

## **CCEA**

## **COUNCIL**

Minutes of the one hundred and sixty-third meeting of Council held on Thursday 25 January 2024 at 2.30 pm via hybrid arrangements.

**Present:** Mr T O'Reilly (Chair) Dr L Caul  
Professor P Hanna Mrs P Leitch  
Mrs D O'Connor Mrs A Kingsley  
Mr B Wilson Mr H McCarthy  
Ms P Slevin

### *CCEA Executive*

Mr G Campbell (Chief Executive)  
Mr M Crossan (Temporary Director of Examinations)  
Mr J Daly (Financial Services Manager)  
Mrs S King (Head of Regulation)  
Mrs P Larmour (Temporary Business Manager, Examinations) (*Only agenda item C/163/5*)  
Mrs P Bowden (PA to CEO)

### *In attendance*

Ms Angela Kane (DE Observer)  
Mrs V Leyden (Boardroom Apprentice)

## **1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from for Mrs K O'Hare and Mrs L Scott.

## **2 Conflict of Interests**

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

## **3 Chair's Business**

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting. He informed the members that the officers were in attendance to provide details on the various agenda items as required and that Ms P Larmour would join the meeting for the paper (C/163/5).

Professor P Hanna submitted his apologies and left the meeting at this point.

### ***Correspondence***

The Chair referred members to the range of council correspondence received since the previous meeting.

The Chief Executive (CEO) wished to place on record CCEA's appreciation for Mr G Fair's (DE) support, advice and assistance over the years, and wished him well in his new role with TEO.

The Chief Executive informed members that a response from the Secretary of State had issued to the CEOs of educational bodies, which acknowledged the CEOs' joint letter of 6 December 2023. There was no further information to report.

Members noted the correspondence from the previous meeting.

Mr B Wilson joined the meeting at this point.

### **Chief Executive's Report to Council**

**C/163/1**

The Chair invited the CEO to provide members with a detailed overview from the Chief Executive's Report.

The Chief Executive provided the members with a succinct summary of his Report and outlined in detail the business activities from across the organisation.

A Council Member commended the staff with the achievement of a successful delivery of the November examinations series.

Members were content with the information provided.

## **4 Ratification of Minutes of Previous Meetings**

### *Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 November 2023 and associated Action Points*

The Chair advised members that the minutes from the previous Council meeting were deferred until the next meeting.

## **5 Governance**

### **GAR**

The Chair provided the members with a detailed update from the last GAR meeting which was held on 18 December 2023.

### **Independent Review of Education**

**C/163/2**

The Chair informed members this paper was not a critique of the review team's recommendations, rather it was highlighting the key strategic, professional and organisational recommendations which could impact on CCEA and its statutory duties. He provided members with a detailed outline of the review team's 10 key recommendations.

The members discussed this at length and sought clarity on various points within the paper.

The Chair commended Dr L Caul for his support and contributions to Council over the years, given that this was his last meeting of Council. The CEO also commended Dr Caul.

The Chair informed the members that a sub-committee for the Independent Review of Education would be established and he invited members to consider joining the sub-committee.

Members noted the information provided.

The Chair reminded the members that KPMG were commissioned in 2022 to undertake a review of administrative arrangements which support Council in exercising governance functions. Their report was presented at the Finance committee in June 2023. He noted that the governance action plan which was provided in the papers was the first bi-monthly progress report on the developments with the recommendations.

Members were content with the information provided and noted progress with the plan.

## **6 Education**

### ***Chairs report on Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) (Verbal)***

The Chair invited the Temporary Director of Examinations (TDoE) to provide members with an update on the CAT presentation which took place on 11 January 2024.

The TDoE informed members that CCEA was continuing to progress with the development of the CAT assessment tool throughout 2023/24. He provided a detailed overview of the developments. The TDoE highlighted that in previous years, minimal funding was allocated by CCEA to the project from its block grant, however future development of the CAT tool will require additional significant investment. CCEA continues to work with the Departments in relation to an extended Direct Award Contract to procure services from Cambridge University and EA which are essential to the continuation of the project.

A Council Member viewed the CAT assessment tool as extremely beneficial in supporting the education of learners and suggested immediate engagement with DE in relation to addressing the funding risks for this project.

Members noted the position.

### ***Curriculum Update***

**C/163/4**

The Chair invited the CEO to provide the members with details of this paper.

The CEO informed members that the paper provided an overview of the strands of work within the Curriculum team.

Members noted the information provided.

### ***Advice on Awarding 2024***

**C/163/5**

The Chair welcomed Ms P Larmour (Temporary Business Manager, Examinations) (TBME) to the meeting for this agenda item.

The TBME reminded members that Council approved the advice on the approach to 2023/24 GCSE, AS and A Level examinations in September 2023 and that this was accepted by DE in October 2023. She informed members of the actions to date:

- Work has continued to finalise the technical arrangements required to achieve pre-pandemic outcomes in Summer 2024 awards;
- These technical arrangements for awarding in Summer 2024 would replicate, in-full, those approved and used in Summer 2023;
- This work has included an assessment of the additional financial and human resources required to implement the technical arrangements; and
- Discussions have been continuing with departmental officials on the awarding approach for Summer 2024.

