

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY
RELATIONS COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON FRIDAY 13TH NOVEMBER 2020
VIA VIDEO CALLING SOFTWARE
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

3368/20 **Present:** Chair Mr M McDonald, Mr R Campbell, Ms M Braniff Ms C Harris, Mr J McCallister, Mr M McDonnell, Ms A Simpson, Ms N Tandon.

3369/20 **In Attendance:** Ms J Irwin (CEO), Mr P Day (Director of Engagement), Mr G McKeown (Director of Finance, Admin, and Personnel), Ms E Tomasso (IT), Ms T Wilson (Finance Manager), Ms J Adamson (HR Manager), Ms H George (PA to CEO and Board),

3370/20 **Observers:** Mr D Johnston (CRC's Boardroom Apprentice).

3371/20 **Apologies:** Ms S McClelland

3372/20 **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

3373/20 **Welcome**

The Chair thanked the Board and staff for their kind messages following his bereavement and the CEO for her regular contact and support during his time off.

The Chair welcomed Mr D Johnston to CRC's Board meeting, adding that he looks forward to working with him, and meeting with him in due course.

The Board offered condolences to Mr R Campbell for the passing of his mother.

The Chair thanked Mr R Campbell for chairing the previous Board meeting, and Mr M McDonnell for chairing the Risk Seminar, in his absence.

3374/20 **Minutes**

Attendees reviewed the minutes of the 215th Board meeting which took place on the 22nd September 2020. The Board approved the minutes.

3375/20 **Matters Arising**

The Chair presented the Board with an update on a number of actions from previous meetings.

CRC plan to arrange for the North Belfast groups to present to the Board at the meeting in December.

The Evaluation of Heads Together's work will be completed by the end of November 2020.

The Chair proposed that the Board discuss the issue of taking policy positions in the new year, before the Core Funding process. The Engagement Team will be presenting a number of briefing papers to the Board in the next few months, and this would be a good opportunity to have this discussion.

The LRA temperature check will be conducted in November, and therefore this action is complete.

The Engagement Team have begun researching funding available to the sports sector.

CRC have shared briefing papers with The Executive Office (TEO) and asked whether these papers can be added to CRC's website. The Engagement Team await TEO's response.

The Board noted this paper.

3376/20

Chair's Business

i) Appraisals

The Chair has received Board members self-assessment appraisals and will begin to review these and add comments. These forms will be sent back to Board members, and if they wish to meet with the Chair to discuss further, Ms H George will arrange these meetings.

He thanked Board members for submitting their forms, and encouraged the one outstanding form to be submitted.

The Chair stated that members had also completed and submitted Board evaluations. Mr G McKeown will collate the evaluation responses and this will be presented at a future Board meeting.

The Chair asked that if Board members have any feedback on the format of these forms, please pass them on to him.

ACTION: If Board members wish to speak to The Chair about their self-assessments, please let Ms H George know to arrange a meeting.

ACTION: All outstanding Board assessment forms to be returned to Ms H George

ACTION: Mr G McKeown to collate Board evaluation responses to be presented at a future Board meeting.

ACTION: The Board to pass on any feedback on the format of the assessment forms to the Chair.

3377/20 Solvency and Liquidity Report Analysis

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with CRC's Solvency and Liquidity Report.

He assured the Board that CRC continue to be solvent and liquid. The analysis shows that, as of the 31st March 2020, CRC has a deficit of £2,588,441. £2,463,000 of this deficit relates to CRC's restricted pension reserve, which TEO provided a guarantee for in April 2019. The Chair reiterated the importance of this pension guarantee provided by TEO.

Mr G McKeown concluded that CRC continues to make all payments to groups and suppliers, and that all spending is in line with the budget provided by TEO, and aligned to the Business Plan.

The Board thanked Mr G McKeown for the paper, and noted that CRC is liquid and solvent.

3378/20 Risk Register

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with the Risk Register, updated following CRC's Risk Seminar. It was agreed at the seminar that the summary page would be presented at all future Board meetings.

Mr G McKeown informed the Board that CRC have three risks in the 'Amber' and 'Red' categories.

Risk one relates to 'No Better No Worse Off' Guidance, and CRC's financial projected costs associated with this.

Risk two relates to staff morale. The Board have regularly received updates on how CRC are mitigating this risk.

