

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY EIGHTH MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY  
RELATIONS COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON FRIDAY 11<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022 10:00AM  
VIA VIDEO CALLING SOFTWARE**

**3721/22**      **Present:** Chair Mr M McDonald, Ms M Braniff , Mr R Campbell, Mr J McCallister, Mr M McDonnell, Ms A Simpson, Ms N Tandon, Ms C Harris.

**3722/22**      **In Attendance:** Dr J Irwin (CEO), Mr P Hynds (Director of Finance, Admin, and Personnel), Mr P Day (Director of Engagement), Mr P Jordan (Director of Funding and Development), Ms J Adamson (HR Manager), Ms E Tomasso (IT Officer), Ms H George (PA to CEO and Board),

**3723/22**      **Observers:** Mr D Johnston (CRC's Boardroom Apprentice).

**3724/22**      **Apologies:** Ms S McClelland.

**3725/22**      **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*

No conflicts of interest were declared.

**3726/22**      **Welcome**

The Chair welcomed Ms C Harris back following maternity leave.

**3727/22**      **Minutes**

Attendees reviewed the minutes of the 227<sup>th</sup> Board meeting which took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2022. The Board approved the minutes.

**3728/22**      **Matters Arising**

The Chair informed the Board that there are currently no ongoing actions or matters arising.

**3729/22**      **Correspondence**

The CEO presented the Board with a piece of correspondence from The Executive Office.

The Executive Office wrote to CRC to confirm that the 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 outstanding Pay Remits have now been approved by their office.

The CEO thanked Mr G McKeown, Ms T Wilson, TEO, and the Board for their work to resolve this issue.

The resolving of this issue now enables CRC to begin the recruitment process.

The CEO thanked Mr P Hynds and Ms S McMenamin for their work to ensure these payments are made in the March 2022 pay.

The CEO assured the Board that all staff members who no longer work at CRC, but are entitled to this pay will receive it.

**3730/22**

### **Chair's Business**

#### **i) Change of Bank Signatories**

The Board approved Mr Philip Hynds to become a signatory for The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council Bank of Ireland Account. This will enable him to carry out transactions and give instructions related to this account.

Mr P Hynds will replace Mr G McKeown the previous Director of Finance, Admin and Personnel who will be removed from the list of signatories. Philip will join the remaining Bank of Ireland signatories: the Chair Mr M McDonald, The Chief Executive Officer Ms J Irwin, the Human Relations Manager Ms J Adamson, and the Director of Community Engagement Mr P Day.

#### **ii) Chair's Update**

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

On 1<sup>st</sup> February the Chair met with Mr G Johnston, TEO, to conduct his appraisal meeting.

The Chair attended the Decade of Centenaries event on 22<sup>nd</sup> February. This event marked the tenth anniversary of the Roundtable.

The Chair met with a member of staff of 23<sup>rd</sup> February as his role as Dignity at Work Champion. The Board will have a closed session at the end of today's meeting to discuss this further.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> February the Chair, along with a number of Board members, attended a panel session to review the Good Relations Award nominations, and agree a winner.

The Chair attended the TEBUC Engagement Forum on 1<sup>st</sup> March. This event featured presentations from a number of private sector representatives. The event provided an exciting opportunity to further engage with the private sector. The Chair suggested that a follow up was necessary with the private sector and the community/voluntary sector. The Chair suggested that CRC could arrange a Shared Learning Forum in the future where representatives from the private sector present to the community/voluntary sector on navigating their grant systems.

The Chair and CEO attended the second meeting of TEO's Arm's Length Body Forum. A number of sub groups were created, looking at the Partnership Agreements, and the department's Business Plan.

The Board thanked the Chair for this update.

**3731/22**

### **Operational Plan**

The CEO informed the committee that the draft Operational Plan has been shared with TEO for comment. While TEO have not shared a written response, the CEO met with Mr C Gardner on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March to discuss the Plan.

TEO raised two points on the Operational Plan. They advised CRC that there is uncertainty around the budget, so cannot confirm what resources CRC will receive for 2022/23. TEO also asked CRC to assist the Department with the review of TBUC Strategy and drafting of a new strategy.

The Board agreed for reference to CRC assisting with the TBUC Strategy review and drafting of a new strategy to be added to the Operational Plan.

The Chair informed attendees that CRC will soon be organising a meeting for Board members and staff to discuss a funding strategy going forward.

