

CCEA

COUNCIL

Minutes of the one hundred and sixty-first meeting of Council held on Thursday 28 September 2023 at 3.30 pm via Hybrid arrangements (in person Room 115).

Present: Mr T O'Reilly (Chair) Dr L Caul
Professor P Hanna Mrs P Leitch
Mrs A Kingsley Mr H McCarthy
Mrs C Fitzsimons Mrs K O'Hare
Ms P Slevin

CCEA Executive

Mr G Campbell (Chief Executive)
Mrs L Scott (Director of Finance & Corporate Services)
Mr M Crossan (Temporary Director of Examinations)
Mrs C Latham (Temporary Director of Curriculum & Assessment)
Mr J Daly (Financial Services Manager)
Mrs S King (Head of Regulation)
Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

In attendance :

Mrs K McCullough (DE Observer)
Mr A Stevens (N/V)
Mr C Coffey (N/V)

Mrs V Leyden (Boardroom Apprentice)

Introduction

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs Donna O'Connor; Mr Brian Wilson and Mr Ray Caldwell.

Conflict of Interests

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

Chair's Business

Boardroom Apprentice

The Chair welcomed Vincenta Leyden to Council, CCEA's Boardroom Apprentice for 2023/24.

Outgoing Council Member

The Chair paid tribute to Mrs Carol Fitzsimons who would be stepping down as a member of Council at the end of October having served 2 terms on the Council. During that time she acted as Interim

Chair of Council, Chair of the ARAC and a member of the Finance and Regulation Committees, as well as significantly contributing to a wide range of CCEA activities during her time with the Council. He thanked her for her huge amount of support both personally and professionally to the Chair, the Council and its staff.

Members wished Mrs Fitzsimons and Young Enterprise every success in the future.

Correspondence

The Chief Executive drew attention to the range of correspondence received from the last meeting. He confirmed that some of the correspondence would be discussed at the forthcoming meetings of Education and Regulation Committees. Reports would be provided as appropriate to Council (including the Modern Languages issue).

He undertook to review of the amount of correspondence ensuring only appropriate information was provided to Council and the Committees.

Chief Executive's Report to Council : June – September 2023

C/161/1

The CEO drew attention to his report which advised on the range of activity underway across the business areas of the organisation. Members noted that the report of the Independent Review of Education could be available in the coming months and a watching brief would be maintained in relation to the issues that could emerge for CCEA.

The expertise and skills sets required to recruit SEN and Irish medium staff was recognised as a risk and this would be included on the Corporate Risk Register (CRR).

The Chief Executive placed on record his thanks to his colleagues for the amount of work required to achieve a successful Summer Examinations series and commended the approach and quality of the communications provided to centres to ensure key messages were student focussed. He also thanked Ms Amanda Swann who played a key role in successfully delivering the examinations and to Mr Michael Crossan for his support.

Governance

Update on Partnership Agreement

C/161/2

The Chair drew attention to the detail provided in paper C/161/2 and confirmed that a Project Board and Project Team had been established to progress this work. He explained that the first part of the agreement was in standard format and how CCEA would work collaboratively in progressing the completion of the proportionate autonomy assessment. The Director of Finance & Corporate Services would lead on the first part of these discussions.

Members welcomed this development. It was suggested Council may require training once the partnership agreement was finalised. The Chair concurred that this would be arranged and advised that Council would also be updated regularly on progress in the discussions with DE.

Annual Council Business Cycle

C/161/3

The Chair presented the Annual Council Business Cycle and confirmed that this would be kept under review throughout the year and updated as required.

Members were content to approve the document, formally proposed by Mrs Anne Kingsley and seconded by Mrs Kathleen O'Hare.

Council Governance Action Plan

C/161/3a

The Chair summarised the recommendations arising out of the desk top review and work with DE on corporate governance arrangements. He presented the Action Plan and advised on the status of the document.

During a detailed discussion some Council members felt more time should be allowed to consider the action plan and provide further input. It was also suggested that this would be an excellent development opportunity for new members once appointed.

