

## CCEA

## COUNCIL

Minutes of the one hundred and forty-seventh meeting of Council held on Thursday 25 November 2021 at 1.30 pm via MS Teams.

**Present :** Mr T O'Reilly (Chair) Miss M Corrigan  
Dr L Caul Mrs K O'Hare  
Mrs C Fitzsimons Professor P Hanna  
Mrs P Leitch Ms P Slevin  
Mr B Wilson Mrs A Kingsley  
Mr H McCarthy Mrs S Sellars

Miss M Farragher (Interim 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)  
Mrs S King (Head of Regulation)  
Mr J Daly (Financial Services Manager)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)  
Ms Clare Greenwood (Boardroom Apprentice)

### Introduction

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting.

### 1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs Donna O'Connor and Mr Rob Smyth.

### 2 Conflict of Interests

None identified.

### 3 Chair's Business

#### ***Mechanism for Electing Council Deputy Chairperson***

***C/147/1***

The Chair drew attention to the information provided in paper C/147/1 which proposed a way forward for election of a deputy Chairperson. Members were content with the mechanism and proposal.

He asked members for expressions of interests to the Manager of the Council Secretariat by the deadline set out in the paper.

#### *Update on 2022 Examinations and Contingencies*

The Chair reminded members that Council had considered and agreed advice previously in terms of Standards for 2022 and Examination Contingencies should they proceed, be partially or fully cancelled for 2022.

The Interim Chief Executive advised that following a meeting with the Minister on 19 October, it was confirmed that the Standards advice had been accepted by the Minister, and principals informed with no negative feedback received. This was welcomed.

In relation to the Contingencies element of the advice the discussion focussed on missed component calculations and reserve papers. Following the briefing, a significant amount of technical detail has been provided on missed component calculations and meetings with University representatives and the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) have been held. All were successful with stakeholders supporting the missed component calculations should apply in 2021/22 with further advice from OSR on how they are applied. A further briefing with the Minister will be arranged in due course.

The Interim Chief Executive advised that a decision was required from DE on AS students who don't continue to A2 in that they would be awarded a centre determined grade with an \* to indicate the difference.

She confirmed that work continued with DE to prepare guidance in the event of examinations being cancelled in 2022. Legal advice obtained on the alternative assessment arrangements suggested that the guidance should be kept at a high level with a view to updating should the need arise.

Members sought and received clarification on a number of issues and were content with the explanations/assurances received.

The Chair thanked the Interim Chief Executive for the update.

#### **4 Correspondence**

The Chair drew attention to the following correspondence:

- Assessment and Award of Vocational Qualifications in 2021/22 Academic Year
- One Year A Level Awards 2021/22
- 2021/22 Resource Budget : Irish Medium Language Acquisition : Impact of COVID on Learning – Interventions
- Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing – CCEA Budget 2021/22
- Nomination of Ex-Officio Member to Interim NI Skills Council
- Arrangements for Candidates who miss Examinations due to illness – Contingencies 2021/22
- DE Corporate Plan – Social Market Research.

#### **5 Ratification of Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 30 September 2021**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday 30 September 2021 were proposed by Mrs Kathleen O'Hare and seconded by Mrs Sarah Sellars 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 status of the action points. Updates were provided on the following :

- *Commissioning Letters of Advice* : discussions have taken place with DE in regards to operational advice and a further opportunity would be taken to raise the matter at the GAR meeting in December.

- *Regulation Committee Co-optee* : NISRA would be approached (in the coming months) re statistical expert.
- *GCSE Maths & GCE Languages* : the Chair confirmed that the matters had been closed out.
- *Examinations – Appeals Process* : A paper would be presented to the January 2022 Council meeting.

#### *Re-order of Agenda Items*

At this point in the meeting the agenda was re-ordered to accommodate the Education Committee Chair's Report to Council

#### *Chair's Report: Education Committee Meeting – 12 October 2021*

The Chair of the Education Committee reported on the main items discussed at the meeting on 12 October. She wished to commend the quality of the presentations delivered under the Monitoring of the Curriculum Programme item.

The Chair said she wished to appoint a Vice-Chair for the Education Committee and asked that this be progressed as per the process agreed for the election of Vice-Chair of Council.

*The agenda resumed its normal running order at this point.*

## **6 Transition of Young People into Careers (14-19) Project**

The Chair welcomed Claire McClelland, Project Manager of the joint Department for the Economy and Department of Education Transition of Young People into Careers (14-19) Project.

