

**CCEA  
COUNCIL BRIEFING**

**Minutes of the 151<sup>st</sup> Council meeting held on Thursday 23 June 2022 at 13:30 at CCEA Headquarters, 29 Clarendon Road, Belfast. Also, via MS Teams.**

**Present:**

Mr T O'Reilly (Chair)

Mrs K O'Hare

Mrs S Sellars (Vice Chair)

Mr B Wilson

Mr H McCarthy

Mrs A Kingsley

Mrs D O'Connor

Mr R Smyth

Mrs Carol Fitzsimons

Miss M Corrigan

Mrs L Scott (Director of Finance & Corporate Services – DoFCS)

Ms A Swann (Temporary Director of Education - TDoE) Mrs S King (Head of Regulation – HOR))

Mr J Daly (Business Manager, Finance and Business Assurance- BMFBA)

Ms Angela Madden (Manager, MarComms) **For items six and seven only**

Mr Andrew McAfee (Business Manager, Multimedia Learning Resources & Engagement – MLRE) – **For items six and seven only** Mr Robin McLoughlin, OBE (Independent Review of Education Panel) **Presented and then left the meeting.**

Ms Isabel Nisbet (Independent Review of Education Panel) **Presented and then left the meeting.**

Ms Jacqui Burns (Temporary Manager, Council Secretariat)

*Mr Ray Caldwell, Department of Education (observer)*

**MINUTES**

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting.

**1. Apologies:**

Apologies were received from Professor P Hanna, Mrs P Leitch, Dr L Caul, Mrs P Slevin, Ms Clare Greenwood and Ms Margaret Farragher (Interim Chief Executive Officer).

**2. Conflict of Interests**

There was a conflict of interest declared by The Vice Chair in relation to RM printing contract.

Mrs C Fitzsimons, Mrs Anne Kingsley and Mr B Wilson also declared that they have children who are sitting CCEA examinations this summer.

**3. Chair's Business**

The Chair informed members that Mrs L Scott (DoFCS) has been temporarily appointed Accounting Officer by the Department of Education.

The DoFCS advised member that recent press coverage on the resignation of the ICEO could result in members being asked to comment on the subject. She asked that members

do not comment and refer such enquiries to the press office. CCEA will also provide members with communications contact details to assist in the event of a press query.

#### **4. Ratification of Council Minutes on 28 April 2022 and 26 May 2022**

##### ***Minutes of Thursday 28 April 2022***

Mrs C Fitzsimons confirmed her attendance.

Mrs A Kingsley corrected her title as Mrs and not Dr.

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2022 were proposed by Mrs A Kingsley and seconded Mrs K O'Hare as a true and accurate record once the above corrections have been made. A copy will be made available for the Chair to sign.

##### ***Minutes of Thursday 26 May 2022***

Miss M Corrigan confirmed her attendance.

Mrs C Fitzsimons confirmed her attendance.

Mrs A Kingsley corrected her title as Mrs and not Dr.

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2022 were proposed by Mrs A Kingsley and seconded Mrs K O'Hare as a true and accurate record once the above corrections have been made. A copy will be made available for the Chair to sign.

#### **5. Correspondence**

The Chair drew attention to the DE correspondence provided for members information. Particular attention was drawn to:

- Letter from DE to Ms M Farragher
- Email from Chair to Ms M Farragher

#### **6. Independent Review of Education Panel**

The Chair had provided briefing notes in advance of the meeting outline the purpose and expectations of the meeting. A copy of CCEA's submission to the panel was also supplied. The review team members in attendance were Robin McLaughlin OBE, currently Principal of Banbridge Academy and Isobel Nesbitt former CEO of OFQUAL.

Ms I Nisbet and Mr McLoughlin introduced themselves to Council members and stated that the Independent Review of Education panel believe the curriculum should feature as a major part of the interim report and in turn in the final report which is due in 2023. Mr R McLoughlin said that he was particularly keen to hear CCEA's view on vocational and technical pathways.

Ms I Nisbet stated that she was also interested to hear CCEA's views on issues such as who should have a lead role in keeping the curriculum under review. Members were asked to think ahead twenty to thirty years and consider if there is a viable national role for assessment at sixteen years old (i.e., GCSE's). Member were also asked to consider the importance of the same branding across the nations (i.e., GCSE's and A Levels). She said that the panel have a particular interest in vocational qualifications and to what extent Northern Ireland should have their own version of these qualifications. Member were also asked to consider the relationship of examinations (particularly vocational pathways) throughout the Island of Ireland as a whole.

