

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Northern Ireland · Charity number 107530

Details

Status	Received
Company number	24026
Registered	2020-02-10
Register	View on the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland register

Contact

Address	The Community Relations Council Equality House 7-9 Shaftesbury Square Belfast BT2 7dp BT2 7DP
Phone	02890227500
Email	info@nicrc.org.uk
Website	https://www.community-relations.org.uk/

Activities

Purposes: The advancement of education and of other charitable purposes beneficial to the community in Northern Ireland ("the area of benefit") and in particular, but not so as to limit the generality of the foregoing, the advancement of education in and the understanding of the different cultural traditions of the peoples of the area of benefit and the improvement of community relations in the area of benefit.

What the charity does: The advancement of education, Other charitable purposes

How the charity works: General charitable purposes, Grant making

Who the charity helps: General public

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£3,207,052	£3,254,936	£-563,368	17

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Martin Mcdonald		
Mr John Mccallister		
Mr Michael Mcdonnell		
Mr Rory Campbell		
Mrs Nisha Tandon		
Mrs Sheila Mcclelland		
Ms Audrey Simpson		
Ms Clare Harris		

Accounts

Company Registration No. NI24026

Charity No. 107530

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council
Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31st March 2025

Presented to The Northern Ireland Assembly by the Community Relations Council on
6th October 2025

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

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The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

General Information

Chair	M McDonald
Registered office	Equality House Shaftesbury Square Belfast BT2 7DP
Auditors	Comptroller and Auditor General Northern Ireland Audit Office 106 University Street Belfast BT7 1EU
Solicitors	Lewis Silkin 220 Ormeau Road Belfast BT7 2FY
Principal bankers	Bank of Ireland Donegal Place Belfast
Charity number	107530
Company registration number	NI24026
Website:	<u>https://www.community-relations.org.uk/</u>

Chair's Foreword

In June 2024, the First and Deputy First Ministers reappointed the Board of Directors for a second term of office on the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council (CRC). In order to introduce a formal succession plan to replace the Board of Directors some members will retire in December 2025 after serving 18 months of the second term and a new recruitment process will be initiated in 2025 by The Executive Office (TEO) to replace retiring members.

As a team of non-executive Directors, we have developed a very positive working relationship with Executive Colleagues. As Chair I would like to thank TEO officials for all their continued support and assistance over the past year.

The restoration of the Assembly has greatly assisted the work of CRC and the attendance of TEO Ministers at a wide range of CRC events has sent a strong signal to the communities we serve that our politicians fully support and endorse the wide range of good relations programmes we deliver on behalf of government. I am confident that as the new Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) policy and strategy emerges in the coming months that CRC will continue to support government and our communities in sustainable long term peace building. The time has come for everyone to accept their individual role of ensuring we build peace into our everyday lives and recognise the benefits to the entire economy of a society that embraces and values a fully socially cohesive community infrastructure.

At an operational level CRC has continued to deliver in line with its operational plan and strategy.

The annual Good Relations Week, co-ordinated by the Community Relations Council took place from 16th to 22nd September 2024 under the theme of "Opportunity". The Week is designed to showcase good practice and encourage wide engagement. 244 event listings covering every council area across a range of themes during Good Relations Week 2024.

The launch and the week of activities attracted extensive media coverage as well as coverage in the regional press.

This year the 2025 Good Relations Awards expanded to six categories. The Awards continued to include five categories with partners from Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA), Volunteer Now, NI Youth Forum and Community Foundation for Northern Ireland with a new Housing for All "Shared Housing" category in partnership with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Panels met in February 2025 to assess a total of 65 nominations received across all the categories. This year CRC's Exceptional Achievement Award went to Kathy Wolff co-ordinator of The Community Relations Forum Newtownabbey. Kathy joins a long list of noteworthy winners of this award and has been a shining light – seeking and supporting peace building, bravely changing and reimagining community.

While CRC delivers grants to many communities it also continues to facilitate a strong engagement process right across the province. Over the last year 450 people attended the three Engagement Forums. 33% of attendees at the three T:BUC Engagement Forums were new attendees and 92% of attendees at the T:BUC Engagement Forum rated the events as good, very good or excellent.

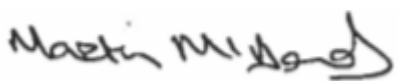
Throughout the year CRC provided support to funded groups including delivery of events online and face-to-face, online grant procedures, regular website updates, social media posts and the monthly eNews.

A programme of four Shared Learning events was delivered for core funded and North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme groups. This year these events were delivered with both in-person and online participation. 81% of participants rate the Shared Learning Events as very good, very good or excellent overall.

In terms of grants delivered by CRC, thirty organisations received grants awards of £1,220,000 from the Core Fund and ten organisations received grant awards totalling £602,640 from the North Belfast Programme which CRC administers on behalf of TEO.

We also awarded £196,739 in funding to 71 projects from 85 applications received under the Community Relations/Cultural Diversity (CRCD) funding programme dealing with the legacy of the conflict, peace-building, tackling sectarianism and racism, and building good relations in our diverse community.

As Chair of CRC I want to conclude by thanking our CEO Dr Jacqueline Irwin for her support and leadership over the past year. Alongside a small staff team she has managed to meet our operational targets in an environment of reduced budgets and increased demand. This would not be possible without the efforts of all our staff who continue to give their best daily to ensure CRC's peacebuilding efforts reaches those in most need.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Martin McDonald', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Martin McDonald

Chair CRC

Chief Executive Officer's Comment

On 27 February 2025 the Executive agreed a Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'. In addition to the immediate priorities set out in the plan, CRC welcomed the commitments to the missions of People, Planet, Prosperity and the cross-cutting commitment to Peace. The plan said, "Our cross-cutting commitment will make sure that everyone feels the benefit of a growing economy, improved environment, and a fairer society"; the Community Relations Council welcomes this but believes that the description of peace leaves out the important factor of social cohesion. We believe that the description should refer to good intercommunity relationships because they are the bedrock on which everything else thrives. Poor community relationships affect everything and place a heavy burden on all areas of public expenditure including policing, justice, housing, health. There is complexity in our peace process and the range of issues in our past and present that can affect different sections of our society in planned and unplanned ways. We do not all experience peace in the same way. Those involved in community relations work know that the challenge lies in acknowledging and working with differing perspectives because that is the reality of pluralist societies. The work is not about bringing everyone to the same point of view but learning to live well together with our differences. Our peace process has endured many challenges, but we can be encouraged by the fact that although never guaranteed, it has endured.

As an Arm's Length body of The Executive Office, the Community Relations Council is a key delivery partner responsible for funding programmes across the region to tackle sectarianism, racism, and to build good community relationships now and for the future. The Community Relations Council works on a collaborative basis and in the coming year we will welcome further engagement on the role of Arms-Length Bodies and the community and voluntary sector in the design and implementation of many of the actions set out in the new Programme for Government. We will continue to refresh our approach to sustaining peace and good relations to ensure we are supporting the most effective interventions for the times we live in and the needs of the community.

The Programme for Government comes at a time of huge challenge in relation to the level of demand for services and the difficulties in public finances. The Community Relations Council recognises the pressures on public finances and the challenges they present. In recent years public services have been operating on single year budgets. To support better planning and delivery of public services we look forward to the re-introduction of multi-annual funding cycles.

Because 2024-25 was another financially challenging year across the public sector, the Community Relations Council had to continue to suspend three grant schemes due to the budget pressures (the Pathfinder Grant Scheme, Publications and Media Schemes). The organisation mitigated the impact by directing potential applicants to our small grant scheme. Given the financial pressures affected the majority of the organisations we fund, it was again

inspiring to see how they found creative ways to overcome these challenges and continue to build good cross-community relationships, often at the same time as delivering other services at a local level. The Community Relations Council is working on new ways to record these additional benefits as they demonstrate the way in which good community relationships are essential to creating the best context into which to delivery other public, voluntary and community services.

Throughout the year the Community Relations Council managed its grant schemes and its engagement and learning work to the high standard required of public bodies, reported as always in a timely and transparent way. The Community Relations Council now routinely delivers services in-person and on-line. This approach has allowed people to attend our events regardless of where they are geographically. It has reduced the number of unnecessary journeys and assisted our aim to work in a sustainable way that contributes to combatting the environmental challenge we all face. We continue to believe that these small actions, if taken by a large enough number of other organisations, and in conjunction with wider systemic and targeted public policy intervention, will make a positive difference and contribute to the region's sustainability goals.

The Community Relations Council operates as a centre of excellence and a hub for the exchange of learning and best practice, through our online and in-person development and engagement work with funded groups, our wide networks in the voluntary and community sector, and with policymakers and academics. Communications on our website, X (formerly Twitter) and e-news also continued to be a valuable source of information.

