

CCEA

COUNCIL

Minutes of the one hundred and sixty-sixth meeting of Council held on Thursday 30 May 2024 at 1.30pm in Room 115 in CCEA Clarendon Headquarters and via TEAMS.

Present:

Council Members

Mrs A Kingsley (Acting Chair)	Mrs S McClelland
Mrs P Leitch	Mrs D O'Connor
Mr B Wilson	Professor S Morison
Mrs M Thompson	Mr Hugh McCarthy
Dr M Johnston	Mrs J Bartley

Executive Team and other Staff

Mr G Campbell (Chief Executive)
Mr J Daly (Business Manager, Financial Services)
Mr M McAuley (Interim Director of Qualifications)
Mrs E Martin (Business Manager Curriculum and Assessment)
Mr G Byrne (Business Manager ICT) for item No. 6
Mrs K McBride (Head of Resources) for item No. 6
Mr A McAfee (Business Manager, Multimedia, Learning Resources and Communications) item No. 6
Mr D Crosbie (Regulation Manager) for item No.9

Ms J Burns (Temporary Council Secretariat)

In Attendance

Mr R Caldwell (DE Observer)
Mrs V Leyden (Boardroom Apprentice)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr T O'Reilly, Mr P Hanna and Mrs S King

2 Conflict of Interests

Members confirmed there were no conflict of interests.

3 Chair's Business

Mrs A Kingsley informed the committee that she would be Chairing the meeting on behalf of Mr T O'Reilly.

Correspondence

The Chair referred to items received that related to the 2024/25 budget and invited the CEO to speak about the budget proposals. The CEO informed members that there would be a budget update later in the meeting and that there were many ongoing developments taking place before a final budget could be signed off for 2024/25.

The Chief Executive's Report

The Chair invited the CEO to update Council on current key events. The CEO informed members that CCEA were close to halfway through the summer examinations series. He informed that a potential issue relating to union strike action had passed without major disruption, but that two more days of strike action was planned over the coming weeks. He explained that although the action was not against CCEA as an employer; it remained a concern for young people.

He also informed Council that CCEA continued its work on the refresh of the curriculum and that the Business Manager for Curriculum and Assessment (BMCA) would provide an update later during the meeting. The CEO also confirmed that the Department of Education (DE), alongside CCEA planned to push through with work based on Statutory Assessment and had commissioned CCEA to take forward refresher training for teachers in the design principles behind the NI Curriculum. The DE representative in attendance concurred and informed members that they are at the stage of resourcing the project.

A Council Member enquired about correspondence from DE received in March regarding the CAT project and asked if the money was for maintenance alone or to further along the development of the project. The Business Manager for Financial Services (BMFS) explained that CCEA do have plans to seek further development money but that this would be subject to availability. The Council Member emphasised the importance of the project and the need for further development. The DE representative confirmed that this project was high on his agenda and that DE were currently considering a phased approach.

Another Council Member expressed concerns over what arrangements were in place if students were to arrive to school late due to industrial action. He emphasised the stress that learners would already be under and that this would be an added pressure. The Interim Director of Qualifications (IDoQ) explained that there were measures in place to deal with this type of situation in general. He explained that centres have a half hour window of opportunity to start an exam late. He also stated that there was also a plan in place for students who do miss an exam.

Another Council Member enquired about funding available for Qualifications Reform. The CEO confirmed that CCEA did receive money from DE to develop this very important piece of work that would require resourcing. He also informed that a paper would be provided at the next Council meeting when the Chair and the Head of Regulation were both in attendance.

4. Ratification of Minutes from Previous Meeting

There were several sets of minutes presented to Council for approval due to an administrative issue.

Thursday 25 April 2024 Council Briefing Minutes

The minutes of the briefing held on Thursday 25 April 2024 were formally proposed by Mr H McCarthy and seconded by Mr B Wilson as a true and accurate record.

Thursday 28 March 2024 Council Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 28 March 2024 were formally proposed by Mrs M Thompson and seconded by Mr B Wilson as a true and accurate record.

Thursday 30 November 2023 Council Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 30 November 2023 were formally proposed by Mr B Wilson and seconded by Mr H McCarthy.

A Council member commented that the information discussed around structures at the April briefing was a significant piece of work. The CEO assured the member that there would be an update in relation to this later in the meeting.

