

**Educational Research Centre
MEETING OF THE BOARD
30th May 2017**

A meeting of the Board of the Educational Research Centre ("ERC"), was held on May 30th 2017 at the offices of the organisation.

Board Members Present:

Pauric Travers (PT), Chairperson; Denise Burns (DB), Deputy Chairperson; Michael Martin (MM) (Via Skype Link), Jude Cosgrove (JC); Edward Murtagh (EM)

In Attendance:

Peter Archer (PA), Anne Comey (AC) who took the minutes

Absent: N/A

Counsel Present: N/A

Call to Order

PT called the meeting to order at 2 pm.

The Agenda was adopted (Appendix I). Item 8 was moved to item 4 for logistical reasons.

1. Minutes BMin 2 – 0317

The minutes of the last meeting were adopted.

2. Matters Arising from previous minutes

Accounts have been audited by Mazars who have come back with some recommendations. The draft accounts will be updated accordingly. Statement of internal controls will be issued by email to the Board in June for review.

3. Report on developments since previous meeting

PA circulated a note on developments since the meeting of the board in March (see Appendix II) and spoke briefly about these developments. Board acknowledged importance of the leaving certificate study (number 5 in Appendix II).

4. Audit and Risk Committee

EM accepted the role of Chairperson of the Risk and Audit committee with the thanks of the Board.

Quotation to be requested from external auditors for both internal risk assessment and training. The first Risk and Audit Committee will take place on July 5th 2017.

5. Updates on the transition agreement

PA, PT and AC met with Declan Raftery, Chief Operations Officer in DCU, to discuss a number of outstanding issues. Declan confirmed that there was no plans for the ERC moving out of the Centre for the foreseeable future and, if this happened, it was clear to DCU that they would need to provide suitable alternative premises.

The issue of the Richmond Road Trust was also discussed and DCU confirmed that Richmond Road was not mentioned in the incorporation document. This therefore raises a question about whether the St Lawrence O'Toole trust still has a role to play in the transfer of the premises to the ERC. DCU also confirmed they had no interest in the building and are prepared to confirm this in writing. It was agreed that solicitors from both sides should get in contact and the ERC is awaiting details of DCU's solicitor.

The issue of the lift was raised with DCU who confirmed that they would look into it. It was decided that the proposed bursary which would result from funds raised by the Centre over the years and looking to build capacity for the ERC in the future will be discussed with Anne Looney shortly. PT indicated that he might have an opportunity to raise the matter with Anne shortly.

Finally it was agreed that a meeting between the head of library and the ERC would be organised to try and resolve the ongoing access issues.

6. DES Governance Meeting

PA and AC reported on a meeting with CAP unit as follows: Governance meeting on 15/05/2017 the following issues were discussed:

- **Workplan:** This, according to CAP, should be adjusted to provide a list of outcomes per topic and to show clear linkages to the Action Plan for Education
- **Accounts /Annual Report:** DES acknowledged receipt of unaudited draft accounts by deadline of 28th February.
- **Budget and finances:** ERC has advised DES of increased costs due to TIMSS and eTIMSS. ERC is to have an internal discussion on this and contact DES further in due course.
- **Code of Practice:** ERC's schedule for preparation of key documents was outlined and agreed by DES
- **DES noted that,** due to resource issues in CAP unit, progress has not been made on the proposed memorandum of understanding to date.
- **New CEO:** DES is progressing discussions with DPER on the matter and will revert as soon as possible.
- **Transition Agreement:** TA running out in Sept 2017. DCU wondering whether to renew licence for payroll software. Also discussed meeting with Declan Raftery as detailed in item 5 above.

- DES advised ERC that due to staffing issues in CAP Unit, it is unlikely that CAP Unit can progress the Transition Agreement discussions as would otherwise have been hoped.
- Staffing: ERC had sent a draft business case for more staff. DES asked for more information on staffing generally in the ERC.
- Pensions: ERC to contact DCU to clarify that all is in order for pension of retiring CEO in August 2017.

7. CBT

The take up of the DES offer to give grants to schools to take the DOTS was very high, and despite some technical issues have proved popular with the schools. However, the number of tests taken in 2017 will still be smaller than had originally been expected.

8. Presentation on resource allocation model

Susan Weir and David Millar joined the meeting and made a presentation outlining work done in the Centre, over many years, which was used to inform resource allocation. In all cases, this involved assessing levels of disadvantage in schools, but in recent work relating to special needs education, information on disadvantage was combined with data from other sources meaning that, unlike previous work of this kind, what the Centre produced was an actual allocation. The advantages of Centre involvement in this kind of work was acknowledged but risks were also noted. In subsequent discussion, it was agreed that work to inform resource allocation was worthwhile but staff and the Board needed to be mindful of the associated risks and that any proposed future work should be considered on its own merits.

9. Terms of Reference for the Board

Proposed Terms of reference for the Board were adopted pending the following changes:

- The wording "Members of the Centre" for "Members of the Board" throughout the document
- The word "allowed" to "entitled" Section (1.7)
- The word "period" to "term" (Section 1.8)

It was also noted that although the ERC would always aim to issue documents for board meetings in a timely manner, some documents, because of their nature (including any document outlining developments since the previous meeting) would be tabled at the meeting rather than distributed in advance. The Board agreed.

10. ERC policies

Revised Claiming Expenses policy and Code of conduct for the Board and Employees of the ERC were adopted by the Board.

It was also agreed that a number of policies would be issued to the Board over two or three meetings to accelerate development and adoption of these.

11. Staffing

A business case has been made to the DES for a Research Fellow and an additional 1.5 Research Assistant to allow for the current work load to be carried out and to respond to a lack of senior positions within the ERC.
Issues of the current staff on temporary contract has been noted by the Board.

12 Annual Report

A draft structure of the annual report was issued to the Board.
A draft of the report itself will be sent in June to finalise the document for approval on July 5th.

13 Strategic Plan

Work on a strategic plan is impaired by the lack of movement on the recruitment of the new CEO.

14 AOB

AC to circulate dates for meetings in the second half of 2017.

JC declared her interest in applying for the CEO position and asked whether any further actions on her part would be necessary, other than removing herself from discussions on this matter. She confirmed she would comply with whatever actions the Board would judge necessary.

15 CEO Recruitment

PA and JC removed themselves from the meeting at this point.

PT to contact DES to organise official request to stay on for a number of months to PA.
Letter shall insist that solution can only be temporary and that action on the recruitment of CEO needs to be taken.

The Board agreed that no further action is required from JC at this point but to remove herself from any discussions relating to the recruitment of the CEO. JC should be allowed to carry out her function as Board Member as normal, save for any business relating to this particular issue.

*Paul Innes
5 July 2017*