

CCEA

Minutes of the one hundred and thirty-seventh meeting of Council, held on Thursday 23 April 2020 via Dial In Facilities.

Present : Mr T Carson (Chair) Dr L Caul
Mrs C Harpur Mr RJ Thompson
Mr C McKinney Mrs C Fitzsimons
Ms R Byrne Dr A Kerr
Mrs K O'Hare Mr B Wilson
Ms P Slevin Mrs P Leitch
Mrs S Kirk

Mr J Edwards (Chief Executive)
Mrs L Scott (Director of Finance & Corporate Services)
Miss M Farragher (Director of Education)
Mrs S King (Head of Regulation)
Mr J Daly (Financial Services Manager)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

Introduction

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting and advised on the protocols for participation.

1 Apologies

None received.

2 Conflict of Interests

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

3 Chair's Business

Resignation of Council Member

The Chair confirmed that Dr Neill Morton had tendered his resignation from Council with immediate effect.

Regulation & Education Committee Business

The Chair advised that for the foreseeable future Regulation and Education Committee items requiring decisions will be presented to Council for consideration at its business meetings as appropriate.

He advised that Mrs Christine Harpur would present the Regulation Committee report to Council at Item 8.

Chair's Report to Council

The Chair advised that he had been involved in a series of discussions with senior Departmental Officials in regards to a range of Covid-19 related matters, including the options provided on alternative assessment arrangements for summer 2020. He confirmed he had expressed his frustrations, on behalf of Council, at the delay in announcements.

Meetings with the Chief Executive: The Chair confirmed that the regular 1-1 meetings with the Chief Executive continued. He advised that following the restrictions and arrangements for social distancing put in place following the COVID-19 pandemic, he has had daily conversations with the Chief Executive where he has been updated on a range of issues and developments regarding the organisation. He has also been in contact with the other members of the Executive Team.

This concluded the Chair's report to Council.

Chief Executive's Report : January – March 2020

The Chief Executive drew attention to the detail of the report provided and updated members on activity since the last meeting.

COVID-19

There has been significant disruption to all of CCEA's operations. Members have been updated on a weekly basis in regards to the options for the summer 2020 awarding.

The Chief Executive confirmed emergency response planning and control has established and is operating effectively. Although there are high-level demands on staff and this key risk to sustaining this response, particularly in examinations, IT and regulation.

A more in-depth update would be provided at Item 7 : *Covid-19 Update and Contingencies*.

Curriculum & Assessment

CAT (Computer Adaptive Tests), were available to Year 8 and Year 10 pupils (Nov 19 – Jan 20). 12025 numeracy tests and 7694 literacy tests completed in 110 schools. Feedback on the use of the system has been positive, and work continues on the development of components for future use.

Online Diagnostic Formative Assessment : the quantum pilot to support schools teaching Digital at Key Stage 3 was extended with 14 new schools utilising the on-line bank of resources. A similar pilot has been developed for Modern Languages with 19 schools participating.

Active Citizenship : CCEA continues to support the Department of Justice on this initiative. A new suite of resources were launched on 5 March 2020.

Work also continues on developing resources for Relationships and Sexuality Education, and additional funding secured for the development of SEN materials and the development of teacher professional learning to support effective delivery of RSE in schools.

Broad and Balanced Curriculum : guidance has been developed on curriculum planning to include video case studies on how some NI schools have used the flexibility of the NI Curriculum at post-primary level.

Irish-Medium Programme Board has been established and met twice. Before the COVID-19 discussions were ongoing in regards to the approval of four projects currently with DE. These have not yet been finalised.

Curriculum Monitoring Report was approved by the Minister. The launch of the report will be delayed until the social distancing restrictions have either been reduced or removed, however it was planned that support activity for centres would continue, subject to COVID-19 restrictions.

Examinations/Qualifications

The Moving Image Arts showcases held on 20 and 21 November; and the True Colours Exhibition 17-23 January, were successful events and showcased a range of work from students in Art & Design.

The Compliance Team have been involved in meetings with 12 Area Learning Communities (ALCs) including 78 Heads of Centres and teachers to introduce the newly developed Malpractice resources.

