

## CCEA

## COUNCIL

Minutes of the one hundred and sixty-fifth meeting of Council held on Thursday 28 March 2024 at 3pm in Room 115 in CCEA Clarendon Headquarters.

### Present:

#### Council Members

Mr T O'Reilly (Chair)	Mrs S McClelland
Professor P Hanna	Mrs P Leitch
Mrs D O'Connor	Mrs A Kingsley
Mr B Wilson	Professor S Morison
Mrs M Thompson	Mr Hugh McCarthy

#### Executive Team and other Staff

Mr G Campbell (Chief Executive)  
Mr J Daly (Business Manager, Financial Services)  
Mrs K McBride (Head of Resources)  
Mr M McAuley (Interim Business Manager, Qualifications)  
Mrs S King (Head of Regulation)

Ms J Burns (Temporary Council Secretariat)

#### In Attendance

Mrs J Cassells (DE Observer)  
Mrs V Leyden (Boardroom Apprentice)

### 1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr M Johnston and Mrs J Bartley.

### 2 Conflict of Interests

Members confirmed there were no conflict of interests.

### 3 Chair's Business

The Chair welcomed all members to Council and attendees to the meeting. He reflected on the success of the visit from the Minister for Education, Paul Givan MLA, which took place prior to the Council meeting.

### ***Feedback from the Governance Accountability Review (GAR) Meeting*** ***(Verbal)***

The Chair informed Council members that the recent GAR meeting took place at the Department of Education's Office on 14 March. For the benefit of new Council members, he explained the purpose of these meetings. He informed members that the meeting focused on progress on examinations for

the summer 2024 series as well as financial management and risk management issues. He also updated members that an agreement on the appointment of two new Director posts had still not been progressed. Council members expressed their disappointment and again asked how they could ensure there was adequate support for the CEO.

A council member enquired as to the difference between GAR and partnerships. The Chair explained that a new agreement between the two organisations would change the relationship from one focussed on CCEA reporting on its level of compliance and accountability, as under the GAR arrangements, to one where there are agreed mechanisms for providing assurance. In such an arrangement, the primary focus would be on working in partnership to achieve outcomes. The CEO added that on a day-to-day basis CCEA and the Department of Education (DE) have already established a collaborative working manner.

### **Annual Assessment Process**

**(Verbal)**

The Chair informed members that the annual assessment process for Council members would commence after the Easter break and that the Council Secretariat would be in contact with a self-assessment exercise designed to help assist members to complete their forms. He informed that the target date for completion is the end of April.

The Chair also advised that he would be holding a Council Vice Chair election before the summer break. He also informed members that there would be a Council Briefing meeting toward the end of April to discuss matters around staffing as well as finance.

### **Correspondence**

The Chair referred members to four pieces of council correspondence received since the previous meeting. He drew particular attention to the letter which detailed the indicative allocation for the 2024/2025 year and said that the Minister confirmed that this would be another one-year budget.

Members noted the correspondence.

### **The Chief Executive's Report**

**C/165/1**

The CEO drew attention to the detail of the report and updated members on the journey to the return of pre-pandemic standards which remained on track as well as the launch of the Independent Review of Education. He also spoke about the effects of industrial action on the examinations series as well as budgets and financial constraints faced by CCEA.

The CEO then highlighted the various projects that CCEA are involved in and gave an update on each of these. He also spoke of the success of the November 2023 series and provided detailed statistics on this series.

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

### *Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 February 2024 and associated Action Points*

The ratification of the minutes of the 25 January 2024 Council meeting were formally proposed by Mrs A Kingsley and seconded by Mr P Hanna as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

There was one action logged from the previous meeting in relation to council members volunteering to join the appeals panel. The Council Secretariat confirmed that this had been completed and resulted in three volunteers. The Chair said that he welcomed that three members had volunteered, and it would be appreciated if other members could offer assistance.

## 5 Audit and Risk

### ***Chair's Report***

***Verbal***

The Audit Risk and Assurance Committee Chair provided a verbal update on the meeting held on Thursday 14 March 2024. She highlighted key areas discussed which included an update on both the internal and external audit strategy and timelines. She also spoke of the draft Annual Governance Statement which required some further edits to reflect the work of the Council. She also mentioned that there was some duplication within the document which was due back to the Committee on 24 April for further review. She provided an update regarding the Corporate Risk Register where the residual scores of three risks had increased, and she informed Council that there had been some discussion around the design of the template.

