

CCEA

COUNCIL COVID-19 BRIEFING

Minutes of a Special Council meeting held via MS Teams on Wednesday 1 July 2020 at 2.15 pm

Present: Mr T Carson (Chair) Mr RJ Thompson
Ms P Slevin Dr L Caul
Mr B Wilson Mrs K O'Hare
Mrs M Kinghan Dr A Kerr
Mrs K O'Hare Mrs P Leitch

Mr J Edwards (Chief Executive)
Mrs L Scott (Director Finance & Corporate Services)
Mrs S King (Head of Regulation)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Ms R Byrne; Mrs C Fitzsimons; Mr C McKinney and Mrs S Kirk .

2 Conflict of Interests

Members confirmed there were no conflict of interests on any of the agenda items.

3 Chair's Business

Staff Retirement

The Chair advised that Miss Ruth Kennedy had retired from CCEA on 30 June 2020. He confirmed he had, on behalf of Council, recorded a short video to Ruth thanking her for all of her contributions to the work of CCEA and in particular the support she provided to Council and its committees in regards to the significant developments in the areas of Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting.

Members recognised how well respected Ruth was by her fellow colleagues across the Education Sector.

Order of Council Business

The Chair thanked Dr Kerr for her correspondence in regards to the way in which the Council conducts business through its agendas. He assured members that following discussions with the Chief Executive, significant matters in regards to Education and Regulation would require substantial discussion by Council and these would be brought forward to the Regular briefings from the end of July. He confirmed that in addition to the Chief Executive's situation report on Covid-19, time would be built in for a wider discussion on the key items that need to be progressed.

4 Chief Executive's Covid-19 Situation Report

Corporate

Staffing

Interim Management Structure Update

The Chief Executive confirmed that the DoFCS had submitted a Business Case together with supporting documentation to the Department of Education for the additional resource to support the Chief Executive and Executive Team. He advised that DE have sought clarification on several matters. These have been answered, however DE have referred the case to the Department of Finance (DoF). He said that several additional enquiries have been made by DoF and these have now been submitted for consideration. He hoped that the matters have been resolved in order for the process to begin.

The Chief Executive confirmed that should any issues arise he would return to Council.

Investors in People (IiP) Survey

The Chief Executive confirmed that staff had been encouraged to complete the online IiP survey, and was pleased to report a good participation rate. The final report will be shared with Council once available.

A Council member sought and received confirmation that an analysis of skills on CCEA staff had been completed in terms of redeployment of officers to ensure mobility and versatility across the organisation. The Chief Executive confirmed that a broader skills assessment was conducted on an annual basis as part of the IiP process.

The Chair sought and received clarification that skills assessment and development needs was part of the staff performance review system.

Members were reassured that this flexibility existed across the organisation give the current working practices.

Awarding

The Chief Executive confirmed that Entry Level draft results were issued to centres of 29 June 2020. A small number of enquiries have been resolved, with no issues of concern to report. Process checks are underway with A Level and GCSE draft results which have been uploaded onto the system.

The Chief Executive advised that in issues continue to be worked through with individual centres in regards to private candidates. He confirmed that a dedicated staff resource had been assigned to close these out.

He confirmed that work continues with other awarding bodies on arrangements for the Issue of Results scheduled for August 2020.

Regulation

The Head of Regulation has begun work on the Regulatory approach for 2021. Considerable work has been completed on initial proposals with input from other Regulators, this work, whilst complex in nature, is progressing well. Following discussion with DE proposals will be brought to Council for consideration.

Work continues on the preparation of results for Vocational Qualifications, with discussions underway with FE institutions in regards to the 2021 academic year, taking account of lessons learned during 2020.

Curriculum & Assessment

The Chief Executive confirmed that a significant amount of resources on 'home working' were now available. He advised that work continued on the request from DE on Qualifications Restart. This would be presented to Council at its next meeting

Communications

The Chief Executive drew attention to the information previously circulated to members in regards to the Children's Commissioner's comments on the Appeals Process. He confirmed he had met with the Chief Executive of the Children's Commission to provide assurances and more detail in regards to the appeals and complaints processes.

An explanatory video blog has now been launched on the website to enable students to access the information, and has been well received to date.

The Chief Executive advised that in cases where CCEA receives negative publicity lines to take have already been drafted and can be enacted if required. This will be included as part of the Communications Strategy.

Members were content that the Chief Executive had taken the appropriate action to maintain good relationships with the Children's Commissioner.

A Council member sought clarification on whether any feedback had been received following Ofqual's recent announcement on resits. The Chief Executive advised that a small number of enquiries had been received, however none were issues of concern.

This concluded the Chief Executive's situation report to Council.

5 Regulation

Update on other jurisdictions (Appeals and Awarding 2020)

The Head of Regulation updated members on Qualifications Wales and Ofqual's positions in regards to awarding and appeals.

Awarding

She confirmed that both CCEA and Quals Wales had not instructed CCEA AO and WJEC respectively to offer candidates opportunities to re-sit examinations in the Autumn term, whereas Ofqual has instructed the English AOs to offer this opportunity. Ofqual's Decisions Report has confirmed that the written examined components will be offered where there is demand for this. The internal assessment components will not be offered, with the exception of Art.

The Chair expressed concern that some centres may see Ofqual's position to put pressure on the Minister of Education (NI) in regards to the opportunity for re-sits, however stated that CCEA should maintain its position. The Chief Executive concurred with this statement.

Appeals

The Head of Regulation advised that Qualifications Wales had issued their Appeals Process consultation findings, and confirmed that their decisions concurred with CCEA's, in that there will be no opportunity to

appeal Teacher Professional Judgement (TPJ). Ofqual issued their consultation on 30 June 2020, their guidance differed from the CCEA and Quals Wales in that there was a possibility that a centre could launch an appeal on the basis that the wrong data was used in terms of an AO not taking account of recent demographical changes when applying the statistical model. Ofqual has insisted this will be rare and exceptional, however the potential still remains.

The Head of Regulation expressed concern in that comparisons might be drawn with the approach of CCEA, however this was mitigated by the fact that Wales is not facilitating this as grounds for appeal.

6 Any Other Business

None identified.

7 Date of Next Meeting

The Chair advised that he and the Chief Executive would revisit the schedule of meetings to identify dates for Council sessions for in-depth discussions around policy matters to allow advice to be provided in a timely manner.

The next Council briefing was scheduled for Wednesday 22 July, time to be confirmed. A Council member asked for flexibility in regards to timings of meetings. The Chair confirmed this would be accommodated.

The Chair thanked members for their support and input to the meetings that have taken place to date.

Subsequently, the date of the meeting was changed to Tuesday 21 July at 10 am.