

COUNCIL

Minutes of the one hundred and twenty-second third of Council held on Wednesday 14 December 2016 at 10.00 am in Room 115, 1st Floor, CCEA HQ, 29 Clarendon Road, Belfast, BT1 3BG.

Present:

Mr T Carson (Chair)	Mr M Donnelly
Mrs C Harpur	Mrs R Cowan
Dr L Caul	Mr R Thompson
Mr T Armstrong	Mrs J Mussen
Dr N Morton	Mrs A Whiteside
Dr A Kerr	Mrs C Fitzsimons

Mr J Edwards (Chief Executive)
Mr R Hanna (Director of Education Strategy)
Mrs S McClelland (Interim Director of Corporate Services)
Mr J Daly (Financial Services Manager)
Mr R McCune (Regulation & Accreditation Manager : Items 1 – 8)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

Introduction

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting, in particular Mrs Angela Whiteside and Mrs Carol Fitzsimons, newly appointed Council members.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr P Cunningham and Mrs K O'Hare.

2 Declaration of Interests

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

3 Chair's Business

Tabled Papers

The Chair drew attention to the various tabled papers for members' information.

Chair's Report to Council

The Chair drew attention to the tabled report and provided an overview on the range of activities undertaken since the last Council meeting.

Meetings with the Chief Executive : The Chair confirmed he continued to meet (on a weekly basis) with the Chief Executive to monitor effectiveness and seek assurances of the operations of the organisation.

Qualifications Wales : The Chair confirmed he had been invited to attend the March 2017 Qualifications Wales Board meeting.

Tier 2 Posts : he reported that some progress had been made towards the approval of the business cases for the 2nd tier posts.

Members noted the information provided

Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive drew attention to the report provided for members' information and gave a brief overview of the main areas contained within.

Investors in People : The Chief Executive confirmed that the IiP Assessor had commenced her assessment of progress towards Gold Status.

A Council member was pleased to note the increase in the number of pupils taking the Computer Based Assessments.

Members noted the information provided.

FOI Requests

Members noted the most recent FOI requests.

Council Agenda

The Chair drew attention to the Council agenda and Strategy Map. He advised that the agenda items were linked to Corporate Plan objectives and that this would continue.

4 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 September 2016

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 September 2016 were proposed by Mrs Rosemary Cowan and seconded by Mr Martin Donnelly as a true and accurate record. A copy was signed by the Chair.

Action Points

Members noted the status of the action points.

Presentations from Council Development Day, 7 September 2017 : The Chair asked that the presentations be circulated to Mrs Fitzsimons and Mrs Whiteside for their information.

Draft Article : GCSE Mathematics Comparability

C/123/1

The Chief Executive introduced this item. He drew attention to paper **C/123/1** and confirmed that the article had been re-drafted following suggestions from members at the last Council meeting.

Members were content with the revisions and formally approved the article for publication.

Minutes of the additional Council meeting held on 12 October 2016

The Chair reminded members that this was a one-item agenda meeting to consider and approve the savings proposals for 2017/18.

The minutes of the additional meeting held on 12 October 2016 were proposed by Mrs Christine Harpur and seconded by Mr Robert Thompson as a true and accurate record. A copy was signed by the Chairman.

The Chief Executive confirmed that no response had been received to the savings proposals to date.

Voluntary Exit Scheme 2016/17

The Chief Executive confirmed that the VES exercise closed on Friday 9 December 2017 with 75 applications received. He advised that final decisions would not be made until the budget allocation for 2017/18 has been received.

The Chair sought clarification on the application of future VES. The Chief Executive confirmed that should CCEA continue with VES, he as accounting officer would be responsible for staff morale and future service delivery from 2017/18 onwards. He assured members he would be mindful of this in any future considerations.

The Chair stressed the importance of having a fit for purpose workforce moving forwards and that good staff morale was critical in achieving this.

