

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY
RELATIONS COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON TUESDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER 2020
VIA VIDEO CALLING SOFTWARE**

3343/20 **Present:** Mr R Campbell, Ms M Braniff Ms C Harris, Mr J McCallister, Ms S McClelland, Ms A Simpson, Ms N Tandon.

3344/20 **In Attendance:** Ms J Irwin (CEO), Mr P Day (Director of Engagement), Mr P Jordan (Director of Funding and Development, Mr G McKeown (Director of Finance, Admin, and Personnel), Mr D McNally (Evaluation Officer), Ms F Dennison (Funding Officer), Ms E Tomasso (IT), Ms G Attwood (Policy Officer), Ms H George (PA to CEO and Board),

3345/20 **Observers:** Mr D Johnston (CRC's Boardroom Apprentice).

3346/20 **Apologies:** Mr M McDonald, Mr M McDonnell.

2347/20 **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

2348/20 **Welcome**

i) CRC's Chair

The CEO informed the meeting that, in Mr M McDonalds absence, Mr R Campbell agreed to chair today's Board meeting. She thanked Mr R Campbell for volunteering to Chair, and for the preparation work he conducted before the meeting.

The Board expressed their sympathies for the Chair, Mr M McDonald, and his recent bereavement. They passed on their support and love to Mr McDonald and his family at this difficult time.

The Chair was in contact with Mr R Campbell prior to the Board meeting, to pass on his thanks for the support and kind words he received from Board members and CRC colleagues.

The CEO will be in touch with the Chair in October and will report back any updates to the Board.

ii) Boardroom Apprentice Scheme

Mr R Campbell welcomed Mr D Johnston to CRC's Board meeting. Mr D Johnston has been assigned to The Northern Ireland Community Relations

Council, to shadow the Board, for the next twelve months. Mr R Campbell added that he hoped to offer practical experience to Mr D Johnston.

Mr D Johnston stated that he was delighted to be assigned to CRC as part of the Boardroom Apprentice Scheme. Mr D Johnston is the head of Diversity and Inclusion at the PSNI, after working in HR for fourteen years. His interests include social mobility and furthering the experience of ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland.

The CEO added that Mr D Johnston's interest in CRC's work is clear and his dedication to diversity is heartfelt, and looks forward to working with Mr D Johnson and is sure that CRC will learn a lot from him.

CRC's Board welcomed Mr D Johnston.

2349/20 Minutes

The Board reviewed the minutes of the 214th CRC Board meeting, which took place on 2nd July 2020. They approved the minutes, agreeing that they were an accurate representation of the meeting.

2350/20 Matters Arising

Mr R Campbell presented the Board with a list of actions and matters arising, following the previous Board meeting.

The CEO informed the meeting that a number of items relating to a funding review are now complete and will be removed from this document.

The CEO reminded the Board of their request to receive a presentation from North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Funded groups. She suggested that these groups present at the December Board meeting.

2351/20 Correspondence

The CEO presented the Board with a letter from The Executive Office setting out CRC's budget for the year 2020/21. This letter was received by CRC on 3rd July, and completes the collection of information for the drafting of the Business Plan.

She drew Board members attention to the omission of the North Belfast Good Relations Fund from the Budget. She explained that the budget for this fund would usually be included in the June Monitoring Round. Unfortunately, due to TEO's administrative oversight, the budget for the North Belfast fund was not included. CRC have received email communication from TEO advising that the budget for this fund would be included in the October Monitoring Round.

The CEO added that, since receiving this letter, CRC's budget has been updated accounting for easements.

The Board noted this correspondence.

2352/20 Chair's Update

- i) Good Relations Week

Mr R Campbell congratulated CRC for the success of Good Relations Week 2020. He thanked the Engagement Team for their hard work, adding that the attendance was remarkable, with over 200 events. He stated that the TBUC Engagement Forum alone had over 200 attendees.

2353/20 Chief Executive Officer's Report

The CEO presented the Board with an update on developments and events at CRC, highlighting a number of items:

i) Good Relations Week

The CEO thanked Board members for their involvement with Good Relations Week, and thanked Ms N Tandon in particular. Board members participated in a number of video interviews added which added richness and dimension to CRC's work.

GR Week was a test of CRC's capacity to host events remotely, and a full evaluation will be presented to the Board at the next meeting.

The CEO thanked Mr P Day and his team for their hard work putting the Week together and hosting events online. CRC learned a lot about running events remotely.

She thanked Ms M Braniff for the presentation she delivered during the 'A Better Normal' event, as part of GR Week. She asked Ms M Braniff to consider delivering this presentation at a future Board meeting.

The Board suggested that, following the success of Good Relations week, it may be useful to record and share the learning from hosting large events online, with other organisations.

