

CCEA

COUNCIL

Minutes of the one hundred and twenty-sixth meeting of Council held on Wednesday 27 September 2017 in Room 115, CCEA HQ, 29 Clarendon Road, Belfast, BT1 3BG.

Present : Mr T Carson (Chair) Dr A Kerr
Mr R Thompson Mr C McKinney
Mrs C Harpur Mrs A Whiteside
Mrs C Fitzsimons Dr L Caul

Mr J Edwards (Chief Executive)
Mrs L Scott (Director of Finance and Corporate Services)
Mr J Daly (Financial Services Manager)
Mr R McCune (Head of Regulation) – Items 8 – 14 only
Ms A Swann (Business Manager, Qualifications) – Items 8 – 13 only
Ms C McNicholl (Regulation Manager) – Item 8 only

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

Introduction

The Chair welcomed members and officers, in particular Mrs Leah Scott, recently appointed Director of Finance and Corporate Services to the meeting.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr T Armstrong; Mrs R Cowan; Dr N Morton; Mrs S McClelland, Mrs K O'Hare and Mr B Wilson.

2 Declaration of Interests

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

3 Chair's Business

Deferment of Council Papers : C/126/9 & C/126/10

The Chair advised that the following papers would be deferred pending consideration by the Education Committee, he apologised for this oversight.

The Chief Executive confirmed the papers would be discussed by the Education Committee at its meeting on 3 October 2017. Subsequently, Council will be asked to consider the advice from the committee on the proposals.

Chair's report to Council

The Chair provided an overview of the range of activities undertaken since the last Council meeting. This included:

- the recruitment process for the Director of Education post.
- A series of meetings with the Chair of the Education Authority and a number of Departmental Officials from both the Department of Education and Department for the Economy on matters of mutual interests and the challenges ahead.
- Attendance at a number of events organised by CIPFA and the Chair's Forum, including an address by David Stirling, Head of the Civil Service.

Meetings with the Chief Executive : He confirmed that the meetings with the Chief Executive continued (on a fortnightly basis) to monitor effectiveness and seek assurances on the operations of the organisation.

Update on Director of Education Appointment

The Chair confirmed that shortlisting had taken place and a number of candidates selected for interview on Friday 29 September. He agreed to inform Council of the outcome as soon as possible.

Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive drew attention to the detail of the report (provided for members' information) and gave an overview on the main areas contained within. He advised that :

- Industrial action in respect of end of Key Stage assessments continued to be a challenge impacting on returns for key stage outcomes.
- In the area of assessment development: testing and trialling was underway of a Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) Prototype for Mathematics at Key Stage 3 in collaboration with Cambridge University.
- Feedback on the DE Learning Leaders initiative continued to be positive with significant interest in foundation learning around the primary sector.

Clarification was sought on whether CCEA officers were providing curriculum support for leaders. The Chief Executive confirmed that this was a DE initiative with CCEA providing support to DE upon request.

- Full range of teaching and learning resources provided to schools have been welcomed, in particular 'Growing for the Future' (in collaboration with Tourism NI) being the most popular.
- The significant increase in examination entries for 2016/17 was welcomed, however this would place additional financial pressure on the organisation in future.

Teachers as Examiners Risk

The Chief Executive introduced this item and reminded members of the media interest associated with malpractice in regards to examinations. He advised that Ofqual had launched a review of teachers as examiners and confirmed that the terms of reference had been drawn up and shared with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ).

Clarification was sought and received on a range of matters. The Chief Executive assured members that the review and associated communications would be dealt with in a sensitive manner to ensure the safeguarding of the professional integrity of CCEA's examiners, the stability of the examinations system and to retain public confidence.

He confirmed that CCEA had commenced a parallel review and JCQ had been notified. He advised that this was in relation to processes, procedures and controls to ensure they were fit for purpose.

An update would be provided to Council in due course.

Members noted the remainder of the Chief Executive's Report.

FOI Requests

Members noted the most recent FOI requests.

4 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 June 2017

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 June 2017 were proposed by Mrs Carol Fitzsimons and seconded by Dr Les Caul as a true and accurate record. A copy was available for the Chair to sign.

Action points

The Chair drew attention to the action points.

He confirmed that Mr Dale Heaney had been invited to the Council Development Day scheduled for 12 October 2017.

A Council member suggested that consideration be given for an evaluation to be carried out on the process of the appointment of the Directors of Finance and Corporate Services, and Education.

Members welcomed this suggestion, in particular, an evaluation of the appointment process for Directors. The Chief Executive highlighted that the spend associated with the appointments process would be subject to a post-project evaluation(PPE) and that this could be shared with Council.