The members considered the proposals presented and there was agreement as outlined below:

- The use of judgemental grade interventions at A and E Grades in the Summer 2024 A levels for the purpose of achieving a return to the pre- pandemic standards. Mr H McCarthy proposed and it was seconded by Ms P Slevin.
- The use of an intervention at C Grade in A Levels to achieve the pre- pandemic standard. Mrs P Leitch proposed and Mrs A Kinglsey seconded.
- The use of a software application to support any necessary adjustments at C Grade in the Summer 2024 A Levels. Mrs D O'Connor proposed and it was seconded by Mr H McCarthy.
- The use of judgemental grade interventions at A, C and F grades in the Summer 2024 GCSE's for the purpose of achieving a return to the pre-pandemic standards.
- That there should not be any judgemental grade interventions at AS Level for the purpose of achieving a return to the pre-pandemic standards. Mrs P Leitch proposed and it was seconded by Ms P Slevin.
- Supported a business case to DE to fund the additional work needed to meet the Summer 2024 awarding requirements and support any interim resourcing and finance requirements until this funding need was met.

Members noted:

- That a regulation paper would be presented at the February Council meeting, detailing how returning to the pre-pandemic standards would impact on outcomes in Summer 2024 A Levels and GCSEs.

### ***Advice on Ofqual***

***C/163/6***

The TDoE informed members that CCEA took the decision to withdraw its qualifications from the England market due to policy divergence with England. He highlighted the main points of divergence:

- 1 GCE AS qualifications decoupled from GCE A2 qualifications.
- 2 GCSE qualifications to be graded 9-1.
- 3 All specifications to be delivered using a linear structure.
- 4 Coursework and controlled assessments to be replaced across all specifications with Non-Examination-Assessments.

The TDoE provided members with the background and a detailed summary of the rationale for CCEA to withdraw its recognition as an awarding organisation with Ofqual.

Members approved the proposal for CCEA to withdraw its awarding organisation status from Ofqual. It was proposed by Mrs A Kingsley and seconded by Mrs D O'Connor. It was agreed that the TDoE would make the necessary arrangements to inform both Ofqual and DE.

## **7 Finance**

The Chair of the Finance Committee provided an update from the last finance committee meeting.

### ***Finance Report as at 31 December 2023***

***C/163/7***

The Financial Services Manager (FSM) provided members with a summary of the December 2023 budget position including the savings plan progress. He reported the key points:

- Variance against DE revenue grant allocation was £55k underspend;
- £3k underspend on non-cash costs, giving £58k total revenue underspend;
- No spend to date on DE Capital grant allocation of £148k; and
- The £800k for the NJC pay settlement was received and approved by DE.

Members noted the financial position.

***Savings Plan Update as at 31 December 2023***

***C/163/8***

The FSM provided members with a summary of the savings plan as at December 2023. He reported the savings plan was broadly on target. He highlighted the main challenge was delivering fully on vacancy control targets, however this was forecasted to be covered by corresponding savings in non-pay costs. He referred to the paper which outlined the details of the current position.

Members noted the position.

***2023/24 Business Plan Quarter 3 Monitoring***

***C/163/9***

The FSM reported the details of the Quarter 3 business plan position; 10 measures were assessed as *On Track for Achievement* and 1 measure was assessed as *Achieved*.

Members noted the position reported.

***Budget 2024-25 Information Gathering Exercise Refresh and Capital Budget 2024/25 to 2027/28 Information Gathering Exercise***

***C/163/10***

The FSM provided the members with the details of the DE commission for CCEA's budget 2024-25 information gathering exercise refresh and also a Capital exercise for 2024-25 to include future years up to 2027-28.

He informed that due to timescales, the draft responses were generated and issued to DE subject to CCEA Finance Committee and Council review and approval.

Members noted the information contained in the paper.

***Draft 2024-25 Business Plan (Verbal Update)***

The CEO informed members of CCEA's agreement with DE to extend the submission deadline of the draft business plan to mid/late February 2024.

**8 Audit**

***2023-24 Corporate Risk Register December 2023 Update***

***C/163/11***

The FSM reported the overall risk ratings have been reviewed by senior management and updated to reflect the current risk environment. He also reported an update on the residual scores since the last review of the corporate risk register.

A Council Member expressed concern in relation to the emerging risk associated with the loss of senior staff, in particular, noting whether the risk rating in the corporate risk register was adequately rated for this risk. The CEO responded that the status of the risks were currently under review and anticipated an increased appetite on this particular risk. However, as with all corporate risks, this would be kept under continual review.

## **9 Below the Line Business**

*Chair's Report of ARAC Meeting: Friday 19 January 2024*

The Chair of the ARAC provided a report on the main items discussed at the most recent meeting of the committee. She thanked the Director of Finance & Corporate Services (DoFCS) and Financial Services Manager (FSM) for the informative papers provided.

### ***Submission of the General Conditions of Recognition (GCoR) Statement***

The Chair of the ARAC proposed submission of the GCoR statement and it was seconded by Mrs A Kingsley.

The Chair of ARAC informed the members of the committee's agreement to amend the title of CCEA's *Whistleblowing Policy* to *Raising Concerns Policy*.

Members noted the information provided.

## **10 Any Other Business**

No further business was identified.

## **11 Date of Next Meeting**

The Chair confirmed that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 29 February 2024.

He thanked members and officers for their input into the meeting.

This concluded the business of the Council.