

CONFIRMED

**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND NINETY FIRST OF THE
COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16 AUGUST
2017 AT 10 AM IN THE ANTE-ROOM, EQUALITY HOUSE, 7 – 9
SHAFTESBURY SQUARE, BELFAST, BT2 7DP**

(Extraordinary meeting to review funding schemes for 2018-19)

2855/17

PRESENT:

Mr P Osborne (Chair), Mr D Mackay, Ms Libby Keys, Mr B McAllister, Mr N McKenna, Mr R Campbell

2856/17

APOLOGIES:

Ms K Garbal, Ms R McGlone, Rev Dr N Hamilton, Ms S McClelland, Ms D Close

2857/17

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms J Irwin [CEO], Mr G McKeown [DFAP Director], Mr P Jordan [Funding and Development Director], Ms F Dennison [Core Funding Officer], Mr D McNally [Evaluation Officer], Ms E Tomasso [Admin Officer], Ms D MacBride [Cultural Diversity Director]

2858/17

OBSERVER:

No observer present.

2859/17

STANDARD CHECKS:

- 1(a) The Chair reminded Members of the requirement to declare any conflicts of interest in any discussions where decisions were required.
- 1(b) The Chair advised that Members need to register any offers of gifts or hospitality since the last Council meeting.

2860/17

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES:

Draft Annual Report and Accounts
[Paper CRC/191/07/17/01 refers]

The Chair advised that although the meeting had been convened to review the Community Relations Council's funding schemes for next year there were a number of other items that had emerged for discussion, in particular the draft Annual Report and Accounts.

Mr. McKeown advised that the Draft Annual Report and Accounts had been sent to the Board at the beginning of July at the request of the auditors to enable the completion of the audit process in a more efficient manner. Mr. McKeown notified the members that the September meeting would be an Annual General Meeting as the 2016/17 Annual Report and Accounts would be presented for approval.

The document includes: the Chair's and CEO's Forewords; Strategic Report; Risk Management and Going Concern; Performance Review (summary and full analysis); Sustainability Report including information on Directors etc. (members were asked to check that the report was correct); Statement of Accounting Officer; Governance Framework (members were also asked to check that this accurately reflected their attendance); Independent Assurance; Remuneration Report; Assembly Accountability and Disclosure Notes etc.

Mr N McKenna asked that the document record the fact that he had resigned from the Audit and Risk Committee.

The Chair requested that the document also records Ms K Garbal's maternity leave.

Mr Osborne advised members that in response to a query from the auditors about attendance he had responded to say that he very satisfied with Board performance and although attendance is an issue it was recognised that Members contribute their time to CRC outside of the regular meetings.

The Chair drew Members attention to his foreword, and asked for members' opinion on paragraph 4. Members were happy that this was included in the document.

[Mr R Campbell joined the meeting]

Mr. McKeown advised members that the finance information that the Board received in April, subsequently updated at the May meeting remains an accurate report on expenditure for the year which is within the 1.5% limit albeit that it is subject to the findings of the audit review from the NIAO is currently ongoing and on schedule.

The Independent Auditor's report will be considered by the Audit and Risk Committee and added to the document when the review is complete. The Annual Report and Accounts will come to the Board for final sign off thereafter.

ACTION: DFAP Dir.

Financial Update at 31st July 2017

[Paper CRC/191/08/17/02 refers]

Mr. McKeown confirmed that the expenditure up to 31 July 2017 is in line with budget and projections.

He noted that at the June Monitoring Round £53,000 had become available and the proposed allocation would be brought to the Board in September.

ACTION: DFAP Dir.

Members agreed that the response to the Health Trust consultation be approved by written procedure as the deadline for submission is before the next Board meeting.

2862/17

FUNDING:

[Paper CRC/191/08/17/04 refers]

Core Funding

Members were reminded that a paper was sent to the Board in July on the Core Fund and Media Grant Scheme priority outcomes and potential measures for next year.

