

**MINUTES OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY FIFTH MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY  
RELATIONS COUNCIL BOARD HELD ON FRIDAY 29<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021  
VIA VIDEO CALLING SOFTWARE  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**3649/21**      **Present:** Chair Mr M McDonald, Mr R Campbell, Mr J McCallister, Mr M McDonnell, Ms A Simpson, Ms N Tandon.

**3650/21**      **In Attendance:** Ms J Irwin (CEO), Mr G McKeown (Director of Finance, Admin, and Personnel), Ms E Tomasso (IT), Ms T Wilson (Finance Manager), Ms J Adamson (HR Manager), Ms H George (PA to CEO and Board),

**3651/21**      **Observers:** Mr D Johnston (CRC's Boardroom Apprentice).

**3652/21**      **Apologies:** Ms S McClelland, Ms M Braniff, Ms C Harris, Mr P Day (Director of Engagement, Mr P Jordan (Director of Funding and Development)

**3653/21**      **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

**3654/21**      **Welcome**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to today's meeting.

**3655/21**      **Minutes**

Attendees reviewed the minutes of the 224<sup>th</sup> Board meeting which took place on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021. The Board approved the minutes.

**3656/21**      **Matters Arising**

The Chair presented the Board with an update on a number of actions from previous meetings.

Board members have all completed their evaluations and appraisals.

Notice was sent to ECNI of the Board's approval of the Section 75 report on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September.

These actions are now complete and will be removed from the Actions Register.

The Board noted this paper.

**3657/21**      **Correspondence**

The CEO advised members that CRC had received correspondence from TEO on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> October, asking for three year above base-line resource bids. This was discussed at F+GP which was already scheduled to meet that day and will be reported on at this Board meeting.

**3658/21**

### **AGM Business**

i) Solvency and Liquidity Report Analysis

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with CRC's Solvency and Liquidity Report.

He assured the Board that CRC continue to be solvent and liquid. The analysis shows that, as of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, CRC has a deficit of £3,572,618. £3,213,000 of this deficit relates to CRC's restricted pension reserve, which TEO provided a guarantee for in April 2019. The Chair reiterated the importance of this pension guarantee provided by TEO.

Mr G McKeown concluded that CRC is both solvent and liquid and that it can reasonable expect to remain so for the foreseeable future and at least for expenditure incurred until 31st March 2023. Mr G McKeown advised that the Board should ensure that expenditure is within budget, incurred to deliver CRCs business plan, in line with DoF guidance and the MSFM.

The Board thanked Mr G McKeown for the paper, and noted that CRC is liquid and solvent.

ii) Risk Strategy and Risk Depository

Mr G McKeown presented the Risk Register and Risk Depository to Board Members. He informed the Board that CRC have four risks in the 'Amber' and one in the 'Red' category.

Risk one relates to 'Compliance with DoF Guidance FD (DFP) 08/14, 09/18 ', and CRC's financial projected costs associated with this. This risk is rated 'red'.

Risk two relates to staff morale. The Board have regularly received updates on how CRC are mitigating this risk. This risk is rated 'amber'.

Risk three relates to Covid-19 and the impact that the restrictions may have on CRC and the funded groups. This risk is rated 'amber'

Risk four related to the implementation of cloud based systems in CRC. This risk is rated 'amber'.

Risk five related to the recent FOI. This risk is rated 'amber'.

The CEO informed the Committee that, relating to the risk around 'Compliance with DoF Guidance FD (DFP) 08/14, 09/18 ' DoF are now investigating whether other ALBs are affected by this issue. The NI Audit Office, during CRC's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, recognised that CRC are doing all they can to resolve this issue and the power to resolve currently sits with The Executive Office.

The NI Audit Office also recommend ALB's rate another 20 risks, including political; Economic; Socio-Cultural; and Environmental.

Mr G McKeown presented all 20 of the items in the Risk Depository to Board members.

The Board thanked Mr G McKeown for this update and noted the report.

iii) Annual Report and Accounts

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with CRC's 2020/21 Annual Report and Accounts. This Report has been audited by the NI Audit Office.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee reviewed the Annual Report and Accounts on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> October and recommended that the Board approve the document.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee reviewed the Annual Report and Accounts on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> October and recommended that the Board approve the document.

The Board unanimously approved the 2020/21 Annual Report and Accounts. The document will now be signed by the CEO and the Chair, and then submitted to NI Audit Office.

The Board thanked Mr G McKeown, the CEO, and staff for their work over the last year.

The CEO thanked Ms T Wilson, Mr G McKeown, staff, and CRC's Board for their work over the year, which was presented in the Annual Report and Accounts. She also added her thanks to the Northern Ireland Audit Office and the internal auditors for their work.