During the year we continued to organise the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Engagement Forum on behalf of The Executive Office. The Forum continues to be a platform for structured engagement between those involved in the design of policy and those working in various aspects of delivery. The complex weave of perspectives necessary to reflect the diversity of our community is evident in those that attend and the themes of the Forum meetings.

The Community Relations Council was also pleased to deliver Good Relations Week 2024. We thank Carl Frampton MBE, who served as Ambassador for the week and everyone who organised or attended the events. As always, we are grateful to the steering group which included representatives from The Executive Office, Education Authority, Libraries NI, The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, NI Environment Link, The Nerve Centre, Disability Action, NI Local Government Association, Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, Mencap and Bryson.

The annual Good Relations Awards were again co-ordinated by the Community Relations Council and delivered in partnership with The Executive Office and we were delighted that Junior Minister Aisling Reilly and Junior Minister Pam Cameron were able to attend the award ceremony. The awards highlight exceptional achievement in promoting community relations, intercultural work, and peacebuilding. This work is strengthening a shared community spirit across the region, improving people's lives and their outlook for the future. We are delighted to deliver the awards in partnership with Volunteer Now, the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA), NI Youth Forum, the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, all of whom encouraged local groups,

individuals and organisations from across the region to get involved and to submit nominations for the Awards. Our congratulations to this year's winners who were Kathy Wolff (Community Relations Council Exceptional Achievement Award -peace building); Cooper McClure (Good Relations Volunteer of the Year Award); Jonah Atos (Good Relations Community Champion Award); Emma Baptista (Good Relations Youth Award -Under 25s); Jubilee Farm (Good Relations Connecting Communities Project of the Year) and Portstewart Community Association (Housing for All). Congratulation also to the runners-up and all those nominated for the great work you do all year round to build a future that will benefit everyone.

We are grateful to The Executive Office for the financial and other support we receive to do our work. We anticipate that the review of the *Together: Building a United Community* strategy will be published in the coming year. We look forward to working with The Executive Office in the co-design processes that will develop the actions in the refreshed strategy. The publication of the review will also set the context for the Community Relations Council to complete work on its next strategic plan.

I am grateful to my fellow staff members for the work they do every day to build and sustain good community relations. I also want to thank our Chair, Martin McDonald and the members of the Board for their continued support and guidance to me during the year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Irwin', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jacqueline Irwin

Chief Executive Officer and Accounting Officer

Strategic Report

i) Performance Overview

The directors are pleased to present their Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025. This overview section gives a summary on the creation of the Community Relations Council, its aims and objectives, the risks it currently faces and its achievements over the 2024-25 year.

Principal Activities

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council was established by government in 1990 as an independent charity and a company limited by guarantee.

The overall aim for the Community Relations Council, as set out in its Articles of Association, is the advancement of education and of other charitable purposes beneficial to the community in Northern Ireland (“the area of benefit”), and in particular, but not so as to limit the generality of the foregoing, the advancement of education in, and the understanding of, the different cultural traditions of the peoples of the area of benefit and the improvement of community relations in the area of benefit.

The Board of the Community Relations Council has nine members, meets every six weeks and is supported by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Community Relations Council is responsible for delivery of the organisation's strategy and is supported by three Directors: Director of Funding and Development, Director of Community Engagement and Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel. The staffing structure of the Community Relations Council is currently made up of 17 employees as presented in the organisation chart shown on page 15. The Community Relations Council encourages and develops employees to enhance the contribution they make to the Community Relations Council's work and the issues important to developing good community relations. Although this is a small team, the Community Relations Council routinely works in partnership across the region with other bodies that have good relations objectives.

The Community Relations Council delivered its 2024-25 operational plan in an agile mix of on-line and in-person activities. This approach enables the organisation to deliver a more sustainable programme with a reduced impact on the environment.

Review of activities

Strategic Plan 2020-25

The Community Relations Council takes its planning objectives from “Together: Building a United Community” (T:BUC) published by The Executive Office in 2013. Following public consultation, the Community Relations Council's 2020-24 Strategic Plan was approved by Ministers in January 2021. It sets out the strategic objectives of the Community Relations Council in the context of T:BUC and provides the strategy for the work delivered by the Community Relations Council during 2024-25. With the agreement of The Executive Office

CRC's 2020-24 Strategic Plan was extended to facilitate alignment with the outcome of the Department's review of Together: Building a United Community.

The Community Relations Council promotes good relations among the citizens and communities of Northern Ireland and supports the delivery of the Programme for Government (PfG) and the T:BUC strategy. To fulfil these aims the Community Relations Council focuses on the following areas of activity set out in our 2020-25 Strategic Plan:

- a) Distribution of funding, in collaboration with The Executive Office, to build and support good community relationships.
- b) Promotion of learning, best practice and assist good communication between all relevant sectors and Government in the delivery of the T:BUC Strategy and good relations outcomes.
- c) Ensuring the efficient and effective use of public resources allocated to it by operating to the highest standard of corporate governance in line with relevant guidance and best practice.

Business Plan 2024-25

The business model employed by the Community Relations Council to ensure delivery of its key priorities and achievement of its objectives is implemented through three key functional activities; Funding and Development; Community Engagement; and Finance, Administration and Personnel.

The Community Relations Council's 2024-25 Business Plan had the following three strategic objectives:

- a) Deliver funding in collaboration with The Executive Office to build and support good community relationships.
- b) Promote learning, best practice and assist with good communication between all relevant sectors and Government in the delivery of the T:BUC strategy and good relations outcomes.
- c) Ensuring the efficient and effective use of public resources allocated to us by operating to the highest standard of corporate governance in line with relevant guidance and best practice.

Risk and Uncertainty

The Community Relations Council, as a community relations development organisation with a funding role, must be prepared to deal with opportunities and risks associated with the nature of its work. The Community Relations Council's appetite for risk is determined by the belief that it is not possible to eliminate risk. There will always be a level of residual risk associated with the work that cannot be eliminated but may be mitigated to an acceptable level.

A series of risks related to delivery of the Community Relations Council's objectives were managed during the year. The Community Relations Council has identified the following as the principal risks and uncertainties facing the organisation at 31st March 2025. CRC's risks are categorised as either red, amber, or green, depending on severity.

<u>Risk</u>	<u>Impact</u>	<u>Mitigations</u>
Resources - Financial	In developing a business case to implement Department of Finance Pay Remit guidance it has become apparent that employees' pension schemes and pension contributions is a complicated and dynamic area, and as such the financial implications have significant inherent uncertainty.	An updated Business Case has been submitted. The Community Relations Council continues to liaise with staff and the union and to work with The Executive Office and Department of Finance to achieve full compliance with Department of Finance guidance. On the advice of TEO, a procurement exercise was completed in January 2025, seeking independent firms to complete the financial, equality and legal aspects of the Business Case. This procurement was unsuccessful. TEO were notified of this and asked for advice on next steps. TEO recommended CRC seek an agency worker to complete the financial aspects of the Business Case. As of 11th August 2025 no agency worker has been identified. In the meantime, TEO are exploring whether a member of the Strategic Investment Board would be able to assist with the Business Case. CRC await an update from TEO on this.
Resources - Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of staffing issues within CRC.	CRC Director of Finance, Admin and Personnel left on 2nd April 2024 to take up a new post. Recruitment has been attempted many times, including May 2025, however each exercise has been unsuccessful. CRC will pursue another recruitment exercise once the Pay Remits have been approved by TEO and staff salaries are in line with NICS colleagues. Temporary cover is being provided by an Interim Finance Manager. A new DFAP Team structure was considered and approved by the F&GP Committee and Board. It was implemented in April 2025

		and has helped mitigate this risk.
Resources – Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of recent correspondence relating to the NILGOSC Pension Scheme	CRC has received legal correspondence about the effects of changes made to pensions as a result of the enactment of the Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014. Legal advice has been taken. CRC's solicitors drafted a response to the correspondence. With the approval of the Chair, the submission was made to the Tribunal Service on Friday 25th November. This letter has been shared with Board members. TEO has been notified and the Board is being updated regularly. In September 2023 CRC's solicitors updated on this issue. Originally the test cases were to be heard in July 2023, however, there was a delay in a consultation process, and therefore the cases have been stayed until October. CRC received correspondence from DoF informing of the outcome of the consultation: <i>After careful consideration of the responses received the Department of Finance will continue with the proposed legislation, which will be made and laid in advance of 1 October 2023. This will restore eligible pension members with service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 to a position they would have been in had the discrimination not occurred, giving them a choice of alpha or PCSPS(NI) benefits for 2015-22.</i> However, CRC's legal advisors stated that this Government decision will not affect whether test cases progress, as there is still the issue of injury to feelings for the tribunal to decide on. NILGOSC has been in contact with CRC in June to receive

		information in relation to affected staff and a response has been provided. An update from the legal advisors was sought in December 2024. They informed CRC that there are still ongoing test cases going through the courts, of which CRC is not one. Therefore, there is no change to this risk.
Resource – Financial	This risk considers the impact CRC faces in terms of the 2024-25 and 2025-26 budgets from The Executive Office.	2025-26 Opening budget allocation letter/s received dated 5th March 2025, and 11th April 2025. A final allocation letter was subsequently received dated 11th July 2025, based on the outcome of the 2025-26 June Monitoring round. A resource budget of £3,201k (including £57k for depreciation) has been confirmed along with a CAPEX budget of £10k A matching GIA – Cash of £3,298k which includes 5% headroom has been allocated for 2025-26. The allocation still falls short of the final out-turn position for 2024-25 and anything previously disallowed will be bid for in the October 2025 monitoring round. Submission to me made on/before 19th August 2025.
Resource – Staffing	This risk considers the impact of the delay in issuing members with official correspondence setting out details of their tenure on the Board, following the end of their first term in June 2024.	CRC Board members' Term of Office all ended on 31st May. TEO has made a submission to Ministers on next steps. The matter has been raised by CRC on numerous occasions with TEO and information provided in relation to members interest in either 18- or 36-month appointments. The Board received their official letters from Ministers in May 2025. Three Board members second terms are due to end on 30th November.