5 Correspondence

Members noted the following correspondence:

- 2016/17 Resource Budget : CCEA's development of Guidance for Schools on the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in School Sports and Physical Education (PE)
- CCEA 2016/17 Business and Financial Plans
- Circular : Assessment 2016/17 : Substitute Cover Arrangements
- 02 NextGen Digital Challenge Awards 2016
- ETI Evaluation of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) – (and response from the Chief Executive)
- Access to Public Sector Transformation Fund (PSTF) in 2017/18 Financial Year
- CCEA Revised Financial Plan 2016/17
- CCEA – Voluntary Exit Scheme 2016/17
- Acceptability of GCE 'applied' Subjects by the Central Admissions Office (CAO)

The Chief Executive provided the background to the matter regarding applicants with GCE (A Level) qualifications, in particular recognition of 'applied' GCE qualifications. He confirmed that

there had been a misunderstanding on the definition of 'applied' and that significant progress had been made in working towards a resolution.

Members welcomed the clarification. The Chair asked that the Chief Executive continue engagement with the IUA to resolve the matter.

6 Governance and Accountability

Governance and Accountability Review (GAR) : 22 November 2016

The Chair drew attention to the minutes of the GAR meeting (tabled for members' information) held on 22 November 2016. He confirmed that DE officials had sought and received assurances on a range of matters.

He clarified that DE set the agenda for these meetings which were reported on by exception.

CBA

The Chair drew attention to page 4 of the minutes and confirmed that he had asked for an urgent decision in regards to the options around CBA and its future.

Members sought and received clarification on a range of matters relating to the GAR agenda and were content with the explanations provided.

Changes in DE Personnel

The Chair advised on a number of changes in DE personnel. These included Mr Gary Fair, Director of Finance; Mr Stephen Van Outen (who has joined the Finance Team), Ms Julie Thompson, Deputy Secretary (with direct responsibility for CCEA); and Ms Beverley Wall, Director of Planning and Performance Management.

He wished to place on record his thanks to Gary Fair for his help and support on a range of matters relating to Council business.

The Chair asked that Item 7: Audit, be taken at this point in the meeting.

7 Audit

Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Report: 19 October 2016

Mr Donnelly, Chair of the Committee, drew members' attention to the detail of the minutes provided and gave a summary of the main items discussed, in particular:

- Draft Conflict of Interests (Staff) Policy: was reviewed by members with no changes required.
- Appointment of New Auditors: Members noted Moore Stephens had been awarded the Internal Audit contract which commenced in September 2016 for a 3 year period.

- Risk Assurance in Awards and Purchases, May to September 2016: five unauthorised purchases reported and no areas of concern on Direct Award Contracts.
- 2015/16 Final Report to those Charged with Governance : no issues of concern were reported.
- National Fraud Initiative : CCEA's participation in this exercise is mandatory. Any matters arising will be reported to the next meeting of the committee.
- Corporate Risk Register 30 September 2016 : members were content that this was a positive reporting period.
- Mid-Year Governance Statement : no issues of concern were reported.
- Internal Audit Activity : the compliance audit against the General Conditions of Recognition was completed.
- Exemplar of Risk Management in CCEA: an overview of risk management within CCEA was provided and an exemplar risk (from inception) was presented. Members commended the detailed way in which risks are managed by CCEA.
- DE Update: the DE representative advised that instances of fraud both historic and ongoing would be reviewed by DE. Instances of Whistleblowing would also be monitored moving forward.
- Qualifications : members were updated on the operational readiness for the January 2017 series.

The Chief Executive also highlighted the main risk which was the continuation of interim management arrangements for the Qualifications Directorate. This has been placed on the Risk Register.

Draft Internal Audit Plan

C/123/tabled

The Chair of the Committee introduced this item and drew attention to the detail of the document provided. He confirmed that the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee had approved the plan via the remote approval mechanism.

The Chair of Council confirmed he had met with the auditors and was content with their professional approach to discussions.

