

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY NINTH MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY
RELATIONS COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON FRIDAY 29th APRIL 2022 10:00AM
VIA VIDEO CALLING SOFTWARE**

3743/22 **Present:** Chair Mr M McDonald, Ms M Braniff , Mr R Campbell, Mr J McCallister, Mr M McDonnell, Ms A Simpson, Ms S McClelland.

3744/22 **In Attendance:** Dr J Irwin (CEO), Mr P Jordan (Director of Funding and Development), Ms J Adamson (HR Manager), Ms H George (PA to CEO and Board).

3745/22 **Observers:** Mr D Johnston (CRC's Boardroom Apprentice), Ms E Crothers (Post Graduate Student Mentee)

3746/22 **Apologies:** Ms C Harris (Board Member), Ms N Tandon (Board Member), Mr P Day (Director of Engagement),

3747/22 **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.

3748/22 **Welcome**

The Chair welcomed Ms E Crothers to CRC's Board meeting. Ms E Crothers will be shadowing the Chair and CRC's Board for the next year, as part of a post graduate student mentorship programme.

3749/22 **Minutes**

Attendees reviewed the minutes of the 228th Board meeting which took place on the 10th March 2022. The Board approved the minutes.

3750/22 **Matters Arising**

The Chair informed attendees that there is currently one ongoing matter which was raised at the previous meeting. Board members were asked to consider and inform Mr P Day of any organisation working in the Good Relations field, which have carried out projects related to the environment.

The Board thanked the Chair and noted the report.

3751/22 **Correspondence**

The CEO presented the Board with correspondence from The Executive Office. The letter provides CRC with details of the interim opening budget for 2022/23.

CRC's 2022/23 opening budget is based on the same budget as 2021/22.

The CEO brought to the Board's attention that the budget does not include the resources for the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Fund. CRC have written to TEO to seek assurance that this Fund will receive resources from the monitoring rounds as has been the case in previous years.

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

3752/22 Partnership Agreement

The Chair presented the Board with the latest draft of The Executive Office and Community Relations Council Partnership Agreement.

The Chair highlighted a list of amendments that were made to the draft.

The Board reviewed and approved this latest version.

The CEO reminded the Board that this is a living document, and may be subject to further amendments in the future.

3753/22 Chair's Update

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

The CEO and Chair met with The Executive Office on 14th March to discuss the Core Funding Programme. CRC informed TEO that a number of applications were made to the programme that were deemed fundable but, due to lack of resources, they could not be funded. The groups were directed towards CRC's other funding streams for support.

On 21st March the Chair attended an event run by the Commission for Public Office, where the Post Graduate Student Mentorship Programme was launched. The Chair met Ms E Crothers at this event.

On 28th March the Chair attended a meeting with the CEO, Mr P Jordan and Ms M Braniff to discuss the upcoming Funding Sub-Group.

The Chair attended the Good Relations Award presentation on 30th April, at which Mr E Phoenix received the award.

On 26th April the Chair attended a Board prep session with the CEO and Ms H George. He thanked Ms H George and CRC's DFAP Team for their work over the last number of months, in the absence of a Director of Finance.

The Board thanked the Chair for this update.

3754/22 CEO's Update

The CEO updated the Board on a number of issues.

i) Staffing

CRC is still below its full staff level with three posts currently unoccupied. The CEO thanked the staff team for keeping CRC services running as normal during this period, and ensuring that all information and routine returns required by The Executive Office are being completed. The CEO noted that this had been greatly aided by the speed at which the temporary Finance Manager had gained an understanding of CRC services and procedures. The CEO also thanked Ms George who had been particularly helpful to her and other staff in relation to timetabling and completing returns and other business.

ii) Covid -19

CRC's staff continue to work from home in line with the public health guidance.

iii) Strategic and Operational Planning

The second draft of CRC's Operational Plan 2022-23 is currently with TEO for review and approval. As feedback from TEO has already been received on the first draft and incorporated in the second, CRC is able to continue to deliver the draft Plan while awaiting formal approval.

iv) Government Departments and Committees

The updated TEO Partnership Agreement was presented at today's Board meeting.

The CEO and Chair met with TEO on 14th March to discuss the Core Funding Programme, as reported earlier in the meeting. While recognising the demand for the Core Fund Scheme, TEO was unable to commit to additional funding at this time.

