

CCEA

COUNCIL

Minutes of the one hundred and forty-ninth meeting of Council held on Thursday 31 March 2022 at 1.30 pm via MS Teams.

Present:

Mr T O'Reilly (Chair)
Miss M Corrigan
Dr L Caul
Mrs K O'Hare
Mr B Wilson
Professor P Hanna
Mrs A Kingsley

Ms P Slevin
Mrs P Leitch
Mrs S Sellars
Mrs D O'Connor
Mrs C Fitzsimons
Mr H McCarthy

Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement Members – Item 3 Only

Dr Noel Purdy – Chairperson
Joyce Logue
Mary Montgomery

Kathleen O'Hare
Jackie Redpath

Executive

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)
Mr J Daly (Financial Services Manager)
Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)
Ms Clare Greenwood (Boardroom Apprentice)

1.Introduction

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting. He confirmed that the Expert Panel on Educational Achievement would present to members at Item 3.

Future Guest presentations to Council

The Chair advised that presentations would also be provided by the Independent Review of Education Panel and members from the Irish Medium Sector at future Council meetings.

Guest Presentation : Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement in Northern Ireland : A Fair Start – Final Report and Action Plan

The Chair welcomed the Chairperson and members of the panel to the meeting and invited them to present the Fair Start Final Report and Action Plan to the Council.

Dr Purdy introduced members of the Expert Panel and provided a brief overview of the background to A Fair Start which was part of the New Decade, New Approach initiative established by the Northern Ireland Executive. He gave a detailed presentation which included :

- The Terms of Reference
- Mediums of Engagement and range of Stakeholders
- Key Areas 1 to 8 (detailed in presentation) & Summary of Costs within each Key Area
- Progress and Future Prospects

Members sought and received clarification on a wide range of issues, in particular the actions pertaining to CCEA and what CCEA's role would be in relation to implementation of the following:

3.2/3.3ii. CCEA to progress development of its own diagnostic assessment tools for use in all schools (including Irish Medium) from KS1 to KS3 with sample data to be used for system level measures including an agreed "value added" measure.

3.2/3.3iii. Refresh of the assessment of skills and knowledge in English, mathematics and ICT in a way which supports subsequent progression; and

3.4iv. Refresher training for teachers in the design principles behind the NI curriculum including play-based approaches at Foundation Stage and development approaches in the Early Years and advice for parents.

Following a wide ranging and detailed discussion members suggested that in order for CCEA to fulfil its role, a more sustainable funding model was required to allow effective planning in order to implement the work required. Dr Purdy concurred and advised that the report had been accepted by the Executive, however stated the need for appropriate funding.

Members, whilst recognising the challenges for implementation, commended the content of the report and the ambitious work completed by the panel.

Dr Purdy thanked the Chair for the invitation to address the Council and presenting the findings and associated actions. The Chair on behalf of Council, thanked the panel members for the report and welcomed all contributions which reflected a very constructive discussion. *The Panel Members left the meeting at this point.*

The Chair confirmed that there would be an opportunity for the Independent Review Panel on Education to present its findings at the June briefing.

Main Business

1 Apologies

An apology was received from Mr R Smyth.

2 Conflict of Interests

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

3 Chair's Business

Condolences

The Chair, on behalf of the Council wished to place on record deepest condolences to Mrs Margaret Huddleston and family on the sudden death of Gerry Huddleston, a highly respected and much-loved member of the Facilities Management Team in CCEA.

Gerry was a friendly character who played an important role not only in ensuring the headquarters building was safe and welcoming but also in his role as Chair of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance Committee (NIPSA) in CCEA. He was always willing to talk with all staff and visitors into the building. He will be sadly missed.

4 Interim Chief Executive's Report to Council C/149/1

The Interim Chief Executive (CEO) referred to the detail of the report and highlighted the range of initiatives and work underway across the organisation. She also informed members how work was commissioned by the Department for the Economy (DfE) through an annual Letter of Offer – this differs from the commissioning methodology used by the Department of Education.

