

CCEA

COUNCIL

Minutes of the one hundred and fifty-ninth meeting of Council held on Thursday 25 May 2023 at 1.30 pm via hybrid arrangements.

Present: Mr T O'Reilly (Chair) Dr L Caul
Professor P Hanna Mrs P Leitch
Mrs D O'Connor Mrs A Kingsley
Mrs C Fitzsimons Mr B Wilson
Ms P Slevin Mr H McCarthy

CCEA Executive

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

In attendance :

Mr R Caldwell (DE Observer)
Mr A Stevens (N/V)
Mr C Coffey (N/V)

Introduction

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting.

Apologies

An apology was received from Mrs K O'Hare.

Conflict of Interests

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

Chair's Business

Chief Executive's Report to Council

C/159/1

The Chief Executive advised on current issues in particular, the commencement of the summer examination series, and provision of additional funding for examiner payments. He confirmed that, a revised 2023/24 budget had NOW been allocated by DE. He recorded his thanks to his team for engaging directly with DE and to Mr Ray Caldwell from the sponsor branch for all their work.

The Chief Executive also updated members on the extensive range of engagement and meetings conducted since the last meeting. Members were content with the information provided.

The Chair advised that in addition to the 3 recent resignations, 4 council members' terms of office would end in October 2023. He confirmed that De were seeking to have CCEA listed as an organisation for which SOS could make appointments in the absence of a local Minister. He confirmed any recruitment process would be in accordance with advice provided by the Office for Public Appointments.

Council discussed the criteria for recruiting members in terms of breadth of knowledge, stakeholder and different age groups, as well as experts from Education (primary and assessment), Finance and Analytics backgrounds. The Chair confirmed that these would all be taken into consideration when drafting the documentation.

Council members suggested an increase in membership of Council given the wide-ranging responsibilities of CCEA.

Members approved the reconstituted Committee Membership to commence on 1 June 2023. This was formally proposed by Mrs Patricia Slevin and seconded by Mrs Anne Kingsley.

Correspondence

Members noted the correspondence received from the last meeting.

Ratification of Minutes of Previous Meetings

Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 March 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2023 were proposed by Mrs Paula Leitch 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 updated members on the status of the Action points. For those still in progress, these would be reported on at the September Council meeting.

The full schedule of Council and Committee meetings would be presented at the June Council meeting.

Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 April 2023

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 24 April 2023 were proposed by Mrs Anne Kingsley and proposed by Professor Phil Hanna. A copy would be made available for the Chair to sign.

AUDIT

Chair's Report of ARAC Meeting : 19 May 2023

The Chair gave a report on the main items discussed at the most recent meeting and also thanked the Director of Finance & Corporate Services (DoFCS) and Financial Services Manager (FM) for the papers provided.

Corporate Risk Register 2023/24

C/159/3

The DoFCS updated Council on the redevelopment and reformatting of the CRR which was aligned to CCEA's draft Corporate Plan. The CRR consisted of three elements.

- CCEA Risk Register template – gives detail of risks, root causes and mitigations as planned.
- CCEA CR Heat Map
- CCEA CR Dashboard

A detailed report on the 8 Corporate Risks together with an overview of the residual risks identified on the dashboard had been included in the papers to ARAC..

The DoFCS reminded Council that the CRR is designed to provide assurance that robust controls were in place to help manage risk.

Members were content with the information provided.

Draft Internal Audit Plan 2023/24

C/159/4

The DoFCS advised that the Draft Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24 was considered by the ARAC on 19 May 2023 and the document was being presented to Council for information.

She confirmed that KPMG were the outgoing auditors and discussions were ongoing with the Education Authority (EA) to avail of a shared Internal Audit function. Once agreed, the new Internal Audit team would review the plan alongside the CRR.

Members noted the information provided.

FINANCE

Draft Summary Finance Report as at 31 March 2023

C/159/5

The Financial Services Manager (FM) presented the detail contained in the draft finance report as at 31 March 2023, and confirmed that the final year end position would be reported to the Councils June meeting.

The Finance Manager clarified the movement in relation to the pension contribution and members were content with the detail of the explanation provided.

The Chair commended the DoFCS, the FM and teams for the significant amount of work carried out throughout the year to achieve this position.

