

CCEA

COUNCIL

Minutes of the one hundred and thirtieth meeting of Council held on Wednesday 3 October 2018 at 10.00 am in Room 115, CCEA, 29 Clarendon Road, Belfast, BT1 3BG.

Present : Mr T Carson (Chair) Mrs R Cowan
 Mrs C Harpur Dr L Caul
 Dr N Morton Mr RJ Thompson
 Dr A Kerr Mr C McKinney
 Mrs K O'Hare Mr B Wilson

Mr J Edwards (Chief Executive)
Mrs L Scott (Director of Finance and Corporate Services)
Mr J Daly (Financial Services Manager)
Ms A Swann (Business Manager, Qualifications) Item 8 only

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

Introduction

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs C Fitzsimons and Ms M Farragher.

2 Conflict of Interests

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

3 Chair's Business

Closed session of Council

The Chair advised that a closed session of Council would be convened at the end of formal business.

Appointment of Head of Regulation

The Chair confirmed that the recruitment process for the Head of Regulation had concluded. Mrs Sharon King was offered and has accepted the post. The Chair, on behalf of Council, congratulated Mrs King on her appointment, and thanked the Council members who were involved in the process.

Remuneration of post

The Chair advised that the Department of Education had required CCEA to withdraw the Performance Related Pay (PRP) element from the terms and conditions of the post. He confirmed that candidates had been advised prior to the conclusion of the recruitment process, and were content to proceed with the competition.

The Chief Executive outlined his concerns in regards to direction on terms and conditions of appointment, including remuneration.

Governance and Reporting Arrangements: Regulation

A Council member drew attention to the proposals for recruitment of Head of Regulation discussed at the June meeting of Council. In particular, clarification on the strengthening of governance arrangements, to avoid the perception of conflict, and also improving the reporting mechanism for regulatory work of the organisation.

The Chair asked Mrs Rosemary Cowan, Chair of the Finance Committee, to chair a sub-group of 2 – 3 members to review the governance arrangements and bring forward a range of proposals to Council for consideration. The Chief Executive confirmed he would meet with the sub-group to draft the Terms of Reference for consideration by the Chair. Expressions of interest would be sought outside of the meeting.

Chair's Report to Council June – September 2018

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

- Recruitment process for new Council members concluded in September. Members noted that appointments may possibly be made between November 2018 and January 2019.
- Recruitment process for Head of Regulation.
- Completion of Chief Executive's performance review for 2017/18.
- Completion of Chair's appraisal with the Deputy Permanent Secretary.
- Conducting Stage 2 Examination appeals and follow up actions.
- A series of meetings with Department of Education and Department for the Economy senior officials; and members of the Executive Team.

The Chair also advised that he had met with a Chinese delegation from Lingong province, China, and attended the Northern Ireland Skills Event Senior Steering group meeting.

- Attendance at a number of events to include NIAO Breakfast Briefing from the Auditor General; Chairs Forum address from Sue Gray, Permanent Secretary, Department of Finance; Young Enterprise Northern Ireland.
- Visits to Bloomfield School and the Chair of the OfQual Board.

The agenda for the Ofqual visit with its Chair, Roger Taylor, would be circulated to members' outside of the meeting.

Meetings with the Chief Executive : The Chair confirmed that regular 1-1 meetings with the Chief Executive continued (on a fortnightly basis) to monitor effectiveness and seek assurances on the operations of the organisation.

Members noted the information provided.

Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive (CE) drew attention to the information provided and updated members on activity since the last meeting. This included :

Curriculum & Assessment

- Monitoring of engagement with end of Key Stage Assessment continues as a result of Industrial action. The Director of Education will discuss this further with the Education Committee.

The Chief Executive advised he had met with senior officials from DE regarding a package of proposals currently under consideration not developed by CCEA. He expressed concern about the continued uptake, as a result of Action Short of Strike (ASOS). It was agreed to monitor progress in this area and report back accordingly.