The Interim Chief Executive was pleased to report that a Principal and member of the Irish Medium Group as well as a C na G Board Member described CCEA's work in supporting the sector as the 'best on the island'. Good feedback had also been received from members of the Digital Programme Board (CBI, leading employers) who were impressed with suggestions to be taken forward through the Education Committee in May to discuss proposals on how Digital can be supported.

Members noted the information provided.

5 Correspondence

The Chair drew attention to the correspondence provided for members' information.

6 Ratification of Minutes of previous meeting held on 27 January 2022

The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed by Ms Patricia Slevin and seconded by Mrs Kathleen O'Hare as a true and accurate record. A copy would be made available for the Chair to sign.

Action Points

The Chair drew attention to the status of the action points and updated members as appropriate.

7 CORPORATE

For Consideration

Development of the 2022-25 CCEA Corporate Plan C/149/2

The Interim Chief Executive advised that the draft plan had been revised following feedback from various forums outlined on paper C/149/2. She gave a comprehensive presentation to support the draft version of the Corporate Plan, this included:

- Progress to date, feedback and approach
- CCEA's Mission and Draft Vision
- The 4 strategic themes and associated actions
- Organisational capabilities

The Interim Chief Executive referred to the discussion points for Council comment.

Members welcomed the quality and accessibility of the content to all audiences and commended the format and design of the document. The significant amount of work carried out by officers was also recognised.

Following discussion members suggested the following points for further consideration/inclusion:

- An introductory statement (of 'what CCEA is') outlining CCEA's responsibilities and its remit to ensure the public have a clear understanding of the services the organisation provides given its complexities.
- An explanatory sentence for each of the 4 themes.
- An explanation of the rationale for the split between Assessment and Assessment delivery separately from the policy work for Curriculum and Assessment.
- Review and reduce the number of actions to make these more realistic and achievable.

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

She confirmed that the points raised would be considered and a summary of outcomes would be drawn up to meet any dovetailing requirements with DE. She advised that, following DE feedback, a further draft would be produced for Council approval.

The Chair thanked the Interim Chief Executive for her input and was content a further draft would be presented to Council at a later meeting.

For consideration

Draft Hybrid Working Pilot C/149/3

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services (DoFCS) introduced this item and advised on the work completed to date and the progress on exploring the hybrid working arrangements would both ensure the business needs of the organisation are met and how they could benefit CCEA as an employer and its work.

A pilot exercise is being planned to measure the benefits and explore risks and logistical issues.

The DoFCS drew attention to paper C/149/3 and sought views as appropriate. A Council member welcomed this proposal and commended consideration of the LRA's practical guide to hybrid working resource during development of the approach. The document was well structured in dealing with workforce and provided a comprehensive structure as reference. It was noted that this would be with a view to normalising working conditions and not contractual.

Clarification was sought and received on the expiry of the leases and challenges in terms of budget constraints. Whilst it was unlikely there would be significant savings, the objective was to ensure CCEA has a more efficient and fit for purpose facility to deliver its services. A Council member referred to the paper, in particular the reference to *who would have the final say on whether officers in their area would be able to avail of the hybrid working arrangements*. He suggested that a co-creation approach could be taken to be able to articulate opportunities for a blended approach to working.

The DoFCS confirmed that the majority of staff are content to work from home, however, with the business need changing it was essential that staff expectation versus business need (which will be first and foremost – staff are aware of this) was properly managed.

A Council member sought clarification on how CCEA's culture would be kept alive whilst supporting a hybrid working model. The DoFCS suggested the hybrid model would reinvigorate the culture and agreed to put in measures to address this aspect.

It was further suggested that an equality impact assessment be carried out to ensure equality of treatment to all staff. The DoFCS confirmed that permanent home working would not be offered to staff at this point, however a rigorous process will be put in place to ensure equality is included. She advised that productivity levels had increased in a number of areas where staff were working from home and sickness absence was significantly lower.