Risk three relates to Covid-19 and the impact that the restrictions may have on CRC and the funded groups.

The Chair asked what the TEO's views were on rating the 'No Better No Worse' risk as red. Mr G McKeown explained that the risks are reported to The Executive Office in CRC's quarterly returns and as the Accountability and Liaison (A&L) meetings. The CEO added that the Risk Register was also provided and reviewed by TEO as part of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee papers. Once the red and amber risks are

reported to TEO at the A&L meetings, they are subsequently reported internally to their own Board.

Only on one occasion has TEO asked CRC to review the risk rating, and that was related to the 'Political Position' risk, when there was no sitting Assembly in Northern Ireland.

Mr R Campbell, the Chair of CRC's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC), added that the Committee reviewed all the risks and agreed that 'No better No Worse' should remain red, as there has been no change to this risk. During the previous ARAC meeting the Northern Ireland Audit Office noted that CRC have submitted a Business Case to TEO to progress this issue, and were content with CRC's progress on these actions. However, this Business Case has been with TEO since July 2020, and CRC have not received any follow up correspondence from the Department on this. TEO had stated at the ARAC meeting that they would be in contact to progress this in the next week.

The Board thanked Mr G McKeown for this update and noted the paper.

3379/20 Annual Report and Account

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with CRC's Annual Report and Account, which reflect the period between 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

He drew the Board attention to a number of items within the paper, including: The Chair's forward; The CEO's Comment; The Strategic Plan; The Going Concerns; The Performance Summary; Key Achievements; Detailed Analysis of Achievements; Breakdowns of Funding Paid, Break Down of Achievements in each Directorate; Overview of the Business Plan achievements; Detailed Financial Summary; Strategic Report; Governance Statements; Organisations Structure; Names of Board Members; Future Plans Overview; Data Protection, FOI, and Complaints; 'No Better No Worse Off' Issue' Remuneration Report.

Mr G McKeown added that the Audit Office and Controller will insert CRC's audit report to page 54 of the Annual Report and Accounts, once it has been signed off.

Ms T Wilson reported to the Board members on the financial statements in the Report, including: The Statement of Financial Activities; Balance Sheet; and the Cash Flow Statement. She assured the Board that all financial statements were completed in line with Charity reporting guidance, Department guidance, and Company House guidance.

The Chair thanked Mr G McKeown and Ms T Wilson for the comprehensive Annual Report and Accounts. He thanked the Board and staff team for meeting the Key Performance Indicators and setting out the strategic targets for the next period.

The Board agreed the 2019/20 Annual Report and Accounts.

3380/20 Chief Executive Officer's Report

The CEO welcomed the Chair back following his bereavement, and offered continued support.

The CEO offered condolences to Mr R Campbell for his recent bereavement.

The CEO presented the Board with her paper and updated attendees on a number of issues.

i) Covid-19 arrangements

The CEO informed the Board that the Covid19 arrangements continue to work well. The success of Good Relations Week is a good example of this.

The Management Team continue to stay in contact with staff in many ways including: weekly directorate updates; weekly Management Team meetings; weekly team meetings; weekly staff newsletter; monthly staff meetings; line meetings; and regular one to one check ins.

ii) The Executive Office

TEO advised the CEO that the Operational Plan has gone to their Board, and the Strategic Plan will be reviewed this month.

CRC have received the October Monitoring Round funding, including the budget for the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Fund.

TEO requested a review by The Strategic Investment Board of CR funding mechanisms some years ago which is always included in the CEO report. There has been no outcome from the review and the CEO has asked TEO to confirm whether one may ever be expected. The response will determine whether this remains on the CEO report.

iii) Meetings

The CEO met with the new head of the Tackling Paramilitarism Taskforce, Ms A Brown, on 1st October. This taskforce are preparing to move into phase 2 of their plans.

The CEO and Mr G McKeown attended the Accountability and Liaison meeting with TEO on the 6th November. CRC asked for TEO to respond to the outstanding queries raised over the year.

The CEO and Mr P Jordan gave evidence to The Committee for the Executive Office on CRC funding. The Board was provided with a copy of the paper. The CEO added that the evidence session is available to review on the NI Assembly's website. She thanked Mr P Jordan and Mr D McNally for assisting in drafting CRC's briefing paper.

