

COUNCIL

Minutes of the one hundred and fourteenth meeting of Council held on Wednesday 10 December 2014 at 10.30 am in Room 111, 1st Floor, CCEA HQ, Clarendon Road, Belfast.

Present : Mr T Carson (Chairman) Mrs J Mussen
Mr M Donnelly Mr R Thompson
Mr J Wilkinson Mrs C Harpur
Mrs R Cowan Dr A Kerr
Ms M Crilly Dr P Cunningham

Mr J Edwards (Chief Executive)
Mr R Hanna (Director, Education Strategy)
Ms AM Duffy (Director, Qualifications)
Mr R McCune (Item 7 only)
Mr G Byrne (Item 6 only)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

Introduction

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting, in particular, Mr Justin Edwards, newly appointed Chief Executive.

1 Apologies

An apology was received from Mr N Morton.

2 Chair's Business

Mr Gerry Byrne and Mr Roger McCune were in attendance for Items 6 and 7 respectively.

Resignation of Council Members

The Chair advised that Mr Enda Cullen and Ms Clare Gibson had resigned from Council. He confirmed that both had tendered their resignations to DE and wished to place formally on record, on behalf of Council, sincere thanks to Enda and Clare for their contributions to the work of the Council and its Committees during their time on the Council. He confirmed he would write to both.

It had been agreed with existing members of Finance and Remuneration Committees that dates and times of future meetings could be changed to ensure quorate.

Standing Orders

The Chairman confirmed that the Standing Orders would be reviewed. This would include appropriate guidelines for appointing Chairs and Vice-Chairs.

Recruitment Process for New Council Members

The Chair confirmed that the process would begin in January 2015 with a view to complete early March. It was hoped that new members would be in place for the April meeting.

FOI Requests

Members noted the most recent FOI requests.

Items under AOB

The Chair drew attention to the tabled items under AOB and advised that the Manager of the Council Secretariat would provide members with a briefing on each of the policies and seek comments outside of the meeting.

Circular : Interim ICT Programme Board

The Chief Executive drew attention to the circular tabled from DE to Gavin Boyd setting out a requirement for all ICT business cases to be approved by the IT Programme Office. He confirmed CCEA was co-operating with the instruction.

Members noted the information provided.

3 Minutes of previous meeting held on 11 November 2014

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 November 2014 were proposed by Dr Peter Cunningham and seconded by Mr John Wilkinson as a true and accurate record. A copy was signed by the Chair.

A Council member sought clarification on the status of the issues she had raised in respect of the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum. The Chair confirmed he had discussed these with DE and had sought their views on same. A reminder would be issued following the meeting and an update provided as soon as possible.

Action Points

Members noted the status of the action points.

Celebrating Excellence Event

The Chairman encouraged members to attend the Celebrating Excellent Event which would be held in the Stormont Hotel on 18 December.

4 Correspondence

Members noted the following correspondence :

- 2014/15 Revised Budget Allocation : Irish Medium Resources
- 2012/13 and 2013/14 Top Management Team Pay Remit Approval
- Temporary Cover to pay eligible staff incremental increase 2014/15
- CCEA Accreditation and Regulation : Additional staffing business case
- Education Bill : Establishment of Education Authority
- End of Key Stage Assessment Arrangements (including Minister's letter and Statement to Principals – October 2014)
- Draft Budget 2015/16

A Council member drew attention to the Statement to Principals re End of KS Assessment Arrangements. She sought clarification on whether the statements describing the levels would be made more explicit to make them more meaningful for schools. The Chief Executive confirmed he had discussed the issue with DE and advised they were considering

further notification on the clarification of accountability. If this is the case then a joint statement will issue from DE and ETI.

The Council member said it was regrettable that the statements were not made more explicit from the outset.

There were no further issues arising.

5 Finance and Planning

The Chairman reminded members that the Finance Committee had fulfilled their scrutiny function on all financial matters.

Finance Committee Reports 17 September and 3 December 2014

The Chairman of the Committee advised that two meetings had taken place since the last Council meeting. The following reports were provided :

17 September 2014 (minutes available in pack)

- Finance Report as at 31 August 2014
- 2014/15 Budget update
- Approval of Revised MSFM

Members were also advised that finance training had been provided for Council members. Further sessions would be organised once new members appointed.

An update was provided on procurement activity. 1 business case and 1 policy were approved by the Committee.

