

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIRST MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY  
RELATIONS COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON FRIDAY 4<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021  
VIA VIDEO CALLING SOFTWARE**

**3582/21 Present:** Chair M McDonald, Mr R Campbell, Ms M Braniff, Mr J McCallister, Mr M McDonnell, Ms N Tandon, Ms S McClelland.

**3583/21 In Attendance:** Ms J Irwin (CEO), Mr P Jordan (Director of Funding and Development), Mr G McKeown (DFAP Director), Mr P Day (Engagement Director), Mr M McGlade (Comms Officer), Ms E Tomasso (IT Officer), Ms H George (PA to CEO and Board).

**3584/21 Apologies:** Ms A Simpson (Board Member), Ms C Harris (Board Member)

**3585/21 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

**3586/21 Welcome**

The Chair welcomed back Mr G McKeown, and the Board congratulated him on the birth of his baby.

Mr G McKeown thanked the Board for their card and the kind words shared during his paternity leave.

The CEO thanked Ms T Wilson for her help during Mr G McKeown's paternity leave, and welcomed Mr G McKeown back.

**3587/21 Minutes**

Members reviewed the minutes of the two hundred and twentieth meeting of CRC's Board, which took place on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2021, and agreed that they are an accurate account of that meeting.

**3588/21 Matters Arising**

The Chair informed the Board that the outstanding Matters Arising have now all been completed, including the Community Safety presentations being shared with Board members; and the scheduling of a Temperature Check meeting.

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

**3589/21 Correspondence**

The CEO referred Board members to the correspondence from The Executive Office. This correspondence is the official confirmation of CRC's Budget. The Board were previously presented with the indicative budget.

CRC will receive a budget of £2.671K during the year 2021/22.

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

**3590/21 Chair's Update**

The Chair informed the Board of two meetings he attended following the previous Board meeting.

He and the CEO met with the John and Pat Hume Foundation on the 28<sup>th</sup> April to hear about the Foundations aims, and to discuss common issues.

The Chair attended the TBUC Engagement Forum on the 18<sup>th</sup> May. He commended the team for their work on this event.

**3591/21 Peace Monitor Six**

The Chair informed the Board that CRC circulated an invitation to tender for the next Peace Monitoring Report.

One bid was received from ARK, a joint Queens University and Ulster University endeavour.

The Tender decision panel met in May to score the bid. The panel agreed that this bid met the criteria and recommended that the Board approve it.

The Board approved the panel's recommendation.

The group will now be contacted for contract initiation.

**3592/21 Temperature Check**

The CEO informed the Board that a Temperature Check meeting was held with Core Funded and North Belfast funded groups. This meeting aimed to establish views from these groups on the upcoming summer period, and any concerns they may have.

The CEO presented attendees with a paper summarising the discussions at this meeting. She highlighted a number of concerns raised:

- There is growing anxiety among young people, not involved in disorder, about predicted disturbances over the summer.
- The building of bonfires and flying of flags has begun much earlier this year.
- Illegal band parades have been taking place.

A number of items were proposed:

- Groups asked for the Department of Education to fund further diversionary work, and detached youth work over the summer months, and beyond.
- Groups suggested that there should be better co-ordination of any action taken by the PSNI, other authorities and those working in the community.
- The groups commented on the lack of reactionary funding available. CRC will ensure that groups are all aware of CRC's CRCD and Pathfinder funds.
- Groups raised concerns about politicians and senior civil servants speaking to organisations that claim to represent communities, rather than the organisations working on the ground.
- The groups highlighted Covid-19s impact, including the boredom of young people, concern for the effect of large gatherings, and detached youth work unable to take place during regulations.

A number of wider issues were raised:

- Interconnectedness between good relations and social welfare issues.
- Succession Planning – burnout and retiring of important staff
- Communication – the role of social media, and the need for more positive press stories to be disseminated.

A representative from the PSNI and the Department of Education will be invited to attend the next meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> June.

The Board thanked the Chair for this update and noted the report. They commented that the groups raised a number of incisive points and that conclusions from these discussions should be fed back to the TEO TBUC team.

## **3593/21 CEO's Report**

The CEO updated Board members on a number of items.

### **i) Covid-19**

CRC's Continuity Plans continue to work well. Preparation for blended working is advanced. Teams have been discussing their needs and preferences in terms of working from the office and working from home.

Changes will likely need to be made to CRC's HR policies, which the DFAP team are reviewing. Any policy changes will need to go to consultation with the Union, and then on to the Board for approval.

The Engagement Team are hoping that Good Relations Week, in September, will be held in a blended style.

ii) Operational Plan

CRCs' Operational Plan has been updated with the agreed budget. This document awaits Ministerial approval.

iii) Government Departments

The CEO was asked to review the new Tackling Paramilitarism awareness campaign, on illegal money lending. Support services will be made available to those affected by this issue.

The Northern Ireland Office have begun their advertisement campaign on their Centenary Programme, details of which were presented at the previous Decade Roundtable meeting.

The Irish Government Department of Foreign Affairs presented details of their own Centenary Programme to June's Decade Roundtable.

