

CCEA

COUNCIL

Minutes of the one hundred and forty-eighth meeting of Council held on Thursday 27 January 2022 at 1.30 pm via MS Teams.

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

Miss M Farragher (Interim Chief Executive)
Mrs L Scott (Director of Finance & Corporate Services)
Ms A Swann (temporary Director of Examinations)
Mrs S King (Head of Regulation)
Mr J Daly (Financial Services Manager)
Mr D Wilson (Business Assurance Manager – Item 8)

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 C Fitzsimons, Mr H McCarthy and Mrs D O'Connor. Mr R Smyth indicated he had to leave the meeting at 2pm.

2 Conflict of Interests

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

3 Chair's Business

Boardroom Apprentice Application 2022/23

The Chair confirmed that an application would go forward for consideration for CCEA to host a Boardroom Apprentice for 2022/23. Members were content for the application to proceed.

Ms Greenwood agreed to provide feedback on her experience at CCEA Council and its Committee as a Boardroom Apprentice at a future meeting.

Ratification of Council Deputy Chairperson

The Chair formally confirmed that Mrs Sarah Sellars had been elected as Deputy Chair for Council.

The Interim Chief Executive (CEO) referred to the report and highlighted the range of initiatives and work underway across the organisation, and updated members on the following:

- Partnership Agreement with DE – establishment of a new set of arrangements using a risk-based approach to replace the Management Statement/Financial Memorandum (MSFM) and suggested that it may be helpful for DE to update Council on developments at a future meeting.
- Establishment of Digital and Modern Languages Programme Boards with excellent representation across the sectors on both.
- CCEA is representative on the new NI Skills Council – updates will be provided as appropriate.
- Curriculum Support – good progress with Initial Teacher Training Providers and also with EA to form strategic relationships to ensure all CCEA's support work is utilised to best effect. This will come forward to Education Committee as appropriate.
- Regulation – significant amount of work ongoing with DfE on Traineeships and exploring mechanism for future funding arrangements. These issues will also come forward to Regulation and Finance Committees for consideration.

A Council member suggested that discussion on the partnership agreement could include a small group of Council members together with officers to take this work forward. The Interim CEO welcomed this suggestion.

Clarification was sought and received on the strategies in place for candidates and parents to ensure they are fully aware of the arrangements for 2022. The Interim CEO outlined the range of work ongoing to develop information for student and parents, to include social media campaigns and CCEA website.

She confirmed that CCEA would write to all centres at the beginning of February and separate guidance would also be provided for students and teachers on the arrangements for 2022.

A Council member suggested that perhaps the Principals' Group could share the messages to maximum effect to ensure maximum coverage as possible to include parents and students. The Interim CEO agreed to take this on board.

The Chair thanked the Interim CEO for her report.

Re-ordering of Agenda

The agenda was reordered at this point in the meeting to accommodate Item 8 Audit.

8 Audit

Chair's Report Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) – 11 January 2022

The Chair of the Committee gave a report on the main items discussed and considered at the ARAC on 11 January 2022.

Corporate Risk Register Summary : December 2021

C/148/8

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services (DoFCS) drew attention to the summary of the December CRR and confirmed the 8 Corporate Risks remained unchanged. She updated members

on the risk environment in relation to CR2, CR5, CR6 and CR8 and advised that mitigations in place had reduced the risks in these areas.

The DoFCS advised that the CRR had been discussed at the ARAC meeting and confirmed that the Executive Team continued to reflect on the way in which risks are managed given the experiences over the last 2 years. A revised CRR would be presented to the ARAC at its April meeting.

Members noted that risks around Examinations and Qualifications, Assessment and Regulation remained relatively high with residual risks of 20. She confirmed that DE were updated as issues arise.

Members were content with the information provided.

4 Correspondence

The Chair drew attention to the DE correspondence provided for members' information.

5 Ratification of Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 25 November 2021

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 November 2021 were proposed by Mrs Kathleen O'Hare and seconded by Mr Rob Smyth as a true and accurate record. A copy would be made available for the Chair to sign.

Action Points

Members noted the status of the action points.

Vice-Chair for Education Committee

The Chair of the Education Committee sought and received confirmation that the vice-chair of the Education Committee would be a Council member.

6 Education

Education Committee Chair's Report : Curriculum Symposium held on 18 January 2022

The Chair of the Education Committee gave an overview of the Curriculum Symposium (a virtual event) held on 18 January and attended by over 160 delegates across the Education Sector. Stakeholders were well represented however further work was required to increase participation from the FE sector. She suggested that this be reported back to Belfast Met.

The event had enhanced CCEA's reputation as a key organisation in the Education Sector and commended the quality and excellence of the presentations, videos and short films presented. The keynote speech was delivered by Professor Tony Gallagher with additional sessions from Professor Graham Donaldson, Mark Huddleston and the closing speech from Mrs Faustina Graham, Chief Inspector (ETI).

She wished to formally thank the following CCEA officers who were responsible for various aspects of the event :

Marcomms : Joanne Scofield; Gemma Dickey; Angela Madden, Mark Higgins.