The CEO gave an overview of all CRC's funding schemes including information on the current budgets, financial cuts made in this year and expectations in relation to future funds although she stressed that as yet there is no clear indication of how expenditure will be affected in future years.

The CEO noted a move towards more intelligent funding with a greater collaboration across the TEO funding schemes. This includes CRC staff sitting on other TEO funding panels. TEO has also requested information on all grants being made by CRC, which will inform a more strategic and coherent placement of funding across all TEO funds. CRC currently records all grant applications on a database and all grants paid are recorded on the Government Funded Database which is an initiative run by the Department of Communities. The above initiatives are very welcome in the current financial climate.

The CEO noted that the discussion about Core Funding would include consideration of funding project costs as well as salaries and running costs. The project costs are currently funded either from the CRC Small Grants Scheme or another funder. It was agreed that the outcomes based approach will challenge the Core Fund Scheme as the impact of funding is harder to measure without including project delivery costs. Core funded groups are projecting costs for the year that they are sometimes unable to deliver because they cannot source project funding. Subject to Board consideration of the issues, this matter would also have to be discussed with TEO.

The CEO outlined four proposed strategic priorities for discussion.

The CEO advised that the assessment procedures are also being refined in light of recommendations coming out of this year's round of funding.

The scope of the scheme would also be discussed at this meeting following a request from groups. CRC does not currently fund children and young people. The CEO reminded members that in response to a previous query about this the Department had indicated that it did not wish to change the overall scope of the scheme but the issue would be kept under review. The matter had been raised again by groups at a recent event with successful core fund applicants.

Pathfinder Grant Scheme

Before proceeding to discuss the proposals in detail Mr. Jordan requested guidance on the Pathfinder scheme for 2017-18 due to likely demand in the remainder of the year. He reminded members that the Pathfinder Scheme is an emergency fund within CRC generally awarded to meet a shortfall or funding gap in an important service or for diversionary activities during periods of heightened tension. Groups that are

unsuccessful in receiving Core Funding also sometimes make applications to this scheme. Mr. Jordan advised that a fuller paper on the scheme would go to the Board meeting in September, however at this point he was requesting approval that any increased demand on this scheme could be funded through efficiency savings.

Members agreed that savings should be directed into Pathfinder rather than into Core Funding at this stage.

ACTION: DFAP Dir.

Core Funding Scheme – inclusion of project costs

The Core Funding Scheme currently funds salaries and running costs. Project costs are funded through the small grant scheme or by other funders. The amount of funding available to groups from other sources has now greatly diminished so some groups are struggling to find funding for project costs. Adding these costs into Core Funding will allow groups the freedom of being able to get on with delivery from the beginning of the grant award without having to find other funding and so limiting their outputs and outcomes. Allowing core funding to be used for project work would also make measuring and evaluating the impact and quality of the project more effective and meaningful. It would also provide more security for groups as other sources of funding diminish.

It was noted that if there was no increase in the overall budget the negative impact from funding project work through the Core Funding Scheme would be that a smaller number of groups would be funded.

If members were agreeable to this additional budget line it was agreed that implementation would begin in the 2018/19 financial year. Groups in existing grant contracts at that time would continue under existing arrangements but could apply for funding under the new system in the normal way thereafter.

Members were supportive of the proposal in principle with the proviso that there would be a very clear line between salaries and project funding and that a letter be sent to the TEO outlining the proposal and requesting feedback.

ACTION: CEO

Core Funding Scheme Strategic Priorities 2018-19

A list of four priorities were presented to the Board:

- Shared Space
- Cultural Celebration
- Addressing the Legacy of the Past
- Sectarianism (including dealing with paramilitarism)

The Board suggested that Cultural Celebration should be changed to Cultural Expression.

The Board also expressed concern that incomers were not explicitly mentioned within the four priorities. Mr. Jordan reminded members that the Core Funding Scheme remit did not explicitly include this as the area was covered under TEO Minority Ethnic Development Fund. The Board requested that staff look at addressing the issues of ethnicity with the TEO's agreement.