		One other member of CRC's Board has since stepped down on the 1 st July 2025, and another hopes to step down in December due to work commitments. This would leave CRC's Board below quorum. CRC asked those members due to leave at the end of 2025 whether they would consider staying on until TEO's recruitment exercise was complete. All members agreed to continue on.

A more detailed explanation of the Community Relations Council's Internal Control and Risk Management process, including the Community Relations Council's principal risks and uncertainties, is included on pages 42 to 46.

The Community Relations Council monitors its performance by comparing actual performance to targeted performance as detailed in the 2024-25 business plan. Performance against business plan targets is reported through the management team to the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Board and The Executive Office. Where comparison between targeted and planned performance has indicated a risk that a business plan objective may not be achieved then mitigating action will be taken and if necessary, reported on the risk register.

Going Concern

The Board is satisfied that the Community Relations Council is a going concern on the basis that it has a reasonable expectation that the Community Relations Council will continue to operate for the foreseeable future. In January 2020-21 the Community Relations Council received Ministerial approval for the 2020-23 Strategic Plan from The Executive Office. The Executive Office has agreed that the Strategic Plan should be extended to allow time for the alignment of the next strategic plan with the outcome of the review of Together: Building a United Community and the next Programme for Government. The Board has commenced work on the new strategy and intends to align the final draft with the new Programme for Government, before undertaking public consultation on it. The 2025-26 business plan is at an advanced stage of preparation and is with The Executive Office officials pending Ministerial approval. Funding was secured for the 2024-25 financial year and budgets across the NI Civil Service have been agreed for 2025-26. The Executive Office wrote to the Community Relations Council (11th April 2025) advising of the opening budget position. The financial statements are therefore prepared on the going concern basis.

The Restricted Pension Reserve, which is the valuation of the company's pension scheme at 31st March 2025 was fully restricted to zero. With effect from 1st April 2019, The Executive Office has provided a guarantee to Northern Ireland Local Government Office Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) in respect of any deficit. In the event that the Community Relations Council becomes insolvent or enters into liquidation, The Executive Office will pay to NILGOSC any unpaid scheme liabilities. The guarantee mitigates the Community Relations Council's solvency and liquidity risk in respect of the Restricted Pension Reserve.

Summary Performance Appraisal

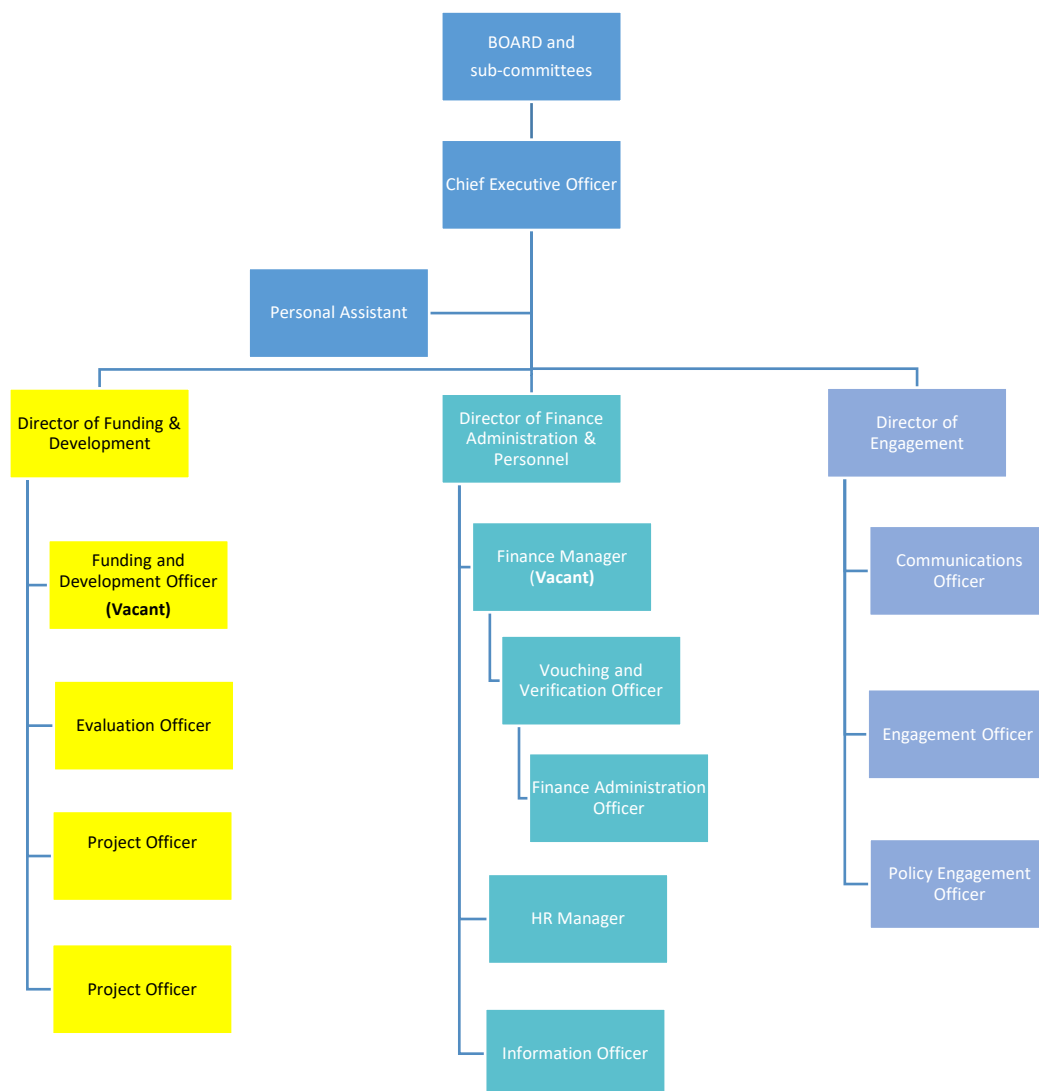
During the year the Community Relations Council achieved delivery of 20 key performance indicators (KPIs).

This included the following achievements:

- 100% of applications for 2024/25 Core Funding has been processed within the agreed timescale. A total of 30 awards have been made with a value of £1.22m (NB: a further £55k was subsequently awarded in year as Cost of Living payments)
- A total of 71 CRCD small grants awards were funded in 2024-25, totalling £196,739
- Over the year 450 people attended the three Together: Building a United Community Engagement Forums. 33% were new attendees, with 92% rating the Engagement Forum as good, very good or excellent.
- CRC's Good Relations Week 2024 (GRW24) took place from 16th to 22nd September 2024 under the theme of "Opportunity". 244 events were registered. Media coverage included: 122 pieces of print and online media coverage; 13 pieces of broadcast (TV & radio) coverage; and 489 pieces of social media coverage from media outlets and third-party organisations.
- Good Relations Awards 2024 attracted a record 65 nominations, with 19 people recognised for their peacebuilding efforts and contribution through the 2024 Good Relations Awards.
- Four Shared Learning Events took place with CRC staff and The Executive Office colleagues on the topic of Good Relations work and Monitoring and Evaluation.
- CRC attended 11 funding fairs across the region focussing on areas of low grant uptake.
- The Community Relations Council has grown its X and Facebook followers to 7,803 followers on X and 4,435 followers on Facebook.
- CRC's Internal Audits all received a 'satisfactory' assurance. These reports related to: The operation of the Good Relations Awards, Grant Administration; Governance and Risk Management. Only three priority three recommendation was received.
- 84.6% annual budget allocated to funding and engagement activities.