Clarification was sought and received on a number of matters and members were content with the explanations provided. The Chief Executive assured members that he would approve the Terms of Reference of each audit to ensure that the days allocated were fully utilised.

A Council member asked for a narrative to support the draft plan outlining the areas to be audited over the next 3 years. The Chief Executive agreed to this request.

Subject to the provision of a narrative, members formally approved the plan.

Outgoing Council Member (Chair of Audit & Risk Assurance Committee)

The Chair of Council wished to place on record, on behalf of Council, his thanks to Mr Martin Donnelly, whose term of office ends on 31 January 2017 for his support on all matters relating to the Council and for the expertise he has provided to the work of the Audit & Risk Assurance committee during his time as Chair.

Mr Donnelly conveyed his appreciation to the Chair, members and senior officers for all of their support during his time on Council.

GCSE Grading

A Council member asked that the communication around the changes to GCSE grading is managed carefully moving forwards. The Chair recognised the complexities of the grading system and the technical nature of developing the appropriate comparability. He confirmed that a significant PR/communications exercise would be put in place to ensure all stake holders from education, industry, commerce and the general public were well informed. This would be a joint initiative between CCEA, as Regulatory, the Awarding Organisations and the Department of Education. He asked the Chief Executive to take this forward with the relevant staff and officials.

General

A Council member welcomed the good working relationship between the Executive and senior officials in DE and commended the significant amount of work undertaken by officers in achieving this. The Chair, concurred with this and placed on record his thanks to the Executive team.

He recognised the need to continue this positive engagement with the newly appointed personnel in DE.

8 Regulation

Regulatory Advisory Committee Report : 9 November 2016

The Chair of Council drew attention to the draft minutes of the meeting held on 9 November, which had been tabled for members' information.

In the absence of the Chair of the Committee, the Chief Executive provided a summary of the main items discussed:

- Horizon Scan : Regulatory matters exploration : members discussed two major items facing regulation moving forwards : Stability in GCSE/GCE Awarding and Technical and Professional Qualifications.
- Youth Training & Apprenticeships : Strategic approach for Northern Ireland : members received a presentation on the DfE Model for Youth training and apprenticeships. CCEA will support DfE on this initiative.

- Outline Regulation Strategy : members considered a first draft strategy and were content with the direction of travel. Further work is required in developing the document which will come forward to the next committee meeting and subsequently to Council for ratification.
- GCSE Grading : decision by Minister and Operational update : members recognised the importance of keeping stakeholders informed and prepared for the challenges ahead. A Communications Strategy is being developed.
- Market Analysis : Professional & Technical Qualifications Achievements in NI : members received a presentation on the findings of an initial market survey in relation to these qualifications.
- Terminology of Technical & Professional Qualifications : Members were content with the proposals to develop definitions for 'General', 'Technical' and 'Professional' qualifications.

General

The Chair wished to place on record that an assurance was sought and received at the GAR meeting on whether the Regulation Team was working effectively and was sufficiently resourced.

Availability of GCSE Science Specifications

C/123/2

The Chief Executive introduced this item and reminded members of the request from the Department of Education (letter attached at Appendix 1) for CCEA, as Regulator, to provide advice in regards to GCSE Science qualifications and practical assessments.

He provided some background to the matter and outlined the options for consideration.

The Head of Regulation confirmed that a significant amount of work had been carried out and summarised feedback received from the Stakeholders survey and Learned Bodies.

Members sought and received clarification on a number of matters and were content to approve Option 1 for return to DE. .

Members were content with this approach.

9 Education

Education Committee Report : 5 October 2016

The Chair of the Committee drew attention to the detail of the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2016 provided in the Council papers. He gave a brief overview of the main items discussed, in particular :

- Education Committee Terms of Reference (ToR) : was revised in light of the formation of the Regulatory Advisory Committee. Final document has been agreed and issued to Committee members and Council.
- Summer Examinations Series 2016: A presentation summarising the key aspects of the summer 2016 examinations series was provided.
- Update on GCSE Grading Process: members were content with the technical work underway on the regulatory rules following the Minister's announcement.
- Review of Specifications (RoS) Update: members noted the project was on schedule and welcomed the positive feedback received on the content of the new specifications.