The Board discussed how meetings will be held in the future. CRC will continue to follow the Covid-19 government advice. Meetings can be held in a hybrid method if some members would like to attend in person and some online. The Community Engagement Team are currently researching how to hold meetings in this manner. The CEO highlighted that measures would need to be put in place to ensure that those online would be able to fully participate in the meeting, and not be disadvantaged by not being in the room.

The Board thanked the CEO for this update.

**3732/22**

### **Chief Executive Officer's Report**

The CEO updated the Board on a number of items and events attended following the previous Board meeting.

#### **i) Government Department Engagement**

The Department have been in contact with ALBs to ask if any staff members have Russian or Ukrainian language skills to assist with refugees. CRC have asked staff to respond if they have these skills.

#### **ii) Funding**

The Core Funding decision meeting has taken place. Those unsuccessful have the opportunity now to ask for the decision to be reviewed. The CEO reminded the Board to continue to avoid any conflicts of interest during this time.

She thanked Mr P Jordan and the Funding Team for their work on applications and the Board members for their assessments.

### iii) CRC Events

The CEO thanked the Engagement Team for their work on the TBUC Engagement Forum. The Head of the Civil Service and TEO's Permanent Secretary were both in attendance. The next Forum will be on the theme of Sustainability and the Environment. The CEO asked Board members to pass on any details to Mr P Day of good relations projects related to this theme.

**ACTION:** Board members to share details of any projects they know of on the theme of good relations and the environment/sustainability.

The Good Relations Award Panel met in February and agreed a number of winners. The CEO thanked panel members for their work reviewing nominations.

An event took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, marking ten years of the Decade of Centenaries. The event reflected on the work of the roundtable, and how the learning can help inform the marking of living history.

### iv) Audit

The CEO informed members that the two whistleblowing investigations are now closed. The Public Disclosure Forms have been returned to The Executive Office.

On 17<sup>th</sup> February the CEO met with the Northern Ireland Audit Office to discuss the strategy for the 2021/22 audit. A draft Strategy has now been received and will be presented at the next Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

### v) Staffing

The CEO welcomed Mr P Hynds to his first Board meeting, following his temporary appointment as Director of Finance, Admin, and Personnel. Ms T Wilson's last day at CRC was 4<sup>th</sup> March and Ms S McMenamin has been appointed the temporary Finance Manager.

The recruitment of a Policy and Engagement Officer role has been completed, with Ms K McKinty taking up this position.

Ms F Dennison will be taking a career break from CRC for one year, and will be taking up a position at the Belfast City Council. The CEO wished Ms F Dennison all the best for this new role.

The CEO thanked the Chair for his support and guidance during this period of transition.

vi) Other

The CEO informed attendees that Mr N Gibson has been appointed Permanent Secretary for the Department of Finance. He has therefore stepped down from the Peace Monitor Advisory Group.

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

**3733/22 Purchase Order**

Mr P Hynds presented the Board with a purchase order for their review.

The CEO informed attendees that CRC had tendered for Good Relations Week PR assistance. There were a number of applications, and following the review of the proposals, ASG were awarded the tender. As the cost is higher than £10K the Board are required to review and approve the purchase order.

The Board approved the £27,526 purchase order.

Mr P Day added that the cost this year is slightly less than the previous year. ASG's application was impressive and the team look forward to working with them.

**3734/22 Dignity at Work Implementation Update**

Ms J Adamson provided the Board with a report, updating on the implementation of the Dignity at Work Plan.

She highlighted that a team building session was put on hold due to the recent changes in staffing and other HR priorities. Ms J Adamson will now liaise with HeadsTogeher to organise this session.

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

Ms C Harris left the meeting.

**3735/22 Pay Remit**

Mr P Hynds presented the Board with an update on CRC's outstanding Pay Remits. As informed earlier in the meeting TEO have now approved all outstanding Pay Remits.

Mr P Hynds is working with the Department to ensure that there are no tax implications for staff receiving this back pay in one lump sum.

The CEO assured the Board that CRC have made provisions in the budget for these payments throughout the year, and the cash resources are available this month to make these payments.

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

**3736/22 Staffing Update**

Ms J Adamson provided the Board with a report updating on CRC's staffing situation.

CRC have two temporary staff members in at the moment, filling the DFAP Director and Finance Manager positions.

A successful recruitment exercise has completed to fill the Policy and Engagement Officer position, while Ms G Attwood is on secondment with the Department.