The Chair commended CRC on the briefing paper and the evidence session. The CEO stated that a member of the Committee has since been in touch to organise a meeting with local groups in their constituency.

CRC met with a selection of community relations organisations doing work in rural locations. The CEO has discussed the establishment of a Rural Advisory Group with the Chair which will be made up of rural champions from across Northern Ireland. She asked that if Board member have any rural champions in mind, please forward suggestions.

ACTION: Board members to consider any community relations rural champions CRC could be promoting.

The CEO attended a meeting of the Northern Ireland Office Centenary Forum, who are looking at the commemoration of Partition in 2021. She informed the Board that the NIO had indicated that the work of the Forum will be guided by the Decade of Centenaries Principles.

The CEO met with the ROI's Department of Foreign Affairs to discuss the Reconciliation Fund and CRC's own funding work.

iv) Upcoming Events

The Decade of Centenaries Roundtable will be meeting on the 26th November, where Ms B Reid will present on her research into Border Communities. All Board members are welcome to attend.

ACTION: If Board members are interested in attending the Decade Roundtable meetings, please let Ms H George know.

The Shared Learning Forum will be taking place on the 26th November, and will include attendees from the Core Fund and the North Belfast Fund.

CRC will be commencing the recruitment of an author for the next Peace Monitoring Report.

v) Governance

The CEO thanked Mr M McDonnell for chairing the Risk Management Seminar and Board members for attending the session. A number of changes were made to the Risk Register including a short explanation of CRC's risk appetite, changes to the presentation of the risk report including the addition of a summary page and a 5x5 assessment to replace the current 3x3 format.

The CEO welcomed Mr B McDonald who CRC have recently recruited as its new Vouching and Verification Officer. This is a new post for CRC.

Ahead of the LRA Temperature Check, CRC are compiling a list of completed work and details for the implementation plan as an update. This is based on the reports that the Board receive at every meeting.

3381/20 TEO Committee Briefing

The Board received a copy of CRC's briefing paper, presented to The Executive Office Committee on the 20th October, and noted this paper.

The Chair thanked the CEO for her report.

3382/20 Section 75 Report

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with CRC's Section 75 Report. The paper includes an overview of the work CRC have done up until the 31st August 2020. Once the Board approve the Report, it will be shared with The Equality Commission for approval.

The CEO reminded that Board that this Report would usually be submitted in August, however, this deadline was extended for all organisations to December 2020. She stated that the document contains a list appendices including documents that the Board has already seen for example the Strategic and Operational Plans. She asked that, if Board members would like to receive any of these appendices, to let CRC know.

ACTION: Board members to notify the CEO if they would like copies of any of the Section 75 Report appendices.

3383/20 Management Accounts

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with the updated Management Accounts up to September 2020.

He informed the Board that there is a projected underspend of £6.5K and that CRC have received their North Belfast Grant funding through the October Monitoring Round.

Ms T Wilson added that the projected underspend will change each month, however, the current projected amount is within the 1.5% tolerance. Any underspend will go back into the accounts.

3384/20 Pay Remit

Mr. McKeown presented the Board with an update on CRC's pay remit process. He informed the meeting that the 2018/19 and 2019/20 Pay Remits have been submitted to TEO. CRC have not received any responses from the department on these submissions.

CRC have also submitted a Business Case to TEO in July 2020 relating to resolving the 'No Better No Worse Off' guidance, and no response has been received from TEO on this either.

The CEO added that the Northern Ireland Audit Office, in their presentation of the Report to Those Charged, recognised that CRC had done what it could to progress this issue.

The Chair stated that he is satisfied that CRC have taken all the necessary steps to close these issues. CRC had asked TEO if the pension and pay remit issues could be separated and dealt with independently, however, no response has been received.

3385/20 Sickness and Absence Report

Ms J Adamson presented the Board with a report updating them on the sickness and absence statistics of staff, for the quarter ending 30th September.

She highlighted that staff's sickness and absences have reduced over the last twelve months.

The Board noted this report.

3386/20 LRA Implementation Update

Ms J Adamson presented the Board with an update stating that CRC continue to progress the LRA Implementation Plan.

She stated that CRC have completed the procurement of an external HR firm to assist with the implementation of the Dignity at Work Charter. Heads Together were appointed to complete this work.

