

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY  
RELATIONS COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2020  
VIA VIDEO CALLING SOFTWARE**

**3392/20**      **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, Ms S McClelland

**3393/20**      **In Attendance:** Ms J Irwin (CEO), Mr P Day (Director of Engagement), Mr G McKeown (Director of Finance, Admin, and Personnel), Ms J Adamson (HR Manager), Ms H George (PA to CEO and Board),

**3394/20**      **Apologies:** Mr D Johnston (Boardroom Apprentice)

**3395/20**      **North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Fund**

The Chair thanked representatives from four different North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Funded Group for attending today's meeting.

Ms S McKinley from the Vine Centre, Ms E Weir from Shankill Women's Centre, Mr T Turley from Ardoyne Youth Enterprise, and Mr M Maguire from Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum presented the Board members with an overview of their work, particularly focusing on what they have achieved during the Covid-19 restrictions.

The groups all carryout work across communities in North Belfast and worked co-operatively with other organisations in the region.

The work of these groups includes: dialogues and storytelling; women's groups; developing cross community relationships; skills development; assistance with mental health issues; education groups; detached based youth work; assisting food banks; and meetings of men's groups.

The presenters all highlighted the difficulty replacing face-to-face contact with online meetings, which is not always an appropriate format for engagement work involving tough conversations. They raised the issue of access to technology, poverty in the area, and young people's engagement with gangs while facilities have been closed.

The Chair thanked the presenters for their insightful talks, adding that the Board should invite a cross section of other funded groups to future meetings to hear about their work.

The CEO thanked the North Belfast groups, highlighting a point each of the groups made, around the intersectionality of Good Relations work and welfare issues. She stated that the issue of bringing good relations into people's everyday lives was very important and one that the organisation had been thinking more about since it was discussed during the development of the CRC Strategic Plan last year. She invited the groups to keep feeding back their experience and ideas on this.

**3396/20**      **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

**3397/20 Minutes**

The Board reviewed the minutes of the meeting which took place on 13<sup>th</sup> November and agreed that they are an accurate account of that meeting.

**3398/20 Matters Arising**

The Chair presented the Board with the actions and matters arising from previous Board meetings, and provided an update.

A number of actions will now be removed from the list including: presentation from North Belfast groups; evaluation of Heads Together's work; Board to return assessments to CRC; feedback on assessment forms to be shared with the Chair; and the minutes of the July Board meeting to be shared with the Chair to review Heads Together's action list.

The Chair highlighted the action calling on Board members to decide if policy positions should be taken. The Board discussed this issue and agreed that, as an Arm's Length Body of The Executive Office, policy is developed by the Department and implemented by CRC and others, therefore CRC should not be taking policy positions.

The Board added that this would not prevent CRC liaising with Government Departments on Good Relations issues and asking them to consider their work in relation to Good Relations.

The Chair highlighted another action from the list, where CRC were to ask TEO whether the briefing papers could be made available to the public. Mr P Day stated that TEO have issued a response suggesting that these papers are for internal use only and that if CRC wished to share them, they would need to be amended into a different document. The Board discussed this action and agreed that these papers should be for internal use only but CRC should continue to learn from policy implementation and discuss with others areas for further research and practical development.

**3399/20 Chairs Update**

The Chair updated the Board on meetings and events he attended.

The Chair attended CRC's Shared Learning Forum on 26<sup>th</sup> November where a number of Core Funded groups presented on their work. He added that the First and Deputy First Minister were able to attend this meeting and speak at the beginning.

The Chair attended CRC's Staff meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December and had a general catch up meeting with the CEO on the 7<sup>th</sup> December.

The Chair met with Ms C Harris on the 8<sup>th</sup> December regarding the Board appraisal process, and held a Board meeting preparation session with the CEO on the 15<sup>th</sup> December.

The Board thanked the Chair for this update.

**3400/20 Finance and General Purposes Committee**

The Chair presented the Board with CRC's draft Terms of Reference for the creation of a Finance and General Purposes Committee.

This Committee will review CRC's HR, finance, and operational issues in detail. The Committee will be made up of four Board members. The members will be able to receive training on finance issues if requested and the committee will meet quarterly.