Recruitment can now begin to permanently fill the DFAP positions.

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

**3737/22**

### **Engagement**

#### i) Good Relations Award

Mr P Day informed the Board that the Good Relations Award panel met in February to review the nominations. The panel recommended one overall winner and seven runners up.

The Board reviewed the proposed winner and runners up, and approved them.

Mr P Day thanked the panel members for reviewing the nominations. A virtual event will be held in due course to announce the winners.

#### ii) Engagement Sector Update

Mr P Day provided the Board with a report, updating on the work of the Engagement Directorate.

The TBUC Engagement Forum took place on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March. The event had a great turn out, and a large number of new participants. The Team will now consider how to further develop these relationships.

An event will be held on 15<sup>th</sup> March for the Core Funded and North Belfast groups on the work of the Tackling Paramilitarism Project.

A Shared Learning Forum will be taking place on 30<sup>th</sup> March to present details of the TBUC review process. CRC will be assisting TEO with this review by facilitating three events giving groups the opportunity to provide feedback.

Mr P Day added that the newsletter and social media subscribers' lists continues to increase. Mr D Johnston suggested that the Engagement Team consider setting up a CRC LinkedIn account, as this may help engage with the private sector.

The Chair reminded Board members that they often express an interest for more focus in meetings on the front line work. He suggested that, going forward, Board members attend as many CRC events as possible, as this is where the front line work will be visible. He suggested that in the next term of the Board, members will be nominated to attend certain CRC events to ensure a Board presence.

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

3738/22

## Funding and Development

### i) Core Funding Guidance

Mr P Jordan presented the Board with a proposed amendment to be made to the Core Funding Guidance for 2023/24. He explained the background to this amendment, and why it is now necessary.

The Board approved the following wording to be added to the Guidance:

*It is recommended that you not submit your application until you are certain that you have completed every question and attached everything that is required.. However, should you submit your application and subsequently realise that you have omitted key information, you may withdraw your application and submit a new bid provided this occurs **prior to the deadline.** **This must be completed before the submission deadline as no changes can be made to your application once the deadline has passed.***

Mr P Jordan added that further amendments may be proposed following future meetings of the Funding Sub Group.

### ii) Funding and Development Sector Update

Mr P Jordan presented the Board with a report updating on the work of the Funding and Development Directorate.

The Funding Team are working on completing the end of year close downs for grants, and making the final payments.

The Core Funding decision meeting took place on 16<sup>th</sup> February. There were 28 applications, 13 of which were offered funding. 9 groups submitted fundable bids, however, due to resource issues CRC are not able to support them. CRC will meet with TEO on 14<sup>th</sup> March to discuss the impact of the resource issue. Unsuccessful groups are welcome to apply to CRC's other funding streams.

The Media Grant awardees have begun their work and are on schedule to complete their films in April.

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

3739/22

## Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

### i) Verbal Update on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mr J McCallister, provided the Board with a briefing on the meeting which took place on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

The field work for CRC's three internal audits (Grants, Human Resources, and follow up of audit recommendations) is now complete. The audit of 'community engagement' will be taking place in March, and feedback on these four audits will be provided at a future ARAC meeting

Two whistleblowing cases have been appropriately investigated and have now been closed down.

Only one recommendation remains on CRCs Audit register. This relates to the implementation of DoF Guidance FD (DFP) 08/14, 09/18. CRC have done all it can to progress this issue, and it currently sits with TEO to resolve.

ii) Risk Register

Mr J McCallister provided the Board with CRC's Risk Register.

He highlighted two new risks in the Register.

'Impact of Delay in Implementing Pay Award'. Following the correspondence from TEO confirming that all outstanding pay remits have been approved, this will be reviewed at the next Committee meeting.

'Departure of Finance Director'. The CEO reassured the Committee that this risk has been mitigated with the filling of the DFAP Director position on a temporary basis. Mr P Hynds has now been in this position for over one month, and brings with him a lot of experience in this area.

iii) Minutes of ARAC meeting 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Mr J McCallister present the Board with the approved minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which took place on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

The Board noted the minutes and thanked Mr J McCallister for this update.

**3740/22 Any Other Business**

None

**3741/22 Date of Next Meeting**

Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2022 10am

**3742/22 Closed Session**

Staff members left the meeting and the Board had a closed session on a Dignity at Work issue.