The January and March 2020 examinations series was completed successfully with no significant concerns reported. The post-results service has transitioned fully on-line and will be administered remotely throughout the COVID-19 isolation period.

GCSE Science Arrangements : an updated options paper will be presented to Council as soon as possible.

Regulation

Qualifications Reforms in England and Wales : CCEA continues to keep DfE and DE officials informed on developments in regards to the new T-Levels in England.

Activities associated with Phase 2 of the Vocational Qualifications Project (DfE) have been suspended until COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted.

The review of GCSE Modern Languages has been completed with a first draft going through quality assurance before submission to DE.

The review of GCSE Mathematics has been completed and Awarding Organisations response received. This will be considered by Regulation before final draft comes forward to Council for consideration.

The General Conditions of Recognition will require amendment following the COVID-19 controls.

Corporate

COVID-19 Response arrangements through Gold, Silver and bronze teams to address strategic and operational matters as they arise. 4 additional teams have been established to deal with Assessment, Curriculum, Communications and Safe Closure of Qualifications.

2019/20 Outturn : due to the government's restrictions in regards to COVID-19 outbreak operational activity was significantly curtailed during March and it is now unlikely that CCEA will be able to achieve the target of 1%. DE has been notified, and it is expected that the outturn will be under 2%.

Funding : an additional bid for COVID-19 funding has been submitted, however no response has been received to date. The 2020/21 Budget has not yet been received, however CCEA has been instructed to continue to plan to spend without committing to significant expenditure.

Communications : a dedicated team has been assigned and developed a communications plan to ensure messages to the greater education sector in regards to the impact of COVID-19 are carefully and accurately communicated.

A dedicated page on the website contains all the relevant materials, and the Curriculum Team has deployed 'Home Learning' materials available on the website to support learners and schools.

Human Resources : Sickness absence levels have reduced to 5.7% (as at 31 March 2020) and continues to do so. Long-term sickness remains the same.

IT continue to deploy equipment to enable remote working and are providing support as necessary. ICT services has also received full re-accreditation to the ISO20000 standard, and achieved Cyber Essentials accreditation in the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) guidelines.

Members sought and received clarification on a wide range of issues, and were content with the explanations provided.

The following points were raised:

Continue to highlight the risks associated with Curriculum & Assessment due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The provision of draft advice on the delivery of a curriculum and examinations systems (ie future proofing in preparation for a re-occurrence/future situation); and the impact should schools re-open with social distancing requirements (ie. smaller class numbers, and reduced content for teaching).

Consideration of alternative forms of assessment (reference made the Holland system where final year A level students receive 50% of their final grade for work completed throughout the school year and 50% for terminal examination).

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for the update and members questions of clarification. He said it was important for the focus to remain on immediate priorities in regards to the examinations series, however agreed that it would be useful for discussions on curriculum and assessment moving forwards.

The Chief Executive advised that a number of curriculum officers had been updating CCEA resources to provide home schooling materials to allow delivery of the curriculum. He observed that once the restrictions are lifted it would be a matter for DE to provide a steer on what advice was required on future arrangements.

He stated that the main priority at present was the implementation of the awarding solution in regards to this year's examinations.

The DoE said that whilst the focus was on prioritising this summer, discussions on a number of scenarios were underway. Thinking was also in progress for KS4, AS and A Level.

She advised that a substantial amount of work had been completed on the provision of resources to support teachers and learning, and said it would not be appropriate to begin discussions with schools on future arrangements until clarity is provided.

The Chief Executive provided a high-level summary of the way in which CCEA was adapting to the business plan and confirmed that a range of emergency contingency arrangements had been enacted to ensure responsibilities were met.

The Chair, recognised the need to consider how business may change in the future, and was satisfied with the way in which the Chief Executive and his teams were responding to the current crisis and addressing issues as they arose.

A Council member sought clarification on whether there had been any engagement with Diversity and Inclusion bodies to ensure parents/guardians for whom English was not the first language were kept informed on the current situation and educational contingencies. The Chief Executive advised that this had been raised at the NI Assembly Education Committee, however DE had not issued any instruction to CCEA in this regard.

This concluded the Chief Executive's Report to Council.

Members noted the most recent FOI requests.