- Alternative Assessment Arrangements : a range of approaches for developing formative assessments were outlined at a workshop with the Department of Education in May 2018. Development work continues in this area with the completion of a pilot, in partnership with Cambridge University, on computer adaptive tests for mathematics. This has been extended to literacy and digital in the current pilot phase.
- Shared Education 2018/19: CCEA continues to fulfil its statutory duty in regards to Shared Education and has continued to support the DE programme. An action plan has been developed to include an audit of existing CCEA resources and materials, as well as the development of educational pathways in conjunction with the Education Authority(EA).
- The Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting team has been shortlisted for an award for the Minecraft learning resource.
- The Chief Executive participated in a joint Department of Education (DE) / Department for the Economy (DfE) strategy planning for 14-19 Education. The report will be circulated to Council once available.

Examinations

- The Summer examinations series concluded with results being issued for A Level and GCSE on 16 and 23 August respectively with no issues to date. The first award of the notional GCSE Grade C* went smoothly.
- Provisional market share in GCSE and A Level are at 95.2% and 82.9% respectively, with a significant increase at A Level from 2017.
- CCEA will contribute to the JCQ review of malpractice chaired by Sir John Dumford. The Chief Executive confirmed that he would be an observer to the process.

Regulation

- Revised A Levels for Mathematics and Further Mathematics were awarded for the first time – Summer 2018, with no issues of concern.
- Revised CCEA GCSE qualifications will be awarded for the first time in Summer 2019. The communications plan agreed by Council on the GCSE Grading Changes continues to be implemented with all stakeholders to ensure clarity and understanding in advance of first awards.

- An initial meeting has taken place with DE officials to discuss the Future of Qualifications report and explore options in the absence of a Minister to agree the way forward. This has been positive to date.
- The Chief Executive has met with senior officials from the Department for the Economy (DfE) to discuss implications of the T-Level consultations and procurement process.

Members considered the information provided and sought clarification on a range of matters, in particular, whether T Levels would be available to schools and the Further Education (FE) sector in Northern Ireland.

The Chief Executive advised that, at present, there was no indication that the Institute for Apprenticeships in England would permit or be permitting the operation of T-Levels in Northern Ireland. He confirmed this was the current position, and it would be monitored to ensure appropriate action could be taken, if required, for learners in Northern Ireland.

A Council member suggested that CCEA present advice to the Departments (DE and DfE) on Vocational Qualifications (14-19). It was also important for the organisation to be proactive and have a position on 14-19 education. The Chief Executive explained that CCEA Regulation was engaged with work on options for the future of Technical Qualifications in Northern Ireland with DfE.

The Chair suggested this be raised with the Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Development Session on 24 October.

The Chair of the Education Committee confirmed that he would discuss the area of vocational qualifications with the Director of Education for inclusion on the next appropriate agenda.

A Council member asked if the Chief Executive would share his learning from his recent Commonwealth Study Visit at the next appropriate meeting. The Chair agreed that learning should be shared with Council.

Corporate

The Chief Executive confirmed that CCEA had successfully completed an external assessment of the ISO standards. He stressed the importance of maintaining quality assurance of the processes and services of CCEA.

FOI Requests

Members noted the most recent FOI requests.

4 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 June 2018

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 June 2018 were proposed by Mr Robert Thompson and seconded by Mrs Christine Harpur as a true and accurate record. A copy was available for the Chair to sign.

It was suggested that, moving forwards, where there are significant proposals requiring approval these should be proposed and seconded accordingly. In regards to Council and Committee papers, where there are proposals and recommendations for consideration, these should be marked clearly and appropriately in the content. The Chief Executive confirmed that this would be taken into consideration.

Action Points

The Chair drew attention to the status of the action sheet. He confirmed that arrangements were underway for a representative from the Boardroom Apprentice to attend a future meeting. Mr Wilson agreed to circulate his presentation to members.

