

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTIETH MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY  
RELATIONS COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> April 2021  
VIA VIDEO CALLING SOFTWARE**

**3562/21 Present:** Chair Mr M McDonald, Mr R Campbell, Ms M Braniff Ms C Harris, Mr J McCallister, Mr M McDonnell, Ms A Simpson, Ms N Tandon, Ms S McClelland.

**3563/21 In Attendance:** Ms J Irwin (CEO), 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), Ms G Attwood (Policy Officer).

**3564/21 Apologies:** Mr P Day (Director of Engagement), Mr G McKeown (Director of Finance, Admin and Personnel).

**3565/21 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

**3566/21 Minutes**

Members reviewed the minutes of the two hundred and nineteenth meeting of CRC's Board, which took place on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2021, and agreed that they are an accurate account of that meeting.

**3567/21 Matters Arising**

The Chair presented the board with updates on a number of matters and actions from previous meetings.

At the Boards request, the Engagement Team have prepared a list of funding grants available to the sport sector, and will present this at today's meeting. This item will be removed from the Matters Arising register.

The Chair informed the Board that the Funding Sub-Group has been established and has held its first meeting, which the Chair of the sub-group, Maire Braniff, will speak about later therefore, this item will be removed from the Matters Arising register.

Mr P Jordan has update the Media Grant Terms of Reference and will present this at today's meeting. This item will now be removed from the Matters Arising register.

Regarding CRC's 2020/21 Boardroom Apprentice, the Chair reminded the Board that Mr D Johnston had to step down due to his health. CRC have been asked to consider taking another Boardroom Apprentice for 2021/22, however the organisers have since contacted the Chair to ask, now that Mr D Johnston's health has improved, whether CRC would be content for him to return to the Board for this financial year. The Board welcomed the opportunity for Mr D Johnston to return as CRC's Boardroom Apprentice.

The Board thanked the Chair for this update.

### **3568/21 Correspondence**

#### **i) CRC's 2021/22 Budget**

The CEO presented the Board with recent correspondence from The Executive Office (TEO) on CRC's budget.

TEO have written to CRC confirming that an indicative budget has been agreed, allocating £2,615K for the year 2021/22. £2,605K towards resources and £10K on capital spend.

CRC has been encouraged to review the budget and consider any easements or bids they wish to make during the June Monitoring Round.

#### **ii) GR Award**

The CEO presented the Board with positive correspondence received from the nominator of the Good Relations Award winner.

### **3569/21 Recent Disturbances Discussion**

The CEO presented the Board with a paper setting out details of the recent disturbances in Northern Ireland.

Mr P Jordan then updated on meetings held with the Core and North Belfast Funded groups since the papers for the Board were issued, and reported back their experiences during this time.

The following next steps were agreed:

- The Board to receive a link to the presentations recorded during CRC's joint staff shared learning meeting with The Executive Office, on Community Safety, on a confidential basis.
- Invite Mr J Byrne, UU, to present at an upcoming Funding Sub-Group meeting. All Board members are welcome to attend this session.

- Mr P Jordan to conduct another temperature check with Core and North Belfast funded groups in advance of the summer, and the keep the Board informed of any developments.

**ACTION:** Ms H George to share a link to the Community Safety presentations from CRC's joint event with TEO.

**ACTION:** The Funding Sub-Group to invite Mr J Byrne to an upcoming meeting to present on Community Safety.

**ACTION:** Mr P Jordan to conduct another temperature check with Core and North Belfast funded groups in advance of the summer, and keep the Board informed of any developments.

### **3570/21 Chair's Update**

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

The Chair and the CEO met with The International Fund for Ireland on 15<sup>th</sup> March.

The CEO and Chair met with Mr R Cushnie, TEO on 26<sup>th</sup> March, and Mr C Stewart, TEO, on 30<sup>th</sup> March. The Chair continues to raise the pay remit and pension issue with TEO at every opportunity. Mr C Stewart agreed that he would write to the Department of Finance around the issues of compliance with DoF pension guidance, and how other ALBs have solved this issue.

The Chair attended and spoke at CRC's Shared Learning Forum on 30<sup>th</sup> March. The event focused on a practical discussion about how to hold difficult conversations online.

On 31<sup>st</sup> March CRC held the 2020/21 Good Relations Awards. Ms M Blood was announced as the winner with one posthumous award presented alongside the main award. Following the event, the Chair noted the very positive feedback on the awards being expressed online. He added that the next GR Award panel will have an independent member.

The Chair attended the Core Funding Launch on the 14<sup>th</sup> April, and the Funding Sub-Group on the 16<sup>th</sup> April.

The Board thanked the Chair for this update.

