

CCEA

COUNCIL

Minutes of the one hundred and forty-fifth meeting of Council held on Thursday 27 May 2021 at 1.30 pm via MS Teams.

Present : Mr T O'Reilly (Chair) Mr R Smyth
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 Corrigan

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)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

Introduction

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting.

1 Apologies

An apology was received from Mrs Donna O'Connor.

2 Conflict of Interests

Two members declared potential conflict of interest for items on the agenda. These were formally noted for the record.

3 Chair's Business

Appointment of Temporary Director of Examinations

The Chair, on behalf of Council, congratulated Ms Amanda Swann on her recent appointment to Temporary Director of Examinations.

Correspondence

Members noted the correspondence received confirming the Minister's decisions on arrangements for CCEA's qualifications for 2021/22.

He advised that this item would continue to be on the agenda to deal with correspondence which would need to be brought to the Council's attention. These would include DE/DfE commissioning letters; Ministerial Direction and finance/budgetary information.

Operational correspondence will be managed by the Executive.

Council Agenda – 24 June 2021

The Chair confirmed the following agenda items for the 24 June 2021 meeting :

- Formal approval of Annual Report & Accounts for 2020/21
- Update on recommendations arising from the Deloitte Action Plan
- Development of Corporate Risk Register
- Informed briefings on the emerging picture on AS and A2 Qualifications; and progress on Summer 2021.

Report on Stage 2 Appeals

Members noted that 7 Summer 2020 Malpractice appeal hearings had been conducted from January to May 2021. None were upheld. 1 further hearing was scheduled for 21 June 2021.

Mrs O'Hare wished to place on record panel members' concerns about the significant amount of time the appeal hearings had taken and recognition of the pressure placed upon CCEA staff, in preparing extensive papers in advance as well as dealing with a range of queries from appellants.

The Chair formally recognised the commitment of the staff responsible for the administration of the Stage 2 appeals and confirmed he would progress the workload issue with the Interim Chief Executive and Director of Finance & Corporate Services, to ensure it was addressed in the new appeals process for 2021.

He recognised the complexity of the issues under consideration and placed on record his thanks to Mrs Fitzsimons, Mrs O'Hare and those Council members involved in the hearings for their time commitment and asked that thanks, on behalf of Council be passed on to all staff involved.

Members noted the update.

Officer Attendance

Mr Andrew McAfee, Business Manager, Multi-Media & Communications, would be in attendance for the Communications item under Any Other Business.

4 Ratification of Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 March 2021 were proposed by Mrs Patricia Slevin and seconded by Mrs Paula Leitch as a true and accurate record. A copy would be made available for the Chair to sign once normal business arrangements resumed.

Action Points.

Members noted the status of the action points.

Ratification of Council Briefings

18 March 2021

The minutes of Council briefing held on 18 March 2021 were proposed by Mrs Carol Fitzsimons and seconded by Mr Hugh McCarthy as a true and accurate record. A copy would be made available for the Chair to sign once normal business arrangements resumed.

29 April 2021

The minutes of Council briefing held on 29 April 2021 were proposed by Mrs Paula Leitch and seconded by Mrs Sarah Sellars as a true and accurate record. A copy would be made available for the Chair to sign once normal business arrangements resumed.

5 Education

The Chair welcomed Ms Amanda Swann, Temporary Director of Examinations to the meeting.

Proposed Post-Results Service Framework 2021

C/145/1

The temporary Director of Examinations drew attention to the detail provided in paper C/145/1 and updated members on developments to date.

A Council member asked that Point 10 (page 11) be redrafted (and highlighted) in the guidance to ensure complete understanding on the type of evidence that would be considered in the event of an appeal, and clear guidance on what does not constitute an appeal.

Members welcomed the clarity of the information provided and assurances received.

Update on Appeals Consultation

Members were updated on the feedback received following the close of the consultation on the proposed appeals process for 2021.

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

The Chair confirmed the final documentation would go forward to DE for agreement prior to issue to centres.

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

6 Regulation

The Chair welcomed Mrs Sharon King, Head of Regulation to the meeting.

Chair's Report : Regulation Committee meeting held on 6 May 2021

The Chair of the Committee gave a detailed overview of the items discussed at the meeting. She advised that two of the items discussed were on the agenda for this meeting. (Approval of : Review of Grading Standards in CCEA'S A Level Modern Languages and General Qualifications Alternative Awarding Framework).

Members sought and received clarification on a range of matters and were content with the explanations received.

The Interim Chief Executive thanked members for the comments in relation to subject comparability and would progress these as appropriate outside of the meeting.

The Chair agreed to consider co-option of a statistical expert on to the Regulation Committee.

For Approval

Final Report : Review of Grading Standards in CCEA's A Level Modern Languages C/145/2

Members were content with the scrutiny applied by the Regulation Committee and approved the final report for release.

Formally proposed by Mrs Anne Kingsley and seconded by Mrs Kathleen O'Hare.

General Qualifications Alternative Awarding Framework C/145/3

Members were content with the scrutiny applied by the Regulation Committee and were content to approve the framework for release to the Awarding Organisation.

Formally proposed by Mrs Anne Kingsley and seconded by Professor Phil Hanna.

The temporary Director of Examinations rejoined the meeting at this point.

