

## **CCEA**

## **COUNCIL**

Meeting of the one hundred and sixtieth meeting of the Council held on Thursday 22 June 2023 at 1.30 pm via Hybrid Arrangements.

**Present :** Mr T O'Reilly (Chair) Dr L Caul  
Mr B Wilson Professor P Hanna  
Mrs P Leitch Ms P Slevin  
Mr H McCarthy

### *Executive*

Mr G Campbell (Chief Executive)  
Mrs L Scott (Director Finance & Corporate Services)  
Mrs C Latham (Temporary Director Curriculum & Assessment)  
Ms A Swann (Temporary Director Examinations)  
Mrs C S King Head of Regulation  
Mr J Daly (Financial Services Manager)  
Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

### *In Attendance*

Mr C Coffey (NV Member)  
Mr A Stevens (NV Member)

### *Introduction*

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting and outlined the main business.

### **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mrs Carol Fitzsimons; Mrs Donna O'Connor, Mrs Anne Kingsley, Mrs K O'Hare and Mr Ray Caldwell (DE).

### **Conflict of Interests**

Members advised that there were no conflicts of interest on any of the agenda items for the meeting.

### **Chair's Business**

The Chair advised on developments in relation to the recruitment process for new Council members following correspondence from DE detailing additional Secretary of State (SoS) approvals required for the recruitment package before the SoS will consider adding CCEA to the list of Public Bodies for which he is content to make ministerial appointments.

The Chair expressed his disappointment and confirmed the recruitment process would now be delayed, and the Department was now considering if it could approach those members whose second term is due to end in the autumn to seek to extend their term of office.

## **Ratification of Minutes of previous meeting held on 25 May 2023**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 May 2023 were proposed by Dr Les Caul and seconded by Mr Brian Wilson as a true and accurate record. A copy would be made available for the Chair to sign.

### *Action Points*

The Chair drew attention to the action points and reported on the status of those in progress.

Members were content with the information provided.

### *Corporate Plan*

The Chief Executive confirmed that a corporate planning session was organised for 28 June to focus on reviewing the draft plan in terms of outcomes, together with pressures, priorities and associated funding.

A Council member stated he was content with an earlier response that finance would run alongside CCEA's priorities in terms of the Corporate Plan. The issue of resources (staffing) was also discussed, and Council was clear that future capacity would be an issue and should additional items of work be requested by DE outside of the agreed business plan, then this needed to be accompanied by associated funding.

The Chief Executive referred to the Financial Plan (on agenda for approval) and confirmed that this set out how CCEA would deliver within the existing resource for 2023/24. He reported that part of the ongoing engagement with DE is to discuss the possibility of agreeing a longer-term budget allocation (ideally 3 to 5 years) given the challenges a year-on-year arrangement presents. He confirmed that savings have been identified within the financial plan aside from pay increases.

With reference to the 2023/24 Business Plan, it was confirmed that DE approval had been received today (22 June 2023).

## **Main Business**

### ***Approvals***

#### ***2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts (inc Report to those Charged with Governance RttCwG) C/160/1***

The Chair introduced this item and confirmed the documentation had been scrutinised by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) at its meeting on 20 June 2023, and recommended the Report be presented to Council for approval.

He commended the content of the report and placed on record his thanks to the Director of Finance & Corporate Services (DoFCS), the Financial Services Manager (FM), and teams for the significant amount of work.

The FM provided a detailed overview of the main parts of the report and drew attention to the two priority 3 recommendations recorded in the Report to those Charged with Governance (RttCwG). He confirmed these have been accepted subject to the feasibility review and scheduling of ARAC in line with tight timescales. At present no guarantee could be provided that this would be achieved for 2023/24.

In line with the satisfactory assurance provided from the Auditor (at ARAC) the FM confirmed that the Annual Report & Accounts had been recommended to Council for approval and signature.

Members concurred that this was a very satisfactory outcome given the challenges CCEA had encountered throughout the 2022/23 year and commended the Management Team on the outcome of the Audit, in particular the Financial Services Manager for steering the organisation through the Audit.