The Chair asked that members be updated as appropriate.

A Council member expressed disappointment that the two remaining items of notified Any Other Business not discussed at the June meeting had not been placed on this agenda. This would be followed up outside of the meeting.

5 Correspondence

Members noted the following correspondence:

- 2017/18 Resource Allocation
- CCEA Project to raise awareness of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The Chief Executive confirmed that CCEA has collaborated with NICCY on this project and commended the Curriculum Team on a successful piece of work.

- 2017/18 Confirmation of Cash Allocation
- AQA Chief Executive and Responsible Officer

The Chief Executive confirmed that he had acknowledged the letter from AQA and had written to the outgoing Chief Executive, Andrew Hall, on his retirement.

Notification had also been received on a change of responsible officers for WJEC and the Pearson Group.

- Approval of On-Line Marking Business Case 2018-2028
- 2017/18 Business Plan Mid-Year Monitoring

6 Governance and Accountability

Notification of Governance & Accountability Review (GAR) Meeting : 6 November 2017

The Chair confirmed that the next GAR meeting would take place at CCEA on Monday 6 November 2017. The minutes would be circulated once approved.

7 Finance and Planning

Finance Committee Report : 22 September 2017

In the absence of the Chair of the Committee, the Chair of Council, provided a report of the main items discussed at the meeting. The minutes would be available once approved.

He confirmed that members had fulfilled their scrutiny and challenge function on all agenda items and reported on the following:

- Digitisation of Council and Committees : members noted that the project was on schedule with initial training planned for Thursday 12 October 2017.
- Final finance report – year-end budget position : members noted an underspend of £107K (0.4%) on the recurrent budget and 0.3% for Capital, this was within DE's tolerance limit of 1%. Members commended the performance at year-end.
- Finance Report as at 31 August 2017 : members noted an underspend of £42K (0.3%) on recurrent budget, with Capital expenditure on track at this time.
- Statement of Financial Position as at 31 August 2017: members noted the information provided, in particular the increase in pension liability.
- Inescapable Pressures 2018/19 : presentation was provided to the committee.
- Public Sector Transformation Fund (PSTF) Bid : members discussed and agreed to recommend to Council that the organisation should be able to access the PSTF for 2017/18.

- Corporate Plan : Monitoring Report: Quarter 1 : members were content with the information provided.

The above items were also on the agenda for this meeting.

- Procurement and Business Case Update : one procurement has been finalised and awarded by the Educational Authority and a separate procurement finalised and awarded by Central Procurement Directorate (CPD). One scheduled procurement is also with Central Procurement Directorate.
- 24 Business cases were approved between May and August 2017, with 1 business case retrospectively approved by the Finance Committee for On-Line Marking.

Updates were provided on a range of activity within the Human Resources Department. These included Sickness Absence in comparison to other Public Sector bodies and developments underway in regards to the Performance Review System.

2 Policies were approved : Performance Related Pay Policy and Framework for 2016/17 and 2017/18.

This concluded the Finance Report to Council.

Public Sector Transformation Fund (PSTF)

C/126/1

The Chair confirmed that this matter had been fully discussed at the Finance Committee. Concerns were expressed by some members at further reduction in headcount, and asked that this be kept to a minimum.

The Chief Executive drew attention to the detail of the paper and advised that given the challenging financial environment and inescapable pressures for 2017/18 it was necessary to apply for funding for 2017/18.

Members noted the information provided and gave formal approval to apply for £500K from the fund.

Final Report – year end budget position as at 31 March 2017

C/126/2

The Chief Executive introduced this item.

The Financial Services Manager (FM) drew attention to the detail of the paper and gave an overview of the information provided. He confirmed a year-end budget position of £107K (0.4%) underspend against DE funded expenditure. Capital was underspent by 0.3%. Both have remained within the DE target of 1%. An assurance was provided that a lessons learned report was being produced and reviewed by the Executive Team. This would come forward to the Finance Committee as appropriate.

Members commended the performance.

Finance Report as at 31 August 2017

C/126/3

The Chair confirmed that this report had been discussed in detail at the Finance Committee at its meeting on 22 September 2017.

The FM drew attention to the detail of the information provided at paper C/126/3 and confirmed an underspend of £42K (0.3%) with capital expenditure on track at this time. This was within the DE target of 1%.