The CEO met with TEO again on 22nd March to discuss how CRC would assist with the TBUC Strategy review. CRC have facilitated a number of in-person and online sessions with various stakeholders providing feedback on the TBUC Strategy. In relation to CRC's response to the consultation she noted that she had drafted a paper for discussion later in the meeting.

The CEO highlighted two meetings included in the report which had been due to take place but were cancelled in the week between when the Board papers were circulated and the date of the meeting, one with the Department of Justice and one with on the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme.

v) Events

The CEO informed the Board of two dates that might be of interest to members: the next TBUC Engagement Forum will take place on 14th June, and Good Relations Week will take place from 19th September to the 25th September.

The Good Relations Award presentation took place on 30th March. Mr G Johnston TEO presented some of the awards and the Chair presented the Good Relations

Award. The event showcased the breadth and variety of good relations work conducted by individuals across the region.

CRC and Heritage Lottery Fund facilitated a meeting of the Decade of Centenaries Roundtable on 31st March. The meeting discussed the future of the Roundtable following the recent review.

The Peace Monitor Advisory Group met on 28th April to review and provide feedback on the first chapter of the Report. The CEO informed the Board of the background to this project and CRC's role in relation to the report. CRC is the recipient of Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust's funding to deliver the project. The funding permits CRC to commission an author to complete the reports. The CEO listed the ways in which CRC remains independent from the Report, this approach having been approved by The Executive Office in 2015. The Chair suggested that, due to recent staff changes in TEO, CRC should write to TEO and seek assurances from them that the involvement and ways CRC remain independent from the Report are still acceptable.

ACTION: CRC to write to TEO in relation to its previous approval of CRC's independence from the content of the Peace Monitor Reports, and ask if TEO is still content with these measures.

vi) Audit

CRC have received the Audit Strategy from the Northern Ireland Audit Office. In the absence of a Director of Finance CRC will be procuring an independent accountancy firm to assist with the completion of the Annual Report and Accounts.

CRC's Internal Audits are now all complete for 2021-22, each having received a 'Satisfactory' rating.

The Chair thanked the CEO for taking on many of the duties of the Director of Finance, Admin, and Personnel during this difficult period.

3755/22

Together: Building a United Community Strategy Review

The CEO presented the Board with a paper on TEO's review of the TBUC Strategy. The document set out the background to the Strategy, and details of the review being conducted by The Executive Office. CRC has been facilitating meeting for stakeholders to provide their feedback on the Strategy.

The document also set out a number of areas in which the CEO felt the delivery of the aims of T:BUC could be strengthened. , The CEO noted that the paper could be submitted to TEO for discussion if Board members approved. It was agreed that the document be circulated to Board members following the meeting, and all comments should be shared with the CEO before Friday 6th May.

The Board commended the CEO for her work on the paper. Ms. Braniff offered to send a hyperlink to relevant recent research that could be added to the document. Ms McClelland noted felt that the revised strategy should be focussed on the next generation. The Board approved the submission of the document to TEO, subject to any changes forwarded by members by 6th May.

ACTION: CRC to circulate the TBUC Review Feedback document to all Board members, and members to provide any comments to the CEO by Friday 6th May.

3756/22 Dignity at Work Implementation

Ms J Adamson presented the Board with a Report updating on the implementation of the Dignity at Work policy.

CRC staff will be taking part in team building training on 20th May. It is still to be confirmed whether this session will be held online or in person.

Ms J Adamson is in regular contact with all staff, who are given the opportunity to raise any Dignity at Work issues at all Staff Meetings, Team meetings, and on a one-on-one basis with the HR Manager.

Ms J Adamson added that the work staff undertook with HeadsTogether has been particularly useful in the current circumstances, with staff shortages.

The Chair added that he recently met with a member of staff regarding a Dignity at Work issue. He consulted with the HR Manager and HeadsTogether. Although the matter was not specifically a Dignity at Work issue, feedback was provided to the member of staff who was satisfied with the process and agreed that the matter was resolved.

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

3767/22 Pay Remit

Ms J Adamson informed the Board the CRC's 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 outstanding Pay Remits have now been paid to all affected staff. All staff are now on the correct pay scale.

The Chair thanked Mr D McMahon, TEO, for progressing this issue.

The Board thanked Ms J Adamson for this update.

3768/22 Staffing Update

Ms J Adamson provided the Board with an update on current CRC staff levels.