4 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 January 2020

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 January 2020, were proposed by Mrs Christine Harpur, and seconded by Mrs Carol Fitzsimons, as a true and accurate record. A copy would be made available for the Chair to sign once normal business arrangements resume.

Action Points

Members noted the status of the action points.

Minutes of additional Council meetings

The Chair advised that the following meetings had been held in regards to matters in relation to updates and mitigations for Covid-19

19 March 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2020, were proposed by Ms Patricia Slevin, and seconded by Dr Ana Kerr, as a true and accurate record.

1 April 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2020, were proposed by Mr Robert Thompson, and seconded by Mrs Paula Leitch, as a true and accurate record.

8 April 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2020, were proposed by Ms Rose Byrne and seconded by Mr Cormac McKinney.

15 April 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2020, were proposed by Mr Robert Thompson, and seconded by Dr Ana Kerr.

Copies of the minutes would be made available for the Chair to sign once normal business arrangements resume.

5 Correspondence

Chair's Correspondence

The Chief Executive drew attention to the correspondence he had issued to the Chair (17 April 2020) in regards to the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20. He confirmed that the document had been updated to reflect the impact of COVID-19. He confirmed that a revised draft would be presented to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting on 29 April 2020.

Chief Executive's Correspondence

The Chief Executive drew attention to the following correspondence :

- Post-Project Evaluation (PPE) – Termination of Contract Payments
- 2019 Mid-Year Governance Statement
- CCEA Performance Related Pay Policy and Framework 2018/19 and 2019/20
- Collaboration on a Data Strategy across the Education Sector

He advised that this initiative has been delayed in light of COVID-19. The 14-19 and Transformation Project had also been delayed.

- January Monitoring Exercise 2019/20
- Direction under Article 78(3) of the Education (NI) Order 1998

The Chief Executive confirmed that the above correspondence outlined the Minister's instruction in regards to the alternative arrangements for summer 2020 examinations.

6 Governance and Accountability (GAR)

GAR Meeting : 4 March 2020

The Chair drew attention to the agenda provided for members' information, and gave an overview of the main items discussed at the meeting. These included:

Internal Audit Contract : The Chair confirmed that he had expressed at the Governance Accountability Review Council's disappointment at the way in which this issue had been handled. The Permanent Secretary (PS) apologised for the current situation and confirmed that DE would provide the necessary IA cover until the new contract was awarded.

Budget 2020/21 : the PS advised that detailed discussions were ongoing with the NI Assembly, and undertook to advise CCEA of its allocation as soon as possible.

Estates Strategy : an update was provided on progress and the challenges encountered as this is taken forward.

The Chief Executive advised that a number of other issues, including 3-country comparability; vocational qualifications and continued pressure on CCEA's workforce were also raised at the meeting. He also confirmed that the COVID-19 situation would disrupt estates planning and strategy.

Members noted the information provided.

7 Audit

Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Reports of meetings held on 16 January and 19 March 2020

The Chair of the Committee drew attention to the detail of the minutes provided. He reported on the following:

- Risk Assurance in Awards in Purchases : August – November 2019 : no unauthorised purchases, and 10 direct awards in relation to general purchases. December 2018 – February 2020 : no unauthorised purchases; 14 direct awards in relation to general purchases, and 1 for external venues; reported during these periods.
- Production of 2019/20 Annual Report & Accounts : members noted the process and associated timelines for the production of the ARA. The Director of Finance & Corporate Services (DoFCS) advised members

at the March meeting that due to the COVID-19 restrictions, arrangements for progressing the ARA would be conducted remotely.

- Corporate Risk Register : December 2019 was reviewed as per normal practice.

The Chief Executive updated members on the status of the risks included in the March CRR (detail provided in the minutes).

- Draft Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 : members noted that the document would be amended to reflect the current circumstances. A revised draft would be presented to the April meeting.
- COVID-19 Preparedness & Mitigations : members discussed the issues and mitigations in detail. The committee will continue to be advised of risks as they arise.
- Internal Audit Service Provider : discussions were held at both January and March meetings. An updated position will be reported to Council at this meeting.
- Internal Audit Reviews on Human Resources and Risk Management were presented to the January meeting. Both received Satisfactory assurance ratings.