The Chief Executive drew attention to the CE Summary, and advised that a greater than expected rise in entries in GCSE qualifications would lead to additional income. He expressed concern that a bid for additional funding could not be made due to the lack of a budget monitoring round. He confirmed that DE was aware of this and confirmed that they are seeking a resolution with the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Members expressed concern and, following a detailed discussion, suggested that it may be helpful to set out CCEA's concerns and challenges in writing to the Department of Education.

Members reminded the Chief Executive that the MSFM should not be breached on this matter.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 August 2017

C/126/4

Members noted the information provided.

Presentation : Inescapable Pressures 2018/19 : initial review

The Chief Executive introduced this item and provided a brief overview on the budget process.

The FM gave a detailed presentation (circulated to members for information) outlining an initial assessment for forecasting the 2018/19 budget. The main areas were :

- Change to existing projects
- Review of forecast 2018/19 budget requirement against potential budget reductions
- Next steps
- Draft 2018/19 budget planning timetable

The FM confirmed, that the presentation gave an initial review of the work carried out internally. He advised that further information would be presented to Finance Committee at its November meeting and subsequently to Council in December.

It was confirmed that all associated risks would be included on the Corporate Risk Register.

Members discussed and sought clarification on a range of matters. The Chief Executive advised that work had begun across the organisation to assess pressure and where essential resources were required. He advised the statutory obligations and DE priorities were at the forefront of the discussions and risk assessments would be carried out to ensure adequate and experienced resources are in place to meet these needs.

Final 2016/17 Annual Report and Accounts and Final Report to those Charged with Governance (RttCwG)

C/126/5

Members noted the information provided.

The Chief Executive drew attention to the information provided at paper C/126/6 and reported on the first quarter for 2017/18. He provided an overview on the reasons for the one indicator that would not be achieved during this reporting period (detail provided on page 2 of the paper).

Members noted the information provided.

8 Education

The Chair welcomed the Business Manager, Qualifications; the Head of Regulation and Regulation Manager to the meeting.

Trends in Entries and Outcomes for GCSE and A Level for Northern Ireland

C/126/7

The Chief Executive introduced this item.

The Business Manager, Qualifications, drew attention to the detail of the paper and provided an overview of the main areas:

- A Level entries from 2013-2017
- A Level results 2016 and 2017
- Gender Comparisons
- Most popular A Level Subjects and Subjects by Gender
- Gender gap in performance from 2010-2017
- AS Entries from 2013-2017
- AS Results 2016 and 2017
- CCEA Market Share of the total Northern Ireland A Level entries

Members sought and received clarification on the information presented and were content with the explanations provided.

Northern Ireland Provisional Results for GCSE Qualifications

C/126/7a

The Business Manager, Qualifications, drew attention to the detail of the information provided in paper C/126/7a and gave an overview on the performance gap between males and females and the factors contributing to the significant growth in CCEA market share.

The Chair welcomed the fact that the Education Conference would focus on *Addressing the Underperformance of Males*. A draft proposal would be reviewed by the Education Committee at its meeting on 3 October.

Clarification was sought on a number of matters and members were content with the explanations provided. The Business Manager, Qualifications, confirmed that detailed data and further information would be available in the Qualifications Insights Report 2017 due to be launched later in the year.

The Chair thanked members and officers for their input and asked for further details on the Education Conference and the Insights Report as they became available.

The Business Manager, Qualifications, advised that a review of candidate and teacher malpractice arising from the Summer 2017 series had been conducted. The findings indicated an increase in both teacher and candidate cases from 2016 and 2015 as well as increased case complexity. She provided a detailed overview of process and advised on the range of penalties that could be applied (detailed on pages 2 and 3).

Members welcomed the clarity of the information provided and received assurances that due process was followed in regards to malpractice.

The Chair was reassured that this area was being managed robustly.

Deferred Papers

C/126/9 and C/126/10

The Chair confirmed that papers C/126/9 Proposal to withdraw CCEA Essential Skills qualification and C/126/10 Proposal to withdrawn CCEA GCE History of Art qualification would be discussed at the Education Committee on 3 October. Recommendations on the proposals would be brought forward to Council as appropriate.

Members were content with this course of action.

Verbal Update : Progress against A*-G Communications Plan

The Head of Regulation introduced this item, and advised that to ensure all stakeholders have a full understanding of the GCSE Grade changes a clear communications plan had been developed for a range of audiences.

The Regulation Manager updated members on developments to date. She confirmed that 4 stakeholder segments had been identified. These included : users and providers; government departments and agencies; and all other Arms Length Bodies.

Four key messages will be articulated :

- Why the grades are changing
- To understand and show the comparisons between different grading systems
- To understand the effect on outcomes
- To advise and confirm the timescales for introducing the new GCSE grading scales.