With regards the filling the Core Funding Officer post which is vacant for one year, CRC investigated using interchange to recruit on a secondment basis, however, it was discovered that this would have implications for CRC's VAT threshold. This will impact CRC's ability to accommodate secondments in the longer term. The HR Manager is looking into this issue and will report back to the Board in due course.

The Core Funding Officer position will instead now be recruited through a recruitment agency.

The DFAP Director post has now opened to applications and will close on 16th May. The dates for the shortlisting and interviews have been scheduled.

The Finance Manager position will be permanently filled after the DFAP Director is appointed to allow him/her to take part in the process.

Ms. Adamson advised that she had met with the Senior Management Team to discuss the mitigation that may need to be put in place while these recruitments are ongoing.

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

3769/22 Funding and Development

Mr P Jordan presented the Board with an update on the work of the Funding and Development directorate.

i) Funding Grant Schemes

The CRCD 2022/23 Grant scheme is now open to applications.

The North Belfast applications have been received and reviewed. Contracts will be issued in due course.

Mr P Jordan assisted with the scoring of the Central Fund, and Ms J Hamilton assisted with the scoring of the Minority Ethnic Development Fund for The Executive Office.

ii) Events & Meetings

The Funding Team and the Engagement Team will be holding a number of information events, publicising the open grant schemes.

CRC will be facilitating a meeting with key community groups to take a temperature check ahead of the summer period. Another meeting will be held in September.

A meeting with all Core Fund 2022/23 groups took place on 28th April.

iii) Staff and Board Funding Strategy Session

Mr P Jordan informed the Board that the Funding Sub Group was due to meet before the Easter break to agree an agenda for the Staff/Board Funding Strategy Session. Unfortunately, the Sub-Group was unable to meet, and the meeting will now be rescheduled for a date in May.

The Funding Strategy Session will take place in June 2022, date to be confirmed.

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

3770/22 Engagement Sector Update

In Mr P Day's absence the CEO presented the Board with a Report updating on the work of the Engagement Team.

The Board noted the Report.

The Board asked for a trend analysis to be added to the social media section of the Engagement Report, to show the monthly changes in the statistics reported.

ACTION: Mr P Day to add a trend analysis to future Engagement Reports, showing the monthly changes in the social media statistics.

3771/22 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

i) Update on ARAC meeting 7th April 2022

Mr J McCallister, Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, provided the Board with details of the latest ARAC meeting.

At April's meeting the NI Audit Office presented CRC's 2021/22 Audit Strategy. The Audit Committee expressed their concern that, again, the cost of the audit has increased to £23K.

The Board echoed the concern of the Committee, and suggested that the Chair of the Committee write to the NI Audit Office and ask that Ms S Walsh attend the next Audit Committee to discuss the cost increase.

ACTION: Mr J McCallister to invite Ms S Walsh, NIAO, to the next meeting of CRC's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

The Chair also suggested that this cost issue can be raised at a future TEO ALB Forum.

ACTION: The Chair to raise the issue of NIAO increasing audit fees at the next TEO ALB Forum.

Mr J McCallister informed the Board that Internal Auditors presented the results of three audits: Grants Administration; Human Resources; and a review of

previous recommendations. They confirmed that all audits have been rated 'satisfactory' with the 'Grants Audit' receiving no recommendations at all and 'HR Audit' receiving only two priority three recommendations. An audit of 'Communications and Engagement' has taken place and will be presented at the next Committee meeting.

ii) Risk Register Summary

Mr J McCallister presented the Board with a summary of CRC's ongoing Risks.

The following risks remain rated amber as there has been no change: 'Staff Morale'; 'Covid-19'; 'Freedom of Information Request'.

Staff Morale will remain amber, and a review of the risk rating will take place following the team building training, staff survey, and meeting of the Implementation Group.

The 'Impact of delay in implementing annual pay awards' risk was downgraded to green, as all outstanding payments have been made.

'Implementation of DoF Pay Remit Guidance' remains rated red, as there has been no movement on the pension issue.

'Departure of Staff in DFAP Team' was upgraded to red as the temporary DFAP Director resigned at the end of March. However, CRC's Temporary Finance Manager was able to complete the end of month and end of year returns, and recruitment for a new director has begun.

iii) Minutes of the 24th February 2022 Audit & Risk Assurance Committee

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee presented the Board with the latest agreed minutes from the Committee meeting which took place on 24th February 2022.

The Board noted these minutes and thanked the Chair of the Committee for this update.

3772/22 Any Other Business

None.

3773/22 Date of Next Meeting

10th June 2022 10am

