

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SECOND MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY
RELATIONS COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON FRIDAY 2nd JULY 2021
VIA VIDEO CALLING SOFTWARE**

3602/21 **Present:** Chair M McDonald, Mr R Campbell, Ms C Harris, Mr M McDonnell, Ms N Tandon, Ms S McClelland.

3603/21 **In Attendance:** Ms J Irwin (CEO), Mr P Jordan (Director of Funding and Development), Mr G McKeown (DFAP Director), Mr P Day (Engagement Director), Ms J Adamson (HR Manager), Ms H George (PA to CEO and Board).

3604/21 **Apologies:** Ms A Simpson (Board Member), Ms M Braniff (Board Member), Mr J McCallister (Board Member).

3605/21 **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

3606/21 **Minutes**

Members reviewed the minutes of the two hundred and twenty-first meeting of CRC's Board, which took place on 4th June, and agreed that they are an accurate account of that meeting.

3607/21 **Matters Arising**

The Chair presented the Board with an update on the matters arising from previous meetings.

He highlighted that, following direction from the Board, Mr J McCallister raised the issue of the NI Audit Office fee, at The Executive Office's Arm's Length Body, Audit Committee Chair's meeting. Attendees were concerned, and the Chair of the meeting agreed to raise it with the Northern Ireland Audit Office.

The Board noted the paper and thanked the Chair for this update.

3608/21 **Correspondence**

The Chair presented the Board with a letter drafted and send to The Executive Office on CRC's Pay Remit and compliance with FD (DoF) 09/18 (Pay Remit Approval Process and Guidance (2018/10)).

CRC received a response to this letter, informing them that TEO will now separate out these two issues, and will begin processing the outstanding Pay Remits.

CRC have submitted the 2018/19 and 2019/20 Pay Remits, and Mr G McKeown will begin completing the Business Case for the 2020/21 and 2022/23 Remits.

In addition, TEO agreed to review what other Arm's Length Bodies will be affected by this pension issue.

The Board thanked the CEO and Chair on their work progressing this issue, and welcomed this news.

3609/21

Chair's Business

The Chair updated the Board on a number of events and meetings he attended, following the previous Board meeting.

On the 7th June the Chair met with the CEO to review the papers for the Finance and General Purposes Committee, the meeting of which took place on the 11th June.

CRC hosted a Shared Learning Forum on 8th June, which the Chair attended.

The Chair, along with a number of other Board members, attended a photo-call at Customs House, to promote the opening of Good Relations Week registration.

A meeting of CRC's Funding Sub Group met on 29th June. This was a very productive meeting, with presentations from The Executive Office.

The Chair took part in 'Finance for Board Members' training in June. He asked for the presentation from this training to be circulated to all Board members.

ACTION: Ms H George to circulate the presentation from the finance training to all Board members.

The Board thanked the Chair for this update.

3610/21

Chief Executive's Update

The CEO updated the Board on a number of issues.

i) Meetings

CRC hosted a second Temperature Check with Core and North Belfast funded group, to check in on preparations for, and concerns about, the summer period. She stated that the mood of this meeting was much more positive than the previous check-in. To encourage a joined-up approach across agencies, Chief Superintendent R Henderson spoke at this meeting, along with Ms C Karayiannis from Youth Services at the Department of Education, and Ms S Simpson from the Locality Team at the NI Executives Programme for Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime. CRC offered to hold a follow up meeting for the groups if they wish. A future event will be held on the Tackling Paramilitarism programme, and the PSNI confirmed their renewed commitment to neighbourhood policing. The CEO noted that political leadership to de-escalate tensions will be essential over the summer.

The Funding Sub Group met on 29th June. The CEO thanked Maire Branniff for chairing the meeting, staff for the preparation and representatives from TEO for attending and presenting at this meeting. She hoped that further collaborative working would emerge from participation in this very useful discussion.

The Shared Learning Forum took place on 8th June, looking at wellbeing and how to combat burnout. The CEO thanked staff for preparation and Ms C. Kane from the Jethro Centre, for facilitating this session.