The Board approved the Terms of Reference, and agreed that the Committee will be chaired by Mr M McDonald, and the membership will include Ms A Simpson, Ms N Tandon, and Mr M McDonnell.

**3401/20 Operational Plan**

The CEO presented the Board with CRC's draft Operational Plan 2021/22.

She explained that CRC are required to send a first draft of the Plan to The Executive Office in December 2020. The Board will have the opportunity to review the next draft in greater detail, following TEO's first review. The next draft will first go to the Finance and General Purposes Committee then subject to the committee's recommendation, to the Board for further discussion or ratification.

Staff will also be reviewing the format for quarterly progress reports to the new Finance and General Purposes Committee and subsequently the Board . The CEO explained that in discussion with the Chair they were suggesting bringing a balanced score card to quarterly Board meetings with a dashboard review of the progress of the objectives.

The CEO presented the Board with the Delivery Plan Reporting Tool which is currently reviewed quarterly by the Senior Management Team and shared with The Executive Office. This report includes details of the objectives' RAG status and an update on the implementation of the task. Going forward, this Report will be presented to future Finance and General Purposes Committee meetings.

The Board approved this approach.

The CEO then talked the Board through the draft Operational Plan 2021/22, and highlighted the amendments from last year:

Outcome F.7 – In conjunction with TEO, CRC will review opportunities to contribute to anti-racism and diversity: The CEO explained that this outcome will remain in the Operational Plan as it has not yet been progressed.

The Chair suggested that, as a number of CRC funded groups are carrying out work in this area already, Mr P Jordan could collate detail of the groups and work funded working in this area.

**ACTION:** Mr P Jordan to collate detail of CRC funded groups and work in the area of diversity and anti-racism.

F.8 – Work with TEO to increase the number of grants in areas with low applications but identified need: The CEO stated this is already underway in relation to geographical distribution and rural work but that CRC will continue to keep this under review and consider other areas of need when making grants.

F.9 – Continue to implement new vouching and verification procedures: The CEO added that CRC recently recruited a Vouching and Verification Officer who is based with the Finance, Admin, and Personnel Directorate. As this is a new post vouching work will continue to be kept under review.

F.11 – Implement any changes arising from the TEO Review of Good Relations Funding Delivery Mechanisms: The CEO informed the Board that this objective remains in CRC's Operational Plan as no outcomes of this review have been shared with CRC. The CEO assured the Board that she continues to raise this at all Accountability and Liaison meetings. If TEO advised that no outcome is likely to be received, this item will be removed from the plan.

E2.5 – Implement the outcomes approach to reviewing impact of CRC engagement work: The CEO explained that the method of gathering data in this area of work has been completed and will now be removed from the Operational Plan, although if sufficient resources were available, more could certainly be done on gathering information on long range outcomes..

The Chair suggested that a possible addition to next year's plan would be the earlier discussion on CRC's commitment to engaging with Government Departments on shared learning and practical outcomes of Good Relations Policy.

G2.5 – Ensure the Finance and General Purposes Committee is convened: The CEO noted that this was a new action arising from the fact that the Board's Finance and General Purposes Committee has now been established and will meet quarterly.

G6.5 Contribute to premises projects: The CEO informed the Board that this Objective previously made reference to 'James House' and has now been amended to read 'premises' as CRC will no longer be moving to James House.

G6.6 – Conclude Alignment with NICS HR policies: The CEO reminded the committee that the consultation with Union members was paused by the Union, and that the

Board had also discussed whether to continue this project. CRC have contacted the Union to ask whether they wish to continue this process.

The CEO highlighted that the finance details on page 26 remains blank, as CRC will insert the 2021/22 budget into this section once details have been provided by TEO.

The Board thanked the CEO for reporting on this draft Plan, and subject to the suggested change approved it as a first draft to go to the TEO. The Board will return to it following TEO's review.

### **3402/20 Chief Executive Officer's Report**

The CEO presented the Board with an update on a number of areas of CRC business.

She informed the Board that CRC's Covid-19 arrangements continue to work well. She noted that following the news of a vaccine roll out programme, CRC hopes to begin preparations for blended working to be implemented when it is safe to do so. At the moment the predictions seem to indicate that this is unlikely to be before the new financial year.