ACTION: Funding and Development Dir.

It was agreed that the four priorities were not exclusive but most other categories such as interfaces etc. would fall into sub-categories under these main four headings. The Board requested that CRC explicitly states that there is a commitment to community cohesion running through all of the themes.

ACTION: Funding and Development Dir.

Changes to the Core Funding Assessment Form

Members were advised that the changes were being proposed because of feedback and recommendations coming out of this financial year's round of applications. Groups felt that there was some duplication in the questions etc. and the form could be more user-friendly. For the same reasons the guidance notes will also be shortened and the terminology reviewed.

Mr. Jordan advised that the revised form and guidance notes would be brought to the Board at the next meeting.

There was some discussion about the timing of letters advising of funding decisions that were sent out for this year's round of funding. The Board agreed that the timetable be reviewed to ensure that groups know the outcome of their application as soon as possible.

It was acknowledged that some groups will fall into the category of only being funded if there is money available therefore there may need to be two rounds of appeal processes, one for the groups who are definitely not going to receive funding and one for those that may subject to funding.

The Board suggested that the appeal time be shortened from 28 days to 14 days.

Board members who have not been involved in the original decision currently sit on the assessment panel for Core Funding decisions. There was some debate as to whether or not the Board involvement in Core Funding decision should change now in line with the recommendations of the Governance review. Following discussion about the Board's role in assessment and appeal processes and taking account of the lack of clarity about the appointment date for the new Board members it was agreed that at the next meeting members would divide into those wishing to take part in the assessment process and those who wish to serve on the review panels.

ACTION: CHAIR

Scope of the Core Funding Scheme

Mr Jordan advised the Board that some groups have been requesting that the Core Funding Scheme should fund work with children and young people. He noted that TEO had made it clear that this was not within CRC's remit in the past. The Board requested that a letter be sent to the Department reflecting the groups' wish to have children and young people included in CRC funding.

ACTION: CEO

Media Grant Scheme:

[Paper CRC/191/08/17/05 refers]

Ms MacBride presented a paper on the Media Grant Scheme priorities for next financial year and outlined the purpose of the scheme. The amount of grant aid available to the scheme is £50,000 - £55,000 per annum.

With the advent of social media and YouTube etc. the media landscape is changing to a more digitized approach and this means that accessibility to film, podcasts etc. is much more widespread.

The media grant scheme's criteria is aligned to the four T:BUC priorities and reviewed annually by the Management Team and Board.

CRCA week is also a helpful tool in disseminating the media projects funded by CRC.

An evaluation from grantees is received at 6 months and 12 months.

The intellectual ownership of the product remains with the Producers, however, CRC has unlimited rights to use the material.

Ms MacBride outlined some the grants given to projects over the past 4 years.

Ms MacBride highlighted the need to revisit the criteria and undertake an internal review of the scheme to ensure its relevance going forward. Production companies and the type of projects being developed are changing and have become much more sophisticated because of the rapid advancement of technology. However, it is clear that more mainstream producers are much stronger at dissemination and promotion of their material and this cannot be ignored. Some of the material being produced needs to be very sensitively handled and cannot be disseminated online. This work is shown to various groups and discussions around the piece are facilitated. Members were keen that media projects should be disseminated through other websites such as CAIN. The CEO advised that a review of the current resources was underway to ensure that they are catalogued; that there is an indication if they should be used with a trained facilitator because the material is sensitive or challenging; and that they are regularly advertised using twitter

It was agreed that the strategic question for consideration by the Board was whether the resources used in the grant scheme should be used to commission work on specific themes through a tender process. The Members indicated they wished to input to the review during the consultation and agreed that an internal review could take place on the basis of the paper presented and any findings should be presented to the Board.

ACTION: Cultural Diversity Dir.

2871/17

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

2872/17

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 21st September @ 1.00pm