Regulation

- Three-Country Comparability : risks and mitigations were discussed in regards to the possible removal of the 3-country approach. An update on developments and associated risks was provided at the March meeting .

The Chief Executive advised that a business case for additional funding had been submitted, and was successful for funding to resource the work. Staffing has also been provided from NI Civil Service has been provided to progress this area of work.

- Funding Decisions on Vocational Qualifications in England : members' noted DfE's (England) decision to withdraw funding for these qualifications, and subsequent implications for NI.

This concluded the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee report to Council.

General

The Chair of the Committee explained that a stylised approach the Audit & Risk was not, at this point in time, ideal and felt that CCEA Council should consider a critical approach to managing risk. He recognised the pace of change that the organisation was operating under, together with the demands from Government Departments, required vigorous consideration and critical response to issues from the Council, with public interest in school closures and the future of the examination systems being at the forefront of these discussions.

He suggested that the Council should consider remodelling its decision making processes, taking into consideration the additional pressures on staff. Council could convene remotely to consider specific issues as they arise, and agendas and minutes to be brief and systematic.

It was further noted that the current dial in mechanism for convening meetings remotely was not sufficient to sustain engagement and conduct a professional approach to decision making.

The Chair agreed to consider future arrangements for convening remote meetings and also to convene a sub-group of members to discuss how Council may operate moving forwards.

The Chief Executive welcomed the points raised and confirmed that it was challenging to continue to produce informative papers within short timeframes and rapidly developing issues. He suggested that regular meetings with shorter agendas would be more advantageous at this time.

In regards to an appeals process to support the new awarding arrangements, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Head of Regulation was working on a consultation paper. Following a short consultation and consideration of feedback, the formal model for the appeals process would be brought to Council for consideration. Members welcomed this and stated it was important for Council to have adequate time to discuss and sign off the finalised process in the coming weeks.

He suggested that the regular Wednesday briefing meetings continue with Council to ensure they are kept up to date of developments and issues as they arise. He agreed that a more consolidated and prioritised approach to agenda items would be welcome.

The Chief Executive agreed to develop agendas with officers in regards to Risk, Examinations, Curriculum and Assessment activity. Finance and ARAC meetings would continue in line with the schedule as these were statutory committees of Council.

Members were content that the weekly meetings continued via the remote mechanism.

The Chair agreed to research the viability of conducting future meetings via MS Teams. Members would be notified of arrangements outside of the Council meeting.

Corporate Risk Register : March 2020

C/137/3

The DoFCS drew attention to the detail of the paper, and confirmed the CR had been reviewed by the ARAC at its meeting on 19 March 2020. She outlined the changes required in light of the risks around COVID-19, in particular : CR1, CR2 and CR3. She outlined the main reasons for the increased risks and advised that these would continue to be kept under review in order to mitigate effectively. She assured members that all other actions taken to mitigate risks have been reviewed and updated as appropriate.

Members were assured that matters were being kept under constant review in order to mitigate risks as they arose, in particular the impact of COVID-19, and the absence of a Departmental budget allocation for 2020/21.

She advised that the 2020/21 CRR would be presented to the ARAC at its April meeting.

The Chair thanked the DoFCS for the update and sought clarification on the possibility on whether the new CRR could be formatted into a more accessible document for Council. The DoFCS advised that the current format was fit for purpose in that it supported the organisation in identifying and mitigating risks, particularly during this unprecedented situation in terms of risk to the organisation. She would not wish to alter the format at this point and time.

Internal Audit Service Provider : Business Case Addendum

C/137/4

The DoFCS drew attention to the information provided, and gave a brief overview in relation to the proposal to proceed to tender for a 3-year Internal Audit Service Contract. The matter was discussed at ARAC on 19 March, and was referred to Council for consideration.

Members were content with the level of detail provided and were content to approve the addendum.

Formally proposed by Mrs Kathleen O'Hare and seconded by Mrs Sam Kirk.