### **3571/21 Honours Nominations**

The CEO informed the Board that CRC annually receive an invitation from The Executive Office, to nominate an individual for an honours. The Board has made no collective decision on the submission of a nominee, therefore, no

nominations have been made in the past and the CEO wished to check whether this reflected the current Board's wishes on this matter. The Board discussed the practical difficulties of gathering the information necessary for a nomination and came to no overall position but agreed that, when a nomination invitation comes in in the future, it can be taken to the subsequent Board meeting for consideration.

The CEO stated that in the meantime she would speak to other funders and ALBs, to see what process, if any, they have in place to determine who to nominate.

**ACTION:** The CEO to consult with other ALBs/funders to establish what process they have in place to determine who to nominate for honours.

### **3572/21      CEO's Update**

The CEO presented her report to the Board and highlighted a number of points:

#### **i) Business Continuity Plan**

The CEO informed the meeting that CRC's Covid-19 arrangements continue to work well.

Planning has begun on CRC's move to blended working. CRC are considering how to use the office space, the use of IT, and updating the relevant policies.

CRC have not yet received guidance from the civil service on returning to the office and blended working. Any guidance from the Department will inform CRC's procedures.

#### **ii) Planning**

CRC's Operational Plan has been approved by TEO's officials. This Plan will be updated with the budget which has just been received and then be taken up for Ministerial approval, before being published on CRC's website.

#### **iii) Meetings**

The Chair and CEO met with Mr C Stewart and Mr R Cushnie, TEO at the end of March. These were very positive meetings.

The Audit Committee met on 13<sup>th</sup> April. The CEO thanked Mr J McCallister for volunteering to Chair this Committee, and thanked Mr R Campbell, the outgoing Committee Chair, for his work over the years.

iv) Funding

The first meeting of CRC's Funding Sub-Group took place on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April. The CEO thanked Ms M Braniff for chairing this meeting and noted that the discussion had already identified a number of areas for further exploration.

The Shared Learning Forum took place on 30<sup>th</sup> March, with both Core and North Belfast funded groups. The feedback on this meeting was good, with attendees agreeing that the practical discussion, on having difficult conversations online, was very useful.

v) Engagement

The Good Relations Awards took place on 31<sup>st</sup> March. This was a well-attended event. The CEO thanked all staff and Board members who helped plan and attended the event. She particularly thanked Mr M McGlade for his work to create a celebratory atmosphere for the online awards presentation.

vi) Premises

The CEO attended a meeting with the Equality House Chief Executive Officers, where an update was provided on the government's estate consolidation plan. CRC and other ALBs will be moving out of Equality House in late 2024 or early 2025, however, no premises has yet been identified. The emphasis of this project will be on agile and blended working. A sub-group will be established to lead this project.

The CEO informed the Board of the birth of Mr G McKeown's first child. Mother and baby are doing well. The Board asked for a congratulation card to be sent to Mr G McKeown on the Board's behalf.

**ACTION:** Ms H George to send a card, congratulating Mr G McKeown on the birth of his baby, on behalf of the Board.

The Board thanked the CEO for this update.

Mr P Jordon presented the Board with the draft Terms of Reference for the refreshed Media Grant Scheme, for approval.

The new fund will provide one grant to one young filmmaker to produce a piece on community relations and peacebuilding. The budget for this fund is currently £15k.

The Board reviewed and approved the Terms of Reference, and Ms M Braniff and Mr R Campbell volunteered to sit on the sub-group.

### **3574/21 Funding Sub Group Meeting**

Ms M Braniff provided the Board with an update on the first meeting of the Funding Sub-Group.

Ms M Braniff thanked Mr D McNally and Ms J Hamilton for their work preparing and presenting the papers at the meeting.

She stated that the membership of the Committee would remain as Board members and staff only, however, other funders or TEO officials will be invited to attend when appropriate. All Board members are welcome to attend these meetings.

The following objectives were agreed by the Sub-Group.

- The group will review the current gaps in the funding portfolio, but also highlight the strengths and assets of the schemes.
- The Group will consider how CRC should and can be more responsive to meeting needs that may emerge.
- The group will consider the current funding criteria and if they reflect the strategic priorities of CRC.
- The Group will consider how to make the work relevant to communities and their everyday lives.
- The Group will identify key partners, including other funders and rural champions.
- The Group will consider whether CRC should seek funding outside of the TBUC family.

The Sub-Group will meet regularly over the next year, and the discussions will inform the drafting of the Core Funding Welcome Statements in the autumn.

The Board noted this update and the Chair thanked Ms M Braniff for chairing this Sub-Group.

### **3575/21 Funding and Development Sector Update**

Mr P Jordan provided attendees with an update on items under his Directorate.

The end of year returns are due on the CRCD 2020/21 small grants, with the funding team working through the evaluations.

The 2020/21 Core Funded groups' end of year returns are now due, and the team will evaluate the work conducted and will present this to the Funding Sub-Group in due course.