5 Correspondence

Members noted the following correspondence :

- CCEA Corporate Risk Register 2018/19
- 2018/19 Public Sector Transformation Fund (PSTF)
- 2018/19 Business Plan 1st Quarter Monitoring
- 2018/19 Business Plan Mid-Year Monitoring
- Temporary Cover to pay eligible CCEA Business Managers Contractual Revalorisation 2018/19
- Temporary cover to pay eligible CCEA Main Staff Contractual Revalorisation 2018/19
- Technical & Professional Qualifications 2018 Developments
- 2018/19 Mid-Year Governance Statement
- CCEA Performance Related Pay Policy and Framework 2017/18
- CCEA Final Financial Plan 2017/18

The Chief Executive welcomed the pro-active engagement with the Department for the Economy in regards to the provision of advice/options on Technical & Professional Qualifications. He confirmed that this would continue as the work progresses.

6 Governance and Accountability (GAR)

Minutes of the GAR Meeting held on 19 June 2018.

The Chair advised that the minutes had not yet been finalised and would be circulated to Council members in due course.

Notification of next meeting

The next Governance and Accountability Review meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 16 October 2018. A report would be provided at the Council meeting on 12 December 2018.

7 Finance

Finance Committee Report : Meeting held on 6 September 2018

The Chair of the Committee drew attention to the detail of the minutes and confirmed that the committee had fulfilled its scrutiny and challenge function on all agenda items.

She reported on the following:

- Finance Report as at 31 July 2018 : members expressed concern at the significant overspend of £459K at this time. Assurances were sought and received that appropriate actions would be put in place to manage the budget during 2018/19.

- Statement of Financial Position as at 31 July 2018 : the main issue remains increased pension liability.
- Final year end budget position : members noted a final end of year position of £19K (0.1%) underspend with capital underspent by 0.2%. Both within the DE target of 1%. Members commended officers on an excellent performance.
- Members received a presentation on Inescapable Pressures for 2019/20.

Clarification was sought on whether figures/statistics were presented to DE to show the costing of the CCEA operation. The Chair confirmed that costing out CCEA's services were clearly presented to the Department of Finance, in detail and on a regular basis.

- Public Sector Transformation Fund (PSTF) Bid : members discussed the proposal and agreed to recommend to Council that the organisation should be able to access the PSFT for 2018/19.
- Corporate Plan : Monitoring Report : Quarter 1 : members were content with the information provided.

The above items were on the agenda for this meeting.

- Public Sector Shared Services Programme (PSSSP): members noted limited progress since the last meeting, and the commitment to participate in and support the programme.
- Invigilation Rates of Pay : members were content with the outcome of the review on rates of pay for invigilators and noted plans to modernise and simplify the process.
- The Government's guarantee for EU funded programmes. CCEA is involved in the Erasmus+ programme. Members noted that the UK government will provide any shortfall on funding or bids for funding up until March 2019.
- Procurement and Business Case Update : two procurements were finalised and awarded by the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD). There is also one live procurement with CPD. CCEA will also be involved in 2 collaborative procurement opportunities.

Members noted the business cases in the final stages of internal review. These would go forward to the committee for approval in due course.

Human Resources : members received reports in Sickness Absence; the Performance Review System and feedback from the Staff Survey. An update was also provided on the recruitment for Head of Regulation, which has since concluded.

The Estates Strategy will continue to be a standing item on the agenda until a suitable facility is found for CCEA post-2021. Members asked for representations to continue to be made to the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) and DE on the specific needs for the organisation, and raise the importance of the timing of the move to ensure the integrity of the summer examinations series.

This concluded the Finance Committee report to Council.

Examination Fees

Clarification was sought on whether the review of examination fees would come forward to Council as fees were a substantial part of schools' budgets. The Chair confirmed that should there be a review of examination fees, this would be presented to members for full discussion.

A Council member stated that an increase in examination fees would not be well received by the schools sector, given the current financial pressures on schools in Northern Ireland.