The Chair also said that it had been agreed that specific training would be organised for Audit, Risk and Assurance committee members.

### ***Corporate Risk Register (CRR)***

***C/165/2***

The Chair invited the Business Manager for Financial Services and Business Assurance (BMFS) to provide detail to the paper updating members on the CRR. He confirmed that the CRR had been reviewed in February and that it was intended to review the document on a more regular basis. He confirmed that a working group is to be formed to undertake the first review. He informed members that CCEA have eight risks in total and that three of these risks increased during the last review. These increases were mainly due to financial pressures, resourcing challenges and industrial action in schools and colleges.

A Council member referred to the issues around resourcing and the recent departures of senior staff and suggested that council members could assist when required to help get through the summer 2024 examination series.

The CRR was proposed by Mr B Wilson and seconded by Mr H McCarthy.

### ***Draft End of Year Governance Statement***

***C/165/3***

The BMFS updated members on the status of the Annual Governance Statement. He informed members that it had been presented to the ARAC but that further work was required when the financial year came to an end. He said that feedback had been received from DE and that there were no significant issues with the statement. The CEO informed members that there would be further opportunity for their input and asked members to send any suggestions they have as soon as possible so that they can be incorporated into the document.

### ***Examinations Operational Readiness – Summer 2024***

***C/165/4***

The Chair invited the Temporary Director of Examinations (TDoE) to update members on the operational readiness for the summer 2024 examinations series.

The TDoE outlined six key risks that have been identified and are being managed by business managers. The risks included the return to pre-pandemic standards, cyber security, financial constraints, large increases in modifications, resourcing and industrial action. The TDoE outlined mitigations that were in place to manage the risks identified.

A Council member enquired as to the types of training available to invigilators and asked if the training was provided by the centre or by CCEA. The TDoE informed that CCEA work very closely with the invigilators.

The Chair suggested that the risks be presented in future using the RAG technique.

## **6 Financial and General Purposes Committee**

### ***Chair's Report***

***Verbal***

The Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee provided a verbal update on the financial position as at 31 January. She informed members of a £161k underspend (position at end of January 2024) which was just below the 1% target. The CEO reiterated the importance of CCEA landing on target.

The Chair also informed members that the Recruitment Policy required further scrutiny and would come back to the Committee for further review. She also said that the Menopause Policy had been approved by the Committee and would require Council approval.

### ***Finance Update***

***C/165/5***

The Chair invited the BMFS to update members on financial matters. The BMFS informed members that as at 29 February 2024 there was a £176k (0.97%) underspend on DE allocated funding.

He informed that CCEA remained on track to achieve their financial targets thanks to the implementation of a strict savings programme that totalled £1.75m.

He also spoke of the return of earmarked funding for RSE as planned work was suspended due to a review of the subject.

### ***Savings Plan***

***C/165/6***

The BMFS informed members that the savings plan was on-track to meet year end targets and asked if members required any clarity around the detail of the paper.

Members were satisfied with the information they received.

### ***Business Plan Q3 Update***

***C/165/7***

The BMFS spoke of the detail in the paper and informed members that CCEA had received feedback from DE who changed the status of one objective in relation to Irish Medium to 'not likely to be achieved'. This was due to issues around resourcing as well as translation of scripts.

The Chair informed members that the intention is to bring an updated version of the Corporate Plan to the next Council meeting and that SMART objectives will flow from the Corporate Plan through to the 2024/25 CCEA Business Plan.

### ***The Menopause Policy***

***C/165/8***

The Menopause Policy was approved by members and proposed by Mrs D O'Connor and seconded by Mr P Hanna.

## **7. Regulation**

### ***Occupational Studies Update***

***C/165/9***

The Chair confirmed that this paper would be deferred until the next meeting.

## **8. Governance**

The Chair provided an update to members on the status of the recommendations on Governance. Members were satisfied with the information provided and had no further comment or questions.

**9. Any Other Business**

No further business was identified.

**10 Date of Next Meeting**

The Chair confirmed that the next Council meeting would be held on Thursday 30 May 2024 but that there would be a Council briefing on the 25 April 2024. Information about the meeting would be circulated to members in advance.

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

This concluded the business of the Council.