Members noted the following activities and associated timeframes.

- A baseline questionnaire is being developed for issue early October – the questionnaire will also be issued for completion at various stages throughout the project.
- Engagement with stakeholders to refine the materials for delivery of the key messages will take place from September to December 2017.
- Materials for the briefing stakeholders will be completed by February 2018.

A Council member suggested that all types of social media be used to promote the changes. The Regulation Manager advised that the full range of social media sites would be monitored to ensure clear communication is provided.

Members were content with the update.

The Chair thanked the Head of Regulation and Regulation Manager for their contributions to the item.

9 Audit

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) Report : 20 September 2017

The Chair of the Committee confirmed that the minutes were not yet available and would be issued once approved.

He advised that the meeting was inquorate and the one decision in regards to the General Conditions of Recognition (GCOR) has been referred to Council for final approval. He reported on the following :

- Risk Assurance in Awards and Purchases : June – August 2017 : one unauthorised purchase was reported. Members received a brief overview on the reason for the spend. 8 Direct Awards were approved in relation to general purchases with no areas of concern identified.
- Final Report to those Charged with Governance : a final document was provided for members' information.
- National Fraud Initiative: members were content that no instances of fraud had been identified. The exercise has now been completed for 2016/17.
- Corporate Risk Register : members were content with the new format of the register and the revised method of reporting. (on agenda)

The Chair advised that members had discussed the way risks were dealt with throughout the organisation.

The Chief Executive suggested that it might be helpful if project risk registers were made available for members on request, this would provide an assurance on how the registers are being used. He confirmed that it was important to have the procedures and mitigations in place to ensure an unexpected risk is handled appropriately.

- Mid-Year Governance Statement : was provided for members' information. The Chair asked that the document come forward to Council for formal noting.
- Internal Audit Activity: three reports were presented to the committee for consideration.
- Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) : Draft Lessons learned review and action plan. The Chief Executive confirmed that he had considered the extent to which actions identified were relevant to CCEA and responded accordingly.

- General Conditions of Recognition : The statements of compliance for CCEA, OfQual and Qualifications Wales were considered by members and recommend to Council for final consideration and sign-off.
- Risk Management : Summer Examinations 2017 : was on the agenda for this meeting.
- Operational Readiness for January 2018 Examinations series. Members were content that no concerns had been identified.

This concluded the report for the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to Council.

Corporate Risk Register : August 2017

C/126/11/11a

The Chief Executive drew attention to the information provided at papers C/126/11 and 11a. He advised that the ARAC members had welcomed the clarity of the document and highlighted the new format. The main changes were :

- The highlighting of causes and consequences of risks;
- Escalation of actions taken; and
- Management of financial risks within the financial year.

Members sought and received clarification on a number of matters. The Chief Executive confirmed that he was responsible for the risks under the former Director of Education Strategy until a new Director of Education was appointed.

Mid-Year Governance Statement 2017/18

C/126/12

The Chief Executive introduced this item.

A Council member asked if it was possible for the clarity between curriculum and operational business cases to be emphasised in the document. The Chief Executive agreed to take this suggestion on board.

Members were content with the information provided.

Risk Management : Summer Examination Series 2017

C/126/13

The Chief Executive introduced this item and drew attention to the detail provided in paper C/126/13. Members sought and received an assurance that as risks materialised appropriate systems were in place to deal with these as they arose.

Members noted the information provided.

General Conditions of Recognition 2017

C/126/14

The Chief Executive drew attention to the detail of the information provided. He confirmed that an independent review had been carried out, for the first time, by Moore Stephens (Internal Auditors). This provided an additional level of assurance and he was pleased to confirm he was content with the feedback received.

He explained the requirement for signing off Statements of Compliance for OfQual and Qualifications Wales.

Members considered the documentation. The Statements of Compliance for CCEA Regulation, OfQual and Qualifications Wales were formally approved. This was proposed by Mrs Carol Fitzsimons and seconded by Mr Cormac McKinney.

The Chair and Chief Executive signed the appropriate documentation to be forwarded to the Regulators.

10 Any Other Business

Qualifications Uptake

A request was made for an in-depth analysis on all CCEA qualifications and their uptake. The Chief Executive confirmed that this information would be available in the Qualifications Insights Report 2017, was currently being finalised. Copies would be available for all Council Members in due course.

11 Date of Next Meeting

The Chair confirmed that the next meeting was confirmed for Wednesday 13 December 2017. He reminded members that the Permanent Secretary and senior DE officials would be present at some point in the meeting. Final arrangements will be issued in due course.

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