Public Sector Transformation Fund (PSTF) Bid 2018/19

C/130/1

The Chair confirmed that the matter was discussed at Finance Committee. He advised that a suggestion of ring fencing critical roles was under investigation.

The Chief Executive provided an overview of the methodology applied for PSFT during the last 3 years. He confirmed that a proposal for a cost savings of £330K with an anticipated headcount of 6 members of staff had been submitted to access funding for VES for 2018/19.

Members sought and received clarification on a wide range of matters. An assurance was given that sufficient mitigations were in place to protect the level of service provided by the organisation, and that the Executive Team continued to deal with pressures within the workplace as they arose.

Members were content with the information provided. The proposal to apply for funding was formally proposed by Mr Trevor Carson and seconded by Dr Les Caul.

Final 2017/18 Budget Position as at 31 March 2018

C/130/2

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services (DoF&CS) drew attention to the detail provided and reported a year-end position of £19K (0.1%) underspend against DE funded expenditure with Capital underspent by 0.2%. She confirmed both remained within the DE target of 1.0%.

She advised that the Report to those Charged with Governance (RttCwG) was received on 3 July 2018, with no adjustments required. An unqualified position on the CCEA Accounts for 2017/18 was also confirmed.

Members commended the performance.

Finance Report as at 31 July 2018

C/130/3

The DoF&CS advised members of an overspend of £459K (3.4%) which is outside the 1% target set by DE. She advised that although concerning, a range of actions were being put in place to manage the budget through to year-end. Some progress had been made and a more accurate position would be presented to the Finance Committee at its December meeting.

She wished to place on record that concerns remained in achieving the budget by year-end.

The Chair of the Finance Committee confirmed that members had discussed the report in detail and were concerned at the position. The DoF&CS and teams had been encouraged to monitor and manage the position closely.

The Chair of Council asked the Chief Executive to brief him as appropriate at their regular update meetings.

Members noted the information provided, in particular the ongoing increase in pension liability.

Presentation : Inescapable pressures 2019/20 : Initial review

The DOF&CS confirmed that an initial assessment on forecasting the 2019/20 budget had been completed.

The Financial Services Manager (FM) gave a detailed presentation (circulated to members for information) which included:

- Summary
- Estimated pay bill pressures
- Initial assessment : forecast 2019/20 budget requirement
- Areas for further consideration
- Next steps

Members sought and received clarification on a number of matters, including the potential budgetary impact on curriculum & assessment projects and possible increases in marking fees in respect of English.

The Chair suggested that an additional meeting of the Education Committee be convened in late November to discuss the possible financial implications on projects and asked the Chief Executive and Director of Education to provide detailed information for discussion.

The DoF&CS confirmed that following discussions with the Director of Finance (DE) it was clear that Council would be required to consider and agree to a range of solutions on pressures that may arise from possible budget cuts. The Chair confirmed that Council would support the process as appropriate.

Following discussion, members expressed concern that significant cuts could have a detrimental impact on the running of CCEA's core business. It was suggested that it may be helpful to have a clear strategy for responding to DE should this arise.

It was proposed that a date for an additional meeting of the Education Committee would be sought in late November.

Annual Report and Accounts 2017/18 and Final Report to those Charged with Governance (RttCWG)

Members noted the information provided.

The Chair of the Finance Committee drew attention to page 7 of the report and wished to place on record her thanks, on behalf of the Finance Committee, to the Financial Services Manager on the quality and effectiveness of the reports presented. She asked that the FM pass on congratulations to all staff across the organisation involved for the substantial amount of work undertaken on this achievement.

Dr Kerr left the meeting at this point.

Planning and Performance

Corporate Plan 2018/19 Monitoring Report : Quarter 1

C/130/6

The DoF&CS drew attention to the detail of the information provided and reported on the first quarter of 2018/19.

Members noted the information provided.

8 Education

The Chair welcomed Ms Amanda Swann, Business Manager, Qualifications, to the meeting.