ACTION: CRC to share learning from hosting Good Relations online, with other organisations.

ii) Covid-19

The CEO reminded the Board that Northern Ireland is six months into Covid-19 restrictions. CRC's arrangements are working well and delivery across all areas of business is continuing.

She informed Board members that an Internal Audit of CRC's Covid-19 Continuity Arrangements has been completed. Reassuringly, CRC received only priority three recommendations.

CRC's emphasis now will be supporting groups, especially those who have struggled to adapt in the current circumstances.

iii) Decade of Centenaries Roundtable

A meeting of the Decade of Centenaries Roundtable took place during GR Week, including a presentation from Mr C Moore on the partition of Ireland. The next meeting will be taking place on the 26th November at which Ms B Reid will be presenting. She asked Board members to inform Ms H George whether they would like to attend this event.

ACTION: Board members interested in attending the next meeting of the Decade Roundtable to let Ms H George know.

iv) Peace Monitor Report

The recruitment of an author for the next Peace Monitor Report was due to begin, however, it was put on hold, with agreement from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT), due to the Covid-19 restrictions. The CEO proposed that it is now the time to return to this recruitment. She will be speaking to JRCT about recommencing this recruitment.

The Board thanked the CEO and noted her report.

2354/20

Strategic Plan

The CEO presented the Board with an updated version of CRC's Strategic Plan. The Board had previously agreed a draft at a Board meeting. The Executive Office have proposed a number of changes to that draft.

The first change amends the date of the last Strategic Plan from 2016/19 to 2016/20. This amendment is necessary as the Strategic Plan, which began in 2016, was extended to 2020 due to the introduction of a new Board.

The second amendment to the Strategic Plan involves the updating of the draft to reflect the return of Ministers and the inclusion of a new section on 'New Decade New Approach'.

The Strategic Plan has also been updated to reference the Covid-19 situation, specifically in areas relating to information technology and the economic position.

The final change to the Strategic Plan is the inclusion of a 'Chair's Forward'. In the Chair's absence this was drafted by the CEO, using the Chair's wording and tone, based on his previous writings. TEO have been made aware that the 'Chair's Forward' will remain a draft until his return.

Mr R Campbell reminded Board members that, if they approve this draft, it will then be taken to Ministers.

The Board approved this draft of the Strategic Plan.

2355/20

TEO Committee Briefing

The Executive Office Committee briefing has been rearranged to take place on the 22nd October. The presentation to the Committee will comprise details from the funding paper presented at the last Board meeting, and details from the funding strategy paper, to be tabled at today's meeting.

Board members will be consulted on who will represent CRC at this briefing.

2356/20

Funding Strategy

i) Welcome Statements

Mr P Jordan presented the Board with a Funding Strategy Paper, reviewing CRC's 2019/20 funding, and presenting the proposed 2021/22 welcome statements.

The Strategy paper details the review of Core and Small Grants, along with the work plans from the Continuation Groups, and the issues raised during the Council Good Relations Officers meetings

Mr D Johnston suggested that, along with Council GROs, CRC could meet with the Good Relations Officers within the PSNI, who will have a distinct knowledge of issues in all areas across Northern Ireland.

The Board approved CRC's draft Welcome Statements and the proposal to assign Project Officer's to specific Council areas in Northern Ireland.

Mr R Campbell commended Mr P Jordan, Mr D McNally, and his team for this Funding Strategy report. He commented that the report sets out the meat of what CRC do and maps the work geographically and by TBUC Theme.

Mr P Jordan presented the Board with a mapping exercise Mr D McNally is completing in conjunction with TEO. The map will plot Good Relations funding across Northern Ireland from a number of grant schemes, including CRC, Central Good Relations Fund, and District Council's GR Funding. This exercise, once complete, will inform future funding strategy discussions.

ii) Uptake of Grants

Mr P Jordan informed the Board that funders are seeing fewer applicants during the current situation, compared with previous years. This is likely due to the restrictions on holding residential trips and face-to-face events.

Ms C Harris informed the Board of a recent study which suggested that language such as 'testing a project idea' or 'trailing a project' may be effective at encouraging applications from those with concerns about delivering during the Covid-19 restrictions. Mr P Jordan thanked Ms C Harris for her suggestion and stated that he would amend the wording in the guidance notes.

The Board also suggested that acknowledgement of current circumstances be added to the introduction of the Welcome Statements. The following wording was suggested: 'CRC acknowledges the dynamic landscape to which community organisations will be working over the next year, including Covid-19'.

ACTION: Mr P Jordan to amend the Guidance Notes to include encouragement of groups to submit applications looking to 'test' and 'trial' projects, and to add a reference to the dynamic landscape in which groups will be working, to the introduction of the Welcome Statements.

The Board suggested that CRC should consider how to capitalise on the good relations networks and connections made during Covid-19 restrictions, where communities found it more comfortable to engage online.