The continued downward pressures on public sector finance are always a risk to the Community Relations Council being able to deliver its full strategic ambition. Strained relationships and other pressures in the political arena also represent a risk to community relations. These risks are considered as part of the Community Relations Council's risk management process, with any necessary mitigating actions identified and reported to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Organisation Chart



ii) PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

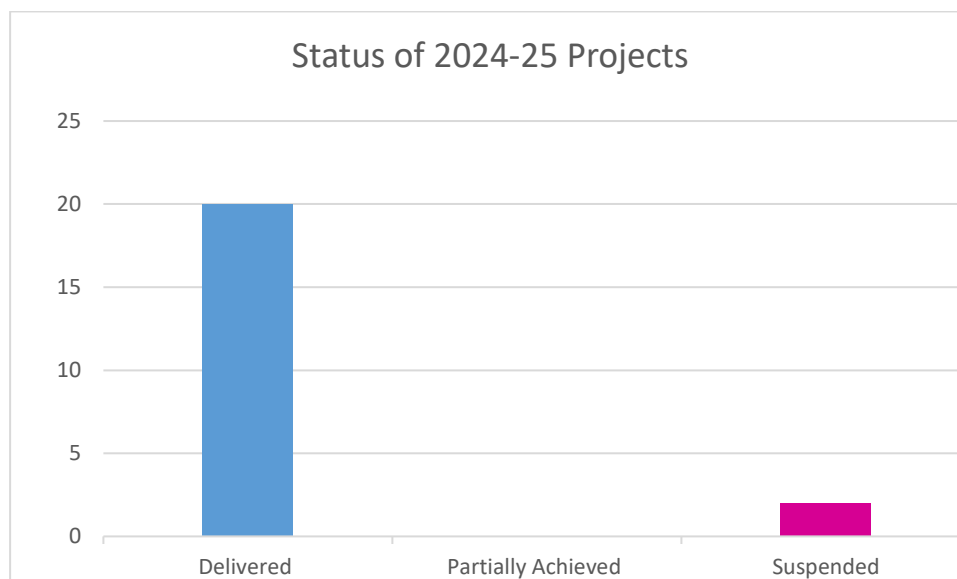
A) Summary

The key undertakings during 2024-25 to deliver on the Community Relations Council's priorities included:

1. The distribution of The Executive Office funding provided to the Community Relations Council for 2024-25 to assist with achievement of the Programme for Government (PfG) and T:BUC strategic outcomes.
2. Contributing to the implementation of the T:BUC Strategy and related PfG outcomes by providing policy feedback to TEO through a series of events including the T:BUC Engagement Forum, inputting to relevant T:BUC sub-groups and giving guidance on good relations best practice to relevant stakeholders.
3. The encouragement and celebration of good relations through the Good Relations Awards and the delivery of the annual Good Relations week with a mixture of online, in-person and hybrid events in collaboration with The Executive Office, Education Authority, Libraries NI, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, NI Environment Link, The Nerve Centre, Disability Action, NI Local Government Association, and Community Foundation for Northern Ireland. New members joined the steering group from Mencap and Bryson.
4. The dissemination of resources to share learning and best practice within and between relevant public bodies and the voluntary and community sector.
5. Recommencement of the Shared Space Project. The purpose of the project is to connect those who carry out research on themes related to peace, conflict, social cohesion and community relations with those who are working on those issues in practice. The project builds on the previous Shared Space Journal published by CRC. CRC is revisiting and renewing this initiative with support from Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University and The Open University.
6. Delivery of our operational plan in a manner that was underpinned by a commitment to public service values including transparency, accountability, equality, efficiency and our commitment to sustainability and our pledges related to the environment, health, and our shared earth.
7. Managing the ongoing financial and staffing pressures in 2024-25 by continuous employee and stakeholder engagement; and by maintaining appropriate risk management, assurance, and accountability processes.

The 2024-25 business plan was laid out in the three strategic areas, Funding; T:BUC Engagement; and Delivery and Trusted and Effective Public Service and Good Governance.

The performance of the Community Relations Council is set out in the chart below which summarises stages of completion of each of the projects undertaken during 2024-25 which are included in the 2024-25 Business Plan. Further detail for each project is given on pages 15 to 28.



Long Term Expenditure Trend

Long term Expenditure Analysis	<u>2021-22</u>	<u>2022-23</u>	<u>2023-24</u>	<u>2024-25</u>	<u>2025-26 Projections</u>
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Grants	2,252	2,323	1,911	2,031	2,126
Programme Costs	76	60	60	85	85
Salaries	979	909	920	851	866
Overheads	296	288	220	231	276
Total Expenditure	3,603	3,580	3,111	3,198	3,353

Since 2016-17 the Community Relations Council has been allocated £603k for the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme grant awards without receiving additional resource to administer the scheme.

During this extended period of financial constraint, the Community Relations Council continues to protect, as far as possible, resources being allocated to funded groups by minimising cuts to grants and programme costs.

B) Detailed Performance Analysis

The directors are pleased to present Detailed Performance Analysis for the year ended 31st March 2025. This analysis section provides detail on the performance of the Community Relations Council by its key functions and objectives during the 2024-25 year.

Key Performance Indicators

The Community Relations Council Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are included in the annual business plan. Performance against those indicators is reported to the Board and to The Executive Office each quarter. The risk management process is designed to ensure that sufficient internal control is in place to manage uncertainty in achieving the Community Relations Council's KPIs and to identify additional action where necessary.

Programme for Government

The Community Relations Council's KPIs have an outcome focus that aims to ensure that work undertaken by the organisation leads to a real difference to society. Peacebuilding and improving community relations contribute to the conditions in which all Programme for Government (PfG) indicators and outcomes are more likely to be achieved. The return of Ministers has allowed for the publication of a new Programme for Government which includes details of the related indicators and outcomes. However, in 2024-25 there were a number of existing draft PfG indicators and outcomes to which the work of the Community Relations Council is particularly relevant:

Indicators		Outcomes
1. Reduce crime (relevant to CRC, crime motivated by sectarianism or racism)	30. Improve our attractiveness as a destination	7. We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other
26. Increase respect for each other	31. Increase shared space	9. We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity
27. Improve cultural participation	35. Increase reconciliation	10. We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest
28. Increase the confidence and capability of people and communities	40. Improve our international reputation	

The Community Relations Council's annual business plan contributes towards the delivery of the Together: Building a United Community strategy's priorities and associated outcomes. The strategy outlines how Government, community and individuals will work together to build a united community and achieve change. The strategy is currently under review.

Funding and Development

In 2024-25 the Community Relations Council delivered the Community Relations and Cultural Diversity Small Grant Scheme, the Core Funding Grant Scheme and on behalf of The Executive Office, the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme (NBSGRP). The Pathfinder Scheme, the Publications and the Media Scheme did not operate during 2024-25 due to a cut in the organisation's budget. In total, 134 organisations and projects received funding offers of £2,021,067.

Thirty organisations received grants awards of £1,221,688 from the Core Fund and ten organisations received grant awards totalling £602,640 from NBSGRP. In addition to the Core Fund and NBSGRP schemes, the Community Relations Council awarded £196,739 in funding to 71 projects from 85 applications received under the CRCD funding programme dealing with the legacy of the conflict, peacebuilding, tackling sectarianism and racism, and building good relations in our diverse community.

During the 2021-22 business year the Community Relations Council moved all of its grant making processes online and in 2022-23 adopted procedures that introduce a risk-based approach to verification of expenditure. The risk-based approach to verification was maintained in 2024-25.

Grant Expenditure to Date - District Council Areas - 2024-2025

	Core £'s	CRCD £'s	North Belfast £'s	Total £'s
Multiple	509,947.79	13,086.00	-	523,033.79
Regional	191,898.79	50,214.01	-	242,112.80
Antrim and Newtownabbey	38,364.30	10,082.18	-	48,446.48
Ards and North Down	-	-	-	-
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	28,670.40	19,047.50	-	47,717.90
Belfast	232,202.12	47,826.35	602,214.00	882,242.47
Causeway Coast and Glens	-	1,300.00	-	1,300.00
Derry City and Strabane	207,732.36	17,758.85	-	225,491.21
Fermanagh and Omagh	-	5,415.70	-	5,415.70
Lisburn and Castlereagh City	-	-	-	-
Mid and East Antrim	-	4,000.00	-	4,000.00
Mid Ulster	-	11,219.00	-	11,219.00
Newry Mourne and Down	9,271.70	5,270.00	-	14,541.70
Total	1,218,087.46	185,219.59	602,214.00	£2,005,521.05

NB: Multiple Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 2 – 4 District Council areas