3 December 2014 (minutes circulated in advance of the meeting)

- *Finance Report as at 31 October* : an underspend of £643K was reported. This was outside the DE tolerance limit with the main factor being the lack of uptake on teacher release due to the ongoing industrial action in relation to the revised assessment arrangements.

Members were assured that the position was being closely monitored through the monthly budget holders meeting. Mechanisms are in place to generate contingency business cases should these be required to bring the budget within the 1% limit by year end.

- *Draft Response to DE Draft Budget Consultation* : the committee received a summary of the consultation and the proposed deadline for Council to respond. This was on the agenda for the Council meeting.
- *HR Issues* is a Standing Item on the Finance Committee agenda. This was a recommendation arising out of an ASM Review. The Chief Executive will decide on the appropriateness of items coming forward to future meetings of the committee.

Members received an update on the Qualifications Technology Roadmap project, procurement and business case activity since the last meeting.

5 Corporate policies were approved by the Committee. It was agreed that the titles of the policies would be circulated to Council members.

Finance Report as at 31 October 2014

C/114/1

The Finance Manager (FM) reported an underspend of £643K against budget at this time. This was outside the 1% DE tolerance limit.

A proposal to use the underspend to fund the Review of Specifications projects was with DE for consideration. The Chief Executive confirmed he was meeting with DE officials to progress this and other related finance matters on 11 December.

Following clarification on a number of issues, members were content with the information provided.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 October 2014

C/114/2

Members noted the information provided.

Draft Response to DE Draft Budget 2015/16 Consultation

The Chairman drew attention to the information provided. He expressed his concern at the proposed cuts facing the organisation and advised that a robust Council response was required.

The Chief Executive gave a detailed presentation (copy provided for members' information) on the potential impact of the draft proposals and associated areas for efficiency savings. He advised that :

- An initial review of all lines of the budget, work plan and staffing had taken place.
- Justifications for projects for CCEA's core business, statutory and non statutory had been provided. All projects will be reviewed.
- Once teams have been assessed, further efficiency savings will need to be identified. Consideration may be given to the configuration of the organisation.
- Consideration has been given to freezing external recruitment, however this may put at risk the in-year budget. Skills gaps and mapping has started with a view to deploying staff across the organisation.
- Potential savings and reductions in other areas would have a fundamental impact on the organisation. These will be flagged with DE.
- Curriculum & Assessment and the Modernisation Programme were at the centre of CCEA's business, but in some cases these will need to be scaled back to achieve the right balance.

The Chief Executive confirmed he would be in consultation with DE to discuss efficiency savings across the organisation. He advised that he was seeking clarification on whether voluntary severance funding would be available for CCEA, if required.

Members commended staff for the clarification on the range of issues presented. Whilst recognising the negative impact on CCEA and the first class service the organisation

provided, concern was expressed about saving money against the good will of staff. The Chief Executive stressed that no decisions had yet been taken. He confirmed he would speak to all staff to explain decisions at the appropriate time.

The following suggestions were put forward for possible inclusion in the draft response:

- A robust opening statement was required, outlining the proposed savings, however, stating that each line comes with a cost, reduced service and impact on staff.
- The central point to the response should focus on being able to continue to provide a high quality service for young people to ensure they are not be disadvantaged in any way because of the cuts throughout the sector.
- Appropriate terminology be used to reflect what DE have asked CCEA to do in considering the draft proposals.
- Identify clearly the impact the changes will have to the front line services CCEA provides and on staff motivation and morale.
- The organisation as a whole needs to be considered, not particular areas. It may be necessary to do different things or do things differently.
- The possibility of putting the regulatory function back into DE. (The Chairman advised that Regulation was a statutory function of CCEA and would require a change of statute to change this).

The Chairman thanked members for their input into the discussion and asked that the points raised be taken into account when drafting the response.

Timeline for draft response

The Chief Executive suggested that a first draft be issued to Council for comment on 18 December. A further draft would then be circulated on or before 23 December to allow the final response to be issued to DE to meet the deadline of 29 December 2015.

Members were content with this approach.

6 Audit

Audit & Risk Committee Reports : 24 September & 19 November 2014

The Chairman of the Committee advised that two meetings had taken place since the last Council meeting. He assured Council that the Audit & Risk Committee had fulfilled their scrutiny and challenge function on all relevant matters.