The Chair thanked members for their input and suggested that this matter be included on the agenda to ensure further discussion on future working arrangements. It was agreed that this would be on the agenda for a future meeting.

The Interim Chief Executive thanked members for their comments, and agreed that it should be discussed further.

Decision

The Chair sought and received confirmation that members were content with the information provided and were content to **approve** the parameters set out for Hybrid Working and noted the timelines required to formalise a permanent approach.

Council Meetings

The Chair suggested that subject to no deterioration in the current position in relation to Covid-19, and adhering to health and safety arrangements in Clarendon, the April Council meeting be conducted using the hybrid model with appropriate arrangements being put in place. Members agreed with this approach.

8 FINANCE

Chair's Report : Finance Committee Meeting : 17 February 2022

The Chair of the Finance Committee gave a report on the main items discussed and considered at the meeting held on 17 February 2022.

Finance Update – January 2022 C/149/4

The DoFCS introduced this item and detailed the financial position as at January 2022. She reported an underspend of £149K at that time with the February 2022 report showing an underspend of 1.3% which was outside the DE 1% target.

It was worth noting that this had been another very challenging year to manage the financial resources. The DoFCS confirmed that plans were in place to achieve and deliver services within budget at year end.

The Chair drew attention to the Chief Executive's Summary in particular the £4.5M pressures for 2023. The DoFCS advised that this has been revised to just over £3M. The Chair sought clarification on whether confirmation in relation to COVID posts and the

reserved Examinations series had been received. The DoFCS advised that confirmation of 2023 allocation had not yet been received however anticipated that DE would consider funding CCEA for the reserved series as project has been approved. It was hoped that budgets would be manageable within baseline, however Council would be updated should any concerns arise.

The Chair asked that a brief update on financial allocations be provided for the April meeting. The DoFC advised that the papers would be presented to the April Finance Committee meeting and forwarded to Council.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 January 2022

Members noted the information provided.

9 EDUCATION

Chair's Report : Education Committee : 22 March 2022

The Chair commended the quality of the papers presented by Mrs Esther Martin and Ms Amanda Swann. The meeting was positive and productive. She outlined the main items discussed and asked that the Insights Report 2021 be made available to Council for information.

The Temporary Director of Examinations confirmed that the Insights Report 2021 was undergoing final editorial in the coming days before being posted on the CCEA Website. Council would be informed when the document was available to view. Members were content with the information provided.

10 REGULATION

Chair's Report : Regulation Committee : 3 February 2022

The Chair of the Regulation Committee gave an overview of the main items discussed on 3 February 2022. She confirmed that expressions of interest had also been sought for a Vice-Chair of the Committee.

Members noted the information provided.

Evaluation of Assessment and Awarding for Vocational Qualifications 2020-21 C/149/5

The Head of Regulation introduced this item and provided an overview of the approach taken in conducting the evaluation of assessment and awarding of Vocational Qualification in 2020 and advised that DfE were satisfied with the approach and commissioned the Evaluation for 2021.

The 2021 evaluation was carried out independently and concluded that the arrangements were largely successful with a number of recommendations provided for consideration/implementation.

Members were content with the detail provided and were satisfied to approve the evaluation report for release to DfE.

The report was formally proposed by Mrs Anne Kingsley and seconded by Mrs Kathleen O'Hare.

11 Any Other Business

Personnel Issues

Mrs Paula Leitch, on behalf of the Council, wished to express their good wishes to Margaret and Michael for their impending wedding day and congratulated them on this special occasion.

Margaret thanked Paula for her kind words and to Council for the card and generous gift.

12 Date of Next Meeting

The Chair confirmed the date of the next meeting as Thursday 28 April 2022 at 1.30 pm and outlined possible agenda items for consideration.

13 Below the Line Business

The Chair asked members to note the ratified minutes of the Finance Committee held on 16 September 2021, and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 12 October 2021.

This concluded the formal business meeting.

The Chair thanked members and officers for their contributions to the meeting.