Report on Summer 2018 Examination Series

The Chair advised that as per normal practice Council would receive a presentation on the trends in entries and outcomes for GCSE and A Levels for the 2018 summer examinations series.

Trends in Entries and Outcomes for GCSE and A Level for Northern Ireland 2018 ***C/130/7***

The Business Manager, Qualifications, drew attention to the detail of the paper and gave a presentation to support the information provided. This included :

- Setting the context – NI School population trends and changes across the three countries
- NI GCE A Level Entries 2014-18 & NI GCE A Level Results
- Gender Comparisons
- Most popular A level subjects and NI Industry impact
- Most popular A Level subjects by gender
- NI GCE A Level Stem Entries 2017-18; STEM popularity continues to grow ie. 43% of all GCSE entries.
- NI Languages Entries 2017-2018
- NI AS Entries 2014-2018
- NI AS Results 2018
- GCSE Results 2018 : 30,619 students received CCEA results across 259 centres
- GCE Results 2018 : 81/1% of entries achieved A*-C which was recognised as the highest pass rate in the UK
- A*-C Grades in GCSE English
- CCEA Market Share has increased to 95.2% (an increase of 6.5% from 2017)

Members discussed the information in detail. Clarification was sought and received on a wide range of matters. Members were content with the explanations provided.

The Chief Executive suggested that it might be helpful for an information session to explore the awarding process and regulation function across the 3 countries (Northern Ireland, England and Wales) to be held in future. This could also include comparability of standards across the 3 jurisdictions.

It was confirmed the Insights Report 2018 would be available in January 2019. UCAS data could be obtained from the UCAS website.

The Chair thanked officers and members for their input.

Mrs Cowan left the meeting at this point.

9 Audit

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) Report : Meeting 20 September 2018

The Chair of the Committee drew attention to the detail of the minutes provided, and advised that the meeting had been substantial, with significant input from the Department of Education representative.

He reported on the following :

- *Risk Assurance in Awards and Purchasing June – August 2018* : members noted one unauthorised purchase during the reporting period, and no areas of concern in regards to Direct Award Contracts.

Members commended the management of this area.

- *Final Report to those Charged with Governance* : (on the agenda for this meeting); members noted the final report.
- *National Fraud Initiative Report 2016/17*: members received a copy of the final report for information.
- *National Fraud Initiative* : members noted CCEA's mandatory participation. They were content that the deadlines had been met, and all the information provided had been investigated with no instances of fraud reported.
- *Corporate Risk Register : August 2018* : (on the agenda for this meeting); members were content with the information provided.
- *Mid-Year Governance Statement 2018/19*: (on the agenda for this meeting); members were content for the information provided.
- *Internal Audit Activity* : members noted the quarterly update report. Three internal audit reviews were considered : Absence & Sickness Monitoring; Creditors Payments & Purchasing; and Financial Management Information. All received satisfactory ratings.
- *DE Update* : the DE representative advised the committee that the Northern Ireland Civil Service Internal Audit were seeking to assume the audit role for all NDPBs.

It was recognised that further discussions were required. The Chief Executive confirmed he had sought clarification from DE that there would be a consultation on this as it denotes a substantial change in governance arrangements. He advised that the Executive Team would take forward appropriate discussions and inform the ARAC/Council accordingly.

- *Risk Management : Summer Examinations Series 2018*: (on the agenda for this meeting).
- *Operational Readiness for the January 2019 examinations series*: members were content that no concerns had been identified.
- *Risks Associated with T-Levels and Qualifications Reform in England* : Members were content with the nature and scope of the risk register being developed. It was recognised that the discussion

on the educational impact to centres and young people required input from full Council. (On the agenda for this meeting).

- *General Conditions of Recognition 2018* : The Statements of Compliance for CCEA, Ofqual and Qualifications Wales were considered and recommended to Council for final sign-off. (On the agenda for this meeting).

This concluded the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee report to Council.