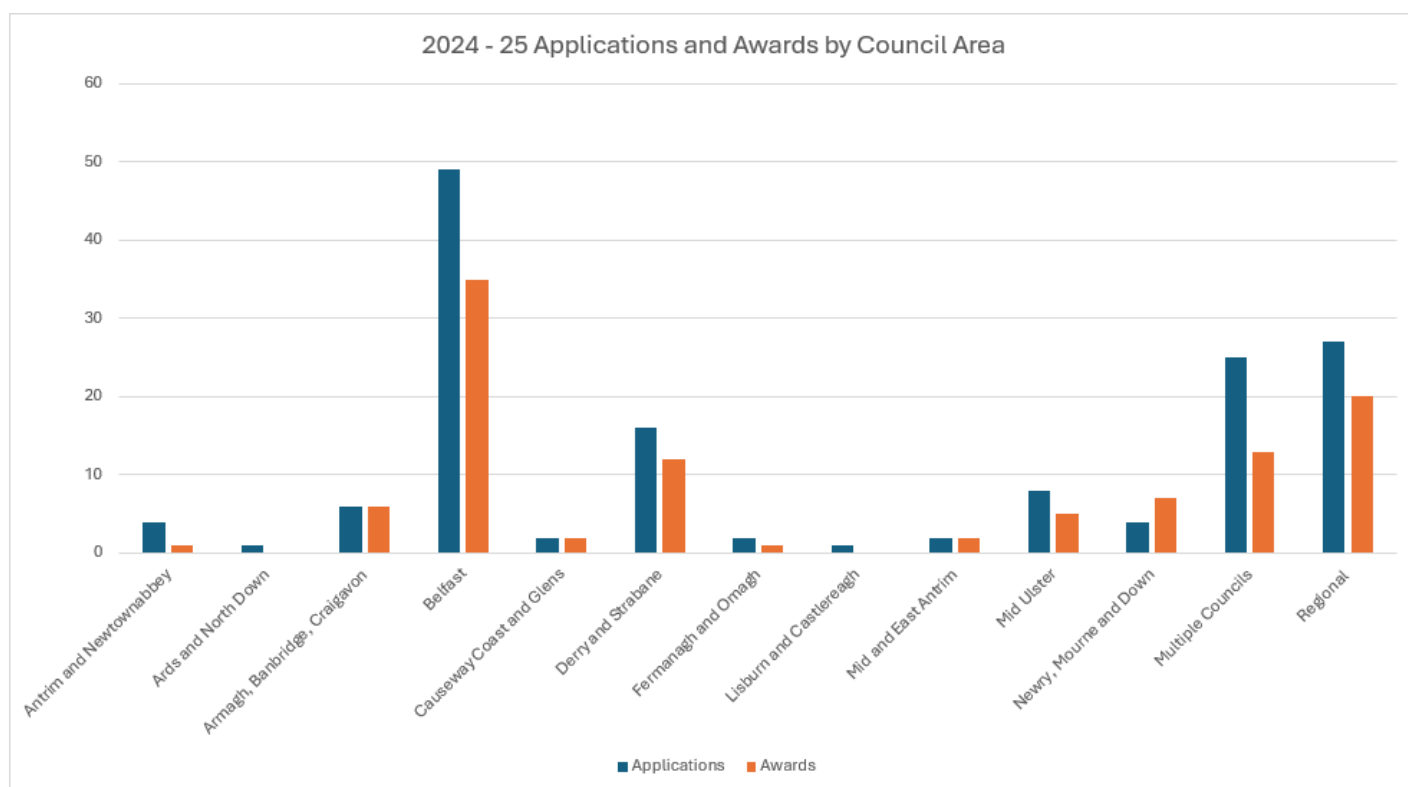
Regional Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 5 – 11 District Council areas

Where there are areas of low grant application the Community Relations Council has put in place welcoming statements to encourage community relations activity.

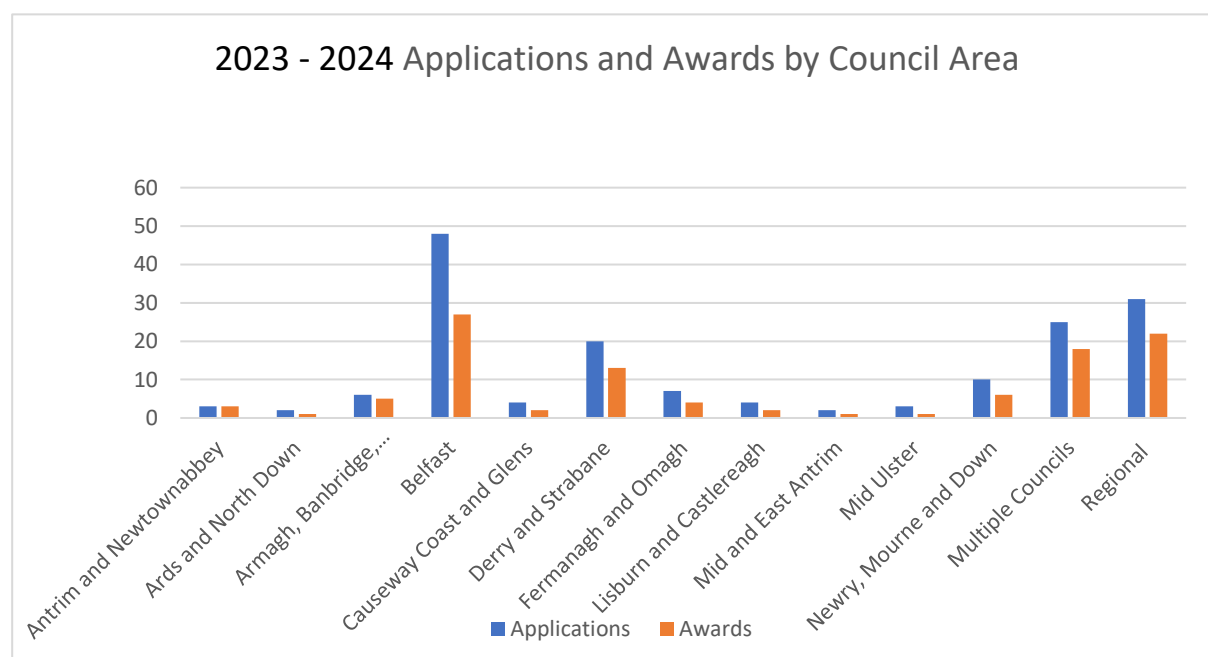
These numbers are detailed on pages 91-102 (Grants paid in 2024-2025). These are 'cash' accounting numbers versus 'resource' accounting numbers reported on page 75

FUNDING – Applications and Awards by Council Area

2024-25 Applications and Awards by Council Area



For comparison: 2023/24 Applications and Awards by Council Area



Performance Highlights

FUNDING - Performance Highlights			
Scheme	Applications Processed as planned		Total Funding
	Target	Performance	
Core Funding	39	39	£1,218,087.46
CRCD	85	85	£185,219.59
NBSGRP	10	10	£602,214
Media*	0	0	£0
Pathfinder*	0	0	£0
Publications*	0	0	£0
TOTAL	134	134	£2,005,521.05

*NB: Pathfinder, Media and Publications Schemes did not operate in 2024-25 year due to budget constraints

Community Engagement

The Community Relations Council provides development support and engagement opportunities as a hub for the exchange of learning and best practice among our funded groups and wider networks. The relationship between policy, practice and reflective evaluation remains at the heart of the work of the Community Relations Council, well-crafted public policy and effective service delivery depends on it.

During the year the Community Relations Council coordinated and delivered three T:BUC Engagement Forums. The Engagement Forums took place on:

- 3rd June 2024 in Craigavon Civic Centre
- 17th September 2025 in Crumlin Road Gaol
- 25th March 2025 in Shankill Shared Women's Centre

The Engagement Forum provides a platform for formalised and structured engagement to influence positive outcomes from the T:BUC strategy through co-design, co-working and a shared learning approach. The diversity of those attending the meetings provides a broad and inclusive perspective that can assist with the achievement of the vision and aims of the T:BUC Strategy. The Community Relations Council continues to encourage a wide participation in the T:BUC Engagement Forum to reflect our community.

The Community Relations Council also organises and facilitates a series of Shared Learning Forums for funded groups to meet and learn from each other's practice.

The annual Good Relations Week, co-ordinated by the Community Relations Council took place from 16th to 22nd September 2024 under the theme of "Opportunity". The Week is designed to showcase good practice and encourage wide engagement. The Community Relations Council was joined on the steering group by The Executive Office, Education

Authority, Libraries NI, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, NI Environment Link, The Nerve Centre, Disability Action, NI Local Government Association, Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, Mencap and Bryson. The launch of the week was also supported Local Authorities, all of whom organised a local launch in their areas. The launch and the week of activities attracted extensive media coverage as well as coverage in the regional press.

The 2025 Good Relations Awards expanded to six categories. The Awards continued to include five categories with partners from NICVA, Volunteer Now, NI Youth Forum and Community Foundation for Northern Ireland with a new Housing for All "Shared Housing" category in partnership with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Panels met in February 2025 to assess a total of 65 nominations received across all the categories. The Awards were presented to recipients by Junior Ministers at a special event in Shankill Shared Women's Centre, Belfast on 25th March 2025.