The Chair sought and received approval for the sign off of the 2022/23 Annual Report & Accounts. Formally proposed by Dr Les Caul and seconded by Mrs Paula Leitch.

The Chair on behalf of Council, thanked all officers involved in this process.

#### *Report to those Charged with Governance (RttCwG)*

The Chair sought and received approval for the Management Response contained in the RttCwG. Formally proposed by Mr Hugh McCarthy and seconded by Dr Les Caul.

#### **2023/24 Business Plan**

**C/160/2**

The Chair advised that the points raised by a member in relation to the format of the business plan template not being fit for purpose were noted and a further discussion would take place with DE.

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services (DoFCS) confirmed that DE had approved this version of the Business Plan.

The DoFCS gave an overview of the plan and confirmed that the business plan was a component part of a range of performance frameworks within CCEA. Further meetings would be scheduled during 2023/24 to review format, content of performance measures and reporting mechanisms to provide assurance to Council on the monitoring of performance across all business areas of CCEA.

The Chief Executive reassured members he would take forward the comments on the template with DE in order to ensure the format was fit for purpose.

The DoFCS assured members that she had reviewed the Corporate Risk Register in the context of the current 2023/24 Business Plan and that the Business and Operational Plans had been developed taking these risk factors into account.

Council members asked that consideration be given to having a meeting before September to allow for a full debate on the financial position and the 2023/24 business plan and asked that the reservations expressed on the process regarding the forthcoming discussions with DE on future budgetary arrangements be placed on record. The Chair and Chief Executive agreed to take this forward.

The Chair sought and received approval of the 2023/24 Business Plan. Formally proposed by Mr Brian Wilson and seconded by Mr Hugh McCarthy.

#### **2023/24 Financial Plan**

**C/160/3**

The DoFCS advised that the initial plan was considered by the Finance Committee at its meeting on 8 June and had approved the document to be presented to Council for final consideration and approval.

The Chair sought and received approval on the 2023/24 Financial Plan. Formally proposed by Dr Les Caul and seconded by Mr Brian Wilson.

The Chief Executive recognised his responsibilities to ensure Council is informed in a timely manner should any matters arise which require further debate.

A Council member advised that his understanding was that assurances had been provided by the Chief Executive, DoFCS and FM in relation to efficiency savings and CCEA's ability to carry out its statutory duties, and that should there be any change to this, the Chief Executive and Chair would inform Council including whether further decisions be required (as per normal practice). He stated that he was assured this process was in place following the last Council meeting.

The Chair of the Finance Committee concurred and emphasised the Finance Committee and Council's role in supporting the Executive. He also stated that the Chief Executive's additional role of Accounting Officer provided another layer of assurance that all necessary action would be taken and Council informed as appropriate.

The Chair thanked members for their input.

#### ***Internal Audit Plan 2023/24***

***C/160/4***

The DoFCS advised the Internal Audit Plan 2023/24 had been prepared by the current Internal Audit provider based on their 3-year plan. She confirmed that the current Internal Auditors contract was ending in September and the process for identifying a new service provider has begun.

The new provider would review this plan and a revised document would come forward to the next ARAC and to Council for the necessary approvals.

#### ***Cyber Security***

Clarification was sought and received on the deferment of Cyber Security risk management and members were content with the detail of the explanation provided. The Chief Executive gave an assurance that a special request would be made to include Cyber Security in Year 1, given the fast moving nature of the cyber environment and its importance to the organisation.

The Chair sought and received approval for the Internal Audit Plan 2023/24. Formally proposed by Ms Patricia Slevin and seconded by Mr Brian Wilson.

#### ***Any Other Business***

None identified.

#### ***Schedule of Meetings 2023/24***

***C/160/5***

The Chair drew attention to the schedule of meetings for Council and Committees from September 2023 to June 2024 and advised that a more detailed plan would be presented to the next Council meeting.

The Chair thanked members and officers for their contributions to the meeting and confirmed that should the need arise members would be contacted.

He wished everyone a good summer break.