

CCEA

Minutes of a Special Council meeting held via MS Teams on Wednesday 17 June 2020 at 2.30 pm.

Present: Mr T Carson (Chair) Mr RJ Thompson
Ms P Slevin Dr L Caul
Mr B Wilson Mr C McKinney
Dr A Kerr (Closed Session only) Mrs M Kinghan
Mrs K O'Hare Mrs P Leitch
Mrs C Fitzsimons Mrs R Byrne

Mr J Edwards (Chief Executive)

Mrs K McBride (closed session only)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr Ana Kerr; Mrs Christine Harpur; Mrs Samantha Kirk and Mrs Sharon King.

2 Conflict of Interests

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

3 Chair's Business

The Chair thanked Dr Kerr for suggesting that an e-mail be issued from the Council to all staff thanking them for their continuous hard work and support during these unprecedented times.

Deferred Paper

The Chair confirmed that the paper : *Arrangements for Regulatory Conditions for General Qualifications under Covid-19 Arrangements* would be deferred to the next appropriate Council briefing meeting.

4 Main Business

Chief Executive's COVID-19 Situation Report

Restart Oversight and Management Structures

The Chief Executive referred to the diagram outlining the Department of Education's (DE) Restart Oversight and Management Structure, led by the Permanent Secretary, Derek Baker. The Programme Board would meet on a weekly basis, starting on Thursday 18 June 2020.

He confirmed that that CCEA officers were represented on each of the programme strands, as follows :

Restart Programme Board :	Justin Edwards
Physical Protection :	Leah Scott
New School Day :	Michael Crossan
Vulnerable Children & SEN :	Ruth Kennedy and Lyn Lynch
Standards and Learning :	Justin Edwards, Margaret Farragher and Sharon King

He provided an overview of the constitution of the high-level Programme Board and responsibilities for each strand.

The 'New School Day' was the most active strand at present. This will define how schools will restart, with Years 12 and 14 going back on 17 August 2020. No further detail was available at present. Michael Crossan was representing CCEA on this strand as the remit includes discussion on examination issues and will provide documentation to inform curriculum planning.

The 'Standards and Learning' strand will require most input from CCEA .

CCEA was at the forefront of initiating the Well-being Hub (CCEA) which will also contribute to the Well-being strand of the programme.

The Chief Executive advised that actions would be reported to Council.

Member sought and received clarification on a wide range of matters. The Chief Executive expanded on the timeframe for completion of the standards and advised that the 'New School Day' project was advanced to ensure guidelines was provided for 17 August. In regards to other areas he confirmed that a significant amount of work was required and would take some time to complete. He would be in favour of a looking forward over a 3-month period to take a longer view and give more stability to the system, (with a reserve plan in place should Covid-19 re-emerge). He confirmed that the programme was adhering to PHA/CMO advice to DE, and CCEA would act accordingly.

The Chair recognised the work was at an early stage and hoped matters would progress quickly now that the Programme Board was in place and the Strands active.

A Council member expressed concern at the lack of confidence there was in the system in regards to progress on the initiatives proposed. Also, at the lack of clarity or direction provided to schools who continued to plan for the 17 August, in recognition that the work may be nugatory once DE's guidance is received. He expressed frustration that with the end of the school year (30 June) fast approaching, the timelines for completing planning were not being recognised.

The Chief Executive acknowledged the challenges and said that it remained difficult for CCEA to provide all relevant information by 30 June given the need for clarity on the operation of the new school day, however engagement with the subject advisory groups, principal groups and other stakeholders is assisting with urgent planning. He agreed that clarity on the approach on years returning to school was essential, and provision of New School Day guidance on direction was critical. He advised that this was a fixed position with flexibility within schools to adapt as appropriate.

Further Education students will return late in September to give staff sufficient time to prepare blended learning approaches.

Clarification was sought on whether there had been engagement with the unions. The Chief Executive confirmed that the NITC has been briefed. A Council member suggested that negotiations with Unions was positive in that additional days can be allocated throughout the year. The Chief Executive welcomed this important point as this information will be required to amend school holidays and prepare for the November examination series, and confirmed he had spoken to DE on this issue.

The Chair asked the Chief Executive to reflect the views of Council members back to the Programme Board at the next appropriate opportunity.

