

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND NINTH MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON FRIDAY 13TH
DECEMBER 2019 12 NOON, THE SIGNAL CENTRE, 2 INNOTECH DRIVE,
BALLOO ROAD, BANGOR, BT19 7PD**

- 2218/19** **Present:** Chair Martin McDonald, Mr Rory Campbell, Ms Sheila McClelland, Mr Michael McDonnell, Ms Audrey Simpson, Ms Nisha Tandon.
- 2219/19** **In attendance:** Ms Jacqueline Irwin (CEO), Ms Jo Adamson (HR Manager), Mr Peter Day (Community Engagement), Mr Paul Jordan (Funding and Development), Mr Gerard McKeown (Finance, Admin, & Personnel), Ms Hannah George (PA to CEO and Board)

2220/19 **In attendance:** Mr Andy Cole (TEO), Mr Chris Gardner (TEO)

2221/19 **Apologies:** Ms Máire Braniff, Ms Claire Harris, Mr John McCallister,

2222/19 **Closed Session**

The meeting began with a closed session between The Executive Office and Board members only.

ACTION: Chair to draft a memo to staff regarding this session.

Mr A Cole and Mr C Gardner left the meeting and the following staff members joined the meeting: The CEO, Ms J Adamson, Mr P Day, Ms H George, Mr P Jordan, and Mr G McKeown.

When staff joined the meeting, the Chair noted that the session discussed the outstanding Pay Remit and pension. He stated that he would draft a memo to go out to all staff outlining the plan for a sub-group, the negotiation process, and who on the staff side should be involved.

2223/19 **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

2224/19 **NICRC Management Statement/Financial Memorandum**

Mr G McKeown stated that, with the introduction of a new Board, TEO undertook to complete a review of CRC's existing MSFM. Board members

have been provided with a copy of the revised MSFM, a summary of what the key changes are, and a copy of the old MSFM.

He advised Board members that the changes are broken down into three sections:

- Changes to note – simple changes to references and terminology
- Changes to accept – minor changes which align the MSFM with current practice
- Substantive changes

He then talked Board members through the substantive changes:

- Powers and Duties noted in the MSFM, which are not include in the Articles of Association. TEO have asked the Board whether CRC should update the MSFM or include the powers in the Articles of Association.
- Changes to delegated authorities for purchases. Expenditure up to £5k will be approved by the CEO, but where the CEO is absent for two weeks or more this power will go up to the Chair in the absence of the CEO.
- CRC will review the delegation of authority for grant at a future date. This power remains in the hands of the Board in this revised MSFM.

He added that further changes are highlighted on page 13 of the paper.

The Board discussed the paper and proposed the following changes:

- Page 9 – Under ‘Powers and Duties’ amend ‘provide challenge to public authorities’ to ‘provide support to public authorities’.
- The Board asked for the following sentence to be added to the section on authorisation of grants: ‘The Board reserves the right to make grant decisions’.
- Appendix B Section 4.2 in the table should be amended to read that the final Business Plan will be submitted to TEO by ‘the end of March’.

On the condition of these amendments being made, the Board approved the draft MSFM.

2225/19 Purchase Order

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with a purchase order for the 2018/19 Northern Ireland Audit Office audit fees totalling £18,300.00. As this purchase order is over £10,000, it requires the approval of the Board.

The Board approved the purchase order.

2226/19 Matters Arising

The Chair reviewed the actions from the previous meeting and highlighted that Mr P Jordan was to share details of applicants to the Core Grant Scheme, and background information on the scheme.

Mr P Jordan stated that these papers would be shared with the Board in the next week.

ACTION: Mr P Jordan to share details of the Core Grant Scheme and the name of the applicants with Board members.

2227/19 **Correspondence**
None

2228/19 **Chair's Business**

The Chair provided Board members with a paper updating his activities. He highlighted the following items to Board members:

- The Chair attended the CRC Decade Project conference on Partition in November, he commended the staff on a very useful and well organised event. There will now be discussions on what the Roundtable will do next. The CEO added that TourismNI is holding a seminar to discuss the value of a version of the Principles in their work.
- The Chair attended CRC's December staff meeting where a member of the National Lottery Community Fund presented on their work.
- Attended a Christmas Reception hosted by the British Irish Intergovernmental Secretariat. Met IFI representatives there, and will be getting in contact to arrange a meeting.
- The Chair is reviewing the Board Appraisal Form with a view to changing the process. He asked when the next appraisal is due following the appointments in June.