The LRA will be carrying out a temperature check with staff on the 17th November, followed by a meeting with the Senior Management Team.

CRC held a general meeting with Unite the union to provide them with progress update for their information. The Union asked if the Board would agree to share the actions which emerged from their closed session with Heads Together in July. The CEO suggested a review of the minutes of the July Board meeting for the list of agreed actions, and to speak to Heads Together and the Chair to confirm the actions in the response to the union which Jo will prepare. This was agreed.

ACTION: Ms H George to share the minutes from the July Board meeting with the Chair, The CEO, and Ms J Adamson.

ACTION: Ms J Adamson to speak to Heads Together and ask for their action list from the meeting.

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

3387/20 Engagement Sector Update

i) Engagement Directorate Update

Mr P Day presented the Board with an update on issues under his Directorate.

The next TBUC Engagement Forum will be taking place on the 9th February. This date may change depending on the outcome of CRC's discussion with TEO regarding whether the meeting, which was postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions, should be reorganised for the end of the year.

The Shared Learning Forum will take place on the 26th November. The Junior Ministers intent to be in attendance. This meeting will include the Core and North Belfast groups.

CRC's website and social media continues to have an increase in traffic, and the email subscribers list grows month on month.

The last meeting in this year's Decade of Centenaries series will be taking place on 26th November. A meeting will be taking place to discuss ideas for the 2021 sessions.

The 2021 Good Relations Awards will open to nominations in December, a panel will meet to shortlist the nominations in February, and an event will be held in March 2021.

The Engagement Team will continue to work with TEO and liaise with funded groups and other stakeholders.

ii) Good Relations Week Evaluation

Mr P Day presented the Board with an evaluation of Good Relations Week, compiled by a PR Agency.

Mr P Day thanked the Board and staff for their participation in GR Week events and for completing the survey on their experience of GR Week. All feedback received was positive.

The survey responses showed that the geographical spread and the social media interest were very positive.

The evaluation showed that:

- Good Relations Week hosted 292 online events and resources.
- There was a 39% increase of events compared to 2019.
- Events were hosted by each of the Councils.
- There were 547 social media posts from third parties on Good Relations Week.
- There was engagement from Junior Ministers and First and Deputy First Ministers.
- The majority of events were digital storytelling, workshops, webinars, and interviews.
- There were 197 piece of media coverage, including BBC online, Radio Ulster, NTV, and print media.

- CRC received positive testimonials from attendees.

The key recommendations coming from the report:

- Ongoing media relations – getting better at telling stories out throughout the year.
- Blended approach – online content as well as in person events.
- Bringing additional experience to the Steering Group.
- Host a headline event every day.
- Live streaming events.
- Assign ambassadors and champions.
- Open registration of events earlier.

The Chair thanked Mr P Day for presenting this very positive report. He added that Good Relations Week 2020 was very successful and was a great opportunity to promote CRC and the funded work.

Mr J McCallister joined the meeting

23388/20 Funding and Development Update

In Mr P Jordan absence the Board noted the funding update paper.

The CEO reported that the Funding Team have been hosting funding fairs online. CRC plans to expand this by making videos with details of the funding streams, examples of work that is being conducted and interviews. These videos will be displayed at online events and in person events too.

3389/20 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

i) Update from ARAC Chair

Mr R Campbell, the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, updated the Board on the meeting held on 13th November.

Mr R Campbell informed the Board that CRC received the 'Report to Those Charged with Governance' from the Northern Ireland Audit Office, following their audit in October. The report only raised one issue relating to the 'No Better No Worse Off' guidance and the Audit Office noted CRC's work at progressing this issue. CRC await TEO response to progress these issues.

Mr R Campbell thanked Mr G McKeown, Ms T Wilson, and the NI Audit Office for their work on this report.

Mr R Campbell updated the Board on the Risk Register, informing them that the Committee agreed that 'No Better No Worse' risk would remain red, the 'staff morale' risk would remain amber, and 'Covid-19' risk would remain amber.

Mr R Campbell added that, like every institution, CRC have faced threats this year. CRC has demonstrated an enormous amount of robustness, evidenced in the internal and external audits conducted this year.

The Chair congratulated CRC for the NIAO Audit report, and thanked the team.

3390/20 Any Other Business

None

3391/20 Date of Next Meeting

16th December 10:30am