Chief Executive's Update – COVID-19 Contingencies

General Qualifications

The Chief Executive referred to the Ministerial instruction received on 16 April 2020. He confirmed that following the Minister's Announcement in relation to assessment arrangements in light of the cancellation of the Summer 2020 examinations, a significant amount of work was being undertaken in regards to the implementation phase. He advised that teams are working through the technical issues to build a system which will work across the Awarding Organisations in the UK to maintain similarities of approach, and have a shared understanding, in particular, with WJEC in Wales. He recognised the significant challenges of implementing the solution, and the substantial amount of work to be done by the technical team(s).

In regards to the Appeals Process, a consultation is currently being drafted by the Regulation team following discussion and input from DE. Ofqual has launched their appeals process. Scotland and Wales will follow.

The Issue of Results date has been moved back to the original August 2020 date.

The Chief Executive advised that there has been a small delay in the issue of certifications of some components for the January and March series due to COVID-19 restrictions. This is a processing matter and centres have been notified.

Vocational Qualifications (VQs)

The Chief Executive advised that an announcement and instruction from Minister Dodds, DfE (Department for the Economy) on how to proceed with the awarding of VQs was anticipated.

CCEA has provided advice to DfE on the calculated approaches in line with that provided in England and Wales.

Essential Skills : advice on awarding arrangements and how this may affect the General Conditions of Recognition (CCEA) has been submitted to Department for the Economy.

Occupational Studies and Entry Level Qualifications : decision is required from DE on how to proceed.

An issue in regards to the Professional Code of Conduct (or licence to practice) has arisen due to the controlled practical element of the qualifications. This is under consideration by DfE.

Corporate

Discussions have commenced on how to re-open the building in the event of any relaxation of the COVID-19 restrictions in the coming weeks.

The Chief Executive recognised the significant pressures placed upon IT staff in terms of managing the interfaces and infrastructures in place to cope with current remote working arrangements.

Members noted the information provided.

BREXIT Update

The Chief Executive confirmed no further correspondence had been received in regards to BREXIT.

8 Regulation

Regulation Committee Report of the meeting held on 5 February 2020

The minutes of the meeting were available for members' information.

In the absence of Dr Morton (Committee Chair), Mrs Harpur gave the following report.

- Committee Terms of Reference were noted by members, and arrangements for co-opting members in order to enhance the knowledge and expertise of the committee would be put in place.
- GCSE Mathematics Review : an update on the findings of the review was provided. The action plan arising from the findings of the review will be considered for adoption by the Regulator. The terms of reference were shared with the committee.
- Review of Grading in Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) at GCSE and A Level: members noted progress and planned actions in regards to the review of the appropriateness of grading in MFL at GCSE and A Level. The terms of reference of the review, and an executive summary of the Ofqual report were shared with the committee.
- Future of Vocational Qualifications Project : A project board has been established to ensure good governance, chaired by the Chief Executive. It includes a wide range of stakeholders and Council is represented by Dr Les Caul.

Members noted that the main risk to the project was the lack of the full range of data from FE required to inform the findings. The Chief Executive has made representations to both DE and DfE requesting the data and the Chair of the committee asked for this to be progressed as a matter of urgency.

- Three-Country Comparability : members noted the preferred option would be to maintain a 3-country approach. (The Chief Executive provided an update on this matter under Item 7 Audit).
- Three-Country Revisions to the General Conditions of Recognition (GCoR) : members noted the main changes were to provide greater clarification and update information to reflect required changes in law, policies, processes and symptoms.

A Council member sought clarification on the status of the Modern Foreign Languages Review. The Head of Regulation advised that the deadline of 31 March 2020 had been met and work was completed, however in light of the change in priorities due to COVID-19, this has been reprioritised. She advised that it would come forward to Council in the coming weeks.

The GCSE Mathematics Review was also being finalised with the Awarding Organisation and Council will have an opportunity to discuss once the work has been completed.

A Council member asked if members could send views on the Future of Qualifications Project to Dr Caul for consideration at the next project board meeting. The Chief Executive advised that the board had been delayed due to the current situation. He said the work was at a very early stage however, representations continue to be made in regards to obtaining the data sets from FE. He thanked Dr Caul for his assistance in supporting the project board.

The Chair confirmed that Council would have the opportunity to contribute to this area of work when it is appropriate to do so.

This concluded the Regulation Committee report to Council.