The CEO thanked the Chair and Board members for attending the Good Relations Week launch photo-call. She apologised for not being able to attend this event due to a medical appointment.

The next meeting of the Decade Roundtable will be taking place on 23rd September. All Board members are welcome to attend.

The CEO and Mr G McKeown met with the successful Peace Monitor tenders, to discuss the contract and initiate the work.

The CEO attended the Boardroom Apprentice launch event, and caught up with Mr D Johnston, who will be resuming his apprentice position on CRC's Board in September.

ii) Strategic Plan and Operational Plan

As reported at the last meeting the Operational Plan has been submitted to TEO. It is still awaiting Ministerial sign off.

iii) Staffing

CRC held two training sessions on the Dignity at Work Charter, these sessions were on holding difficult conversations and how to raise concerns. The CEO thanked Jo Adamson for her work with Heads Together in advance of the sessions.

CRC continue to progress the cloud IT system migration. The CEO thanked Gerard McKeown and Ellana Tomasso for their work on this project.

The Board thanked the CEO for this update, and noted the paper.

3611/21

Community Engagement Update

Mr P Day presented the Board with a paper updating them on a number of items in the Engagement directorate.

The Team continue to plan the TBUC Engagement Forum, due to take place on 21st September. The Executive Office are coordinating an international input for the event. Due to this element, the start time for the Forum will be late afternoon. CRC and TEO are meeting weekly to discuss the planning of this event.

The Shared Learning Forum, which took place on the 8th June, received very positive feedback. The team are considering how to bring the learning from this meeting to CRC staff.

The first Problem Solving Circle took place on Friday 25th June. These meetings will take place on the last Friday of every month. A specific issue will be brought to each meeting, and discussed by attendees.

Mr P Day thanked the Chair and Board members for attending the Good Relations Week 2021 launch photo-call, and thanked the Chair for speaking to the press. The Engagement Team are collecting videos from young people, promoting the event, and hope to receive similar videos from Ministers.

The Decade Roundtable will meet again during Good Relations Week, with presentations from the author Mr I Gibbons and community groups.

The Board thanked Mr P Day for this update and noted the paper.

3612/21 Funding and Development Update

Mr P Jordan updated the Board on items under the Funding Directorate.

i) The Temperature Check

Mr P Jordan thanked Mr P Day for his assistance in organising this meeting, and thanked the Department of Education, PSNI and Tackling Paramilitarism Programme for presenting. The key points from this meeting include:

- Groups are much more positive about their ability to deal with any situations that arise over the summer.
- Challenges include how gatherings are being promoted and policed during this Covid period.
- Bonfires and flags are being displayed in area where they have never been before.
- The groups in attendance agreed that more should be done to emphasise the good work that goes on all the time, and welcomed the opportunity to do this during Good Relations Week
- Attendees stated that the current political rhetoric is unhelpful to the situation.

ii) Funding Grant Schemes

The Community Relations/Cultural Diversity Grant is currently open and receiving a lot of interest.

The Core Funding contracts have been issued and the first payments are now being made. The Funding team will be meeting with the groups to review their work plans.

The North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Fund contracts have also been issued, and work plan review meetings will be taking place in due course.

The Publication Scheme is now open to applications.

iii) Funding Sub-Group Update

The Funding Sub-Group met on 29th June, with input from Mr S Brannigan TEO Outcomes Team, Ms K Smyth TEO GIS Mapping, Ms A Tohill TEO Head of Good Relations Delivery Team.

This meeting reviewed how CRC and TEO conduct evaluations, how data is collected, and how it is shared. Attendees agreed that further discussions are needed on how to ensure a more joined up approach to ensure gaps are covered, and to discuss the priorities of the schemes.

The Chair stated that the Funding Sub-Group meeting was very useful. The TEO presented details of their GIS mapping project, which will be a brilliant resource when populated with all areas of impact.

