

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTH MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY
RELATIONS COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON MONDAY 10TH JUNE 2019 14:00
EQUALITY HOUSE, SHAFTSBURY SQUARE, BELFAST**

3157/19 Present: Mr M McDonald (Chair), Ms M Braniff, Ms C Harris, Mr J McCallister, Mr M McDonnell, Ms A Simpson, Ms N Tandon

3158/19 In Attendance: Ms J Irwin (CEO), Mr P Day (Director of Engagement), Mr P Jordan (Director of Funding & Development), Mr G McKeown (Director of Finance and Personnel)

3159/19 Apologies: Mr R Campbell, Ms S McClelland

3160/19 Welcome

The Chair thanked and expressed his gratitude to the outgoing Chair Mr P Osborne and all outgoing Board Members. He added that the previous Board oversaw a number of changes to the Community Relations Council that he hoped the incoming Board would be able to build on.

He welcomed the new Board members to the meeting.

3161/19 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*

No declarations were made.

3162/19 Introductions

Board Members introduced themselves, describing their background, and the particular areas of interest to them.

The Chair stated that he began his career as a town planner, and, after a number of years, went to the Rural Development Council on secondment. He is a member of a number of Boards.

Ms A Simpson stated that she recently retired from the Family Planning Association. Through this position, she saw clearly the similarities between the Communities in Northern Ireland, stating that the concerns of mothers from a Catholic community background, and those from a Protestant Community background, were the same.

Ms C Harris stated that following a number of years researching abroad she returned to Northern Ireland to take up the role working on Queens University Belfast's Graduate School Innovation Strategy. This is her first public appointment, and she aims to represent the people she works with, in this role.

Ms M Braniff informed Board Members that she is currently a senior lecturer in Politics at Ulster University with a background in peace and conflict studies. She too worked outside Northern Ireland for ten years. Her focus is on peacebuilding, with particular emphasis on paramilitarism, education, young people, and storytelling. She added her excitement to see so many women on the Board.

Mr M McDonnell informed Board Members that he is currently the CEO of Choice Housing, with a background in chartered accountancy. He has previously held positions in not-for-profits and IFI. He added that he is passionate about Community Relations and strongly believes in the importance of interdependence.

Ms N Tandon stated that she is currently the CEO of ArtsEkta and has been living in Northern Ireland for 40 years. Her work involves engagement with ethnic minority organisations around community building, peacebuilding and housing, through the medium of arts.

Mr J McCallister informed Board Members that before being elected to the NI Assembly, he worked for the Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster, and now works for Young Farmers and Ulster Farmers Union. He added that while Northern Ireland has achieved a lot in terms of peace, the surface has only been scratched on reconciliation.

The Chair thanked Board Members and recognised the important contribution and experience each new member will bring to the Board.

3163/19 Director of Finance and Personnel

Mr G McKeown introduced himself to the Board as the Director of Finance and Personnel, with responsibility for finance, HR, procurement, and IT. Leading a team of four, their role is to keep the mechanics of CRC well-oiled and operating to allow staff and Board to add value.

3164/19 Director of Funding and Development

Mr P Jordan informed Board Members of the work of his department, explaining that his team oversee a number of grant schemes, including: Core funding; Community Relations/Cultural Diversity; and North Belfast Scheme. Another focus of his team is developing the capacity

and the programmes of funded groups, analysing how the impact of the work can be maximised, and how to engage the next generation.

3165/19 Director of Engagement

Mr P Day explained that his team oversee the comms and engagement work at CRC. They develop a programme of events including the TBUC Engagement Forum, Good Relations Week, and Shared Learning Forums. The Engagement Team is currently working on a video project that will highlight the work of a number of CRC funded groups and will show how CRC funding benefits groups and individuals.

3166/19 Chair's Business

The Chair informed Board Members that, since appointment on 1st June, he attended a briefing session with Mr P Osborne, the former Chair, and also with the CEO. He is due to meet Mr A Cole, TEO, on Monday 17th June, following the rescheduling of the original meeting.

3167/19 CEO

The CEO warmly welcomed the new members to the Board and stated that she hoped they would enjoy their time with the organisation. She said there were many opportunities to engage with the work and she hoped members would do so to the full extent that they wish.

The CEO talked Board Members through the contents of the Induction Packs, drawing members' attention to the CRC structure, governance

and policies, including government and sponsoring departmental guidance.

She explained some of the existing practices of the Board including that CRC's Board meet every six weeks, with a gap in July and August. She added that the previous Board would travel to other areas of Northern Ireland on alternate Board Meetings and received a presentation from the Good Relations Officer of the Council area they were visiting.