2357/20 Management Accounts

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with CRC's Management Accounts.

He explained that there is a £6K projected underspend. He assured the Board that 85% of CRC's budget was allocated to grants project spend.

CRC have submitted an October Monitoring Round return to The Executive Office, including a number of easements for CRCD and North Belfast fund.

Mr G McKeown reminded the Board that the North Belfast fund, due to receive a budget through the June Monitoring Round, will now receive a budget through the October Monitoring Round.

All procurement has been carried out in line with CRC's and CPD guidance.

2358/20 Budget Gathering Exercise

TEO requested CRC perform a budget gathering exercise, including:

- 1) Providing details of actions required to live within baseline budget and savings measures required
- 2) Providing details of additional funding requirements for 2021/22 -2023/24 periods, including proposals which will contribute to Covid-19 recovery, PfG outcomes, NDNA priorities, transformation programmes or new or emerging pressures.
- 3) Providing details of capital spending.

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with the response submitted to TEO. The response explains that CRC have undergone a number of efficiencies since 2013, as the budget has been reduced each year. CRC are no longer in a position to absorb

any further efficiencies, and any attempt to, would have an impact on grant expenditure, programme expenditure, and have a direct impact on Good Relations activities.

The Board thanked Mr G McKeown for this paper. They noted CRC's report, reiterating that no more efficiencies can be absorbed without affecting the work of the ALB.

2359/20 Covid—19 Arrangements Update

Mr G McKeown informed the Board that CRC's continuity arrangements continue to work well. Payments are being made to funded groups and suppliers in a timely manner.

The Management Team are now considering blended working and updating policies to account for this.

All staff have received a survey, considering their equipment and safety needs while they work from home, and an office floor plan has been drafted. This floor plan aims to ensure CRC staff are still able to socially distance in the office, and comply with all Covid-19 safety precautions, when/if returning to the office.

The DFAP team are drafting a blended working implementation plan, which will be completed by the end of September, and will be tabled at the next Board meeting.

2360/20 Pay Remit

At a previous Board meeting, the Board approved a Business Case aiming to respond to the 'No Better No Worse' and 'Equal Pay' guidance. This Business Case was submitted to The Executive Office (TEO) in July, and CRC have not received any follow up questions or correspondence from TEO.

CRC's Finance Team have submitted the 2018/19 and 2019/20 Pay Remit to The Executive Office. No response has been received on this submission.

The Board thanked Mr G McKeown for this update.

2361/20 Legal Services Purchase Order

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with a Purchase Order setting out CRC's legal services costs for three years. This legal service provides CRC with advice on 'No Better No Worse', employment and corporate issues, and pension law.

The cost of this service will be £16K if the Board approve this Purchase Order, and there will be no need to complete a procurement exercise as the service is within the CPD Framework.

The Board agreed the Purchase Order covering three years of legal service, at the cost of £16K.

2362/20

CRC Annual General Meeting Standing Order

Mr G McKeown informed the Board that, in order to hold CRC's AGM remotely online, the Standing Orders will need to be updated.

He presented the Board with the draft Standing Order. Mr J McCallister proposed the change, and Ms N Tandon seconded the proposal. The Board voted unanimously to amend the Standing Orders as follows:

Article 19 of CRCs *Articles of Association* states:

'No business shall be transacted at any meeting unless a quorum is physically present, save in circumstances that may be determined in Standing Orders, allowing for remote attendance by electronic means. Five persons entitled to vote shall be a quorum.'

The Board asked whether the voting procedures will need to be updated in CRC's rules and procedures ahead of the AGM. Mr G McKeown stated that he would review this and inform the Board.

ACTION: Mr G McKeown to review whether CRC's voting procedures will need to be updated ahead of CRC's AGM.

2363/20

Funding and Development Update

Mr P Jordan provided the Board with an update on funding and development within CRC.

CRCD and Pathfinder grants are open for applications. The funding team are working to encourage groups to innovate with their project ideas.

Ms F Dennison and Mr D McNally are working with Core Groups on their work-plans. Core groups 6 month reports, due in September, are a good indicator of where there are gaps in GR and where to target resources. Ms F Dennison is also working on the application process for 2021/22 Core Funding grant which will open in October.

The work of the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Funded groups continued over the summer months, engaging people isolated at home. There have been 45 different projects completed by the North Belfast groups, and activities taking place fifty weeks of the year, with 8,735 individuals directly involved in these projects. Their reports showed positive changing attitudes of the participants.

The Publication and Media grants opened during Good Relations week, and have received interest. The work completed by 2019/20 Media and Publication Grant awardees was presented during Good Relations week.

Mr R Campbell thanked Mr P Jordan, Mr D McNally, Ms F Dennison, Ms H DiDuca, and Ms J Hamilton for all their work.

