

## **CCEA**

Minutes of the one hundred and thirty-sixth meeting of Council, held on Tuesday 28 January 2020, at 9.30 am in Room 115, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 29 Clarendon Road, Belfast.

**Present :** Mr T Carson (Chair) Dr L Caul  
Mrs C Harpur Mr RJ Thompson  
Mr C McKinney Mrs C Fitzsimons

Mr J Edwards (Chief Executive)  
Mrs L Scott (Director of Finance & Corporate Services)  
Miss M Farragher (Director of Education)  
Mrs S King (Head of Regulation)

Ms R Wheeler (NFER) for Session 2 only

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

### **Introduction**

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting.

#### **1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Ms R Byrne; Dr A Kerr; Dr N Morton; Mrs K O'Hare; and Mr B Wilson.

#### **2 Conflict of Interests**

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

#### **3 Chair's Business**

##### *Officer Attendance*

Mr Andrew McAfee, Business Manager, Multimedia, would give a demonstration on the new CCEA website at Item 6 on the business agenda.

##### *New Format of Meetings*

The Chair advised that this was the first of the new format meetings which are replacing the Council Development Days. He confirmed that there would be a short business meeting to deal with Minutes and routine matters, followed by time dedicated to discussion on items of interest to Council.

He outlined the Council discussion programme, and confirmed that Ms Rebecca Wheeler from NFER would present feedback from the PISA 2018 at Session 2.

#### **4 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 December 2019**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 11 December 2019, were proposed by Mrs Christine Harpur, and seconded by Mr Robert Thompson, as a true and accurate record. A copy was available for the Chair to sign.

Clarification was sought on the meeting with the PSNI representative in regards to Internal Audit. The Chief Executive explained that the NICS Internal Audit was providing the service to the PSNI and

the Executive, together with the Chair of Council, and Chair of Audit & Risk Assurance Committee felt it would be useful to seek feedback from the quality of the service provided.

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services confirmed that she had written to the Head of Internal Audit in the NICS outlining Council's concerns on the provision of a quality service in this area.

#### *Action Points*

Members noted the following :

*Item 6 Raising Awareness : marking conferences information* : The Chair welcomed this development and said it would be useful material for teachers.

*Item 9 Corporate Plan 2020-2025* : The Chief Executive confirmed that amendments have been made following the Council meeting in December, and the document is now out for consultation.

#### ***Mechanism for Electing/Appointing Chairs and Co-opting Members onto Committees C/136/1***

The Chair introduced this item. He drew attention to the specific reference to how Chairs and committee members should be appointed as per the Standing Orders, in that

*'The Chairman will put forward proposals to Council for Chairpersonship and membership of the main committees. Council will determine the membership and Chairpersonship of the main committees'*

A Council member sought clarification on whether or not the standing orders had been applied appropriately. The Chair advised that there was a need for a clear process and for Council to be fully involved in these decisions.

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance advised that this item referred to an earlier proposal to have a broad discussion at Council level about CCEA Committees, and to have the opportunity to reflect concerns of Council members in regards to committee membership, function and their contribution. He explained that he had been asked to raise concerns from other members.

It was noted that there was no formal process for appointments to Committees, in particular the Chair. It was suggested that there was a need to define appointment terms for Chairs including length of term of office, the level of authority, and opportunity for appraisal.

In regards to the Standing Orders for Council, it was recognised that these referred to the management of Council business and how committee Chairs' would be elected and managed by the Council. It was decided that it would be appropriate to review this area.

Reference was made to the statement of authority of Council in the Standing orders including the management of its committees.

Members discussed the matter in detail. The following points were made:

- Formalisation of the way in which Chairs are appointed/elected. A letter of appointment issued stating the length of the term of office.

Clarification was sought on the appointments process for the Chair of Council. The Chair confirmed this was a Ministerial appointment (through the Public Appointments Process). It was noted that all members were Ministerial appointments.

- Discussion on the committee structure – how many committees does the Council require, covering what functions.

The Chief Executive stated that under the Management Statement/Financial Memorandum, the Council was required to have a Finance Committee, and an Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.

- The need to ensure up to date Standing Orders for the Council are in place, setting out clear responsibilities for Chair and members, in the event of a challenge to decisions made.
- The opportunity for Committee members to meet with Committee Chairs to discuss effectiveness.
- A clear governance system at Council and committee level to provide confidence to members that their actions are accountable.

The Chief Executive explained that the Standing Orders are owned by the Council. The Management Statement/Financial Memorandum (MSFM) is owned by DE and acts as requirements under which the organisation must operate. He confirmed that the Standing Orders can be revised and adopted by members at any time.

He advised that the Terms of Reference for the committees may be derived from of the Council Standing Orders. These may also require revision to reflect governance arrangements within the Council's legislative remit.

It was suggested that the Standing Orders be reviewed approximately every four years, or each time new Council members were appointed. It was noted that this particular Council has been appointed on a rolling basis with some members' terms of office ending sooner than others.