The Chair of the Committee also reported that following the 1 year delay in the Mathematics specifications, development work was well underway and the subjects would be available for first teaching in September 2017.

- Pre-school Development Work: CCEA has been asked to scope pre-school curricular guidance with a view to revamping existing materials.
- Committee workshops : an assessment workshop was held on 16 November for all committee members. The Chair of the Committee commended the quality of the presentations provided by the Education Strategy officers and welcomed the creativity and energy displayed amongst presenters.
- Future meetings : members noted that opportunities would be provided at future committee meetings for an input from the Careers Advisory Forum and discussion on the Professional and Technical debate.

A Council member asked for the links to the reports provided to the Committee to be forwarded to Council.

Education Committee Report : 23 November 2016

The Chair of the Committee advised that this was a special meeting to discuss and put forward recommendations to Council on *Quality Assurance of Transfer Test*.

He confirmed that substantial consideration had been given to the content of the paper provided and advised that members recommended a draft letter be formulated for review and approval by Council for issue to DE.

A Council member stated that he expressed concern at the meeting about the issue for debate, however, welcomed the clarity provided in that responses were to specific questions.

Quality Assurance of Transfer Test (Draft Letter to DE)

C/123/3

The Chief Executive introduced this item.

Members welcomed the detail provided in the draft letter and commended the clarity of the material provided for committee consideration.

Members were content with the recommendation from the Committee and approved the draft letter for issue to DE in final format.

Annual Qualifications Insight Report 2016

C/123/4

The Chief Executive introduced this item and summarised the content of the report. He confirmed that the document was available on the CCEA website and had been circulated to a wide range of stakeholders.

Members noted the information provided.

10 Finance, Planning and Performance

The Chair of the Committee confirmed members had fulfilled their challenge and scrutiny functions on all agenda items.

Finance Committee Report : 12 October 2016

The Chair of the Committee advised this was a one item agenda meeting for members to consider and recommend the savings proposals for 2017/18 to Council for approval.

Finance Committee Report : 30 November 2016

Draft minutes were tabled for members' information.

The Chair of the Committee reported on the following :

- Appointment of New Auditors: Members noted Moore Stephens had been awarded the Internal Audit contract.
- CBA Options Paper : members received an updated on the options paper issued to DE on Computer Based Assessment (CBA).
- Finance Report as at 31 October : members noted an underspend of £131K (this included additional income of £120K). Capital expenditure was underspent by 2.8% at this time. Plans are in place to bring this in on target by year end.
- Statement of Financial Position as at 31 October 2016 : No issues of concern were reported.
- Budget Update 2016/17 : the report was fully discussed by the committee.
- Corporate Plan : Monitoring Report : members were content with the information provided.

The above items were also on the Council agenda for this meeting.

- Procurement and Business Case Update : no live procurements with Education CoPE; 1 live procurement with CPD; and 2 being progressed within the Collaborative Procurement Activity.
- 21 Business Cases were approved between September and October 2016.
- HR Report : Updates were provided on the People and Estates Strategy.
- CCEA Values : report and findings were presented to the Committee by Deloitte.
- Policies : The Conflict of Interests (Staff) Policy and revised TOIL Policy were approved by the committee.

Members noted the information provided.

Finance Report as at 31 October 2016

C/123/5

The Chair of Council assured members that the detailed finance reports had been thoroughly investigated by the Finance Committee at its meeting on 30 November 2016.

The Financial Services Manager (FM) drew attention to the information provided at paper C/123/5. He reported an underspend of £131K(1.0%). Excluding additional income of £120K, the underspend is £11k (0.1%) inside the DE target of 1%. Capital expenditure is underspent by 2.8%, however plans were in place to bring this budget on target before year end.

Members noted the Budget Updates, in particular the October monitoring round which was approved on 31 October 2016.