The Board noted Mr P Jordan's report.

Community Engagement

i) Briefing Papers

Mr P Day presented the Board with three briefing papers. He explained that Ms G Attwood drafted these papers to help CRC better engage with the three areas: Sport; Business; and Rural.

Three more papers are being drafted for a future Board meeting, looking at: Health; Heritage; and the Environment.

The Board reviewed the Briefing Papers and thanked Ms G Attwood for the work, commending her on succinct and detailed reviews.

The Board commented that sport is a place for sustainable good relations work and asked whether CRC could research who else is investing in this area, and whether CRC could attach themselves to this work. The CEO informed the Board that the mapping exercise TEO are completing will eventually show a picture of all funding in Northern Ireland, and CRC will share this with Board members when it is complete.

ACTION: The Engagement Team to review and inform the Board of what other organisations are providing funding to the sports sector in Northern Ireland, when the mapping exercise is complete.

The Board stated that the paper shows clear detachment between business and good relations. They suggested CRC engage with Business in the Community, GROs, and Invest NI, to encourage participation in good relations activities. The CEO stated that CRC had been engaging with Business in the Community, before the pandemic, and hope to open up this engagement again.

The Board then suggested that, in terms of engaging the rural community, CRC could work with vocal people in those communities such as RCN and Ms M Bryan. They added that CRC could engage with the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs to help with rural conversations and seek funding from the department.

The CEO concluded that, TEO have asked CRC to engage on panels and funding decision bodies, to add a Good Relations perspective. She stated that CRC could engage with other departments to help draw out good relations work from their other interventions. Good Relations work is natural across all aspects of life.

The Board thanked The Engagement Team for this work, and asked that these papers be shared with TEO, and if possible, placed on CRC's website.

ACTION: The Engagement Team to share briefing papers with TEO, and ask whether they can be published on the website.

ii) Community Engagement Update

Mr P Day presented the Board with a paper setting out the activities of the Engagement Team.

He informed the Board that Good Relations week 2020 was a great success, with all events being held online. There were over 200 events, with large number of attendees. CRC completed all the planning, technology and facilitation of the events with no help from any professional bodies.

The events saw the involvement of the First and Deputy First Minister, and Junior Ministers, as well as Mr M Browne and other TEO colleagues. CRC held an event everyday of Good Relations Week. 'A Better Normal' event had over 130 attendees, while over 200 participants took part in The TBUC Engagement Forum. The Good Relations Awards saw 55 attendees, and the Decade Roundtable had 50 attendees.

All Council's and Core Funded Groups held events during the week, and engaged in other organisations events.

Mr P Day stated that video was a key element of GR week, including interviews with Board members, media grant videos, and funded groups videos.

Mr P Day thanked the Board and the Engagement Team for their work during the week, and all staff members for their help. A full evaluation of the Week will be presented at the next Board meeting.

Mr R Campbell thanked the Engagement Team for their excellent work.

The Board noted this paper.

2365/20

CRC's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

- i) The Minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee 14th May 2020.

Mr C Campbell, the Chair of CRC's Audit and Risk Committee presented the Board with the minutes of the May 2020 ARAC meeting.

The Board noted this paper.

- ii) CRC's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee 10th September 2020

Mr C Campbell provided the Board with an update on CRC's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting, which took place on the 10th September 2020.

He informed the Board that the completion of CRC's Audit, conducted by the Northern Ireland Audit Office has been delayed but will still be completed with enough time to submit the Annual Report and Accounts to Companies House by

the deadline. The CEO added that this was not the fault of CRC, rather it was due to a delay the audits of other organisations.

Mr R Campbell reminded the Board of the ongoing issue in CRCs Audit Recommendations, relating to the Pay Remit and Pension issue. He stated that CRC have submitted a Business Case to TEO, and have yet to receive a response.

He then highlighted a number of items from CRC's Risk Register. The 'Finance' risk, previously categorised as 'red', has now been amended to 'amber' as CRC have now received their budget. The ongoing uncertainty around Covid-19 informs CRC's 'Resilience' risk's categorisation as 'amber'.

Mr R Campbell reminded the meeting that CRC will be holding a Risk Seminar for Board members in October. CRC will be in contact with members in due course to confirm the date.

Mr C Campbell, informed the meeting that CRC's internal audit of Covid-19 arrangements has been completed. This audit reviewed CRC's business continuity arrangements; IT controls; financial controls; governance arrangements; and IT related expenditure. The Audit found that CRC's arrangements are up to date and reflect the necessary controls. This audit received a 'satisfactory' rating.

The Board thanked Mr C Campbell for this update.

2366/20 Any Other Business

None

2367/20 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be depended on the completion date of NIAO audit. CRC will be in touch the Board members to confirm at date in due course.