Ms McClelland gave a detailed presentation on the development of a more strategic approach to the 14-19 Education and Training. She outlined the background to the project and gave an overview of:

- Project Workstreams/ Development of Baseline
- Stakeholder Engagement and identification of key challenges of each workstream
- Key Challenges which included consistency of careers provision; adequate funding and resourcing; teacher training; curriculum delivery; progress and pathways; and issues post-16.
- Outline of the Draft Framework and Action Plan

She confirmed that the Project Board had signed off the Framework and Action Plan which was currently under consideration by the Permanent Secretaries for DfE and DE in advance of being presented to Ministers. Any agreement would then require to be endorsed by the Executive .

Following presentations to both Education and Economy Committees (of the Executive) the Framework and Action Plan will be published and implementation.

The Chair thanked Ms McClelland for her informative presentation.

Members welcomed the development and progress to date. Clarification was sought and received across a range of areas. Members were content with the explanations provided.

The Interim Chief Executive added her thanks to that of the Chair for an excellent presentation. She confirmed that she and other CCEA colleagues had participated in the project board. She welcomed CCEA's involvement and said that the strategic aims of the project underpinned CCEA's future work plans. She assured members that CCEA would assist as appropriate in taking forward the actions.

The Chair said that this would be one of the key areas for change in Education in the medium to long term. He asked Clare if she could provide an update on progress to the Council over the next 12 months.

Ms McClelland left the meeting at this point.

## **7 Education**

### ***'Fair Start' – report from the Programme Board***

***C/148/2***

The Interim Director of Curriculum & Assessment advised that this was one of the main drivers in Education which has provided CCEA with opportunities to be involved in taking the work forward.

She drew attention to the detail provided in paper C/148/2 and gave an overview of the interim report of the Expert Panel on Education Underachievement including progress in taking forward the key actions for CCEA (page 4 of the paper), with 2 completed.

Members noted 47 actions were recommended by the Expert Panel to be progressed across several government departments.

The Chair welcomed the progress to date. He confirmed that Noel Purdy, Chair of the Expert Panel would attend the informal Council briefing in February to discuss the Fair Start report.

Members welcomed the interim report and its findings which highlighted issues which would require further discussion at Council.

Clarification was sought and received on a number of matters and members were content with explanations provided.

The interim Director of C&A suggested that once 14-19 has been confirmed and ratified, an updated paper/presentation to show similarities in terms of approach across the initiatives would be drafted for members.

The Chair agreed that Council should take more time to consider and debate the findings of the Fair Start report.

A Council member wished to commend CCEA on the successful use of MS teams for meetings, however, would welcome an alternative mechanism for progressing matters.

The Chair concurred with members on the challenges with virtual meetings of Council and its committees and said that a suitable mechanism of facilitating a broader discussion with Council on Fair Start would be progressed.

The Chair thanked the interim Director for C&A for her input and that Fair Start should be kept on the Council's agenda moving forward.

The interim Director of C&A drew attention to the information provided in paper C/147/3 and gave an overview of the aims and objectives of the Independent Review of Education, including the core strands (Strand 1 and Strand 2 – page 2 of the paper).

The Terms of Reference were provided at Appendix 1.

*Verbal Update : report from introductory meeting – 18 November 2021*

The Interim Chief Executive confirmed that the meeting with the panel was at an early stage of their work. She outlined the content of the presentation given to the independent review panel and commented focussed in particular on GCSE's, their fitness for purpose and whether or not a different type of qualification was required. Assessment of skills was also discussed.

She suggested that Council members' views would be welcome on the core strands so this could be fed back to the panel.

Further detail will be provided on support available on curriculum and the Future of Qualifications Report (recently presented to the Education Committee), and views from the Regulation Committee and Council would also be welcome.

The Chair indicated that the review panel was in 'discovery mode' until March 2022, conducting meetings with a wide range of stakeholders, identifying issues and research papers. At the end of this phase they will start to consider emerging themes.

The initial engagement was useful, however a further meeting of the panel would be welcomed. Council will be provided with the information that was issued to the review panel in advance of the development days scheduled for December.

Members noted the information provided.