The Chief Executive suggested a more thorough induction programme for new members was required and Council should own the Action Plan and contribute to it accordingly.

The Chair advised that the plan would not be signed off until Council was completely satisfied with the content and agreed a development session for members should be arranged before the November Council meeting.

Ratification of Council Minutes

Council Meeting held on 22 June 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 22 June 2023 were formally proposed by Professor Phil Hanna and seconded by Ms Patricia Slevin as a true and accurate record.

Council Briefing on 31 August 2023

The minutes of the briefing held on Thursday 31 August 2023 were formally proposed by Mrs Carol Fitzsimons and seconded by Mrs Anne Kingsley as a true and accurate record.

Copies would be made available for the Chair to sign.

Education

Chair's Report to Council : Education Committee held on 1 June 2023

The Chair of the Education Committee gave an overview of the main items discussed at the meeting held on 1 June 2023 (detail provided in the minutes).

She asked to place on record her thanks and congratulations to Ms Amanda Swann for leading the successful work and arrangements for the summer 2023 examinations. She also thanked Mrs Sharon King (Head of Regulation) for the Regulatory work, in particular across the three jurisdictions and wished Michale Crossan well in his new post of temporary Director of Examinations.

Curriculum Monitoring – Action Plan 2023/24

C/161/4

The Interim Director of Curriculum & Assessment introduced this item and updated members on the range of activity ongoing across the Directorate. She drew attention to the Curriculum Monitoring Action Plan and advised on status as appropriate.

A Council member recognised the importance of curriculum monitoring and how it is implemented and managed within schools. She suggested that in terms of risk management discussions on implementation should be included in CCEA's Corporate Risk Register moving forwards (within CCEA's remit).

Members noted the update.

For Approval

Increase in Examination Entry Fees and Introduction of Fees for Examination Appeals C/161/5

The Chief Executive provided a brief overview of the background to the issue. He advised that in discussions with DE, the importance of early communication of this information to centres was agreed and therefore the increase would not come into effect until March 2024.

The Chief Executive outlined the rationale for introduction of fees for examination appeals and confirmed that the proposal had undergone an equality screening exercise and did not require an equality impact assessment.

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services raised the issue of CCEA moving further into the commercial environment and whether this might impact on the arrangements with DE.

A Council member confirmed the issue had been raised at a recent ARAC meeting and advised that it was important to recognise that this was simply reflecting the cost of running examinations and the revenue would not be an additional income stream.

The Chair stated that an assurance was required that this revenue would not be 'clawed' back in terms of income and also the issue of CCEA operating within a commercial market. The DE representative advised she would discuss the issue with the Department of Finance (DoF) and provide clarity as soon as possible.

Mrs Paula Leitch left the meeting at this point.

The Chair drew attention to the recommendations. He sought and received confirmation, subject to further clarification on the income and commercial implications for CCEA, that members were content to approve the following :

Proposal to increase Examination Entry Fees: The following recommendations (1 to 3) were formally proposed by Professor Phil Hanna and seconded by Mr Hugh McCarthy.

- 1 Approve increasing examination entry fees by 9.7% from the March 2024 examination series onwards to enable CCEA to carry forward the increased marking fees from summer 2023 and address other marking and moderation pressures (not all subjects or activities received a rise in summer 2023. The money secured was prioritised across subjects that had shortages in resourcing).
- 2 Approve an annual increase in fees (in line with inflation) to cover costs pressures. This will be submitted to DE in March of each year.
- 3 If the proposed increase is greater than inflation, then it will be presented to Council for approval in advance of submission to DE.

Proposal to introduce Fees for Examination Appeal: The following recommendations (4 to 7) were formally proposed by Mrs Kathleen O'Hare and seconded by Dr Les Caul.