**3659/21**

**Chair's Business**

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

The Chair took part in a number of events during Good Relations Week 2021, including; interviews on a number of radio programmes; TBUC Engagement Forum; Newry, Mourne, & Down Intercultural Forum; and the NI Youth Forum research launch.

The Chair and CEO met with Legal Island on 1<sup>st</sup> October and Danska Bank on 26<sup>th</sup> October to discuss Good Relations and the public sector.

Following the Dignity at Work Implementation Group meeting, the Chair met with all CRC staff, apart from Directors and the CEO, to receive feedback on the Policy. The staff engaged in the session, expressing their confidence in the new policy and procedures. Staff expressed anxiety about some behaviour reverting to previous conduct when staff return to the office. The Chair then met with Mss A Barrett, followed by the CEO in October. The Chair will now meet with each Director, separately.

The Dignity at Work Champion will meet with staff every quarter going forward, until further progress has been made, and then will meet with staff twice yearly.

**3660/21**

### **CEO's Update**

The CEO updated Board members on a number of items.

i) Covid-19

CRC's Covid-19 procedures continue to work well.

The NI Civil Service have drafted a Hybrid Working Policy which is currently out to consultation. CRC will take this guidance into account as it continues to develop and implement its Agile Working Policy, and will review it for alignment and consistency.

ii) Strategic and Operational Plans

CRC is still awaiting Ministerial sign off of the 2021/22 Operational Plan.

iii) TEO request for Three Year Resource Bid

CRC received correspondence on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> October, asking for three year above base-line, resource bids in one working day.

The CEO presented the Board with details of CRC's bid which had been discussed at the Finance and General Purpose Committee which was already scheduled to meet on 27<sup>th</sup> October. TEO asked that bids come under the four Covid-19 Recover plan headlines. CRC requested the following bid:

Sustainable Economic Development – engagement with the private sector  
Green Growth and Sustainability – Good Relations and environmental sustainability  
Tackling Inequalities – support minority ethnic groups in tackling inequality  
Health of Population – support the community to deliver healthy outcomes that encourage good relations and Covid-19 security.

The bid set out the total funding costs for each of the years: 2022/23 £375,860; 2023/24 £455,970; and 2024/24 £457,489.

The Board welcomed and congratulated the CEO on this bid.

iv) Meeting with Permanent Secretary

TEO's new Permanent Secretary, Mr. Denis McMahon invited the CEO to meet him on 19<sup>th</sup> October.

He has since accepted an invitation to meet with CRC's Board which Ms H George will organise. The CEO will prepare a briefing paper for the Chair ahead of this meeting.

At the request of the Chair the CEO informed the Permanent Secretary that CRC's Board members will be coming to the end of their terms in May 2022 to allow for preparations to begin to ensure a Board is in place by the 1<sup>st</sup> June.

v) TEO Committee

CRC was invited to provide The Executive Office Committee with a briefing covering 4 areas: Role and function; Activities in the last year; Planned activities for the coming year; Details of expenditure . This was due to insufficient committee time to scrutinise all the Arm's Length Bodies through oral evidence sessions. However, the Committee may still decide to request an oral briefing if necessary. The CEO drafted this briefing, in collaboration with Directors and the Chair.

The briefing was on the Committee's schedule for their meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> October and received no follow up questions or requests for additional information.

vi) The House of Commons Committee on the Protocol

Following a meeting with House of Lords Speaker Lord McFall, CRC have been invited to take part in a panel giving evidence on the Northern Ireland Protocol.

As set out in her report the CEO reiterated that CRC do not hold an opinion on the Protocol, and therefore cannot offer an opinion at this meeting but could discuss the overall work of the organisation and the wider context including the response to Covid-19 and the unrest earlier in the year.

The Board agreed that CRC should attend this panel session and use it as an opportunity to highlight the work CRC is doing, and the consequences of current events on good relations, including the political uncertainty.

The CEO stated that she will prepare written evidence and agree this with the Chair in due course.

vii) Funding

The Core Fund is now open for applications. The Team have held a number of information sessions for applicants during October.

The CEO, Funding Director, and Policy Officer met with representatives from Rural Community Network to discuss how to encourage more applications from rural areas where there are currently gaps. Attendees discussed the role of rural champions/enablers; good relations in everyday lives; succession planning; and understanding the existing networks in local areas and how to engage with them.

viii) Engagement

The TBUC Engagement Forum took place on 21<sup>st</sup> September, with the First and Deputy First Minister and the US Consul General in attendance. Hosting this

meeting on Zoom enabled the meeting to have an international element. The CEO thanked the Engagement Team, staff, and those Board members who attended for their work and attendance at this meeting.

The Engagement Team are currently completing the Good Relations Week evaluation which will be presented at December's Board meeting.

The next Decade Roundtable will meet on the 25<sup>th</sup> November. All Board members are welcome to attend.