2023/24 Budget

The DoFCS confirmed that DE had made some additional funding available to support CCEA's statutory responsibilities as well as provision for increased examiner fees. The DoFCS confirmed that a financial plan would be submitted to DE based on the revised budget allocation and assured Council that they would be kept informed of pressures as they arise throughout the 2023/24 year.

The DoFCS confirmed that funding of £980K had been allocated by DfE to Regulation in respect of Vocational Qualifications.

The Chief Executive confirmed he was content with progress made since April. He highlighted the importance of a full review of CCEA's budget scheduled to commence in September.

The Chair confirmed his understanding that a draft financial plan would be presented to the next Finance Committee (8 June).

Members discussed the financial position and stressed the importance of CCEA fulfilling its statutory obligations. The Chief Executive assured members that the organisation now had sufficient resources to complete the summer examinations series, however he stressed that there remained challenges that would need addressed during the year.

The Chair placed on record Council's appreciation to the Chief Executive, DoFCS, FM, CCEA's teams across the organisation and to DE officials for their assistance.

Re-ordering of Agenda

The Chair re-ordered the agenda to take Item 9: Regulation at this point in the meeting.

REGULATION

COVID-19 Response : Longitudinal Evaluation of Assessment & Awarding Arrangements for Vocational Qualifications in Northern Ireland 2020-22 ***C/159/6***

The Chair introduced this item.

The Head of Regulation (HoR) drew attention to the paper provided, in particular the Executive Summary and Conclusions. She advised on the methodology used in conducting the evaluation and was pleased to report that DfE (Department for the Economy) was satisfied with the content of the document. (The full report would be available for members on request).

The Chair commended the Regulation Team in securing funding for 2023/24 and for all of the work completed in what has been a challenging year.

The Chair reverted to the original running order of the Agenda.

CORPORATE

The Chair welcomed Mr Andrew McAfee (Business Manager Multimedia, Marketing & Communications) and Ms Ruth Hobson (Portfolio Manager) to the meeting.

Communications Strategy – Summer 2023

The Multi-Media/MarComms Business Manager provided an overview of the work completed to date on the Summer 2023 Examinations series. He also commended the Portfolio Manager and her team for all the work completed on the various communications strategies throughout the year.

The Portfolio Manager gave a comprehensive presentation on the Communications Strategy to support the understanding and preparation for the Summer 2023 Examinations and any mitigating actions (prioritised in terms of risk). (A copy of the presentation was provided to members' for information).

Members welcomed the engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and with other education bodies (including children, young people and parents) in developing the communications messages needed to ensure full understanding of how the examinations would work this year.

The Chair commended the detail provided and confirmed that Council had full confidence in the communications methodology and thanked all officers involved in the development of the content of the strategy. He asked that members be kept informed should any issues arise.

EXAMINATIONS

Examinations Series : Update on the Agreed Approach to Awarding Summer 2023 ***C/159/7***

The temporary Director of Examinations reported that no issues had arisen since the start of the series. She confirmed that the increased markers' fees did appear to be attracting the numbers required to mark the full complement of papers.

The temporary DoE was pleased to report that:

- Permission has been granted by the CEO to recruit resources to ensure the RMA's can be completed successfully.
- The versatility shown by staff in terms of their willingness to assist with the awards and assured members that adequate training and support would be provided to those new to the process.
- Various training events for providing advice to examiners and markers as well as provision of information to school Principals to ensure there is a full understanding of the processes being followed in this first year of full return to public examinations.

The Chair commended the temporary DoE on the progress made whilst recognising there remained challenges to be addressed.

The Chair also understood work was ongoing between the AO and Regulation to finalise the rules to ensure Councils approach to awarding standards is achieved.

Any Other Business

None identified by the Secretariat.

Below the Line Business

For Approval : Lessons Learned Report 2022

C/159/8

The Chair drew attention to the Lessons Learned Report 2022. He sought and received approval for the report which was formally proposed by Mr Hugh McCarthy and seconded by Mr Brian Wilson.

Date of Next Meeting

The Chair confirmed that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 22 June 2023 at 1.30 pm. The agenda for the meeting would primarily be approval of the Annual Report & Accounts and sign off on the Business Schedule 2023/24.

He thanked members and officers for their input into the meeting.

This concluded the business of the Council.