- 4 Approve the introduction of fees for centres for any examination appeals. This will not become operational until the Summer 2024 series appeals in August / September 2024.
- 5 Approve that the initial fees be set at 50% of the level of other JCQ awarding organisations.
- 6 Approve that the fees be increased on annual basis with the objective over time of bringing them in line with other awarding organisations; and
- 7 Agree that Departmental agreement be sought to the initial fee rate for 2024 and the longer- term approach to bring them in line with other awarding organisations.

Finance

Chair's Report : Finance Committees 8 June & 14 September 2023 – this item was deferred.

Finance Report (Final) as at 31 March 2023 (Including Final Statement of Financial Position) C/161/6

The DoFCS drew attention to the detail provided and presented the final financial position as at 31 March 2023 and advised on the recurrent and capital budgets.

The final Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2023 was provided as part of best practice.

The DoFCS was pleased to report an unqualified set of Accounts for 2022/23.

Finance Report as at 31 July 2023 **C/161/7**

The DoFCS confirmed that the Finance Committee had fulfilled its scrutiny and challenge function on the finance reports. She referred to the challenging financial environment CCEA continued to operate under and drew attention to the detail provided.

Members were updated on the savings plan and made aware of the variances where savings needed to be identified. No formal allocation had been received (to date) for the capital budget however some funding had been identified for CCEA.

The Chair commended the performance during this reporting period.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 July 2023 **C/161/7a**

Members noted the information provided as part of best practice.

Business Cases – For Approval **C/161/8, 8a& 8b**

The following business cases were tabled for retrospective approval for formal recording purposes, having been previously approved by members using the remote approvals (email) mechanism.

- **Courier Services (C/161/8a)** : formally proposed by Dr Les Caul and seconded by Ms Patricia Slevin.

- **Irish Medium Team Restructure(C/161/8b)** : formally proposed by Mrs Carol Fitzsimons and seconded by Mrs Kathleen O'Hare.

Budget 2024/25 Information Gathering Exercise

C/161/9

The DoFCS outlined the various pressures identified in the submission to DE in a bid for funding. She advised that funding had been provided for inescapable pressures which has been factored into this submission.

Members raised a number of important points in relation to how much it actually costs CCEA to deliver its statutory functions. The Chief Executive confirmed that the meeting to discuss the CCEA financial cost base with DE was currently being rearranged.

This submission was provided for retrospective approval for formal recording purposes and was formally proposed by Mrs Anne Kingsley and seconded by Dr Les Caul.

Capital Budget 2024/25 – 2027/28

C/161/9a

The DoFCS advised that this paper reflected the future estates strategy and stated the speculative nature of the information provided.

This submission was provided for retrospective approval and was formally proposed by Mrs Anne Kingsley and seconded by Mrs Carol Fitzsimons.

A Council member thanked the DoFCS and teams for the significant work carried out to prepare and complete the submissions.

Regulation

Chair's Report to Council : Regulation Committee meeting held on 29 June 2023

The Chair of the Regulation Committee reported on the main items discussed at the meeting (detail provided in minutes) and referred to the items presented for discussion at this meeting.

Draft Advice CCEA Approach to Summer Examinations 2024 – for approval

C/161/10

The Chief Executive gave some background in relation to the approach and referred to the detail of the paper, including the recommendations on the proposed approach for 2024 summer examinations.

The Head of Regulation provided further detail around the adaptations and reassured members that a requirement of timeframes around decision making can be included.

The Chair sought and received approval for the following recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 4.

1. Considering that Advanced Information is not expected to be available in England and Wales in 2024, Council agree that Advanced Information will not be made available in 2024. This includes not continuing with a Mathematics aid for GCSE.
2. Taking account of the available quality assurance controls as to who would qualify for a missed component calculation, it is recommended Council agree to both the retention of Missed Component Eligibility at the 25% threshold for a further year and that the terminal rule should be

suspended for resitting students and those who have missed the exam for acceptable reasons only in Summer 2024.

3. It is recommended that Council agree the 2019 internal assessment task now be removed and publication of coursework and controlled assessment tasks should align with commitments set out in each respective specification.
4. It is recommended that Council agree to the permanent change in the examination timetable.