5. Audit and Risk

Chairs Report

VERBAL

The Chair invited Mrs D O'Connor to provide a verbal update on the activities to date at the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee. She informed Council that the Annual Governance Statement had been approved and signed off at the previous meeting and that the Annual Report and Accounts external audit process will go to ARAC in June. She also advised that the Corporate Risk Register was a standing item on the agenda and that the biggest concerns were centred around resourcing issues.

6. Finance and General Purposes

Chairs Report

VERBAL

The Chair invited Mrs S McClelland to provide a verbal update on the activities to date at the Finance and General Purposes Committee. She informed Council that CCEA's year end position had landed within the 1% target. She also highlighted that the additional information received from the Corporate Services teams was very useful. Mrs McClelland also updated Council on the quarter four Business Plan Update which was very satisfactory and promising. She also highlighted that later in the meeting there would be a very important paper relating to the increase of examination fees and emphasised the importance of this paper.

Finance Update

C/166/1

The BMFS referred to the detail in the paper and informed members that the Financial Services team were currently going through the audit process and that it was anticipated that the year end 1% target would not change. He also informed that capital remains broadly in line.

Business Plan 2023/24 End of Year Report

C/166/2

The BMFS referred to the Committee Chairs previous comments in her update and reiterated the positive outcome of the quarter four monitoring report. There was one objective that following a DE review was amended to 'Not Achieved' (4.4)

'Subject to DE direction, CCEA will support learning and progression throughout 2023/24, through delivery of statutory assessment arrangements in the Cross Curricular Skills (CCS) of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT and provide DE with professional support and advice in the implementation of phase one, the DE Review of Statutory Assessment project.'

It was agreed that the reason for this objective not to be progressed was due to resourcing issues within DE.

ICT Report to Council

C/166/3

The Business Manager for the ICT department (BMICT) delivered a paper outlining the work of his department as well as highlighting any issues the department were facing. The BMICT informed members that his team were divided into two parts. One section that focused on software development and the other on infrastructure. He highlighted the quality assurance achievements of the teams such as ISO 27000 and ISO 20000 as well as a 98% satisfaction rate on independent customer satisfaction survey.

The BMICT also highlighted that one of the main issues that all organisations are facing an ever increase in risks in regard to cyber security and emphasised the importance of training staff on how to spot unusual email activity.

Council Members thanks the BMICT for his comprehensive Report and confirmed that they had nothing further to add.

Human Resources and Resources Report to Council

C/166/4

The Head of Resources (HoR) delivered a paper to Council updating them on the five key strategic priorities;

Priority One – Learning and Development Programme 2023/24 (Training and Development)

The HoR reported that the Organisational Development team continued to facilitate the organisations needs in relation to training and development to providing opportunities enabling staff to progress their careers as well as their interested.

Priority Two – High Quality Leadership Management

The HoR informed members that Leadership Forums were attended by the Executive Team, Business Managers and Programme Managers four time per year.

Priority Three – Attracting, Recruiting and Retaining Talent

The HoR informed Council that a recruitment audit had taken place by KPMG in February 2023. The overall rating for this was satisfactory.

Priority Four – Engaging with out People

The HoR informed members that her teams were working hard and remained dedicated in working towards Investors in People Re-Accreditation.

She also informed Council that the CEO played a major role in the engagement of Labour Relations who helped to facilitate the reconstruction of the JCNC in January 2024. A Council member congratulated the team for their good efforts in achieving this important outcome.

Priority Five – Wellbeing

The HoR referred to the launch of the 2023/24 Wellbeing programme with over two hundred colleagues in attendance.

Council Members thanked the HoR for her comprehensive report and confirmed they had nothing further to add.

The BMFS presented this paper to Council as head of the Business Assurance Team. He highlighted the ISO certification that had been retained (ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO 45001). He also informed members that the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan had been managed with Satisfactory Assurance level achieved.

He also highlighted that the team had successfully completed its self-assessment and Annual Compliance Statement in relation to GCOR Compliance.

He advised that there had been a backlog of PPE's to be completed with 122 to be completed in June 2023. The team had worked hard to reduce this number and completed 66 PPE's during 2023/24.

A member enquired about the 'Duty of Care' process used within the organisation and the BMFS provided a detailed summary of the process.

Members were satisfied with the information provided and confirmed that they had nothing further to add.

Multimedia, Learning Resources and Engagement**C/166/6**

The Business Manager Multimedia, Learning Resources and Engagement (BMMLRE) provided Council with paper highlighting main issues, developments and projects over 2023/24. These included RSE, Wellbeing, Period Dignity, a range of qualifications support material as well as many others.