Following the Board's approval at the last meeting, the Annual Report and Accounts have been lodged with the NI Assembly and Companies House. Due to CRC's charity status, the Report will also be filed with the Charity Commission in due course.

The CEO informed the Board that, subject to the response from the sponsoring Department on the review of Community Relation's funding delivery mechanisms, and the completion of reviews into CRC's funding procedures, staffing, and governance, this section will be removed from future CEO Reports.

The CEO informed the Board that the CRCD grant application process for this year will close on the 15<sup>th</sup> January and that the Core funding assessment process has begun.

The CEO asked Mr P Jordan to send the Board a list of groups who have applied for Core funding, to ensure no conflicts of interest or canvassing.

**ACTION:** Mr P Jordan to share a list of Core 2021 applicants with Board members.

The CEO and Mr P Jordan have been meeting with a number of groups based in rural areas, including a session facilitated by MLA Martina Anderson, and a meeting with groups from the Bushmills and Ballymoney area.

The CEO thanked Mr P Day and his team for their work on the last Shared Learning Forum. She added that the attendance of the First and Deputy First Minister, as well as the participation of the Junior Ministers in CRC's Good Relations Week evaluation video was very encouraging recognition of the work..

The Board were informed that the LRA have completed their temperature check fieldwork and will be issuing CRC staff and Chair with a report by the end of the

month. She added that Heads Together have been appointment to complete the implementation of the Dignity at Work Charter.

The Board thanked the CEO for this update.

Ms C Harris and

Ms N Tandon left the meeting

**3403/20 Management Accounts up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021**

Mr G McKeown informed the Board that there is no updated Management Accounts to be presented at today's meeting. He stated that a consumption report will be drafted and send to The Executive Office in due course.

CRC's spending is on target and the projected underspend of £15K is in line with the 1.5% tolerance. He assured the Board that all spending has been conducted in line with CRC and CPD guidance.

The Board thanked Mr G McKeown for this update.

**3404/20 Pay Remit**

Mr G McKeown informed the Board that CRC have submitted all Pay Remits, but have not received any response from the Department.

He stated that CRC have just received comments from TEO on the 'No Better, No Worse Off' Business Case. A meeting with the Chair to review the comments will take place in December 2020, and a meeting of the Pension Sub-Group will take place in early January 2021.

The Board thanked Mr G McKeown for this update.

**3405/20 LRA Implementation Update**

Ms J Adamson presented the Board with an update on the LRA Implementation Plan.

A meeting with Heads Together took place this month, to plan the work to be completed in the first quarter. They will be providing the Management Team with information on how to open discussion with their teams to embed each of the 12 principles contained in the Dignity at Work Charter. Training has also been arranged for the Management Team on Effective Leadership, to take place on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

Heads Together will be working with CRC's HR to separate the Bullying Policy and Harassment Policy to create one policy that will cover Dignity at Work and align with the Charter.

The Board thanked Ms J Adamson for this update.

**2406/20 Health Briefing Paper**

Mr P Day presented the Board with CRC's Health Briefing Paper, drafted by Ms G Attwood, who was unable to attend today's meeting.

Mr P Day stated that there is growing awareness of Good Relations work in the Health Trusts, including the Joint Regional Equality, Human Rights and Good Relations Forum which Mr P Day attends. This group are drafting general Good Relations statements for Northern Ireland's Health Trusts.

The Health Trusts continue to engage in CRC's events, and have participated in Good Relations Weeks in the past.

The Board commended Mr P Day and Ms G Attwood for the comprehensive Health Briefing Paper. The paper shows good examples of how CRC can build practical relationships with the Health Trusts.

Ms A Simpson stated that the paper is an excellent piece of work, but would like to see more details on the health implication of conflict on people in Northern Ireland, including domestic violence and coercive control. Ms M Braniff recommended a recent report produced by the World Health Organisation, one section focusing on health and peace. She stated that she would share this with Mr P Day.

**ACTION:** Ms M Braniff to share a recent report by the World Health Organisation with Mr P Day.

The Board thanked Mr P Day and subject to the additions suggested, noted the Briefing paper.

**3407/20**

### **Community Engagement Sector Update**

Mr P Day provided the Board with an update on items under the Community Engagement Directorate.