The email newsletter, eNews, has been issued every month during the year. The eNews covers CRC and T:BUC funding opportunities, as well as sharing stories of community-based groups and organisations who are working hard to build united communities at the local level.

Social media was also used to communicate our messages. The Community Relations Council has grown its X and Facebook followers to 7,803 followers on X and 4,435 followers on Facebook. Our website continues to provide a valuable resource for information, as well as keeping people up to date with news from the sector. During the year, the Community Relations Council website attracted 10,861 users and had 46,126 page views.

This year the Community Relations Council started work on the Carbon Literacy Project (CLP) with Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful. The CLP is a practical training and awareness programme for staff and board members providing an accredited certification that signals a professional commitment to tackling climate change.

The Community Relations Council this year continued its engagement with minority ethnic, rural and young people's groups through our wider stakeholder engagement work.

During 2024/2025 the Community Relations Council has continued to work closely with the District Council Good Relations Programme at the request of TEO. Staff have been attending monthly update meetings with Councils and presenting at sub-regional council cluster meetings organised by TEO. CRC delivered a Shared Learning event for the District Council Good Relations Programme on 30th January 2025 in Cookstown at which all Councils were represented.

T:BUC Engagement and Delivery

Objective	Output	Highlights
In conjunction with TEO deliver the T:BUC Engagement Forum.	Three meetings of Engagement Forum were delivered on 3rd June 2024, 17th September 2024 and 25th March 2025. Produced a summary report and production of key messages/evaluation document for each event.	Summary and key messages and evaluation documents were completed. Events were well attended. Attendees and participants included TEO staff, community practitioners, policy makers and academics amongst others. Over the year 450 people attended the three Engagement Forums. 33% of attendees at the three T:BUC Engagement Forums were new. 92% of attendees at the T:BUC EF rated the events as good, very good or excellent
Influence good relations policy outcomes by inputting to relevant PfG and T:BUC subgroups and providing information and feedback to relevant stakeholders.	Participating in the T:BUC Structures. Provided advice and shared learning opportunities. Guidance on funding requirements to funded groups. Collate and disseminate resources. Participated in funding fairs. Delivered four Shared Learning Events for core funded and North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme groups. Worked with TEO on Good Relations Workforce Survey. Worked with TEO on the District Council Good Relations Programme.	Throughout the year CRC provided support to funded groups including delivery of events online and face-to-face, online grant procedures, regular website updates, social media posts and the monthly eNews. A programme of four Shared Learning events was delivered. This year these events were delivered with both in-person and online participation. 81% of participants rate the Shared Learning Events as very good, very good or excellent overall. 11 funding fairs were delivered across the region focussing on areas of low grant uptake. We were pleased to work alongside Councils and community partners in delivering these events. Delivered a Shared Learning event for the District Council Good Relations Programme on 30th January 2025. All Councils were represented. Also participated in regular District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP) meetings with TEO.

Promote Good Relations work through the delivery of Good Relations Week, the Good Relations Award and other activities.	Good Relations Week delivered in online, hybrid and in-person formats during September 2024. The week saw the delivery of a programme of engagement events, lessons learned and best practice with other groups and organisations within and connected to the community relations sector. An evaluation report was produced. 2025 Good Relations Award presentation event took place on 25th March 2025 in Shankill Shared Women's Centre.	244 event listings covering every council area across a range of themes during Good Relations Week 2023. 122 pieces of print and online media coverage about the Week. 13 pieces of broadcast (TV & radio) coverage. 489 pieces of social media coverage from media outlets and third-party organisations. New Instagram account created for GRW. Engaged Carl Frampton MBE as a high-profile Ambassador. Positive feedback received in the event evaluation. New "Housing for All Shared Housing" category added to the Good Relations Awards with partner Northern Ireland Housing Executive. 19 people recognised for their peacebuilding efforts and contribution through the 2025 Good Relations Awards. 65 Award nominations were received.
Co-ordinate and lead on work emerging from Good Relations Week and CRC's own sustainability pledges that focus on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.	Participation and engagement with stakeholders to develop a programme of work raising awareness of the UN Sustainable Development Goals with CRC stakeholders.	Working with Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful on the initiation and delivery of the Carbon Literacy Project.
Engagement and communication with the sector via relevant media platforms.	Regular updates of CRC social media platforms. News information produced and circulated widely. Video content created.	X Followers: 7,803. Facebook Followers: 4,435. Website Page Views: 46,126. Users 10,861 Email marketing subscribers: 2,838 12 Monthly eNews produced and distributed. New videos on CRC website and YouTube channel covering for example GRW24, GR Award winners, Core and CR/CD funded work.

Peace Monitoring Report

The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust provided the Community Relations Council with a grant award to fund two further editions of the Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report. Production of the sixth edition was completed in 2023. In December 2023 the sixth edition of the Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report was published by the Community Relations Council. £34,700 of the funds received from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust have been treated as deferred income and are included within Accruals & Deferred Income on the Balance Sheet in the 2024-25 financial year.

The Community Relations Council is grateful to The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for funding this project. It is anticipated that work will commence on the seventh edition of the report in 2025.

Financial Summary

The Statement of Financial Activities on page 64 indicates that the company had incoming resources of £3,207,052 (2023-24 - £3,430,570) in the year. Note 2 on page 71 shows The Executive Office as being the sponsor of 98.2% (2023-24 98.6%) of this income. In line with the “Charities SORP FRS 102” the Community Relations Council recognises income as it is received and expenditure as it is incurred. As a result, income was exceeded by outgoing resources of £3,254,936 by £ (47,884). (2023-24 – income exceeded outgoing resources of £3,110,854 by £319,716)

The Community Relations Council was allocated a resource budget of £3,213,000 for the year to 31st March 2025 by The Executive Office. This budget funded net resource expenditure of £3,198,000 (excluding actuarial movements on the pension liability) which represented 100% of total funding allocated to The Community Relations Council by The Executive Office. The Community Relations Council was also allocated a capital budget of £10,000 for the year to 31st March 2025 by The Executive Office. This budget funded capital expenditure of £9,909.

The Balance Sheet on page 65 shows that the company had a fund deficit of £ (289,617) at 31st March 2025 (2023-24 – deficit of £ (241,733)). The organisation’s Restricted Reserve at 31st March 2025 was a deficit of £ (289,617), (2023-24 – deficit of £ (241,733)). The valuation of the company’s pension scheme as at 31st March 2025, for the purposes of IAS19, was fully restricted to zero. (2023-24 - was fully restricted to zero).

Corporate Social Responsibility

The Community Relations Council is committed to complying with all its Human Rights and Equality obligations and best practice. The Community Relations Council applies its equal opportunities policy to prevent any instances of direct and indirect discrimination. The Community Relations Council applies its Equality Scheme which has been approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI). The scheme is developed in compliance with practice recommended by ECNI to promote equality and good relations as envisaged in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Community Relations Council applies its Disability Action Plan, which has been reviewed by ECNI.

The Community Relations Council monitors and applies its Fraud policy and procedures, including anti-bribery procedures, and subsequently provided training to all Community Relations Council employees. In addition to the Fraud policy, the Community Relations Council apply a suite of policies and procedures to ensure appropriate anti-corruption measures are taken including its Financial Manual, Procurement procedures and Whistleblowing procedures.

iii) Other matters – Sustainability report

The Community Relations Council is committed to the Northern Ireland Executive's Sustainable Development Strategy and has introduced policies and practices to encourage efficiency in the use of resources. These include the 100% use of recycled paper and the introduction of multifunction printing/copying/scanning devices which are set to duplex printing. The Community Relations Council is located in Equality House, a modern office building in Belfast that houses other Arm's Length Bodies. In doing so the Community Relations Council makes a contribution to Government targets for better use of its overall estate. The Community Relations Council participates in the Equality House facilities committee with the other Arm's Length Bodies. The Community Relations Council has undertaken a number of projects to move its services online and away from paper-based processes. The realisation of the full benefits of these projects was hastened by the move to remote working due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The lack of travel and the use of online conferencing for events assisted our contribution to the sustainable development strategy which has been maintained since through our Agile Working Policy.

CRC received a presentation from Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful in March 2025, and as a result, will be pursuing Carbon Literacy Training and accreditation for Board members, staff members, and the organisation in 2025-26.

Through its earlier work in preparation for its Strategic Plan 2020-25 the Community Relations Council has noted a substantial and growing interest in wider environmental issues, including concerns around climate change, global warming, sustainable development and recycling. In its strategic plan the Community Relations Council notes that the concepts of well-being and the common good provide a link between good relations and a wide range of other issues, including environmental issues. The Community Relations Council appointed an Environmental Champion who aims to improve and monitor the sustainability and environmental goals of the organisation. The Board has also approved a strategy to improve CRC's environmental impact by: introducing a 'Digital First' policy to publications; eliminating the purchase or single use plastic; continuing to implement a paperless office; working to

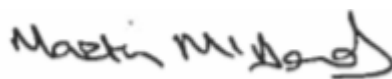
become a 'FairTrade' office; adding criteria to the procurement policy relating to sustainability and environmental standards. The organisation has an Agile work method that blends in-person and on-line working in a manner designed to have a positive environmental impact. The Community Relations Council will continue to explore the interconnection between good relations and environmental issues.