ACTION: Check with TEO when CRC's Board appraisals should be taking place.

- The Chair stated that he intends to revive the Finance and General Purposes Committee, and will work on the Terms of Reference for the Committee for Board consideration.

ACTION: The Chair to draw up Terms of Reference for the proposed Finance and General Purposes Committee.

- The Chair stated that the Good Relations Award nomination process has opened, and that three members of the Board will be needed for the sub-group. The Board agreed that the Chair, Ms N Tandon, and Mr J McCallister would take part in this sub-group.

2229/19

CEO's Report

The CEO presented the Board with an update, making particular reference to the following:

- Staffing Review – The consultation process with affected staff has been completed, CRC will now move on to recruit a Verification Officer
- Board induction – All induction sessions are now complete. The CEO thanked the Board for attending these sessions. Two members of the Board could not attend the Equality Training, this training will be arranged again for them, at another time, if they wish.
- No update from the Charity Commission on CRC's registration.
- CRC attended a number of meetings with TEO regarding the alignment between TEO and CRC's grant schemes. CRC is also working with TEO to enhance the strategic impact of the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme.
- The CEO stated that a meeting with Mark Browne was due to take place to discuss the next Engagement Forum, however this meeting will be rescheduled for January as the relevant staff were ill.
- The next Shared Learning Forum will be taking place on 14th January. The Chair stated that he would be attending this event.
- The next TBUC Engagement Forum will be taking place on 11th February, venue to be confirmed. The Chair encouraged Board members to attend this event.
- The CEO informed Board members that the Partition conference was well attended and received positive feedback. She thanked Mr P Day and staff who organised the event. She commended the choice of venue stating that the layout worked very well.
- LRA Implementation Group met on 12th December and a third party has been appointed to carry out a number of sessions with staff. The CEO added that there was a very good tone to the meeting.
- Premises move – The CEO stated that work is ongoing with regards the proposal to move a number of ALBs to James House. However, there are still a number of strategic and operational issues to be resolved.
- A meeting to discuss the flexi grant system was due to take place this week but has been rescheduled for the New Year.

Ms A Simpson noted that she had to leave the meeting but in relation to items coming up on the agenda, she was content with the Strategic and Operational Plan and felt CRC should take on a Board Room apprentice. She also commented on the Exit Policy. Ms A Simpson then left the meeting.

2230/19

Draft Strategic Plan

The CEO presented Board members with an updated version of the Strategic Plan. She informed them that their suggested changes to the 'Vision' and

'Values and Beliefs' sections have been made, and that the 'Strategic Priorities' have been amended to include 'cultural diversity'.

The CEO reminded the Board that they had previously discussed holding an annual session on outcomes with TEO.

ACTION: CRC to hold a session annually on outcomes with TEO.

She added that once the Board approve the draft, it would be shared with TEO and then go out to public consultation. When the draft is before the Board again at the end of the financial year the design work will have been completed. She thanked the Board for their input.

The Board approved the draft of the Strategic Plan.

Ms S McClelland suggested that the CEO and Chair request meetings with the newly elected MPs, in the absence of NI Ministers.

ACTION: The Chair and CEO to request meetings with NI MPs as part of their engagement meetings.

2231/19 Draft Operational Plan

The CEO presented the Board with the first draft of CRC's Operational Plan. She highlighted the following sections of the Plan:

- She drew the Board's attention to page 25 onwards of the paper. She stated that these appendices tie the Operational Plan to the population outcomes and show how this is measured. These were incorporated into the last Operational Plan, TEO have suggested that they be removed, so they are included now for the new Board members to see the linkages and will be removed in the next draft.
The Board agreed that this section should be removed.
- Pg 12-13 contains the actions and outputs relating to 'Funding'.
- Pg16 shows the actions and outputs relating to 'Engagement'. She added that CRC makes a Good Relations Award annually and noted that TEO have asked whether, in the future, an awards gala could be held, linked to other awards in the TBUC field.
- Pg 23 sets out 'Good Governance' including preparatory work for the premises move.

Mr M McDonnell stated that it was important to see a link through the vision, strategic priorities, outcomes, a smaller set of key performance indicators and baselines. The CEO agreed and stated that some of the performance information had been provided in the Board's induction packs. She added

that Mr D McNally (Evaluation Officer) had been doing a lot of work in relation to establishing meaningful measures.