The Chair said that in previous discussions with the Independent Review Panel there had been a focus on Key Stages Three and Four, but many of the current issues emerged from problems related to early years education.

Mrs K O'Hare informed the panel members that CCEA recently had a curriculum symposium which had attracted 160 attendees. She listed some of the concerns raised at the symposium.

1. There is too much assessment.
2. There is a need to focus on early years development. Including those at nursery school age.
3. Centres are spending tens of thousands of pounds purchasing assessments that do not entirely fit. However, CCEA should be able to provide a more system-based assessment for learners in Northern Ireland. Unfortunately CCEA's curriculum department has reduced over the years due to redundancies and stated the need to rebuild this; but to do so will require funding. This would rectify the situation that centres are having to choose assessments that are not totally relevant to Northern Ireland learners.

Mrs K O'Hare also suggested CCEA could have a role in developing high level apprenticeships benefiting not only the learner but also the overall economy in Northern Ireland. However, funding is again required to develop this pathway.

The Chair posed the question 'How do we assess when younger learners are fit to attend school and what would this mean for the role of playschools and nurseries in the education sector?'

Mr Hugh McCarthy said that children who attend school with limited speaking ability and have communication do require intervention strategies. This requires a province wide system for assessment at this early stage.

Miss M Corrigan addressed issues in Northern Ireland regarding 'distortion of the curriculum'. She said that Northern Ireland centres use assessments as a point of measurement rather than a form of development and that questions regarding the role of GCSE's and A Levels need addressed. She said that these examinations no longer do what they were originally designed to do and that they should not be the sole driver to quantify success. She also said that there is a need to focus on development rather than competition and a revised programme where all centres are focused on the same objectives.

The Chair posed the question 'What is assessment?' He highlighted the significant adaptations that had occurred during COVID of assessment impact on the transfer test to GCSE's and A Levels and whether there was a need to reconsider our current model of assessment and sixteen and eighteen year old. He said that CCEA had become an examinations-based organisation and it was important to get back to developing the curriculum and research based assessments.

Ms I Nisbet posed the question 'Is there a role for summative assessment and if so, what is it?' The Chair agreed there is a need for more project based and relationship-based learning and highlighted that current arrangements remained largely unchanged over several decades.

The Temporary Director of Education (TDoE) raised the issue around the quantity of qualifications on offer and if so many of these are required. She asked if there is a way to capture the softer skills as even if there was a small core of NI based vocational assessments, it would be an improvement.

K O'Hare commented on the need for culture change regarding vocational qualifications both with learners as well as within the community. She asked if there will be an action plan at the end of the final report. Ms I Nisbet said that the panel will take a strategic view overall but

that it is too soon to discuss the format of the final report at this stage. Mr R McLoughlin said that there will be a lot of work to be picked up after the interim report.

The Chair commented on the use of C2K and emphasised that any new system needed to be focused on assessment being used on a rolling basis to support learning rather than the creation of league tables. A good example of this is the CAT project.

Mr B Wilson commented on the increasing use of integrated education by parents and the need for this to be addressed in any proposed changes as part of a modern society.

Mr H McCarthy commented on how the 'Accelerated Reader' programme is assessed, and results managed on an individual basis. He said that the capability of intervention is very apparent and said that this is an example of how it can be done.

Miss M Corrigan said that it is important to look at the different ways that learners learn, and the assessment needs to benefit the learner. At present, assessment is based more around learning by repetition to get a better score. She said that this type of learning needs to be avoided to provide a model of assessment that is of value to the learner and not one where a child feels that they have failed because of a low score.

Mrs K O'Hare said that assessments need to start at some stage during the key stage one period as it is important to identify any issues as early as possible. However, lack of staff at this critical stage does hinder that plan.

The Chair spoke about 'Economies of Scale' in Northern Ireland the risk for CCEA in taking on responsibility of vocational and technical qualifications. Mrs C Fitzsimons agreed that Northern Ireland needs a workforce that is appropriately trained, and the skill set is obviously lacking in the region at present. She said that there is a need to promote the value of vocational and technical qualifications to learners, parents and organisations throughout the region. Mr B Wilson commented on the changing working patterns brought about by the pandemic and the need to look at strategies of work-based learning in order to fit in with the 'new normal'.