## **8 Regulation**

***Chair's Report : Regulation Committee Meeting 21 October 2021***

The Chair of the Committee was pleased to confirm that co-optees from QUB and SQA had attended the meeting on 21 October. She advised that the meeting was productive and outlined the range of items discussed and considered.

***CCEA Proposals on Development of Vocational, Applied, General Qualifications*** **C/147/4**

The Head of Regulation (HoR) gave a detailed overview on the various factors impacting on the supply of alternative qualifications to GCSE and A Levels in Irish medium. She outlined the risks of a non-NI provider and drew attention to the proposal for CCEA to develop applied, general qualifications which will provide alternative provision and also ensure Irish medium provision for these types of qualifications.

Members were content with the information provided and were satisfied that work progress on the basis of the proposal presented.

## 9 Audit

### ***Chair's Report : Audit & Risk Assurance Meeting 7 September 2021***

In the absence of the Chair of the Committee, Mrs Carol Fitzsimons gave a report on the main items discussed and considered at the ARAC on 7 September.

#### ***Corporate Risk Register Summary : November 2021***

***C/147/5***

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services (DoFCS) advised that the CRR had been reviewed and outlined the revision to CR1a in light of a successful post-results service. All other risks remain unchanged.

Members were content with the information provided.

## 10 Finance

### ***Budget Update & Finance Report as at 31 October 2021***

***C/147/6***

The DoFCS drew attention to the detail of the report and highlighted the challenging financial situation CCEA continued to operate under moving into the last quarter of the financial year.

She confirmed that the invoices to schools have been issued offering the 75% discount.

Work continues on the January monitoring round with ongoing engagement with budget holders on risks and easements for the remainder of the financial year.

Members were content with the information provided.

#### ***Statement of Financial Position as at 31 October 2021***

Members noted the information provided.

#### ***Corporate***

### ***CCEA Policies and Processes for Handling Complaints***

***C/147/7***

The DoFCS referred to the information provided and gave some background to the matter for the benefit of members.

She outlined the recommendations arising from the NIPSO report which had been accepted by CCEA and are in progress, including how a complaint can be raised by CCEA and what does and does not constitute a complaint.

A member asked if the information and learning arising from the complaints process at a high level is being brought to Council to provide it with assurances. The Interim Chief Executive suggested that an overview of complaints would be provided to the relevant committee on an annual basis.

The Chair concurred with this suggestion and asked if a paper be presented to Council in the New Year on the approach to Appeals for 2022.

A Council member suggested that in preparing the information could an explanation for 'What is a Complaint' and 'What is not a Complaint' to be at the beginning of any documentation prepared for stakeholders.

A Council member referred to those who had been involved in appeals. He suggested that moving forward a briefing on 'what is within CCEA's scope' and what is not should be given to the panel to ensure they can deal with what is directly relevant to CCEA and nothing outside the organisation's remit.

## **11 Any Other Business**

A Council Member wished to raise an item and asked Council officers, apart from the Interim Chief Executive to leave as it was an employment related issue in relation to CCEA's accountability in regards to staffing matters.

The Council member sought clarification on the current position of the interim directors appointed in Curriculum & Assessment and Qualifications.

The Council member expressed his view that this was not a decision for Council and that this rested with the interim Chief Executive based on the information provided at the On Board Training provided in relation to the separate roles of the Chair and Chief Executive. His understanding that staffing issues was not the Councils' role.

The Interim Chief Executive explained the position of the interim posts were both temporary in that these were required to give additional support to the Executive Team and recognised the concern at having temporary positions for a considerable length of times. She also outlined the complexities following the completion of VES exercises and reporting compliance to DE.

She also referred to other issues that required review at Executive Team level and suggested that perhaps discussions would be taking place with the Grade 3 official at DE in the coming weeks/months. She would welcome the opportunity to put forward a structure on what is required to support the Executive Team once relevant discussions had taken place.

The Chair clarified his understanding of the responsibility of the Council in terms of staffing at the senior level. He concurred with the Interim Chief Executive that discussions were required on an appropriate future senior staffing structure with Council, DE, the Interim Chief Executive and Director of Finance & Corporate Services.

The Council member wished to express his concern about Council members being held accountable for any matter that was not specifically its role.

## **12 Date of Next Meeting**

The Chair confirmed that the Council briefing scheduled for Thursday 16 December 2021 was stood down. The next meeting of Council was scheduled for Thursday 27 January 2022 at 1.30 pm.

