

Community Relations Council
2nd Meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee
11th June 2021 11am
Via online video software

1. **Present:** Mr M McDonald (Chair of CRC Board), Ms A Simpson (Board Member), Mr M McDonnell (Board Member)
2. **In Attendance:** Ms J Irwin (CEO), Mr G McKeown (Director of Finance, Admin, and Personnel), Ms T Wilson (Finance Manager), Ms H George (PA to CEO and Board)
3. **Apologies:** Ms N Tandon (Board Member)

4. Minutes

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the 10th March 2021 Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting and agreed that they were a true and accurate reflection.

5. Conflict of Interests

The Committee were asked to bring to attendees attention any conflicts relating to the agenda items.

No conflicts were raised.

6. Employee Grading

The Committee had a confidential discussion relating to an employee grading issue. Ms H George and Ms T Wilson left the meeting for this discussion and returned once completed.

7. Quarterly Delivery Report

Mr G McKeown presented the Committee with CRC's 2020/21 Quarter Four Delivery Report.

He provided the Committee with assurance that all of the activities and outputs identified in the 20/21 Business Plan have been delivered, excluding a small number which have been superseded.

A balanced score card summary of the Delivery Report will be presented for the 2021/22 Business Plan updates.

The Committee congratulated CRC for their delivery of all actions during this difficult year.

The CEO added that during the Covid-19 situation CRC was able to mitigate any issues and adapt to online and home working very quickly. She highlighted that the only area that showed an impact was the Community Relations/ Cultural Diversity grant, as many small organisations applying for this grant were not able to carry out their projects in the Covid-19 landscape. Some of this resource was released back to TEO.

The Committee thanked Mr G McKeown and the CEO for this update and noted the Report.

8. Summary of Financial Performance

Mr G McKeown presented the Committee with a summary of CRC's financial performance for 2020/21.

He informed the Committee that CRC awarded £2.1M in grants during this year. He added that this was £29K below budget, which was due to the Covid-19 situation and the uncertainty faced by groups.

The projected underspend is currently 0.9%, which is within the NICS expenditure target of 1.5%.

The summary shows that 85% of expenditure went directly to grants and engagement activity during the year 2020/21. Mr G McKeown presented a summary of expenditure budget including a variance analysis that reported a mix of adverse and favourable movement.

Mr G McKeown added that the 70% Pathfinder budget that was not spend was reallocated to other funding schemes. The Funding Director will be doing more work to promote the Pathfinder funding scheme during 2021/22. The CEO highlighted how important this fund is to responding to emergency situations and providing support to groups who have lost funding during the year.

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

9. Annual Report and Accounts

Mr G McKeown presented the Committee with CRC's Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21.

He drew the Board attention to a number of items within the paper, including: The Chair's forward; The CEO's Comment; The Strategic Plan; The Going Concerns; The Performance Summary; Key Achievements; Detailed Analysis of Achievements; Breakdowns of Funding Paid, Break Down of Achievements in each Directorate; Overview of the Business Plan achievements; Detailed Financial Summary; Strategic Report; Governance Statements; Organisations Structure; Names and Attendance of Board Members; Future Plans Overview; Data Protection, FOI, and Complaints; 'No Better No Worse Off' Issue' Remuneration Report.

Mr G McKeown added that the Comptroller and Auditor General report will be inserted into CRC's audit report into the Annual Report and Accounts, once drafted.

Ms T Wilson highlighted to the Committee on the financial statements in the Report, including: The Statement of Financial Activities; Balance Sheet; and the Cash Flow Statement. She assured the Board that all financial statements were completed in line with Charity reporting guidance, Department guidance, and Company House guidance.

The Committee suggested that details of CRC's TEO Pension Guarantee should be added to the section on 'Going Concern' within the Report, add context to the issue.

ACTION: Mr G McKeown to add details of CRC's TEO Pension Guarantee to the section of the Annual Report and Account on 'Going Concern'.

The Chair thanked Mr G McKeown and Ms T Wilson for the comprehensive Annual Report and Accounts. He thanked the Board and staff team for meeting the Key Performance Indicators in this difficult year.

Mr G McKeown added that the Annual Report and Accounts will now be shared with the NI Audit Office, and following their sign off, will go to the full Board for approval during the Annual General Meeting.

10. 2021/22 Budget

Mr G McKeown provided the Committee with a paper setting out CRC's 2021/22 budget.

He highlighted that CRC were awarded an extra £20K from TEO compared to the 2020/21 budget. Despite inflationary pressures, resource available to grants funding is equal to 2020/21.

He added that overall salaries have increased by £18K due to estimated Pay awards for this period.

A saving has been projected due to the efficiencies around operating costs, however, this has been imbedded in CRC's cost structure so there is little opportunity to get benefits from these savings.

The Finance Team will monitor deliver against the budget through the management accounts process and report back at future Finance and General Purposes Committees.

The Committee noted this report.

11. Pay Remit

Mr G McKeown informed the Committee that The Executive Office and The Department of Finance have not progressed CRC's Pay Remits following the previous update.

The Chair wrote to TEO highlighting that this delay will again appear in CRC's Annual Report and Accounts, and be raised during NI Audit Office's audit of CRC.

The letter asks for TEO's view on the reasonableness in further delaying approval of the pay awards and what actions they are taking to progress this issue.

Mr G McKeown added that CC's 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 pay remits are still outstanding.

The Committee thanked M G McKeown for this update.

12. Large Business Case

Mr G McKeown updated the Committee on CRC's two large business cases:

i) Pension

This business case is currently with TEO. CRC have received no further correspondence on this.

ii) Accommodation

Mr G McKeown previously presented and discussed a large business case on CRCs accommodation to this Committee. This business case is no longer applicable, as the Department of Finance have superseded it by working on a joint business case for all residents of Equality House.

13. Vouching and Verification Procedures

Mr G McKeown informed the Committee that the new procedures, approved by the Board this year, were implemented in April 2021.

CRC received a positive audit report on these procedures, with a number of best practice suggestions made.

The Chair added that Ms T Wilson gave a very good presentation on these new procedures in April to funded groups.

The Committee thanked Mr G McKeown for this update.

14. LRA Implementation Plan

Mr G McKeown presented the Committee with a report setting out CRC's progress made on implementing the LRA Plan.

The Chair stated that he would be attending an upcoming staff meeting, to reassure staff of his and the Board's commitment to this process.

15. Sick Absence Report

Mr G McKeown presented the Board with a report on CRC's staff members' sick absence statistics.

He highlighted that the number of days lost due to sick leave was down by 54% compared to the previous period's statistics. This is a saving of £21k.

The Committee noted this report.

16. Equality and Disability Update

Mr G McKeown provided the Committee with a report updating on the implementation of the Disability Plan and Equality Scheme.

He highlighted that CRC are currently conducting a review of the website to ensure that it meets the accessibility standards.

Staff will be receiving training on disability and equality in the 2021/22 financial year.

17. Health and Safety

Nothing to report

18. Premises Committee

Mr G McKeown recently attended a Premises Committee for Equality House residents, and provided the Committee with a Report on this meeting.

He stated that the facilities contract is up for renewal and a procurement exercise is being progress by ECNI. CRC will get the opportunity to contribute to this procurement exercise in due course.

The Committee noted this report.

19. Any Other Business

The Committee commended CRC's Management Team and staff for their work over the last year.

20. Date of Next Meeting

The following dates are indicative, and subject to change:

8th October 2021 11am

7th January 2022 11am