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J Irwin - Accounting Officer

22nd September 2025

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Date



.....
M McDonald - Chairperson

22nd September 2025

.....
Date

DIRECTORS' REPORT

A) Corporate Governance Report

i) Trustee's and Directors' Report

Structure, Governance and Management

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council is a company limited by guarantee, with no share capital, and is registered as a charity by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 2006, along with selected disclosures as recommended in the 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard FRS 102 (effective 2nd October 2019)'.

The Directors have complied with guidance published by the Charities Commission.

Organisational Structure

The Community Relations Council is governed by the Members of the Council. Where the Articles of Association refer to the Council, it can also be read as the Company, which shall mean the Members of the Council can also be read as the Directors of the Company.

The Council has capacity to register 24 members and there was a total of nine members in post during the year. The Council aims to meet every six weeks, holding at least six meetings during any 12-month period. A scheme of delegation is in place and day-to-day responsibility for provision of services rests with the Chief Executive Officer, Dr Jacqueline Irwin, supported by the Senior Management Team. The Senior Management Team consists of the Director of Funding and Development, Director of Community Engagement and Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel.

The Chief Executive Officer, with the assistance of the Senior Management Team, manages the day-to-day activities of the Council and reports directly to the Chairperson. The Chief Executive Officer and the Senior Management Team also provide progress reports to all Council meetings.

Directors

The directors of the company at 31st March 2025 were as follows:

Mr. Martin McDonald (Chair)	Mr. Michael McDonnell
Mr. Rory Campbell	Ms. Claire Harris
Ms. Audrey Simpson	Mr. John McCallister
Dr. Máire Braniff	Ms. Nisha Tandon
Ms Sheila McClelland	

Board members, including the Chair, are appointed by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service following a recruitment exercise led by The Executive Office in a manner intended to comply fully with guidance from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Northern Ireland (OCPANI). All current members took up their positions on 1st June 2019 and were appointed for three years. In the absence of Ministers, The Executive Office extended the term of office of all members effective from 1st June 2024.

Following appointment, all directors receive ‘On Board’ training conducted by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), Equality and Recruitment training, conducted by ECNI, induction into the role by The Executive Office as its Arm's Length Body and a full induction into the work of the Community Relations Council conducted by Community Relations Council staff. Induction training for new members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the Community Relations Council is also provided into the work of those committees.

Statement of Grant Making Policies

The Community Relations Council provides grant aid and advice to voluntary and community groups in support of projects which have a community relations purpose or value. The Council has a variety of funding schemes each tailored to promote certain aspects of community relations:

- The Community Relations and Cultural Diversity Small Grant Scheme is intended to help community/voluntary groups in Northern Ireland develop their capacity to engage in community relations work and to enhance the community relations potential of projects they undertake. The maximum award payable for this grant is £10,000.
- The Core Funding Grant Scheme is designed to support voluntary and community organisations to develop community relations work in a strategic manner, on a regional basis. Support is specifically targeted at work to combat sectarianism in Northern Ireland on a strategic long-term basis. The amount awarded normally ranges between £20,000 and £85,000.
- The Publications Grant Scheme aims to encourage the production and dissemination of publications that will contribute to greater understanding and better community relations in Northern Ireland. The maximum award payable for this grant is £5,000.

This grant scheme did not operate during 2024-25 due to cuts in the budget received from The Executive Office.

- The Media Grant Scheme aims to assist with the dissemination of community relations priorities via print, broadcast or other widely accessible media. This grant scheme did not operate during 2024-25 due to cuts in the budget received from The Executive Office.
- The Pathfinder Scheme contributes towards the salary and running costs of organisations or projects which are considered of strategic importance in promoting community relations work in Northern Ireland. The Pathfinder Scheme is not an open scheme to which groups can apply; discussion with the Director of the Funding and Development Programme will precede any proposal made to this scheme. This scheme also supports emergency intervention funding through small project grants. This grant scheme did not operate during 2024-25 due to cuts in the budget received from The Executive Office.
- The North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme (NBSGRP) is a funding scheme administered by the Community Relations Council on behalf of The Executive Office. It is a Ministerial scheme, and its overall strategy remains with The Executive Office. The key aim of the Programme is to develop relations within and between communities in North Belfast. Responsibility for the administrative aspects of the Programme were transferred to the Community Relations Council during 2016-17. The programme made awards up to £100,000 during the 2024-25 financial year.

Details of the grants awarded during the 2024-25 financial year are shown on pages 91-102

Community Engagement

The Community Relations Council seeks to promote learning, best practice and good communication between all relevant sectors and government to assist effective implementation of the Programme for Government and T:BUC strategy by:

- providing development support and engagement opportunities as a hub for the exchange of learning and best practice among our funded groups and wider networks. The relationship between policy, practice and reflective evaluation remains at the heart of the work of the Community Relations Council, well-crafted public policy and effective service delivery depends on it;
- leading on the coordination and delivery of the T:BUC Engagement Forum events that bring together good relations practitioners, voluntary & community sector and government to assist effective implementation of the Programme for Government and T:BUC strategy;
- co-ordinating the annual Good Relations Week which takes place annually in September. The week is designed to showcase good practice and encourage wide engagement;

- co-ordinating the Good Relations Awards to highlight exceptional achievement in promoting community relations, intercultural work and peacebuilding in Northern Ireland; and
- promoting the work and the activities of the Community Relations Council and others within the sector through monthly email newsletters, its website and social media channels.

Future plans

As an Arm's Length Body of The Executive Office our strategic direction, confirmed by Ministers, is to be a key delivery agent for departmental good relations policy, including the implementation of the aims and objectives of the T:BUC strategy and an outcome based approach to delivery. This includes promoting policy through positive engagement with relevant stakeholders in the community and establishing and implementing best practice.

- The Community Relations Council will finalise work on its next Strategic Plan, carry out a public consultation and seek approval of the final draft from The Executive Office ministers. The plan will align with the new Programme for Government and the revised T:BUC strategy subject to the timing of its publication. The Strategic Plan will build on the Community Relations Council's role as a trusted and critical link between government and all sections of society, continuing to promote good practice in building peace and good relations.
- The organisation will continue to take a co-ordinated approach to grant funding focused on T:BUC priorities and objectives. The organisation will continue to review the distribution of its grants and put in place any necessary mitigations to achieve the goals set out in the new Strategic Plan.
- The organisation will continue to develop its suite of key performance indicators and targets to enhance strategic decision making and better demonstrate the impact of the work undertaken by the Community Relations Council. The organisation will continue to emphasise an outcomes-based approach and incorporate the good relations indicators emerging from the revised T:BUC Strategy as the basis of its performance monitoring framework. The organisation will also continue to explore the value of other evaluation methods that align with the overall objectives of the strategy.
- The organisation will continue to deliver a programme of engagement and shared learning. It will also contribute to any new architecture and thematic groups emerging from the revised T:BUC strategy.
- During 2025-26 the Community Relations Council will continue to implement the *'Partnership Agreement'* with The Executive Office.
- The organisation will continue to operate agile working methods in a manner that is consistent with the needs of the organisation and public sector guidance.

Employee and Board involvement

The Board of the Community Relations Council is responsible for establishing the overall strategic direction of the Community Relations Council. In doing so it will approve the triennial strategic plan, the annual business plan, corporate policies and provide assurance to The Executive Office that appropriate action is being taken on strategic, financial, legal and governance matters. Employees are responsible for implementing the Board's decisions, including reporting and providing assurance to the Board on the Community Relations Council's performance in implementing the Board decisions. Staff involvement includes attendance at Board meetings, joint planning sessions with Board members, monthly staff meetings, the use of project teams and performance management tailored to support the achievement of strategic objectives.

Personal data related incidents

The Community Relations Council is required to report on personal data related incidents and accordingly have a control system to meet these responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The control system has been established to ensure the appropriate handling of personal data and information used for operational and reporting purposes through the development of appropriate strategy and policy.

There were no breaches of personal data during 2024-25.

Freedom of Information

During 2024-25 year the Community Relations Council received no (2023-24: one) Freedom of Information (FOI) request. When received, request are handled in a timely way and in a manner consistent with the Community Relations Council's publication scheme.

Pensions

The Community Relations Council participates in a defined benefit pension scheme administered by the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) for all permanent staff. Further details are set out in the Remuneration Report on pages 50 to 54, the accounting policies on pages 67 to 71 and commitments under Defined Benefit Pension Scheme in Note 16 on pages 81 to 84.