7 Audit

Chair's Report : Audit & Risk Assurance Committee meeting held on 20 April 2021

The Chair of the Committee gave a brief overview of the items discussed at the meeting. He confirmed the substantive item was the Corporate Risk Register which was on the agenda for this meeting.

Draft Corporate Risk Register – April 2021 C/145/4

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services (DoFCS) confirmed the corporate risks had been reviewed and updated (following the ARAC) to reflect the mitigations in place and progress on the awarding arrangements. She reminded members of the ever-changing high-risk environment CCEA continued to operate within and the evolving nature of the CRR at this time.

The DoFCS confirmed a workshop on the development of the CRR would be arranged with officers to ensure the CRR is fit for purpose.

An overview of the current status of Corporate Risks 1-8 was provided.

Clarification was sought on a number of points and the following were suggested for consideration:

- Inclusion of children and young people at the beginning of CR1.

The DoFCS confirmed this would be taken on board and included in the June CRR.

- Moderation – inclusion of upholding and consistency of standards and how this is demonstrated.

The Chair asked for consideration to be given as to how mitigations for moderation can be explicitly included as this may require management during the summer months.

- Pre-prepared statements for each phase of the 5-Step process to be developed and enacted over the summer months.

The Interim Chief Executive confirmed clear statements would be provided on how CCEA has supported the system in relation to moderation, fairness and consistency. She assured members that a more proactive approach would be taken on communications in advance of the results being issued, and also as CCEA begins to emerge from emergency/crisis arrangements.

The Chair welcomed comments made and suggested the CRR would benefit from wider discussion from the Council members at the June briefing, in particularly identification of the major risks over the next 12 months.

Members were content with the information provided and proposed way forward.

8 Finance

Chair's Report : Finance Committee Meeting held on 20 May 2021

The Chair confirmed that the Finance Committee had fulfilled its scrutiny and challenge functions on all aspects of finance and planning.

The Chair of the Committee provided an overview of the main items discussed at the meeting held on 20 May 2021 and referred to those on the agenda for this meeting.

Finance Update

C/145/5

The DoFCS reported an interim year end position of £753K (3.6%) and a capital underspend of £37K (23.3%), (exceeded the DE tolerance limit of 1%). She assured members that DE had accepted the circumstances and reasons for the underspends given the challenging financial environment CCEA continued to operate within.

Members noted the detail provided to support the interim year end financial position.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2021

Members noted the statement of financial position as at 31 March 2021.

2021/22 Resource Budget Allocation

C/145/6

The DoFCS drew attention to paper **C/145/6** and confirmed a budget allocation for 2021/22 of £21.1M. She advised on the contractual pay increases and separate allocations for earmarked projects. It was also confirmed that the £2M bid for Covid-19 related activity had been approved.

It was worth noting that whilst expenditure would continue to be incurred during the incoming year, further clarity was required before finalising charges for fees (summer 2021). She confirmed that the fees policy would be issued later in the year, and assured members that centres have been kept informed of developments in this area.

Members noted the information provided.

This concluded the governance items on the agenda.

9 Any Other Business

Communications

The Chair welcomed Mr Andrew McAfee, Business Manager, Multi-Media and Communications to the meeting.

Communications Plan

The Business Manager Multimedia & Communications outlined the range of activity underway targeting parents and students in respect of the Issue of Results for Summer 2021. He outlined the themes, key messages, the aim of the communications and the type of resources and support available.

The presentation focussed on the Summer 2021 Communications Strategy supported by 6 specific communications objectives, and also touched on the Next Steps and Student & Parents Plan.

The Chair thanked Mr McAfee for the informative presentation.

Members welcomed the significant number of planned activities. They commended the high quality of the information presented; the range of communications and campaigns being put in place to ensure parents and students gained a full understanding of all aspects of the Summer 2021 issue of results and services available.

Clarification was sought and received on a number of points. Members were content with the explanations provided.

Members asked to place on record their recognition of the significant amount of work carried out in these unique and challenging circumstances (without formal examinations).

The Chair confirmed that work would continue to seek to ensure public confidence in CCEA throughout the coming months. Press statements and lines to take would be prepared as required (in advance of any press briefings).

On behalf of the Council, the Chair wished to extend thanks to the CCEA awarding team and congratulated them on all of the work completed to date. He asked the Interim Chief Executive to pass this message on to all staff involved.

Education Committee – Change of Date.

The Chair advised that due to conflicting priorities the Education Committee has been rescheduled to 10 June 2021 at 1.30 pm.

General

The Chair wished to place on record his thanks to Miss Kennedy for her work in supporting the Council in finalisation of minutes, preparation, release of papers and associated documentation for the meeting. He also acknowledged her ongoing support to him since his appointment.

10 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 24 June 2021 at 1.30 pm.

11 Below the Line Business

The Chair drew attention to the following items under Below the Line Business.

- Draft CCEA Operational/Business Plan 2021/22 : Paper C/145/7
- Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Minutes 18 March 2021
- Finance Committee Minutes 23 March 2021

Links to a number of reports were also provided for members information.

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

Officers left at the conclusion of formal business.

Closed Session of Council

The Chair updated members on progress in relation to the recruitment process for a permanent Chief Executive.

Members were content with the information provided.