9 Finance

Finance Committee Report of the meeting held on 19 February 2020

The Chair of the Committee confirmed that members had fulfilled their scrutiny and challenge function on all of the agenda items. He drew attention to the minutes provided, and reported on the following:

- Finance Report as at 31 December 2019: members noted the underspend of £65K at that time. The information was discussed in detail and members recognised the extent of the constraints and challenges facing the organisation.
- Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2019 : member noted the information, in particular, the two provisions outlined in regards to pension liability.
- Pay Remit Update 2019/20 : no pay remits for 2019/20 have been approved. Members noted migration to the new NJC pay scale had been completed and payments honoured in the December pay run.
- Draft Budget 2020/21 : the detail of the discussion was provided in the minutes and this item was on the agenda for this meeting.
- Operational Plan 2019/20 : Quarter 3 Monitoring Report : also on the agenda for this meeting. Members wished to place on record its deep concern about the way in which the development and integration of Irish medium education, and CCEA's Education strategy had been dealt with by DE.

It was confirmed that both of these issues were raised at the Governance and Accountability Review meeting held on 4 March, and recognition received that CCEA staff had fulfilled their responsibilities in progressing the business case. An assurance was provided that there would be no inference that CCEA was at fault.

- Procurement and Business Case Update : members were updated on activity since the last meeting, and approved 1 Business Case : Internal Audit provider.

Members also received an overview of the Education Directorate teams' reconfiguration, and were updated on progress in regards to HR initiatives, and the Estates Strategy. Members also noted the sickness absence report for Quarter 3.

Two policies were considered and approved by the committee as detailed in the minutes of the meeting.

The Chair of the Committee advised that issues in regards to funding for Irish Medium support for Level 3 BTEC qualifications and 3 country comparability were also discussed and have been progressed, where possible, with DE by the Chief Executive.

This concluded the Finance Committee report to Council.

Finance Report as at 29 February 2020

C/137/5

The FM drew attention to the detail provide at paper C/137/5 and reported an underspend of £155k (0.9%) against net DE funded revenue expenditure. At that time it was predicted that the budget would come in on target.

However, due to the impact of COVID-19, planned spend has not been progressed. DE has been notified that the underspend will exceed the 1% target, with the current estimate of 2%. The FM said that every effort would be made to utilise the funding as soon as restrictions are relaxed.

Members noted the main areas of overspend and underspend outlined on page 3 of the paper, and were advised on the contingencies to offset these items.

January Monitoring Round

The FM advised that CCEA had submitted a resource pressure of £320k due to reduced examinations income, this was offset by a reduced requirement of £320K of costs connected with the reduced income.

Reduced Requirement – February 2020

The FM advised that a further reduced requirement of £300K in relation to predicted underspend in Irish medium was submitted to DE, this was as a result of delays in departmental approval of business cases.

The Chair expressed disappointment in surrendering funds back to DE, however recognised the unprecedented times, and challenging environment within which the organisation was continuing to operate. He wished to place on record his thanks to all staff involved, in particular the Executive Team and Finance Team.

Statement of Financial Control as at 29 February 2020

C/137/6

The FM confirmed the statement was provided in line with best practice, with no areas of concern to report. He drew attention to the non-current liabilities, in particular the two provisions outlined in regards to pension liability. This will remain until the year-end position is finalised.

He confirmed that the final draft of the Annual Report & Accounts 2019/20 will contain an accurate end of year financial position.

The Chair sought clarification on whether there would be an increase on pension contributions. The FM advised that NILGOSC had confirmed pension contributions for 2020/21 would remain the same, however there could be a potential impact due to the current situation.

Members noted the information provided.

2020/21 Budget Update

C/137/7

The FM confirmed that no budget allocation for 2020/21 had been received. He drew attention to the detail provided in paper C/137/7. This work had been carried out on the basis of a flat budget for 2020/21, and completed in advance of the Minister's decision to close schools.

He advised that CCEA officers have been working closely with DE following the enactment of COVID-19 restrictions, and highlighted the information provided in the summary of current revenue funding estimates for 2020/21, with pay and price pressures being estimated at £705K .