If Board members would like to receive a link to these two Centenary Programmes, please let Ms H George know.

**ACTION:** Board members to inform Ms H George if they would like to receive a details of the DFA and NIO's Centenary Programmes.

iv) Events & Meetings

The Funding Sub Group held a meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> May, and a planning meeting took place on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June.

The TBUC Engagement Forum took place on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June. This was the first meeting attended by Mr C Stewart and Mr R Cushnie, TEO. The First Minister and Junior Minister were in attendance.

The CEO and Mr G McKeown attended a meeting with the Northern Ireland Audit Office regarding the upcoming 2020/21 audit.

Internal Meetings continue to take place

The Board thanked the CEO for this update and noted the report.

Mr P Day presented the Board with an update on planning around Good Relations Week 2021.

A Steering Group has been established with members from multiple agencies and a number of youth ambassadors.

The proposed theme of Good Relations Week 2021 is 'Brighter Days Ahead', highlighting young people's contribution to Good Relations and Peacebuilding. A logo has been designed by young people. The Board were presented with this draft logo. The indicative dates for this Week are 20<sup>th</sup> September to 26<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

Mr P Day informed the Board that this event will likely take a blended approach, with a number of events being held online, and a number of in-person events too. He added that this is dependent on government guidance and regulations.

A Board member suggested that a number of youth ambassadors could be asked to monitor their own perspective of issues which may arise over the summer, and present this during Good Relations Week. Mr P Day welcomed this idea, and will raise it with youth ambassadors at the upcoming Steering Group meeting.

Ms N Tandon suggested a contact for Mr P Day to speak to, from the Syrian community, about his story and involvement with peacebuilding in his area. Mr P Day welcomed this suggestion, and asked Ms N Tandon to share these contact details with him.

**ACTION:** Ms N Tandon to share contact details with Mr P Day, of a young man in the Syrian Community.

The Board approved the proposed plan for Good Relations Week 2021.

### **3595/21      Our Peace, Our Stories**

Mr P Day informed the Board that the Engagement Team have been working on a project titled 'Our Peace, Our Stories' over the last number of months. Mr M McGlade has created a website which tells the story of CRC's work, and brings good news stories together.

Mr M McGlade presented this website to Board members. The website has a multi-media structure, with a number of resources and stories displayed. Podcasts, videos, infographics and movies are hosted on the site, with links provided to further resources. 30 pages display the stories of projects created by a number of CRC funded groups, as well as CRC's own content. A video presenting CRC's funding schemes is included, as well as a statistical

breakdown of the work over the past year. Guides, tips, and messaging ideas are also presented on the website.

The Board commended Mr M McGlade on this work, noting the website's dynamic and innovative format, which will attract a younger audience. The Board were amazed by the resources presented.

The Chair thanked Mr M McGlade for his presentation, highlighting his skills in website design, but also his clear passion for these stories and this work.

The CEO thanked Mr M McGlade for his work bringing these stories together.

Mr P Day added that the Engagement Team are planning CRC's website to be a hub, and link to this new website, along with a 'Acorns website', Decade Roundtable Principles website, and the Good Relations Week website.

The Board suggested an event to launch this resource during Good Relations Week 2021, possibly during the TBUC Engagement Forum

### **3596/21 Community Engagement**

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

The TBUC Engagement Forum took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> May. Feedback on this event has been very positive, with the First Minister and Junior Minister in attendance. Following the circulation of an event survey, the result shows a 4.5/5 rating for this event. The only suggestions are around the need for more discussion time at the event. Mr P Day recognised this issue, and stated that this is difficult to facilitate online.

The next Forum is due to take place on 21<sup>st</sup> September, during Good Relations Week. TEO have suggested a number of international delegates to contribute to the event.

Mr P Day asked that the Board pass on any details of events being held in a blended format over the next few months, to assist him with CRC's GR Week planning.

**ACTION:** Board members to pass on details of any events being held in a blended format over the next few months.

A Shared Learning Forum will be held on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> June on the subject of self-care. Ms C Kane from the Jethro Centre will be leading this session.

CRC's social media, website visits, and mailing list continue to grow monthly.

The Engagement Team continue to liaise with the Southern Health Trust on how they can get involved in Good Relations Week 2021. Core Funding Groups and young organisations are also being encouraged to get involved.

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

### **3596/21 Funding and Development Update**

Mr P Jordan provided the Board with a verbal update on a number of items under his directorate.

The Community Relations/Cultural Diversity Grant Scheme is now open, with 20 applications in and another 28 in progress. There is a lot of interest in this scheme, and many more applications will likely be submitted when Good Relations Week event registration is open.

CRC have received a number of proposals from groups for Pathfinder Grants. This scheme covers reactionary and emergency projects.

Mr D McNally has completed the Core Fund 2020/21 evaluations and will present this at the next Board meeting.

Ms J Hamilton has completed the 2020/21 CRCD fund review and will present this to the Board in due course.

Mr P Jordan thanked his team and colleague for their work on the Temperature Check in his absence.

The North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Fund contracts have been drafted and will be send to groups next week, following TEO's approval.