He informed the Board that the next TBUC Engagement Forum will be taking place on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 10:30am, on the theme 'Shared Space and Shared Housing'. If any Board members are interested in attending, please let Mr P Day know.

**ACTION:** If Board members are interested in attending the TBUC Engagement Forum on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021, to let Mr P Day know.

Following the meeting of the Shared Learning Forum on the 26<sup>th</sup> November, CRC are preparing the dates for the 2021 sessions.

CRC's top tweets over this period were on the Rural Community Network's funding information session, and congratulations are due for Irish Football Association's 'Football for All' twentieth anniversary.

The Decade Roundtable 2020 meetings have concluded, and preparations are being made for the 2021 schedule. 2021 will focus on the practical aspects of the centenary, and how it is being marked by different groups and Councils in NI. The

Decade Roundtable will host a Resources Fair in February 2021 over three days, at which CRC will present the Decade Toolkit.

The Good Relations Award is open for nominations, closing on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021. The Board agreed that the GR Award decision panel will be made up of Chair M McDonald, Ms N Tandon, Mr J McCallister, and Ms C Harris and M Braniff as reserves. An event will be held in March to present this award.

CRC staff held a joint learning session with TEO staff on the centenary, with Eamon Phoenix as guest speaker. A series of these meetings will be held quarterly in 2021.

The engagement Team are working on promoting CRC's rural focus by holding a funding information session in December in conjunction with Rural Community Network, and information sessions with Good Relations Officers in the new year.

The CEO added that CRC will also be looking into small projects that CRC funded a number of years ago which have since developed into bigger projects and affected social change. The Engagement Team may take this forward as a publication next year.

The Board thanked Mr P Day for this update.

### **3408/20 Funding and Development Update**

Mr P Jordan presented the Board with an update on Funding and Development issues.

The CRCD grant is still open for applications, but will close on the 15<sup>th</sup> January. There are currently 59 bids with another 49 applications in progress. The CRCD grant recipients have expressed their appreciation for CRC's flexibility. The Project Officers have asked groups to draft a contingency plan in case Covid-19 restrictions affect their work plans.

Core has received 31 applications for next year, three of which were ineligible. These applicants have been notified and informed of CRC's other funding opportunities.

Mr P Jordan reminded the Board that Ms H George was in contact asking if members will be available on the 18<sup>th</sup> February 2021 for the Core Funding Decision Meeting. He asked Board members to respond to Ms H George as soon as possible.

**ACTION:** Board members to inform Ms H George if the 18<sup>th</sup> February 2021 suits them to attend the Core Funding Decision Meeting.

Mr P Jordan informed the Board that all ten of the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Fund recipients were able to complete their work and adapt during the Covid-19 restrictions. The groups have proved the impact their good work has had, and CRC will be collecting details of this work for promotion.



The Media Grant has received a number of applications this year and decisions on these will be made in December 2020.

The Publications Grant is still open for applications.

The Board thanked Mr P Jordan for this update.

**3409/20      Audit and Risk Committee Update**

i)      Risk Register Summary

The Chair of CRC's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mr R Campbell updated the Board on the meeting which took place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December.

He presented the Board with CRC's Risk Register Summary, highlighting that Covid-19 and Staff Morale remain 'amber' as there has been no change. The Committee discussed the 'No Better, No Worse Off' risk, which they agreed should remain 'red'. The Committee highlighted that CRC have done all they can to progress this issue, including setting up a Sub-Group, and submitting a Business Case to The Executive Office. The CEO added that the work CRC have done to progress this issue was recognised in NIAO's external audit.

The CEO stated that as agreed earlier she, Mr G McKeown and the Chair will meet in December to review the feedback from TEO received this week and convene the Sub-Group in January. The Chair suggested that, following this, he would propose meeting with Mr M Browne, TEO, to discuss the delay in resolving this issue and risks associated with it.

ii)      Minutes from

Mr R Campbell presented the Board with the minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting, which took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> November.

The Board thanked Mr R Campbell for this update and noted the Risk Register Summary and the Minutes.

**3410/20      Any Other Business**

None

**3411/20      Close of Meeting**

The Chair and the CEO thanked CRC's Board and Staff members for their work during 2020. They wished Board and Staff a happy Christmas and New Year.

**3412/20      Date of Next Meeting**

27<sup>th</sup> January 10:30am