A meeting of the Peace Monitoring Report Advisory Group will take place on 4<sup>th</sup> October. The Chair Dr A Guelke and all members have agreed to continue on the Advisory Group. The Committee will consider additional members to invite onto the Advisory Group, including women and early career academics.

The CEO thanked Mr D Johnston for the introduction to those working on good relations in Danska Bank and Legal Island, whom the CEO and Chair met. The CEO will work on a plan for engaging further for the private sector.

### **3661/21**

#### **CRC Development Paper**

During CRC's Accountability and Liaison meeting with The Executive Office on the 4<sup>th</sup> August, TEO asked CRC about development ideas for the organisation.

In preparation for the discussion with TEO, the CEO presented a paper for Board's consideration, proposing ideas for development in the areas of: Finance; Engagement; and Governance. The Board reviewed this paper during September's meeting, and proposed a number of additions.

The CEO informed the Board members that these amendments were made, and provided them with the updated paper. The CEO noted that the paper had now gone to TEO.

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

### **3662/21**

#### **Collaboration with Other Funder**

The CEO and Chair met with the International Fund for Ireland earlier in the year, to discuss possible areas of collaboration.

The organisation and CRC have many areas of mutual interest and have worked together in the past.

CRC asked TEO whether it was content for CRC to collaborate with this organisation, and as was discussed at a previous Board meeting, the Department has agreed in principle.

Three potential areas of collaboration were presented to the Board: learning and evaluation; grant application to deliver a programme of work; acting as an agent for the organisation (subject to the normal appointment processes).

The CEO informed Board members that CRC's focus on Good Relations in everyday life was of particular interest to IFI in the earlier discussions.

The Board thanked the CEO for her paper, and welcomed the ideas. The Board approved the proposal, and commended the direction of travel set out in the paper.

The CEO will now share the paper with the International Fund for Ireland.

**3662/21 Community Engagement**

The Board received a paper updating members on the work of the Engagement Team, following September's Board meeting.

The Board noted this report.

**3663/21 Funding Update**

The Board received a paper updating members on the work of the Funding and Development Team, following September's Board meeting.

The Board noted this report.

**3664/21 Purchase Order**

Mr G McKeown informed the Board that the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland developed a business case to extend the lease of Equality House until March 2026. The business case provided budget cover for all current tenants within Equality House, including CRC.

The Department of Finance approved the business case on 22nd July 2021 and CRC's Finance and General Purposes Committee recommended the Purchase Order for approval at their meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> October.

The value of the MOTO over the period of the contract is estimated to be £486,895.

The Board approved this purchase order and the signing of the Memorandum of Tenancy and Occupation by the CEO.

**3665/21 Finance and General Purposes Committee**

The Chair of CRC's Finance and General Purposes Committee updated Board members on the meeting which took place on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

The Meeting discussed a confidential grading query relating to a staff member. This session was held in private.

Mr G McKeown presented the Committee with CRC's Quarterly Delivery Report. The Chair assured members that all targets are on schedule to be completed by the end of the financial year. CRC drafted a 'Balanced Score Card' showing 'How Much CRC

Did'; 'How Well CRC Did It; and 'If Anyone is Better Off'. More work is to be done on the measuring of the qualitative question.

The Committee received the Annual Report and Accounts and CRC's Management Accounts. The 2021/22 Management Accounts are in line with the budget and procurement policy.

The Board thanked the Chair for this update.

**3666/21 Pay Remit**

Mr G McKeown informed the Board that CRC's 2018/19 and 2019/20 Pay Remits are in an advanced stage of review. All queries sent by The Executive Office have been answered.

The 2020/21 and 2021/22 Pay Remits have also been submitted, and all TEO queries have been replied to.

CRC now await approval from The Executive Office.

The Board thanked Mr G McKeown for this update.

**3667/21 Dignity at Work Implementation**

Ms J Adamson presented the Board with an update on CRC's Implementation of the Dignity at Work Charter.

A team building session will take place in December, where all staff will attend in person. This is dependent on public health guidance and staff preference.

The Dignity at Work policy is now live, and a staff member has felt confident to raise a concern through this process, albeit that it was not a Dignity at Work matter.

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

**3668/21 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

i) 29<sup>th</sup> October ARAC Meeting

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee updated the Board on the latest meeting.

The Committee received and recommended the Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21.

The Committee received the Report to Those Charged With Governance from the NI Audit Office. This Report showed only one recommendation, related to the 'Compliance with DoF Guidance FD (DFP) 08/14, 09/18 ' which the audit office recognised as relying on input from others and is not solely in CRC's control to complete.

The Committee reviewed and approved the Risk Register, which was presented earlier in this meeting.

ii) Minutes of the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021 ARAC Meeting

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee presented the members with the minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting which took place on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

The Board thanked the Chair for this update, and noted the minutes.

**3669/21 Any Other Business**

None

**3670/21 Date of Next Meeting**

10<sup>th</sup> December 2021 10:30am