- The Standing Orders be reviewed to check where they are in conflict with the MSFM, with a view to making the necessary amendments to allow the committees to function effectively.

The Chief Executive advised that potential changes to MSFMs for all ALBs was imminent and indications were that the focus will be on easing of some constraints ALBs are currently operating under.

The DoFCS confirmed that the current Standing Orders outline the way in which the Council meetings are conducted, the frequency and how committees report to the Council.

The Chair recognised the important points made. He advised that the evolving relationships between Arms-Length Bodies and the sponsoring Departments will have a significant impact on how business is conducted and on how Standing Orders are written.

He confirmed that new Committee Chairs were in place, however, there was a need for Council to discuss the issues raised to day to ensure clear and fit for purpose governance is in place.

He advised that the paper presented (**C/136/1**) was to give clarity to the current situation, and also to give members an opportunity to decide if the proposals were sufficient, or needed to be wider-ranging. He confirmed that, given the issues raised by members, there was a clear need for full Council discussion on arrangements and the Standing Orders.

Members recognised the need for a full review of the Governance arrangements in respect of Council and its Committees.

Following discussion on how this matter should be taken forward, it was agreed that this was a whole Council matter. The Chair confirmed that a half day meeting be convened to review the matters discussed.

It was suggested that a paper be prepared to include Standing Orders, appropriate references from the MSFM, with a range of options put forward for consideration and advice to be followed. Also included should be mechanisms for:

- Adjustments to the Standing Orders
- Protection of Chairs of Committees

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee also suggested that a mechanism/opportunity/time set aside for Council members to voice their opinions – perhaps in a closed environment.

The Chief Executive agreed to draft a document, taking into account the points raised.

The Chair confirmed that he would discuss the way forward with the Chief Executive, and a meeting convened. It was agreed that the paper be issued in advance of the meeting.

## **5 Notification of Changes to the General Conditions of Recognition (GCoR) C/136/2**

The Head of Regulation drew attention to the information provided in paper C/136/2, and advised on the changes to the GCoR in terms of making the document more accessible. She confirmed that discussions to agree the final wording were ongoing and the final document would be published by 20 February 2020.

Council ratification of the changes was required. The Head of Regulation suggested the document, together with a summary of the changes, be circulated to Council by Friday 7 February 2020, for their consideration and feedback.

A Council member asked that any implications for CCEA be stated clearly and highlighted for members in the documentation to be provided.

Members were content with the proposal to consider the revisions via the e-mail mechanism and provide feedback by 17 February 2020.

## **6 Demonstration of the new CCEA website**

The Chair welcomed Mr Andrew McAfee, Business Manager - Multimedia, to the meeting. The Business Manager, Multi-media gave a detailed demonstration of the new website which contained a vast amount of data.

The Chief Executive confirmed that there was a significant amount of discussion on the design and content of the new format, which took into account feedback from a range of stakeholders.

Clarification was sought and received on a number of matters; and some suggestions made by members.

Members commended the new design and clarity of navigation around the website and suggested some signposting to areas of interest be considered.

The Chair asked for regular updates to come forward to Council. The Chief Executive advised that a high level dashboard was under development which would give the general participation rate at a glance. This would come forward to Council in due course.

## **7 Any Other Business**

None identified.

## **8 Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 1 April 2020 at 10 am.

## **COUNCIL PROGRAMME**

The Chair advised that the Council Programme would provide opportunities for discussion and sufficient time has been allocated for each of the 3 Sessions.

### **Session 1 : Future of Vocational Qualifications Update**

The Head of Regulation gave a detailed update on developments and relevant actions in this area.

The following points were raised :

- Issue of protectionism to be escalated to Senior Officials in DE as appropriate.
- Update on developments with Vocational Qualifications be provided to school principals through the Communications Strategy.
- Recognition that issues are continually evolving at a fast pace.

The Chair confirmed that this are will be reported to Council through the Regulation Committee.

### **Session 2 : PISA 2018 : Headline findings for Northern Ireland**

The Chair welcomed Ms Rebecca Wheeler (NFER) to the meeting, and thanked her for agreeing to present to and update members PISA 2018.

Ms Wheeler gave a brief overview of the study, outlined the findings and provided some background information on PISA 2018. A copy of the Key Insights from PISA 2018 for the UK (NFER Education Briefing) was circulated to members' for information.

Members discussed the findings in detail. Sought and received clarification on a number of matters and were content with the explanations provided.

The Chair recognised the need for further exploration of some of the issues to inform a meeting with the new Minister, these would be taken forward with the Chief Executive.

The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked Rebecca for her presentation, and for the clarity of the information provided.

### **Session 3 : Governance : New Decade, New Approach**

The Chief Executive outlined the main areas of CCEA's response to the Government's New Decade, New Approach document.

Member discussed the information in detail.