Multi-media: Jennifer Bill; Conor McAfee; Jim Smyth; Christine McVeigh; Andrew McAfee.

ICT : Jonathan Cushenan and Alan Lavery

Research & Statistics : James Millen

Education Team : Esther Martin; Nicola Woodside; John Trueman; Aileen Harris; Teresa Robb; Lyn Lynch; Ryan McAuley; Jane Fitzgerald; Corinne Latham; Margaret Farragher.

She was extremely proud to be involved in CCEA and asked that thanks be passed on to the named individuals. A summary of the symposium

A Council member concurred with the quality of the presentations and suggested that time be set aside for reflection and discussion on approaches to education and other issues that required further debate by Council going forward. The Interim Chief Executive agreed that it was important not to lose the good work arising from the symposium and suggested the next steps be followed up at the next meeting of the Education Committee.

A Council member agreed and referred to the Council development days (pre-Covid) and suggested that some of the topics covered at the symposium be kept on the agenda for when face to face meetings are resumed between Council and CCEA officers.

The Chair commended the event and recognised that there are lessons to be learned with a number of good points arising from the symposium which could be taken forward by part of the workplan for the Education Committee.

He wished to formally record on behalf of Council, thanks to Mrs Kathleen O'Hare, Chair of the Education Committee, members of the Education Committee; CCEA officers, in particular the Interim Chief Executive: Miss Margaret Farragher; Mrs Corinne Latham; Miss Amanda Swann and the CCEA officers on a very successful event.

He suggested that further thought be given to how CCEA communicates with the wider Education sector building on current engagement activities with stakeholders.

Mr Rob Smyth left the meeting at this point.

For Information

Fair Start Update

C/148/2

The Interim Chief Executive introduced this item and advised that the paper outlined ways in which CCEA can support the action plan. She highlighted the need to work collaboratively across the organisation to ensure the actions allocated to CCEA can be progressed as efficiently and effectively as possible within current resources (budget). She welcomed the overlap with the 14-19 action plan as positive development in terms of commitment across government departments to help ensure the actions progress.

A draft version of the 14-19 Action Plan has been received and will be presented to Education Committee and Council at the next appropriate meeting.

The Interim Chief Executive advised that she had attended the first meeting of the Fair Start Programme Board and reassured members that a significant amount of progress was being made on some of the other actions that had been allocated funding.

The temporary Director of Qualifications drew attention to the detail of the paper and provided an overview on work completed on and proposals for exploring and development in relation to the 3 actions allocated to CCEA, in particular:

- 3.2/3.3ii. CCEA to progress development of its own diagnostic assessment tools for use in all schools (including Irish Medium) from KS1 to KS3 with sample data to be used for system level measures including an agreed “value added” measure.
- 3.2/3.3iii. Refresh of the assessment of skills and knowledge in English, mathematics and ICT in a way which supports subsequent progression; and
- 3.4iv. Refresher training for teachers in the design principles behind the NI curriculum including play-based approaches at Foundation Stage and development approaches in the Early Years and advice for parents.

Clarification was sought and received on allocation of funding in respect of general and vocational qualifications. The Interim Chief Executive confirmed that discussions would continue on the future funding of CCEA by DfE.

It was suggested that TPL, Vocational Education and Curriculum Support for FE come forward to a future meeting of the Education Committee.

Independent Review of Education

C/148/3

The Interim Chief Executive wished to place on record her thanks to Mrs Corinne Latham for her work on this draft report. She drew attention to the detail of the document which had been developed following the initial meeting with the Review Panel on 18 November 2021. The report continued to be refined as it reflected on the questions outlined in the paper.

She advised that the panel were conducting informal sessions across the education sector and suggested that it may be appropriate for Council to invite the panel to attend a future meeting to discuss matters further.

A member stated that the questions should be addressed by the Council under advisement by the staff and concurred that the panel should be invited to meet with Council and discuss matters.

The Interim Chief Executive advised that the panel have a keen interest in CCEA's role in vocational qualifications and agreed that it would be beneficial for Council to meet with the panel.

The Chair confirmed that this paper did not constitute formal advice and agreed that it would be appropriate to have a discussion with the panel on the content and how we provide a more formal position for the independent review.

It was suggested that it would be a valuable exercise for all members of Council to have discussions with professional staff to understand various positions set out in the paper. The Chair agreed to take this on board and facilitate these discussions when possible.

Members noted the information provided.

For consideration/approval

Draft Advice : A Hybrid Approach to Awarding in Summer 2022

C/148/4

The Chair advised that the draft advice had been issued to DE pending Council approval.

The temporary Director of Qualifications drew attention to the detail of the advice and advised that this approach was being currently being discussed across the jurisdictions, however, was mindful that it may not materialise as developments continued to be monitored.

A member referred to the challenges over the past 2 years and stated that the risks identified were significant and would bring significant risk in terms of having to run two processes and manage messages out into the system and it was important to note that this was not an ideal option for the summer series.

Members were content with the information provided. Formally approved by Dr Les Caul and seconded by Mrs Anne Kingsley.