The Core Funding review panel met on 14<sup>th</sup> March to assess the one appeal submitted. They decided to uphold the original decision made by the Board.

Mr P Jordan met with Mr S Higginson, TEO, who he will be working with on TEO's outcomes and evaluation work.

The North Belfast end of year evaluations are soon due in, and an event will be held to mark and promote their good work. The groups' 2021/22 North Belfast applications have been reviewed, and all have reached the funding threshold.

The Funding, Engagement, and DFAP Teams held a joint meeting with the 2021/22 Core Funded Groups, providing information on the new vouching and verification procedures and the grants timeline. The Chair expressed his thanks to the team for their work, and commended Ms T Wilson for her excellent presentation at this event.

Ms S McClelland left the meeting

### **3576/21      Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Update**

#### **i) Verbal Update**

Mr J McCallister, Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, provided the Board with an update on the meeting which took place on 13<sup>th</sup> April.

Mr J McCallister informed the Board that the fieldwork for CRC's final two Internal Audits is now complete. The outcome of these audits will be presented at the next ARAC meeting, along with a draft of the 2021/22 Internal Audit Strategy.

The Audit Committee agreed to close down the long running investigation into a group who previously received funding. It was confirmed that the group in question was no longer operating, as either a charity or a company.

#### **ii) Risk Register Summary**

Mr J McCallister presented the Board with CRC's latest Risk Register Summary.

At this month's ARAC meeting, members discussed the three ongoing risks and agreed that 'staff morale' and 'covid-19' should remain rated amber as the former cannot be resolved until staff are back in the office and the latter is difficult for CRC to completely mitigate. The 'Compliance with DoF pension guidance' risk remains rated red, as there has been no further progress.

Mr J McCallister drew the Board's attention to one new risk: '2021/22 budget allocation'. At the time of the meeting CRC had not yet received a budget, but had received a letter of cover from TEO, allowing CRC to make inescapable expenditure. As CRC has now received its budget letter, this risk will be reviewed at the next Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting.

iii) Minutes of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Audit and Risk Committee Meeting

The Board noted the minutes of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which took place on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

The Board thanked Mr J McCallister for his update. Mr. McCallister left the meeting.

**3577/21 CRC Fair Employment Return**

Ms J Adamson presented the Board with CRC's 2020/21 Fair Employment Return.

Following the completion of this return, CRC are not required to take any affirmative action. This Return will now be submitted to The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

**3578/21 LRA Report Implementation Update**

Ms J Adamson presented the Board with an update on CRC's implementation of the LRA report.

A Dignity at Work Policy has been drafted and shared with staff for consultation. Staff submitted a number of amendments which have been incorporated into the draft, which will be presented to the Senior Management Team in due course.

Staff will be provided with training, from the consultant HR professionals, on this new policy in May.

The consultant HR professionals continue to work with staff, HR and Management, providing one-on-one session with the Management Team.

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

### **3578/22 Sport Funding in Northern Ireland**

Ms G Attwood reminded the Board that, at a previous meeting, they requested details of the funding being provided to the sport sector in Northern Ireland.

She presented the Board with a paper setting out this sports funding. The paper sets out the funding environment, and the statutory, voluntary and private sector funding to sports in NI.

Organisations such as: Sport NI; TEO's TBUC scheme; Central Government; and National Lottery are providing key sports funds in Northern Ireland. The paper set out details of the schemes, and the total money granted.

The paper then lists a number of other funders to sports in NI, including: Groundwork NI; Irish Department for Foreign Affairs; The Ireland's Fund, Children in Need, and Halifax.

The Board thanked Ms G Attwood for this update, and noted this paper.

### **3579/21 Engagement Sector Update**

In Mr P Day's absence, the CEO provided the Board with an update on the Engagement Sector.

The next TBUC Engagement Forum will be taking place on the 18<sup>th</sup> May, on the theme of Community Safety. All Board members are welcome to attend. She asked the Board to notify Ms H George if they would like to attend.

The CEO stated that the theme has been agreed, but no agenda has been drafted yet. The Chair suggested that space might be given at the Forum to discuss the recent disturbances and CRC funded groups' experiences and how they responded.

**ACTION:** Board members to notify Ms H George if they would like to attend the TBUC Engagement Forum on the 18<sup>th</sup> May.

The CEO thanked all staff and Board members who helped plan or attended any of the events held over the last month, including the Shared Learning Forum, Core Fund Launch, and the Good Relations Awards.

Ms J Irwin presented the Board with an Engagement Update paper, drafted by Mr P Day. She drew their attention to the breakdown of the number of newsletter, social media, and website visits, and noted that CRC continue to reach new audiences and engage with already established relationships.

The Board thanked the CEO for this update, and noted Mr P Day's report.

Mr M McDonnell left the meeting.

**3580/21      Any Other Business**

None

**3581/21      Date of Next Meeting**

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2021 10:30am