The Chair raised an issue related to the potential for CRC to seek funding from a non-TEO source. The Board agreed to let the Chair pursue this idea, and discuss with The Executive Office in the first instance.

ACTION: The Chair to discuss with TEO, the proposal to seek funding from a non-TEO source.

The Board thanked Mr P Jordan for this update and noted the paper.

3613/12 Dignity at Work Policy

Mr J Adamson presented the Board with a draft Dignity at Work Policy. A consultation has taken place with staff, and updates were made. This policy combines CRC's Harassment Policy and Bullying Policy. It sets out how to raise a complaint formally and informally.

It includes a section on victimisation, to reassure staff that they will not be subject to unfair treatment if they raise a complaint or assist another member of staff with raising a complaint.

A form is included in the policy, which will assist staff completing a formal complaint.

The Board suggested an addition to the line in the victimisation section, page 6 to read "Ostracising or excluding colleagues from day to day work, events or social activities".

ACTION: Ms J Adamson to amend the Dignity at Work Policy section on 'Victimisation' to read "Ostracising or excluding colleagues from day to day work, events or social activities".

On the inclusion of this amendment the Board approved this policy. The Chair suggested that the paper on the Dignity at Work Champion should be included as an appendix to this paper.

The LRA Implementation Group will be convened to review the Policy, and the Union will be consulted.

3614/21 LRA Implementation Update

The Board was presented with a paper updating on the implementation of the LRA Plan.

The Board discussed the feedback session staff took part in during their recent training, with some suggesting that the percentage outcomes were not very positive if taken from a health and safety perspective. Mr J Adamson stated that this feedback was sought in the context of having difficult conversations rather than health and safety. Staff suggested that the binary 'yes and no' options in the questionnaire didn't give enough choice, and answers may vary from time to time in different circumstances.

The CEO added that the results of this survey indicate that this is an area CRC need to continue to monitor.

Ms J Adamson informed the Board that staff attended two training sessions on how to have difficult conversations, and how to make a complaint. Staff will receive a toolkit, following this training, in due course.

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

3615/21 Finance and General Purposes Committee

i) 11th June 2021 F&GP Committee Meeting

The Chair provided the Board with an update on the key points from the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting which took place on 11th June 2021.

Mr G McKeown presented the F&GP committee with CRC's 2020/21 Quarter Four Delivery Report. He provided assurances that all of the activities and outputs identified in the 20/21 Business Plan have been delivered, excluding a small number which have been superseded.

The Committee were presented with a summary of CRC's financial performance in 20/21. CRC awarded £2.1M in grants during the year. This was £29K below budget, due to the effect of Covid-19 and uncertainty faced by groups. CRC's underspend currently sits at 0.9%, which is within CRC target of 1.5%.

CRC have completed the first draft of the Annual Report and Account, which was presented at this Committee meeting. This draft will now go to the Audit Office

for review, and then to the Board to approve at the AGM. Mr G McKeown added that the NI Audit Office have asked to receive CRC's Annual Report and Accounts on 23rd July for review, then the audit will begin in August.

The Committee received a draft of CRC's 2021/22 budget. CRC were awarded an extra £20K from TEO, compared to the 20/21 budget. The budget allocates 86% of resource to funding and engagement activities, which is consistent with previous years.

The new Vouching and Verification procedures were implemented in April 2021, and are continuing to work well.

The number of days lost to staff sick leave was down by 54% compared to the previous year. This is a saving of £21K

The Board thanked the Chair for this update.

ii) 10th March 2021 F&GP Committee Meeting

The Chair presented the Board with the agreed minutes of CRC's previous Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting, which took place on the 10th March 2021.

The Board noted these minutes.

3616/21 Any Other Business

The Chair wished Board and staff members a good summer, and thanked them for their work and support over the last year.

Ms C Harris informed the Board that she will be on maternity leave during Septembers so will not be able to attend that meeting. The Board congratulated Ms C Harris on this news and expressed their best wishes to her.

3617/21 Date of Next Meeting

17th September 2021 10:30am

29th October 2021 10:30am