She said that the Board currently has one sub-committee: the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which will be constituted later in the meeting. The Committee also meets at six weekly intervals, generally two weeks before the Board meeting.

In February each year, a sub-committee consisting of a number of Board Members is established to review and allocate funding under the Core Funding Scheme. An appeals panel is also established if necessary, involving two Board Members who have not taken part in the grant decision making process and an independent chair.

Board members receive independent assurance from the NI Audit Office and internal auditors who conduct audits of CRC throughout the year.

In relation to the handling of their personal information, the CEO asked the Board to note the Privacy Notice in their packs.

3168/19 Current Issues

The CEO talked the Board through a number of current live issues at CRC, including:

- New Board – induction and training
- Strategic Plan – the new CRC strategy to be drafted this year and taken to public consultation
- Business Development
 - a) New grants management system – the CEO thanked Mr G McKeown and Mr P Jordan’s teams for their work on this.
 - b) Data Protection – this is important for trust building purposes, the CEO noted that Mr G McKeown led on this.
- Change processes
 - a) The amalgamation of The Equality Commission and The Community Relations Council set out in Together: Building a United Community (TBUC) is no longer being taken forward by the Executive Office.
 - b) Reviews – CRC has successfully undergone TEO reviews in three areas: Staffing Review; Board Review; and Funding Review.
 - c) Staffing:
 - i) Pay Remit – CRC Pay Remits are being delayed because of a difference in pension scheme arrangements and Department of Finance guidance. There are a number of organisations in similar positions that are also reaching agreements with their sponsoring Departments.
 - ii) Process of aligning CRC’s Terms and Conditions with NI Civil Service – This process has stalled at the request of the union, due to the delay in the Pay Remit.

The CEO noted that the wider strategic changes and delays in salary uplifts had affected staff morale which would be discussed in more detail during the induction and subsequent meetings. In the meantime, to resolve matters work is ongoing with the Chair, TEO, staff, and the union.

d) Premises – A number of Arms Length Bodies including CRC will be moving offices to James House in The Gas Works in 2021.

- Annual Report and Account – currently in draft form, the NIAO will carry out it's audit and review the draft, and the final report will be taken to the September Board meeting for approval.
- GR Week – 16th September. Members were asked to hold the week and further information on the programme of events will be circulated in due course.

The Chair said that he had been briefed on the issues related to pensions and the Pay Remits in CRC. He stated that in a small organisation like this, the staff are the key resources, and he hopes the matters could be resolved as soon as possible. The Chair stated that he would be raising this issue at his upcoming meeting with TEO. He added that he hoped that members would all get to know the staff and understand their roles.

3169/19 Bank Signatories

The Chair informed attendees that, as members of the Board, they will now take on the position as Directors and, if the Board was content, the new Chair would become a signatory on the CRC Bank account.

The Board agreed to the new Chair becoming a signatory on the account. The Chair then completed the necessary paperwork.

3170/19 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

Mr G McKeown informed Board Members that CRC's Board was required to constitute an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, to support the work of the Board.

He advised that it was good practice for this committee to include at least one member from a finance background. It was agreed that CRC would not need to appoint an independent member with a financial background to the committee, as there is at least one member already with this background, however, the Board agreed to keep the structure under review in the future.

The Board agreed the following members would take up positions on the Committee: Mr R Campbell, Mr M McDonnell, and Mr J McCallister.

3171/19 Good Relations week

Mr P Day informed Board Members of the current preparation work for Good Relations Week 2019. Final deadline for events to appear in the brochure is 19th July. Board Members were asked to promote and attend Good Relations Week events this will help to increase the new Board's visibility.

The Chair thanked Mr P Day for this update, expressing his endorsement of the week, and highlighting that it is a good opportunity for new Board Members to see the good relations work that is happening across the region.

2172/19 Date of Induction

The CEO explained the contents of the induction programme that Board Members will undertake. This includes: 'On Board' training; a Equality training; arms length body training delivered by TEO; and a more detailed introduction to the work of CRC.

ACTION: Ms H George to circulate potential dates for the induction.

2173/19 Timetable of future meetings

The Board agreed the following dates for future meetings:

19th September 12 noon – Equality House

31st October 11am – Venue to be confirmed

13th December 11am – Equality House

ACTION: Ms H George to email Board Members with this list of meeting dates.

2174/19 AOB

None

2175/19 Date of Next Meeting

19th September 12 noon – Equality House