The Board approved the first draft of the Operational Plan.

2232/19 Boardroom Apprentice

The CEO presented the Board with a letter from Ms E Mullan (Boardroom Apprentice) asking CRC to participate in the next round of the Boardroom Apprentice.

The Board welcomed and approved this request. The Chair added that he would be happy to act as the Apprentice's buddy during their time with CRC's Board.

It was noted that Ms A Simpson had stated earlier in the meeting, prior to her departure, that the Board should accept the request and take on a person under the age of 25.

2233/19 Exit Interview Policy

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with CRC's new Exit Interview Policy.

It was noted that Ms A Simpson suggested earlier in the meeting, prior to her departure, amending the policy so that exit interviews are conducted with the line manager, and include HR only if requested.

Mr M McDonnell disagreed with this view, stating that the policy should stipulate that the HR manager carry out the exit interviews only. This ensures that no implied message is taken if the line manager is excluded. Ms J Adamson stating that this was her view as well.

ACTION: The Exit Policy to be amended to stipulate that the HR Manager will carry out the Exit Interview only, with no line managers present.

Mr M McDonnell suggested that the document presented to the Board contained the procedure as well as the policy, and that this was unnecessary. Ms J Irwin said the policy and procedure could be separated but as the Board may be involved in any appeal panel related to HR and employment, they should see and approve the policy and procedures relating to it.

The Board approved the paper.

2234/19 Draft Disability Action Plan

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with the draft Disability Action Plan. He stated that Ms J Adamson and the Management Team worked on this draft which is designed to be practical, achievable and manageable. He added that a draft was approved by the Board in April, and is returning now following public consultation.

A discussion followed and the following actions were agreed:

- The report should be amended to make reference to 'persons with disabilities' not 'disabled people'
- Mr G McKeown to review and shorten the timescale of the action points
- Mr G McKeown to download Disability Action's Accessibility Checklist and check for any other appropriate actions.
- CRC to meet with relevant stakeholders/disability charities.

ACTION: Mr G McKeown to make amendment to the Disability Action Plan

2235/19 Management Accounts

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with CRC's Management Accounts up to 31st March 2020. He made particular reference to the following:

- CRC are predicting a £24k underspend, which is 0.75%, within the allowed variance. All expenditure was incurred in line with CPD and CRC procurement guides.
- There is a significant risk that some of the budget may not be spent. This relates to: reversal of last year's accruals, underspend in training for Board, £11.5k underspend on grants. This would take CRC's overall underspend to £71k, 2.1%.
Mr G McKeown has met with the CEO, Mr P Jordan, and Mr P Day to identify areas where this resource could be used. This mitigation would reduce the underspend to £30k, 1.1%.

The Chair asked what the procedure is around underspend and the Board's involvement, and where money goes as a priority.

The CEO informed members that the previous Board had instructed CRC to protect front line deliver and grant making. However, if it is too late in the year to reallocate the money to grants, then it goes to other businesses areas of need. She added that throughout the year the Board reviews the monitoring rounds and sees the variances. The end of year underspend is usually an insignificant amount bearing in mind that the variance target of 1.5% is small.

Every time the Management Accounts are presented to the Board any variance changes are included.

The Board noted the Accounts.

2236/19 Pay Remit

Mr G McKeown updated the Board on the progress of the Pay Remits. He stated that the 2016/2017 and 2017/18 Remits have been approved and paid to staff. The 2018/19 Pay Remit is currently being drafted and will be submitted to TEO in the New Year.

2237/19 LRA Implementation Group meeting

The Chair updated Board members on the LRA implementation. A meeting was held on Thursday 12th December, and a third party was appointed. Attendees at the meeting believed that things have settled, however, the Chair added that the work will continue and there can be no complacency.

2238/19 Good Relations Officer Donna Mackey

Ms D Mackey attended the Board meeting to speak about Good Relations work in her area. She made particular reference to the good relations issues in the area and the lack of take up of grants aid opportunities.

Ms D Mackey stated that the Good Relations unit in the Council consists of herself as manager, two part-time admin staff, and an assistant. Their budget is £245k, with £175k of that coming from TEO. She concluded that more money would not necessarily solve the problems.

The Board and CEO thanked Ms D Mackey for attending the meeting and speaking to them about Good Relations in the Borough.