The Chair said that CCEA is required by legislation to align with the other three countries in the UK but it was also important to look at the Republic of Ireland who have adopted a more project-based approach assessment and sixteen and eighteen years old.

Mr R Loughlin asked for council members thoughts and opinions on 'The curriculum as a bigger picture and the purpose of the curriculum?'

Mrs K O'Hare who had an involvement in the early curriculum highlighted the importance of having the same curriculum throughout centres in Northern Ireland to ensure no political differences. It needs to focus on what children need to learn and ensure that teachers have the necessary skills to provide that. She referred to the CCEA slogan 'Enabling the full potential of all learners to be achieved and recognised'.

Mrs C Fitzsimons said that the curriculum needs to be humanised resulting in curious people who are willing to learn and know how to learn. The Chair said the goal is to develop good citizens for a better future / world by ensuring learners who have the right skills to live and contribute to improving society as well as making a significant contribution to the economy.

Ms I Nisbet raised the issue of centres purchasing assessments to measure their student's performance and noted that CCEA's ability to meet the needs of vocational and technical qualifications is lacking. She asked that CCEA could come back to her with possible solutions.

## **The Chair thanked the guests from the Independent Review Panel and at that point Mr R McLoughlin and Ms I Nisbet left the meeting**

CCEA council members had a short recap of the meeting:

Mrs K O'Hare suggested inviting a guest from the Republic of Ireland to a future council meeting to discuss what they are doing.

Mr H McCarthy commented that it would have been beneficial to spend a bit more time to answer the questions; what is the curriculum, what is it for? And what are assessments for and why?

### **7. Education**

The Chair invited the TDoE to update council members on the current position regarding 'Advice on Awarding Summer 2022 Examinations'

The TDoE referred to a letter received from the Department of Education re 'Summer 2022 Awarding.' She said that she has been working closely with, Departmental officials and HoR to ensure that CCEA outcomes do not disadvantage learners in Northern Ireland in comparison in to those in England and Wales. The Chair highlighted that England and Wales are experiencing issues in how to handle the 2022 results and CCEA are in agreement with the Department of Education on the approach to the 2022 results. He said 'examiner judgment' remains the key principle for grading in 2022 and CCEA have received formal notification from DE to this effect.

The TDoE informed that there were only three days left of examinations from the main timetable and the reserve series commenced on Monday 20 June 2022. She noted that there are some issues around resourcing for the reserve series.

Mr A McAfee, Business Manager, Multimedia Learning Resources & Engagement (MLRE) confirmed a detailed communications plan is in place. He confirmed the team are currently working on a guide for statement of results and that Mr John Trueman (Temporary Business Manager, Qualifications) has provided a lot of training so that learners are both aware and prepared for issue of results. He also confirmed that the CCEA communications team has been in contact with NICCY and ParentKind for feedback on the guide.

The MLRE also confirmed that the team are preparing arrangements for visits to centres on results day as well as queries from the Ministers announcement on 2023 Awarding.

The Chair asked if there are any urgent matters that need to be flagged to council members. The MLRE said that there are concerns over comparisons with England and Wales and the need to avoid disparity.

The HoR spoke of last years results and expressed concern around centre grades due to the return of public examinations.

It was confirmed the Department of Education are content with the draft advice from CCEA on 2023 examinations.

Mrs K O'Hare spoke of lost learning and asked members to consider if CCEA should provide advice not only on GCES's and A Levels but also on research on younger learners who have lost learning in the years before sitting the exam. She emphasised the impact particularly on STEM education as well as languages. The Chair advised this issue should be taken forward

by CCEA officers via the CCEA Education Committee. The DoFCS said that there is a need to clarify responsibility for this with the Department of Education.

Miss M Corrigan expressed concern that there is a misconception that money will fix all of the issues in regard to 2023 examinations. One of the main problems is getting the appropriate human resources to start working on the issues. The Chair summarised other significant risks around the 2023 examinations including:

1. Advances information
2. Resources regarding contractors
3. Back up papers and the ability to access these if needed.
4. Communication with stakeholders when required.

The Chair indicated that all of these issues were contained in the advice and CCEA officers and departmental officials are working positively to mitigate the risks.

Mrs A Kingsley asked if CCEA is aware of what other AO's are planning in reference to advanced information. The TDoE said that CCEA are in discussion with AO's and have been preparing for scenario's. They are aware of some of the failure situation which tend to be mostly centre based errors.