Corporate

Finance

The Chief Executive confirmed that following Council consideration and agreement of the 3 options papers on Examination Fees; Payment for Examiners and Contract for Services, a consolidated paper has been submitted to DE for consideration and approval. He advised that DoF approval would also be required.

Buildings

The Mallusk site is fully operational with staff returning on a phased basis.

Clarendon site is prepared and ready for staff to return for essential business items only.

Planning

The CCEA Business Plan is being remodelled in advance of receiving the commission from DE. Work is underway to report on Quarter 1 for 2020/21.

Awarding

The Chief Executive was pleased to report 100% completion of centre assessment grade entries for GCSE and A Level. All have been signed off with no contingencies required. Peter Weir, Minister for Education has thanked all teachers for their engagement in the process.

Awarding process is progressing satisfactorily.

Private Candidates

The Chief Executive advised that many private candidates have received grades with a number of issues being resolved at centre level. CCEA awarding staff have a process in place for the management and resolution of private candidates' issues, and will be doing all reasonably possible to ensure these candidates receive grades.

Regulation

The independent statistical consultants have recommended changes to the statistical model for A2, these have been actioned and the model has now been ratified. Work continues on AS Level, GCSE and Occupational Studies with final sign off scheduled for Friday 26 June.

Vocational Qualifications

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Regulators have agreed with the AOs to extend the date for submission of adaptive assessment to allow FE colleges to open in August and September to progress their qualifications. Processes are being amended as requested.

The Chair stressed the importance of highlighting CCEA's involvement in its Communications Strategy across all processes and how Regulation has influenced and progressed issues.

A Council member suggested that some work was required to build relationships between FE colleges and CCEA. The Chair confirmed that CCEA acted appropriately under the direction of Department for the Economy, however the delay in the provision of direction has caused uncertainty within the FE sector. The Chief Executive recognised the challenges for the sector, and advised that his long standing relationships with FE principals had been tested. He recognised that there were significant lessons to be

learned from the operation of the vocational qualifications market and that it was urgent to revisit the 'Future of Vocational Qualifications' project as this would have addressed some of the issues that have arisen.

He confirmed that he had been highlighting issues in regard to the size, scale and complexity of the vocational market with DfE since 2016, and that decisions and investment was needed for an alternative approach for Northern Ireland. The work on the Vocational Qualifications Review has been suspended by DfE in light of the Covid-19 crisis, and will resume when instructed.

Curriculum & Assessment

The Chief Executive advised that no further direction had been received on Curriculum requirements at this time, however CCEA is considering statutory arrangements for the Curriculum.

Assessment

Statutory assessment arrangements for the new academic year will be considered under the Standards and Learning Strand of the Restart Programme. CCEA's involvement is critical to this and a programme lead will be appointed

Communications

The Chief Executive advised that communications issues were relatively stable over the past week. Positive feedback continues to be received on curriculum and support materials.

He also confirmed engagement with some political parties to bring them up to date on developments.

Logistics and Closure

The Chief Executive advised that all arrangements were on target for the issue and delivery of results at this point in time.

The Chair welcomed the assurance that matters were under control as far as possible from CCEA's perspective. He suggested that over the coming weeks some time could be set aside to explore a timeframe for forward planning in regards to taking Council's view of what the landscape should look like over the next 2-3 years. He would also consider inviting DE to a future session.

A Council member thanked the Chief Executive for the weekly updates. He sought clarification on whether it was time for Council to begin thinking in terms of what the Council needs to put in place and how this can be put in place. He urged caution in regards to Covid-19 and suggested that care be taken in resuming the Education sector.

The Chair thanked the member for his comments and confirmed that consideration would be given to the future structure of Council meetings, together with an outline of items for consideration and timeline for discussions into September/October.

This concluded the Chief Executive's situation report.

5 Examinations

For Information : International Monitoring

CB/17June/1

The Chief Executive drew attention to the detail of the paper, and advised that the information would be updated as appropriate.

Members welcomed the information provided.

6 Regulation

Arrangements for Regulatory Conditions for General Qualifications under Covid-19 Arrangements **CB/17 June/2**

The Chief Executive confirmed that this item had been deferred to the next appropriate Council briefing meeting.

7 Any Other Business

None identified.

8 Date of Next Meeting

The Chair confirmed that the next full Council meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 24 June 2020 at 1.30 pm. The Chief Executive's situation report would be incorporated into the agenda.

He thanked members and officers for their contributions.