The refreshed Media Grant Scheme will be launched in June.

The Board thanked Mr P Jordan for this update.

### **3597/21 Funding Sub Group**

#### **i) Verbal Update from Chair**

Ms M Braniff, Chair of the Funding Sub Group, presented the Board with an update on the work of the Group.

She informed attendees that the membership of the Sub-Group is not static, and all Board members are welcome to attend the upcoming meetings.

CRC will be inviting TEO to attend the next meeting, to discuss the funding landscape.

The Sub-Group are focusing on three categories:

- Short term issues that CRC has direct control over (including any changes to Core Fund for September)
- Medium term issues that are achievable without larger scale policy change but will require discussion with agencies outside CRC
- Longer term issues that would probably require larger scale change in the policy, funding and delivery environment but could be encouraged by facilitating or encouraging interagency discussions in the first instance.

Following the presentation of many papers from the Funding Team, the Sub-Group will now look at actions and practical issues going forward. This includes a review of the funding criteria, and the consideration of extending the Welcome Statements to cover a three year period.

The CEO noted that Ms M Braniff is doing a great job chairing this Group, and brings a lot of her own expertise to these discussions.

The Board thanked Ms M Braniff for this update.

ii) Minutes of the 19<sup>th</sup> April Funding Sub Group Meeting

The Board noted these minutes.

**3598/21 LRA Implementation Update**

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with a paper updating them on the progress of the LRA Implementation Plan.

Teams have begun discussions around CRC's values and how to implement these into everyday work. The Management Team receive this feedback and will continue to have their own discussions on these values.

The Dignity at Work Policy has been drafted and a consultation process with staff has been completed. The Management Team and staff will receive updated version before going to the Board for decision.

Training is planned on the Dignity at Work Charter to take place on June. HeadsTogether will then carry out an engagement survey with staff in September. This project will be concluded by the end of this year.

The Chair reiterated his commitment to this work, and suggested attending an upcoming Staff Meeting. Ms H George will send the Chair an invitation to the upcoming Staff Meetings.

**ACTION:** Ms H George to send the Chair an invitation to the upcoming Staff Meetings.

**3599/21      Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

i)      Verbal Update from Chair

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mr J McCallister, presented the Board with a verbal update on May's meeting.

The Internal Auditors presented the Committee with the results of their review into CRC's Grants Management and Administration, and Board Effectiveness. Both audits received a 'satisfactory' rating with only one recommendation rated as priority three.

The Internal Auditors reviewed CRC's implementation of the previous year's audit recommendations and found them all to be implemented.

The new Vouching and Verification Procedures were reviewed and found to be comprehensive and appropriate.

The Audit Committee received the Internal Audit Assurance Report – which noted that CRC's systems relating to risk management, control and governance were adequate and operating effectively.

ASM presented the 2021-24 Audit Strategy, which includes reviews into: grants management; IT systems; information security.

The Board congratulated CRC for their satisfactory internal audit rating.

The Audit Committee also received the Northern Ireland Audit Office's 2021/21 CRC Audit Strategy.

Two risks noted in the report included the 6% salary adjustment and the implementation of vouching and verification procedure during Covid-19 restrictions.

The error reporting threshold for this audit is £1,300, any errors below this will not be contained in the final report, but will be reported to CRC's Accounting Officer

The Audit fee for this year is £22K, which is a 9% increase from the previous year. The Audit Office stated that this increase has been applied to all audits across the sector.

The Chair of the Audit Committee asked the Board for their views on this fee increase. The Board noted their concern highlighting that the fee has increased significantly over the last five years with no change in the level of

service, and, in addition, CRC's internal audits show that risk has been reduced and well mitigated.

Mr G McKeown informed the Board that he contact three other ALBs to discover if a similar increase had been applied to their audit fees. He found that one had a similar increase, and the second did not. The third is yet to reply.

The Board agreed that the Chair of the Audit Committee should write to CRC's Chair expressing these concerns. The Chair will then share this correspondence with TEO.

The Chair of the Audit Committee stated that he will be raising this issue at the upcoming ALB's ARAC Chair meeting, held by the TEO in June.

**ACTION:** Mr J McCallister to write to CRC's Chair, expressing the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee's concern around the increased NIAO audit fee.

**ACTION:** The Chair will pass the ARAC Chair's correspondence on to TEO and ask for advice

**ACTION:** Mr J McCallister to raise the issue of this increase in NIAO audit fee at the upcoming ALB ARAC Chairs meeting.

ii) Risk Register Summary

Mr J McCallister, the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee presented the Board with CRC's Risk Register Summary.

He highlighted that the Committee agreed that the 'Staff Morale' and 'Covid-19' risk should continue to be rated as 'amber'.

The 'Implementation of DoF pay remit guidance' continues to be rated 'red', and the 'budget allocation' risk was downgraded to 'green' as the budget has now been confirmed.

iii) Minutes of the 13<sup>th</sup> April ARAC meeting

The Board noted these minutes.

**3600/21 Any Other Business**

None

**3601/21 Date of Next Meeting**

2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021 10:30am