The Chair asked if members are content to progress with the draft 2023 advice. This was proposed by Mrs K O'Hare and seconded by Mrs S Sellars.

*Mr A McAfee (MLRE) & Ms A Madden (Manager, MarComms) left the meeting*

## **8 Audit and Risk Committee**

### ***Chairs Report***

Mrs C Fitzsimons provided a brief verbal update on the Audit and Risk Committee held on 26 April 2022. She commented on the very positive year end accounts and the committee's intention to bring forward Corporate Risk number eight to the Council Committee for review on risk status.

### **'Failure to effectively manage the Corporate Governance and management arrangements in CCEA'**

It was agreed that this would be discussed at a closed session at the end of the meeting as this risk lies in the ownership of the Council.

### ***Annual Report & Accounts***

The DoFCS gave a verbal update to the members on the Annual Report and Accounts in that they have been approved without any major changes required. She informed that the audit started on 16 May and was completed on 09 June 2022.

The DoFCS also confirmed that the RttCWG has been received on 17 June from NIAO via the Department of Education.

Mrs C Fitzsimons commented there were recommendations made in 2021 as to when the accounts would be available to the Committee for comment. Improving the timetable for when the accounts had been issued had helped the approval process this year. She questioned if the length was a requirement and if it could be more concise. The DoFCS confirmed the structure of the Annual Report is a requirement but the content could be looked at again.

Mrs S Sellars thanked Mr J Daly, Business Manager Finance (BMF) for getting the papers to council members on time as well as the finance team for replying to queries so quickly.

The Chair asked members if they were content to agree the Annual Report and Accounts , and this was proposed by Mrs S Sellars and seconded by Mr Brian Wilson.

The Chair also expressed this thanks to the finance team and the DoFCS for the reports.

### ***The Corporate Risk Register – June 2022***

The DoFCS confirmed that the June 2022 Corporate Risk Register was discussed at the last ARAC meeting held on Tuesday 21 June 2022 and that Council have been provided with a summary of concerns:

**CR2:** Failure to ensure adequate processes and resources (including human, physical and financial) to support the provision of quality services and products (including digital solutions) across all CCEA functions (including managing third party dependencies).

The DoFCS confirmed that this has now been escalated to probable following resourcing concerns over external posts.

**CR5:** Failure to comply with Governance arrangements including data, data services, cyber security, GCOR, Quality Standards, Health and Safety, Equality and HR Legislation. The DoFCS confirmed that the risk has increased due to fears over cyber security during the examination period as well as the ICEO concerns on governance.

**CR8:** Failure to effectively manage the Corporate Governance and management arrangements in CCEA

The DoFCS brought this to the attention of council members as was previously mentioned by Mrs C Fitzsimmons in her verbal update. Mrs S Sellars agreed that this would be discussed in a closed session at the end of the meeting.

## **9. Regulation**

An update paper on the Exam Procedures Review Service (EPRS) ToR for 2022 was provided to council members for approval.

The HoR explained that the EPRS is a service offered by the three regulators (Ofqual, QW and CCEA Regulation) to consider whether an awarding organisation has followed its own processes and secured the outcomes required by the General Conditions of Recognition in relation to the award of a relevant qualification. Each regulator has their own version, but the principal is the same.

The HoR confirmed that CCEA's EPRS ToR have been sent to Legal for appraisal and have been approved by the Regulation Committee. They now await council approval before uploading to the CCEA website for information to centres and learners. Council members were asked to agree the ToR and this was proposed by Mrs K O'Hare and seconded by Mrs C Fitzsimmons.

## **10. A.O.B**

The Chair invited Mrs S Sellars to say a few words about CCEA's boardroom apprentice Claire Greenwood who has now completed her apprenticeship.

Sarah extended her thanks to Ms Greenwood and also to Mrs P Leitch who has helped her during the apprenticeship.

The new boardroom apprentice has now been confirmed as Mr Nathan Ludlow who will join meetings from September.

#### **11. Date of Next Meeting**

**Council Briefing: 25 August 2022 at 1.30**

**Council Meeting Thursday 29 September 2022 at 1.30pm**

**A closed session with council members followed the conclusion of normal business.**

*Mrs L Scott (DoFCS, Ms A Swann (TDoE), Mrs S King (HoR), Mr J Daly (BMF) left the meeting.*