The CEO reflected on the fact that Ms D Mackey was impressed with the GR work in schools, and noted two issues coming out of the presentation: how can schools not currently involved in this programme be supported; and how to continue to engage people post the school programme.

Mr P Jordan added that, with the introduction of a Vouching and Verification Officer at CRC, this will free up the funding team's time to work more on development in areas of low take up, and encourage Core groups to become hubs of support for new work.

ACTION: Chair and CEO to meet Ards and North Down Council's CEO.

2238/19 Funding and Development Sector Update

Mr P Jordan updated the Board on the work of his Directorate, making particular reference to the following:

i) Core Funding

- 32 applications have been received, five of which were deemed ineligible.
- Mr P Jordan is putting together a list of groups who applied, background information on the scheme, and the scoring matrix, to share with Board members in due course.
- There are 8 Core Funded Groups, up for renewal, that Mr D McNally is currently conducting full evaluations on, to be presented at the Core Fund Decision Meeting on the 21st February. Current Core Funded Groups have recently submitted their 6 month evaluation reports.
- TEO and CRC held a meeting regarding the alignment of the Core Scheme and the Central Fund. There will be a number of follow up meetings on this.

ii) Community Relations/Cultural Diversity & Pathfinder Grant Schemes

- CRCD deadline has been extended until the middle of January.
- 22 applications are currently being processed.
- The new system shows that there are currently 145 applications in the pipeline.
- CRCD spend is on target.
- Mr P Jordan then spoke on two Pathfinder applications: 'Hillhall Regeneration Group' project working on a resource to go out to local school; and Rural Community Network 'Radicals and Rebels, Royalists and Loyalists', engaging young people, taking them on training programmes.
- Mr P Jordan and Mr P Day are working on writing up a report on the impact of funding including a summary of CRCD projects.

iii) North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme

- Mr P Jordan is currently conducting annual site visits with North Belfast groups. The key aim is development of networks and joined up working.
- A number of meetings have, and will be taking place with TEO regarding the North Belfast Scheme to discuss changing the application forms to ensure partnership work.

The Board discussed the North Belfast Grant Scheme and recent downturn in relations in the area around the political election season. The Board agreed that CRC should consider where the strategic intervention of the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme is, and that the groups need to be working together.

The Board stated that once Mr P Jordan has completed the North Belfast groups' evaluations, they would like to receive a copy. They also reiterated

that they would like to receive a presentation on the scheme and hear from some of the groups themselves.

ACTION: Mr P Jordan to share NBSGRP evaluations with the Board once they are complete, and invite the groups to present at a future meeting.

iv) Media Grant

- Seven groups have received funding. Due to underspend five more groups were able to receive funding.
- Ms G Attwood and Mr P Jordan will be meeting with groups awarded Media Grants and writing up synopsis for each.

The Board noted this report.

2239/19 Community Engagement Sector Update

Mr P Day presented the Board with an update on a number of items under his Directorate, making particular reference to the following:

- Partition Conference – Mr P Day thanked the Chair for attending and commended his team for their work. Podcasts of the speeches at the conference will be available on the website, as will the presentations themselves. CRC are putting together a programme going forward for the Decade Roundtable.
- Good Relations Awards – the nomination process has opened and will close on the 14th February. Mr P Day asked the Board to spread the links to the applications which are available on CRC's website and on social media. The Chair suggested CRC contact newspaper editors and TV stations to promote the awards, and suggested they could do a profile on the past winners.

ACTION: Mr P Day to contact newspaper editors and TV stations regarding the Good Relations Award.

- CRC's 30th anniversary 2020 – Mr P Day stated that the Engagement team are thinking about ways to mark the occasion. These include: a hashtag; fun items such as old photos; infographic showing the total amount of money CRC have given away and the total number of projects supported; stories about projects funded; stories on GR award winners; profile of past chairs and groups; billboards and buses; special GR award for young peace builders; a young peacebuilders grant to fund training; partnership with music festivals and sports events; soundbites from media personalities. Mr P Day showed Board members the draft 30th anniversary logo design.

Mr P Day asked Board members to consider ideas for the anniversary and share with him.

ACTION: Board members with any ideas for the 30th anniversary celebrations, to contact Mr P Day.

The Board noted this report.

2240/19 Audit and Risk Committee

- i) Minutes of the 17th October 2019 meeting

The Board noted the minutes.

2241/19 Any Other Business

No other business

2242/19 Date of Next Meeting

24th January 11am Equality House

5th March 11am TBD