The FM confirmed that a significant amount of work had been carried out to address the underspend and advised that the last quarter would be challenging should any unexpected pressures arise.

Members were content with the information provided and satisfied with the plans in place to address the budget before year end.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 October 2016

C/123/6

Members noted the information provided.

Budget Position 2017/18

C/123/7

The FM drew attention to the information provided in paper C/123/7 and confirmed that a rigorous exercise had been conducted across the organisation to identify savings opportunities. Follow up exercises would continue until the budget allocation has been received, this would

include identification of cost pressures within the Examinations Directorate which would also be included in the final report.

The Chief Executive expressed concern that further delays in receiving the budget allocation would present significant challenges in Quarters 1 and 2 of the 2017/18 financial year.

The Chair sought confirmation that a meeting with the new Director of Finance in DE had been sought. The FM confirmed he and the Chief Executive were meeting Mr G Fair and Mr S Van Houten in January 2017.

Members noted the information provided and asked to be kept informed of any further pressures or challenges that may arise.

VES

A Council member sought clarification on whether there would be any budget impact on VES. The Chief Executive explained the process put in place and confirmed that approval had been provided for £1.6M to fund the scheme. He confirmed the exercise would be completed and successful applicants would be informed by 28 February 2017.

Members would be updated as appropriate.

General

The Chief Executive confirmed that decisions were required on CBA and KS3. He assured members that representations continued to be made to seek clarity on these matters.

The Chair wished to place on record that the current position was less than satisfactory, but recognised decisions were required before future planning could commence.

Corporate Plan : Monitoring Report

C/123/8

The Interim Director of Corporate Service (DoCS) drew attention to the information provided in paper C/123/8 and confirmed there were no matters of concern to report.

Members noted the information provided and were content with the performance in the second quarter.

CCEA Values : Our New Values

C/123/9

The Chief Executive introduced this item and provided an overview on the work carried out on the CCEA Corporate Values and advised that if approved, the new values will form the basis of the new Corporate Plan and the performance review mechanism (currently under review). This will also form a values based approach suggested by Investors in People.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Executive Team would positively reinforce the values at every opportunity. He advised that consideration would be given for the inclusion of Values as a standing item on the Executive Team agenda.

The Chair of the Finance Committee confirmed the need for a strategy to embed the values and to keep the implementation of the values simple, ensuring buy in from staff.

Members recognised that this was an evolving process. Subject to the caveat that this was a living document and would be revisited as appropriate, members were content to adopt the 'New Values'.

Any Other Business

CCEA Events

Members were reminded of the following CCEA Events :

- Celebrating Excellence : Wednesday 14 December 2016 : Stormont Buildings, 6pm
- Launch of True Colours : Thursday 12 January 2017 : further details would be issued in due course.

The Chair commended both events and asked members to make every effort to attend.

Council Training and Development

C/213/tabled

The Chair asked members to review the tabled document and provide any suggestions/comments either directly to himself or the Manager of the Council Secretariat, outside of this meeting.

He confirmed that the next Council Development Session would be held on Wednesday 22 February 2017 and the programme would be issued in advance.

Outgoing Council Member

The Chair wished to place on record his thanks to Mrs Jennifer Mussen (whose term would end on 31 January 2017) for her significant contributions to the work of the Council and in particular the way in which she chaired the Education Committee. He paid tribute to her attention to detail on all aspects of Council and Committee business and for her support during her term on the Council

Mrs Mussen conveyed her thanks to the Chair, her Council colleagues and CCEA officers for a rewarding experience during her term on the Council; and for the support provided in assisting her to fulfil the role as Chair of the Education Committee.

Date of Next Meeting

The Chair confirmed that the next scheduled meeting of Council was **Wednesday 29 March 2017 at 10.00 am**

He thanked the Chief Executive and officers for their significant contribution to the Council and its Committees during an extremely challenging year.

He thanked his Council colleagues for their support and input over the last 12 months and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.