

CCEA

COUNCIL

Minutes of an emergency Council meeting held on Thursday 12 October 2017 at 10.00 am.

Present :

Mr T Carson (Chair)	Dr A Kerr
Dr L Caul	Dr N Morton
Mrs R Cowan	Mrs C Harpur
Mrs C Fitzpatrick	Mrs A Whiteside
Mr C McKinney	Mr B Wilson
Mrs K O'Hare	

Mr J Edwards (Chief Executive)
Mrs L Scott (Director of Finance and Corporate Services)
Mrs S McClelland (Interim Director of Corporate Services)
Mr R McCune (Head of Regulation)
Ms A Swann (Business Manager, Qualifications)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr T Armstrong and Mr R Thompson.

Main Business

The Chair thanked members for attending the meeting and confirmed the main item of business : GCSE and GCE English Literature, Summer 2017 series.

He provided an overview on the actions taken since the media coverage of the issue on Monday 9 October and invited the Chief Executive to address Council on :

- The English Literature issues raised by the media on Monday 9 October
- An initial assessment of the cause
- Extent of reputational damage to CCEA
- Considered next steps for operations

The Chair welcomed the confirmation that an internal review would be carried out on the matter and would seek views from the Council on whether an independent review would also be required. Members confirmed that an external review should be carried out.

GCSE and GCE English Literature : Initial Assessment

The Chief Executive provided a timeline of the events and initial assessment of cause. He outlined subsequent actions following the initial media coverage.

He gave a detailed presentation and analysis of the GCSE and GCE English Literature performance and potential causes. This included:

- Materialisation of issue, timeline and handling
- Performance of the system
- GCSE : Grade changes following the review and provisional analysis of the changes

- Benchmarking
- Conclusions : GCSE English Literature
- GCE : Performance and Conclusions
- Provisional Review of Marking Outcomes : AS English Literature (cash-in)
- Interdependencies
- Next steps for operations

The Chief Executive, whilst assuring members that the system was stable and there was confidence in the processes, lessons must be learned from this.

He confirmed that he had re-opened the remarking for GCSE and GCE (AS) English Literature revised specification. This would close on 17 October 2017.

The Business Manager, Qualifications, confirmed that a comprehensive training programme for all examiners, in particular, new examiners was provided. Face to face training with assistant examiners is still in place as officers feel this adds value to the process. She confirmed that a range of checks are built into the various stages and that there are standards examiners are required to meet.

Whilst members recognised the speed at which the events unfolded, a member expressed disappointment at not being informed about the issue and potential media interest in advance of Monday 9 October. It was suggested that Council members be informed about potential controversial matters in advance of them becoming public knowledge. This was agreed.

Discussion and Points for Consideration

Members sought and received clarification on a wide range of examinations processes and associated matters.

The Chair wished to place on record his recognition of the high quality standard of work, procedures and processes that continue within the organisation under challenging financial circumstances.

The following points were made:

- An internal review with appropriate action plan to mitigate the risk of further re-occurrences of similar issues with the subject. This should include : a communications plan to ensure key stakeholders are aware of the actions being taken.
- Support literature/documentation for parents so they are clear about the process of enquiry/ review of marking.

The Chair suggested that more interaction with school leaders should be considered.

- Appeals training is to be offered to all Council members to ensure a good understanding of the process.

Members discussed and agreed that there was a need for an External Review to provide confidence and assurance that all key issues identified and recommendations would be considered. A number of members expressed a preference for this to be completely independent. Terms of Reference for the group would also be required.

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee suggested that the Corporate Risk Register be updated to reflect the risk of reputational damage and associated mitigations/actions.

The matter of fees and charges for review of marking, as part of the Enquiry about Results process was discussed. The Chief Executive confirmed that the fees group were reviewing charges for a range of services.

The Chair commended the Chief Executive and his team for managing this issue. He confirmed that a mechanism would be put in place to ensure members are made aware of any such instances in future.

He thanked all members for their input into discussions and advised all suggestions made would be forwarded to the appropriate officers to progress.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the following were already underway :

- An Internal review
- Updating the risk register to include high level risks and mitigating actions
- Communication with examiners to assure them of CCEA's confidence in their role.
- Monitoring of further potential for media coverage.

He confirmed he would take on board all suggestions made by members and provided an assurance that the draft report from the External Review would come to Council, once completed.