Potential cost pressures not included at this point in time were CAT (development of online assessments for numeracy and literature); and additional CCEA translation support and payment to Pearson associated with changes to BTEC Level 3 qualifications. These are currently being discussed with DE by the Chief Executive

COVID-19 Bid

The FM confirmed that an initial bid of £5.2M was submitted to DE which reflected a 'worst case' scenario should the summer examinations had to be replicated, as this did not materialise and there is no requirement for an Autumn series, the bid was revised and £1.6M resubmitted to recover ongoing and anticipated costs.

Work was also underway with managers and budgetholders to identify the impact this will have on charges across the organisation, including examination fees for this year.

General

The Chief Executive expressed serious concern around the 2021/22 budget, as pressures on entries and continued pressures are rising and will continue to do so. There will be significant challenges with public finances, pension contributions, inflation, longer term arrangements for Curriculum, and stated that thinking has begun on how CCEA will cope over the next 6 months.

The FM concurred with the Chief Executive and reminded members that the paper reflected the challenges facing the organisation, including adjustments to the curriculum.

Members recognised the significant financial challenges and pressures that could materialise. The Chair stated that going forward the public sector will face difficult times and advised CCEA to continue to plan prudently, identify and highlight pressures, as they arise, to DE.

10 Planning and Performance

Operational Plan Monitoring Report : Quarter 3 (by exception)

C/137/8

The DoFCS provided an overview on Quarter 3, 2019/20. She drew attention to those targets not likely to be achieved: *The Development and Integration of Irish Medium Education, and CCEA's Estates Strategy*.

She advised that the end of year report is being finalised and it was likely that restrictions of COVID-19 would impact upon the targets, with a number being 'likely to be achieved but with some delay'. It was hoped that DE would take a pragmatic approach in its assessment given the exceptional circumstances all government departments are currently operating under. However, the DoFCS stressed that despite the disruption, the focus would remain on good business planning moving forwards.

Planning and visioning for CCEA's delivery during 2020/21 is the Council's priority and management continue to demonstrate strategy and operational focus within each area despite delays in direction being provided by DE.

The Chair commended the substantial amount of work carried out by staff across the organisation, who have demonstrated above and beyond their commitment to the operations of the organisation during the COVID-19 outbreak and the transition to remote working practices for a significant number of employees

The following points were raised:

- The possibility of having suitable indicators put in place for interim achievement.

The Chief Executive advised that he had challenged DE around putting in place additional indicators to allow for current circumstances to be recorded in the shorter term to ensure the organisation was not exposed to risk. He confirmed that the DoFCS would take this forward with DE.

He stated that many of the targets not achieved were short term and confirmed that COVID-19 restrictions had impacted upon performance.

- The importance of scenario planning to take work forward, and understand the shift in profile and determining where savings can be achieved.
- The status of the Estates Strategy. The DoFCS advised that with market disruption and the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, the strategy would be delayed until the end of 2020.
- Management of staff morale.

The DoFCS confirmed that management continues to be very aware of the significant changes in circumstances amongst staff, and confirmed that a range of health and well-being initiatives continue to be offered by HR. Also include : communications group to ensure managers maintain contact with their teams, to ensure they continue to support staff as appropriate.

- Forward planning once restrictions are eased, returning to the building, anti-virus friendly, and examinations.

The DoFCS confirmed that a group has been established to consider a wide variety of factors post-Covid-19 working. These will all be progressed and placed on the risk register as appropriate.

11 Any Other Business

Record of Thanks : Dr Neill Morton

The Chair wished to place on record his thanks to Dr Neill Morton for the significant amount of work he undertook during his tenure on the Council, in particular his support and dedication as Chair of the Education Committee and more recently for taking on the role as Chair of the Regulation Committee.

Structure of Future Meetings

A Council member asked that dedicated time be set aside to discuss how Council business can be progressed, in light of the current disruption to the meetings schedule.. The Chair agreed to put out a request to members for a small group to discuss and put forward suggestions on how Council business could be conducted moving forwards.

The Chair thanked members and officers for their participation and contributions to the meeting in these challenging circumstances.

12 Date of Next Meeting

The Chair confirmed that the next weekly update would be Wednesday 29 April 2020 at 4pm.

The date of the next business meeting of Council is scheduled for Thursday 21 May 2020 at 1.30 pm.