Corporate Risk Register (CRR) : August 2018

C/130/8

The DoF&CS introduced this item and provided an overview of the main risks and associated mitigations outlined in the CRR. She confirmed that continuous monitoring would take place to ensure risks are updated as appropriate.

Members discussed the matter of T-Level Qualifications and associated risks. The Chief Executive suggested it may be useful to share the potential risks with Council, once developed, should these qualifications become available in Northern Ireland. He confirmed that the Regulators were working on a full range of options for consideration by the Regulatory Advisory Committee before being presented to Council.

The DoF&CS confirmed the need to have complete clarity on the different risk perspectives around T-Levels to ensure appropriate actions/mitigations can be developed should the need arise.

Mid-Year Governance Statement 2018/19

C/130/9

The Chief Executive introduced this item and provided an overview of the detail of the statement. He drew attention to significant risks identified, which included:

- Increase in level of risk to staff through threat and harassment.
- Increasing pressure on resources in a difficult financial environment in the Education sector.
- The change (in England) to 9 to 1 GCSE grading requiring a review of CCEA GCSE grading.

He assured members that remedial action had been taken to support the staff involved, and that a range of services were available on an ongoing basis.

Members were content with the information provided.

Risk Management : Summer Examinations Series 2018

C/130/10

The Chief Executive introduced this item and drew attention to the detail provided in paper C/130/10. He gave a brief overview of the following :

- Entry Profile
- Centre Operational Risks and Mitigations
- Examination Risks and Mitigations
- Materialised Risk

He confirmed that the ARAC had discussed the issue of lost scripts and assured Council that a full review was underway to identify changes required to prevent the errors re-occurring. Appropriate action plans would also be put in place and progressed accordingly.

Members noted the information provided.

The Chief Executive introduced this item. He reminded Council that he had been instructed to write to the Department for the Economy, who has now recognised there could be significant risks for Northern Ireland and are keen for CCEA Regulation to assume an active role in assisting in this area. (Appendices 1 and 2).

He provided a detailed overview of the information in paper C/130/11 and drew attention to the main risks on page 2.

Mrs Harpur left the meeting at this point.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the policy and qualifications were fully attached. Control for the programme would be held by the Institute of Apprenticeships, and the qualification regulated by Ofqual. He confirmed that procurement was required.

Members discussed an range of matters including :

- The intention to review non-GCSE Level 2 qualifications;
- The indication of a full market reform and a reduction of Vocational Qualifications on offer in Northern Ireland.
- Consideration of making provision for investment to develop alternatives for the T-Levels Policy and Qualifications should England not permit them to exist in Northern Ireland.

The Chair recognised the concern of Council and advised that the issues were for the Department of Education and Department for the Economy to determine what Vocational pathways/qualifications are required for learners in Northern Ireland to ensure the needs of its young people are met.

He asked for a range of options to be developed for further discussion, and for the Chief Executive to monitor developments and keep Council informed as appropriate.

General Conditions of Recognition 2018**C/130/12**

The Chief Executive drew attention to the detail of the documentation provided and advised that in addition to the submission of CCEA's Statement of Compliance (Appendix 1), statements for Ofqual (Appendix 2) and Qualifications Wales (Appendix 3) were also required.

He confirmed that the statements were considered by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting on 20 September 2018.

Members formally approved the statements to go forward for final sign-off by the Chair and Chief Executive, and subsequent submission to the Regulators.

The Statements of Compliance for 2018 were formally proposed by Mr Robert Thompson and seconded by Dr Neill Morton.

10 Any Other Business

None identified by the Secretariat.

11 Date of Next Meeting

The Chair confirmed the date of the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 12 December 2018 at 10.00 am. Dr Anne Evans, Chair of Qualifications Wales, would be present on this occasion.

Members noted the Council Development Day would be held on Wednesday 24 October 2018. The Deputy Permanent Secretary, Department of Education (DE) would give a presentation on DE's Transformation Programme, with the remainder of the day devoted to developing aims and objectives for Council.

A programme, together with additional information would be issued to members in advance.

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

