given.

The CEO thanked Mr P Day and his team for their work on the Decade of Anniversaries seminar, which involved a presentation from Eamon Phoenix on partition. She invited Board members to attend future seminars on the dates noted in her Report, and to share the details with their networks.

She commended the Engagement Team for their work on the TBUC Engagement Forum in Armagh City Hotel, on the topic of sport and good relations, and thanked Board members who were able to attend this event.

A correction was noted in the CEO's Report. A meeting of the HAIP took place on the 2nd March, however, due to an over run of the Urban Villages assessment panel meeting, the CEO was unable to attend and relayed her apologies.

Highlighting from her CEO's report an event launching the 'Lives Entwined' publication, the CEO noted that Mr J McCallister had made an input to the book. She recommended the publication, which is available online.

2276/20 Liquidation and Solvency Analysis

During a previous Board meeting, the Board requested Mr G McKeown prepare a Liquidation and Solvency analysis.

Mr G McKeown presented this paper to the Board.

He highlighted the two areas of reserves CRC hold. The restricted income reserve and the pension deficit reserve.

The restricted income reserve, through historical analysis, was paid for in full by TEO at years end. As long as this expenditure is incurred to deliver the Business Plan, and is in line with CPD and CRC's procurement guidance, TEO will provide the budget for this.

The second income reserve CRC hold is the pension deficit reserve. Mr G McKeown explained that The Executive Office have provided CRC with a guarantee to cover this deficit. As long as that guarantee remains in place, CRC will be solvent.

The Board thanked Mr G McKeown for completing this piece of work, and noted the report.

Core Funding Decision Process

The CEO and Mr P Jordan thanked the Board for attending the Core Funding Decision meeting on 21st February, and the staff team for the work assessing and reviewing the applications.

The CEO stated that the Board are now in a position to decide what their involvement will be with funding decisions in the future. This is the remaining issue to be decided arising from the Governance Review recommendations.

The Chair stated that the process works well and that the Board should continue to engage with the funding decisions. The Board agreed, and added that it gives an extra level of scrutiny to the process.

Mr P Jordan added that the involvement of the Board in Core funding decisions gives extra protection to the organisation.

A Board member added that, while the process works well, they did not believe it was necessary to review all applications that did not meet the funding threshold.

The Chair explained that the groups who did not receive a high enough score to receive funding, were assessed by the Board to ensure that the threshold for ranking and scoring was correct.

Mr P Jordan updated the Board on what has occurred since the Core funding decision meeting. He stated that staff are following up with groups who have requested feedback, holding meetings when they have been requested. He added that one group has asked for the papers to make an appeal, but have not submitted this yet.

The Core review meeting will be taking place on the Friday 27th March, where Mr David Russell, CEO of The Human Rights Commission, will act as the independent chair.

Mr P Jordan reminded the Board that the decisions are still indicative, as CRC's budget has not yet been confirmed for 2020/21. TEO have been notified of these decisions, as have the successful groups. He asked the Board to keep the decisions confidential. An event to mark the successful awards will be held in due course, once the budget has been confirmed.

Michael McDonnell left the meeting

2278/20 Funding and Development Update

Mr P Jordan presented the Board with a report updating them on the funding schemes.

He informed the Board that the Community Relations/Cultural Diversity Grant has closed and 145 applications have been received. 111 projects have received funding, with a number of application reviews still to be completed.

Mr P Jordan stated that, with regards the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Fund, he met with TEO on 17th February to review and score the applications. The applications and contracts this year make particular reference to the groups' requirement to work in partnership with each other. He added that the North Belfast Scheme's Business Plan is now in its final year.

Mr P Jordan informed the Board that Ms Helen Di Duca has been recruited to fill the position of Project Officer, she will begin her employment on the 20th March.

The Board noted the Funding and Development report.

Ms J Adamson joined the meeting

2279/20 Community Engagement Update

Mr P Day presented the Board with a report updating them on items under his directorate.

Mr P Day informed the Board that the TBUC Engagement Forum took place on the 11th March on the subject of sports and creativity. He thanked Board members who were able to attend. He stated how positive it was to have the Junior Ministers present at the event.

The Chair asked if any member of The Executive Office Committee were in attendance at the meeting.

ACTION: Mr P Day to review the TBUC Engagement Forum attendees list to discover if any member of the TEO Committee attended.

A Board member commented that the event focused mainly on sport, rather than creativity, which could have informed an event of its own. This will be taken forward in planning future events.