The following updates and summaries were provided :

24 September 2014 (minutes available in pack)

- It was agreed that the minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee would be published on the website, subject to the normal FOI checks.

- Members noted the actions taken in respect of the non-compliance with CCEA's purchasing arrangements; and the number of Direct Award Contracts from May to August 2014.
- *2013/14 Annual Report & Accounts* : an unqualified audit certificate and report had been received from the Comptroller and Auditor General.
- *Quarterly Assurance Statement & Corporate Risk Management* : reports were received.
- *NIAO National Fraud Initiative Report* : members were informed this would be a standing item on the agenda going forward.

Updates were provided on internal audits; and the risks associated with the revision of specifications programme highlighted.

19 November 2014 (minutes circulated in advance of the meeting)

- Training for Audit & Risk Committee members took place on 13 November. Those who attended commented on the objectives and learning outcomes from the course.

The Chair of Council advised he would be meeting DE Officials to discuss what type of training would be available for Council members going forward, particularly in the development of good governance skills.

- Members noted the number of non-compliance with CCEA's purchasing arrangements (significant progress had been made with no high risk issues reported).
- The number of Direct Award Contracts (September to November) were also reported.
- *Quarterly Assurance Statement & Corporate Risk Management* : both reports were on the agenda for this Council meeting.

Updates were also provided on :

- Management of Internal Audit and revised Operational Plans 2014/15 and 2015/16
- Review of CCEA's Policy Framework
- Internal Audit Activity
- Fraud
- DE Update
- Regulation of Qualifications and associated activity (as detailed in the minutes)
- End of Key Stage Assessment and Computer Based Assessment.

ASM fact finding review of staffing arrangements

Members have asked for quarterly reports and a detailed action plan to be presented to the committee until the review has been concluded.

The Business Assurance Manager gave a detailed review of both documents and drew attention to the high level risks and status of same outlined in the CRR.

Clarification was sought on maintaining the Council Register of Interests. It was confirmed that this had been addressed and would be complete by 31 January 2015.

Members noted the information provided.

7 Education

Education Committee Report : 22 October 2014

The Chair of the Education Committee drew attention to the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2014. She advised that the main item on the agenda was discussion of the options for the way forward for Computer Based Assessment. Recommendations were subsequently put forward to Council at an additional meeting on 11 November. Following Council agreement, a range of options were submitted to DE on 28 November for consideration.

The committee also discussed :

- *Grading Arrangements for GCSE Qualifications* : further discussion on this issue was on the agenda for this meeting.
- *Accreditation Arrangements for A/AS Levels* : members were content that the documentation outlining the new accreditation process for the new A/AS levels specifications was robust and fit for purpose.
- *Maintaining Standards across GCSEs/A Level Qualifications* : members were content with the direction of travel proposed and asked for updates to come forward as the work progressed.

The committee received a presentation on Item Level Data : Summer 2014 (GCSE English and Mathematics. Members welcomed developments and endorsed the work to date. The Chair commended the Programme Manager for the information provided.

Updates were provided on :

- Revision of Specifications
- SEN Qualifications provision (entry level)
- Entitlement Framework
- Summer Examinations.

Regulation

Presentation : GCSE/A Level Reform

The Regulation & Accreditation Manager gave a detailed presentation on the GCSE and A/AS Level Reform. A copy of the presentation was provided for members' information.

The main areas covered were :

- Minister's Statement : March 2014
- Recent developments
- Timescales and Technical Issues

Members noted the information provided.

GCSE Grading

The Regulation & Accreditation Manager advised that the Department have asked CCEA to provide technical advice to inform their consultation with schools on the proposed change in grading from A* to G to 9-1.

Following a brief discussion, it was proposed that a special meeting of the Education Committee be convened early in the new year to discuss the recommendations put forward.

It was agreed that a date would be sourced outside of this meeting.

8 Any Other Business

Council Policy on Conflict of Interests

It was agreed that the Manager of the Council Secretariat would contact members for comments on the documents outside of the meeting.

Whistleblowing Policy

It was agreed that the Manager of the Council Secretariat would contact members for comments on the document outside of the meeting.

Members were asked to put forward their name (to the Manager of the Secretariat) if they were interested in being considered for the role of CCEA Whistleblower.

9 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 18 February 2015 at 10.00 am.

The Chairman thanked members and officers for their input into the meeting and for their support throughout the year.

He wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.