Examinations and Assessment Appeals

C/148/5

The temporary Director of Qualifications reminded members that this was an action from a previous Council meeting taking on board lessons learned from previous appeals processes from 2020. She spoke to the detail of the paper and summarised the recommendations for Stage 3 of the Appeals Process and preferred option.

It was proposed that the preferred option (Option 1) would be to remain within the JCQ Guidelines and continue with the Appeals Panel consisting of Council Members and an Independent Panel Member.

The Chair confirmed that members were content with the recommendation proposed : preferred **Option 1**, for formal recording purposes.

The temporary Director of Qualifications left the meeting at this point.

7 Regulation

Retrospective Approval

Draft Advice to DfE on VTQ Alternative Arrangements if Examinations are Cancelled

C/148/6

Members were content to retrospectively approve the advice for formal recording purposes. Proposed by Mrs Kathleen O'Hare and seconded by Ms Patricia Slevin.

For information

Future of Vocational Qualifications : High Level Costing of Options Draft Report ***C/148/7***

The Interim Chief Executive introduced this item and provided some contextual information on the Future of Qualifications for Northern Ireland project commissioned by the Department for the Economy (DfE). She confirmed that a desk top exercise had been carried out in terms of providing the high level indicative costings to inform DfE to enable them to take forward an economic appraisal exercise with a specialised, qualified body.

The Chair confirmed that Council was not being asked to approve the advice contained in the draft report rather Council was being asked to note the report had been forwarded by DfE.

The Interim Chief Executive assured members that this work had been managed by CCEA Regulation colleagues with no involvement from Corporate or Awarding colleagues and stated that

it would not be within CCEA's remit (nor would there be any expertise) to conduct the economic appraisal.

The Head of Regulation (HoR) drew attention to the detail of the report. She advised that the paper outlined the approach taken to estimate the costings and the outcomes of investigations, using approximations of similar reform activities in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in the UK, and using scaling and the Barnett formula as a guide where appropriate. It also sets out the variables, caveats and assumptions that have informed any costings.

She welcomed recognition by DfE that funding was not only required for qualifications development but across other areas in the sector to facilitate these changes.

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

The temporary Director of Qualifications rejoined the meeting.

Professor Phil Hanna left the meeting at this point.

9 Finance & Corporate

For Information

Finance Report : December 2021

C/148/9

The DoFCS drew attention to the information provided and reported an underspend of £102K (0.7%) at this time. She confirmed that plans were in place to achieve and deliver services within budget at year end.

She referred to the Chief Executive Summary and confirmed that budget planning was underway with budgetholders for 2022/23.

Members were content with the information provided.

Draft CCEA Business Plan 2022/23

C/148/10

The DoFCS introduced this item and provided an overview of the draft business plan. She confirmed that a considerable amount of work had been completed to develop measures for consideration.

The Chair observed that there was some work to be carried out in terms of outcome-based accountability. The DoFCS referred to the additional column provided that will measure outcomes, however, stated that this would be a significant exercise to ensure achievement was accurately tracked.

Members were content to approve the draft for release to DE.

Corporate

For consideration/approval

Draft Anti-Fraud Policy

C/148/11

The DoFCS confirmed that the draft had been revised in line with feedback from DE and in line with best practice. The draft was considered by the ARAC at its meeting on 11 January and recommended to Council for further consideration.

The Chair asked for the Whistleblowing and Anti-Fraud policies to be reviewed to ensure consistency in the language used, in particular 'that it is an offence for management and staff to victimise employees that may raise a concern' is accurately reflective of current legislation. The DoFCS agreed to progress this and bring forward to the next appropriate meeting.

For consideration

Communications Strategy : Awarding Arrangements Summer 2022

C/148/12

The DoFCS introduced this item and advised that the document had been pitched at a high level but also highlighted the approach and tone which been developed taking account of lessons learned, stakeholder feedback and engagement to provide clear messages for CCEA's wide range of stakeholders to ensure they are fully informed and supported on arrangements for summer 2022 and maintain public confidence.

She advised that a detailed action plan had also been developed to support the strategy.

Clarification was sought and received on invigilation and mental health awareness (which would be made more prominent in the strategy). The following points were raised :

- Need to re-educate and reassure stakeholders about moving back to the usual examinations process and what is slightly difference and finding a balance between existing and new information.
- Clarification of the terms standard and standardisation and balance of information provided.

The Boardroom Apprentices suggested that it may be appropriate to have ambassadors from students who have sat CCEA 'A' Level examinations and also parents to share the messages around the system. This would be taken on board.

The Chair asked that the Business Manager for Communications/Multi-media present to Council at future appropriate meetings to ensure members are aware of all of the communications/messages that are being developed/issued in advance of the summer series.

Members were asked to provide feedback on any other aspects they wished to be considered for inclusion.

10 Any Other Business

None identified.

11 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next Council briefing was scheduled for Thursday 24 February 2022, subsequently, following agreement with the Chair and members, this briefing was re-scheduled for Thursday 17 February 2022 at 12.30 pm.

The Chair thanked members and officers for their input into the meeting.