The next TBUC Engagement Forum will be taking place on 19th May, venue to be confirmed. This event will be on the subject of shared housing.

Mr P Day informed the Board that the last Shared Learning Forum, for Core funded groups, was on the theme of social media. Google presented at the meeting, which received very positive feedback. The next meeting will take place on the 8th April on the subject of self-care. All Board members are welcome to attend.

Mr P Day updated the Board on how CRC will be marking their 30th anniversary. He stated that an event would be held every quarter, including the Good Relations Award in March, Good Relations Week in September, and a reception in Stormont at the end of the year. The proposed activities include: a staff tree planting day; a time capsule with schools; 30 years in 30 seconds graphic; reviewing old materials and photos. CRC have already procured a number of 30th anniversary promotional items.

Mr P Day informed Board members that the Good Relations Award would be taking place on the 31st March. Ministers and all nominees will be invited to attend, as well as CRC Board members. CRC have received 17 nominations, which the panel will assess on 12th March.

The Chair asked the Board to consider delegating the responsibility for making the decision on the GR Award to the three panel members. The board approved this proposal.

The Board noted the Community Engagement Report.

2280/20 Management Accounts

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with CRC's Management Accounts up to 31st March 2020. He drew the Board attention to the projected underspend of £41k. He explained that CRC are taking mitigating actions to reduce this, and is certain that the underspend will be within the 1.5% tolerance.

The Board asked why there is a £45k variance on CRC'S grants, in the Management Accounts. Mr G McKeown explained that at the beginning of the year CRC profiled the programme expenditure for the funded groups, however, the exact totals will

not be known until the claims come in. He added that, the variances are set out in a table included in Board members' papers.

The Board asked if Mr G McKeown could provide a narrative for these variances in the future.

ACTION: Mr G McKeown to provide Board members with a narrative to explain the variances in the Management Accounts in the future.

2281/20 Labour Relations Agency Implementation Update

Ms J Adamson presented the Board with a report updating the Board on the implementation of the Labour Relations Agency Report.

She highlighted from the Report that Heads Together have conducted four sessions with staff, held one-to-one meetings with those who requested it, and is due to meet with the CEO and Chair in the week beginning 9th March. Heads Together will be using these sessions to inform the drafting of a Dignity at Work Charter.

She informed the Board that the Labour Relations Agency will be returning to CRC in July to conduct a temperature check. It will take the form of staff focus groups, and the LRA will receive a report of all the actions CRC have completed and planned, as a response to their report.

Mr J Adamson stated that harassment, bullying and equality, and dignity at work training has been completed by staff. No further meetings have been requested by the Union.

She added that staff have been very positive about the Heads Together sessions. The Board asked if an evaluation of the Heads Together sessions could be completed once the work was finished.

ACTION: Once Heads Together sessions are complete, HR will conduct an evaluation of their work.

2282/20 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

i) 20th February ARAC Meeting Update

Mr R Campbell, the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee updated the Board on developments for the 20th February meeting.

He stated that CRC have received further correspondence from Group Fraud Investigation Services, regarding the investigation into a group previously funded by CRC. The investigators stated that, following consultation with the PSNI, there was no evidence of fraud.

Mr R Campbell added that 'pensions' have been added to the Risk Register, categorised as red. He added that, all risks will be reviewed at the following Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, and will take into account the change in deadline for the pension issue to be resolved.

ii) 9th January ARAC Meeting Confirmed Minutes

The Board asked the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to review the wording on page 2 of the 9th January 2020 minutes: "CRC do not have the capacity or

power to track grants to their end point, to ensure the groups use them for their intended purposes” as this may be misleading.

ACTION: The Audit Committee to review the wording of 9th January 2020 minutes.

It was explained that this CRC require all groups to provide invoices, expenditure profiles, bank statements, and print-offs of HMRC accounts, as well as a copy of their management accounts. CRC can ensure that all of CRC’s funding is spent, and that it corresponds with their bank accounts.

What CRC cannot do is forensically audit the finances. The CEO added that TEO are also not able to conduct this level of scrutiny but CRC would be working with TEO to identify any future changes in verification that could be made.

2283/20 Any Other Business

The Chair asked Mr G McKeown to review the Business Continuity Plan and amend to take account of the Covid-19 virus, and any contingency plans CRC will need to put in place.

ACTION: Mr G McKeown to review the Business Continuity Plan and amend to take account of Covid-19 virus.

2284/20 Date of Next Meeting

20th March 11am 2020- CRC

21st April 11am 2020 – CRC