He outlined the many key achievements and membership project that the team was involved with. He also provided detail around the MarComms team and the many campaigns that they assisted with including True Colours, Moving Image Arts Showcase as well as the Ministers visit to CCEA at the end of March.

He also informed members that the print production team at the Mallusk site were hoping to be in a position to have a new printer which would remove significant risk for the examination's series.

A member commented that the work of the team is what the population of Northern Ireland see.

The Council thanked the (BMMLRE) for the detailed report and confirmed that they had nothing further to add.

7. Education**Chairs Report****VERBAL**

The Chair invited Mrs M Thompson to provide a verbal update on the activities to date at the Education Committee.

She informed members that the committee had been updated on a Fair Start as well as Digital Skills and that DE had commissioned CCEA's involvement in refresher training where the attendance had been good.

She also informed members that discussions took place around the integration of Modern Languages into the KS1 and KS2 area in the hope to generate interest for languages at a younger age. It was hoped that a strategic steering group (by DE) would be developed and that CCEA would produce a report by June 2024.

The Committee Chair also spoke about issues around Digital Skills in that it may have developed beyond school capabilities creating challenged with confidence in teaching abilities.

She also touched on one of the challenges facing Irish Medium in that there is no Irish Language Framework.

Summer Examination Series Progress Report

C/166/7

The Interim Director of Qualifications (IDoQ) provided a positive and comprehensive update on the summer 2024 series to date. He confirmed that all question papers had been delivered to centres successfully and outlined some key risks that the series faced. This included the challenges around the return to pre-pandemic standards as per Ministerial direction as well as an ever-growing threat of cyber-attacks that awarding bodies faced.

He also updated Council on issues around strike action by a number of trade unions who represent none-teaching staff in centres. He also highted members on the mitigations that CCEA had in place to avoid disruption as much as possible.

Proposed Increase in Examination Entry Charges

C/166/8

Following the previous Finance Committee Meeting, it was agreed that this paper should be presented to Council for discussion and decision.

Council members were asked to approve CCEA engaging with DE relating to an increase in examination entry charges by 3.2% in line with inflation as of March 2024, from 01 April 2025. This was to enable CCEA to increase examination related fees and other examination cost pressures. The increase would come after a recent uplift in fees from January 2024 which was to enable CCEA to attract and contract suitable qualified examiners.

The Council discussed many aspects of the proposal such as public funding and the differences between how CCEA operates as an organisation versus other awarding bodies.

The CEO explained that the CCEA are under time pressure and that the approval was to allow CCEA to engage with DE.

The DE Representative commented on the length of time that the previous increase had taken to be approved and agreed that it did make a difference in recruiting examiners, however that a further increase would be through the lens of affordability.

After a detailed debate on the subject, the Chair recognised that a consensus would not be met and that the paper would require further deliberation and should be brought back to Council at the June meeting.

8. Regulation

Chairs Report

VERBAL

Mrs A Kingsley provided a verbal update on the activities to date at the Regulation Committee. This included issues around the perception of CCEA Regulation (self-regulating).

She also provided a summary of the updates on Modern Languages as well as the future of Vocational Qualifications.

The Chair invited Mr D Crosbie to answer any queries that members may have on a paper provided to update the Council on the Occupational Studies Evaluation.

The Council required no further clarification and were happy to approve this work for progression.

9. Any other Business

Budget 2024/25 Update

C/166/10

This item was discussed at the Finance section (No.6).

The BMFS updated members on the difficulties CCEA were facing as a result of proposed budget cuts. He and the CEO expressed their concerns that the initial amount that was short left CCEA in position that could jeopardise CCEA's ability to fulfil its statutory duties. However, since then CCEA had been asked to save a further 10% which would render the organisation ineffective. They both discussed and explained in great detail the different approaches taken to try to meet the requested cuts but were unable to successfully do so.

Some Council Members suggested benchmarking or itemising, and this was discussed but not seen as viable as CCEA was so unique.

The Chair asked how the CEO planned to ensure that Council were kept abreast of the developments. He informed members that he planned to do this via email.

It was agreed that it was the duty of Council to ensure that CCEA's statutory duties were met and that the only way to do this was to ask DE to prioritise the work of CCEA. The DE representative agreed that this was why DE needed to know what the possible outcomes would be under three scenarios' so that prioritising could be done.

Council thanked the CEO and the BMFS for their update.

10. Date of the Next Meeting:

Thursday 20 June 2024 at 2.30pm