Formally proposed by Dr Les Caul and seconded by Mrs Kathleen O'Hare. The Chief Executive confirmed he would write to DE outlining the approach approved by Council.

Resilience Arrangements in GCSE, AS and A Level – for approval

C/161/11

The Head of Regulation gave some background to the item and advised on the resilience arrangements outlined for GCSE, AS and A Levels for 2024. She said it was important to match the arrangements in England and Wales however CCEA can tailor these to suit the structure of Northern Ireland examinations and its education system. She urged caution in moving carefully on this approach taking account of the current industrial relations climate in schools. The Chair recognised that lessons learnt from 2020 to 2023 and confirmed that this system wide approach would be made visible and accessible for parents and all stakeholders.

The Chair sought and received approval on the following recommendations.

- A similar approach as that taken by Ofqual and Qualifications Wales (QW) is adopted by CCEA on resilience arrangements and draft guidance on these arrangements be issued to schools and centres in the Autumn term. This guidance should be drafted to take account of the current industrial relations environment and the modular structure of CCEA qualifications.
- The resilience guidance should include the use of Teacher Assessed Grades underpinned by centre-based moderation and a CCEA assurance framework.
- A sector wide consultation on the guidance be undertaken to hear the views of centres as well as the teaching profession, unions and other education bodies including ETI.
- Taking account of the learning from the past three years, consultees should also be asked to identify any additional assurance measures that could be introduced to support the assessment process.
- A mandatory teaching order for specifications should not be introduced and instead the resilience guidance should encourage schools and centres to ensure assessment objectives are covered and assessed as early as possible in the academic year.

Formally proposed by Dr Les Caul and seconded by Professor Phil Hanna.

Audit & Risk

Chair's Report to Council – ARAC meeting held on 20 September 2023

The Chair placed on record her thanks to the team for their support during her time chairing the committee.

She reported on the main items discussed at the meeting held on 20 September 2023 and drew attention to those items for discussion on this agenda. She referred to the discussion around Artificial

Intelligence in Education and the recommendation from the ARAC for the Education Committee to take this forward, however it was important for the AI risk to be included in order to future proof the integrity of examinations.

Members noted the update.

Corporate Risk Register (CRR) September 2023 – for approval

C/161/12

The DoFCS presented the September 2023 Corporate Risk Register (CRR) to Council. She advised that appropriate reviews and updates had been completed and updated members on the current risk environment, the movement in escalation and de-escalation of the main corporate risks.

Members were content with the detail of the information provided and approved the CRR September 2023. Formally proposed by Mrs Carol Fitzsimons and seconded by Mrs Anne Kingsley.

Appointment of Internal Audit Service Provider

C/161/13

The DoFCS confirmed that the internal audit service will now be provided by the Education Authority (EA) Internal Audit Team until March 2027.

Members noted the information provided.

Proposed Internal Audit Strategy 2023-26 (to include revised internal audit plan 2023/24)

C/161/14

The Head of Internal Audit (EA) has proposed a draft internal audit strategy until 2025/26, this included changes to the 2023/24 plan that was approved by ARAC on the 19 May 2023.

The Chair sought and received approval of the 2023 to 2026 Internal Audit Strategy which included revisions to the 2023/24 plan. Formally proposed by Mrs Anne Kingsley and seconded by Professor Phil Hanna.

Below the Line Business

MSFM Update (September)

C/161/15,15a & 15b

Members noted the cosmetic changes to the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum which had been reviewed and accepted by the Chief Executive and Chair of Council. Final versions will issue to Committees and Council once they have been signed by the Department of Education.

Committee Minutes :

The following committee minutes were provided to Council :

Education Committee : 1 June 2023

Finance Committee : 8 June 2023

Audit & Risk Assurance Committee : 20 June 2023

Regulation Committee : 29 June 2023

Date of Next Meeting

The Chair confirmed the date of the next Council meeting as Thursday 30 November at 3pm and thanked members and officers for their contributions.