Reporting of Complaints

The Community Relations Council received no complaints during 2024-25.

The Community Relations Council's Complaints Policy can be accessed via the [website \(https://www.community-relations.org.uk/contact-us\)](https://www.community-relations.org.uk/contact-us).

Prompt Payment Policy

The Community Relations Council is committed to the prompt payment of bills for goods and services received in accordance with the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998. Unless otherwise stated in the contract, payment is due within 30 days of the receipt of the goods or services, or presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand, whichever is later. Regular reviews conducted during the year to measure how promptly the Community Relations Council paid its bills found that 98% (2023-24: 93%) of bills were paid within this standard. It was also noted that 91% (2023-24: 67%) of bills were paid within 10 days.

Related Parties

Details of the company's related parties are set out in note 17 to the Accounts.

Register of interests

The Chair, Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officer and Senior Management Team are required to register all interests, direct or indirect, which members of the public might reasonably think could influence their judgment. The register of interests is available on the Community Relations Council website or for public inspection by contacting the Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel, Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast. BT2 7DP.

Corporate Governance

The Governance Statement is set out on pages 36 to 49.

Auditors

The Comptroller and Auditor General has the statutory responsibility for the audit of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council under the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013.

ii) Statement of Accounting Officer's and Directors' Responsibilities

Under the Companies Act 2006, the Directors are required to prepare for each financial year, a statement of accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for Charities. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Community Relations Council and of its income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer and Directors are required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) and in particular to:

- observe the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the FReM have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the Accounts;
- prepare the Accounts on a going concern basis; and
- confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Accounting Officer of The Executive Office has appointed the Chief Executive Officer as Accounting Officer of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's assets, are set out in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

As required by the Companies Act 2006, the Accounting Officer and Directors are also responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the accounts comply with the Companies Act 2006. The Accounting Officer and Directors have a general responsibility taking steps as are reasonably available to safeguard the assets of the company and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

Statement of disclosure of information to the auditors

The Accounting Officer and Directors confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and the Accounting Officer takes personal responsibility for the annual report and accounts and the judgments required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Accounting Officer and Directors confirm that, for all directors in office at the date of this report:

- So far as the Accounting Officer and each director is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditors are unaware.
- The Accounting Officer and each director has taken all the steps that she/he ought to have taken in her/his duty as a director in order to make herself/himself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditors are aware of that information.
- The Trustees have complied with their duty in Section 11 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to guidance published by the Charity Commission.

iii) Governance Statement

1. Introduction

This statement is given in respect of the Community Relations Council for the year ended 31st March 2025. It outlines the Community Relations Council's governance framework for directing and controlling its functions and how assurance is provided to support me in my role as Accounting Officer for the Community Relations Council.

The Community Relations Council's governance structures are developed in line with Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI), Departmental and other requirements and guidance. The Board of the Community Relations Council has corporate responsibility for ensuring that the organisation fulfils the responsibilities, aims and objectives set by the Board and agreed with The Executive Office and Ministers including promoting the efficient, economic and effective use of staff and other resources. As Accounting Officer, I have a duty to satisfy myself that the Community Relations Council has adequate governance systems and procedures in place to promote the effective, efficient conduct of its business and to safeguard financial propriety and regularity.

The Community Relations Council is an Arm's Length Body of The Executive Office and a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. It has been formally governed as an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) since April 2012.

The Community Relations Council operates in accordance with a Partnership Agreement with The Executive Office as laid out in the NI Code of Good Practice. This sets out the relationship between the two organisations and defines the financial and administrative framework of the Community Relations Council. The Community Relations Council's primary source of income is grant-in-aid provided by its sponsoring Department, The Executive Office. The Partnership Agreement sets out the conditions on which grant-in-aid is paid and the related financial delegations of the Community Relations Council. The Partnership Agreement replaced the Management Statement Financial Memorandum previously approved by the Board and The Executive Office.

Within this overall framework, it is the role of the Community Relations Council to determine its policies and activities.

2. Compliance with Corporate Governance Code

The Community Relations Council applies the principles of the Department of Finance's *Corporate governance in central government departments: Code of good practice (2025)* where applicable and any other relevant guidance received from government as it continues to strengthen its governance arrangements.

At the 31st March 2025 the Community Relations Council is compliant with the Code.

3. Governance Framework

The Community Relations Council has developed key organisational structures and relationships which support the delivery of corporate governance and which are:

- The Executive Office Ministers;
- The Executive Office Departmental Accounting Officer;
- The Board;
- The Accounting Officer;
- The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee;
- The Finance and General Purposes Committee;
- Internal Audit function; and
- External Audit function (NIAO).

These key structures and relationships along with their responsibilities and performance are explained in detail in the relevant sections below.

4. Governance Responsibilities and Performance

Ministers

Relationships between the Community Relations Council and the Ministers are governed by the arm's length principle, wherein the primary role of Ministers is to set the Community Relations Council's strategic and financial framework including the structure of its funding and governance.

These responsibilities are discharged on a day-to-day basis on the Ministers' behalf and in their absence, by the Sponsoring Body. Within this framework, it is the role of this organisation to determine its policies and activities in keeping with the objectives of Government policy and guidance.

Board and Sub – Committees

Board members have individual and collective responsibility for ensuring that the Community Relations Council fulfils its functions in accordance with its remit and that its activities ensure value for money within a framework of best practice, regularity and propriety.

The Community Relations Council has capacity for 24 members and there was a total of nine members in post during the year. The Community Relations Council aims to meet every six weeks, holding at least six meetings during any 12-month period. A scheme of delegation is in place and day-to-day responsibility for provision of services rests with the Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Jacqueline Irwin, supported by the Senior Management Team.

The Board supports the delivery of effective corporate governance and operates within best practice guidelines set out in the Department of Finance's Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice (2025). The Board takes an objective long-term view of the business of the Community Relations Council, leading its strategic planning process and assisting me as Accounting Officer in meeting the corporate governance responsibilities for the Community Relations Council.

In addition, the Memorandum and Articles of Association set out the Board's responsibility to establish and oversee corporate governance arrangements. Notwithstanding this, all tiers of management have commensurate responsibilities for ensuring that good governance practices are followed at an organisational/business level.

The key aspects of the Board's role include:

- setting the strategic direction for the Community Relations Council, including its vision, values and strategic objectives, and overseeing the implementation of the strategic and business plans, performance against its commitments to The Executive Office, and budget;
- developing, promoting and overseeing the implementation of policies and programmes in line with the Community Relations Council's strategic direction;
- leading and overseeing the process of change and encouraging innovation, to enhance the Community Relations Council's capability to deliver;
- monitoring performance via the Community Relations Council's corporate plans, budgets and targets, and assessing and managing the strategic risk to delivery;
- overseeing the strategic management of the Community Relations Council's staff, finance, information and physical resources, including setting training and health and safety priorities;
- establishing and overseeing the implementation of the Community Relations Council's corporate governance arrangements, including risk management; and
- overseeing and monitoring progress against all of the Community Relations Council's equality of opportunity, good relations and human rights obligations.

In line with best practice, the operational procedures of the Board are kept under continuous review. The Chair has reviewed the number of meetings of the Board and its committees as they relate to the completion of the business plan for the year. He has also reviewed attendance, chairing of committees and the findings of this year's audit reports and is satisfied with performance for the year. During 2024-25 an Internal Audit report concluded that controls designed to mitigate risks and CRC's corporate governance processes provided a satisfactory level of assurance.

During the year the Board received reports during each meeting on the delivery of business plan objectives; financial management and budget monitoring; HR and other resource priorities; and reports from the ARAC in relation to resilience of security and information assurance, contingency planning and business continuity planning.

The Board keeps under review the format and content of Board papers in line with good practice in relation to corporate governance and considers the information provided to be sufficient to allow it to discharge its strategic planning and corporate governance responsibilities.

The Board held eight meetings during 2024-25 in April, May, July, September, November, January, February, and March. The attendance at the meetings of directors in post at 31st March 2025 during the year is detailed in the table below:

Name	No of Meetings Attended	Total Possible Attendance
Mr. Martin McDonald (Chair)	8	8
Mr. Michael McDonnell	6	7
Ms. Claire Harris	1	5
Mr. John McCallister	7	8
Ms. Nisha Tandon	4	8
Ms. Audrey Simpson	4	8
Dr. Máire Braniff	5	7
Mr. Rory Campbell	6	8
Ms Sheila McClelland	2	8

Dr. Máire Braniff and Mr. Michael McDonnell volunteered to sit on the Core Funding Appeals Panel. This resulted in both Dr. Máire Braniff and Mr. Michael McDonnell being prevented from attending the Board meeting that considered applications for Core Funding. As a result, maximum possible attendance for these members was reduced to seven meetings.

Ms C Harris was on maternity leave for a portion of 2024-25.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

The purpose of the ARAC is to support the Accounting Officer in monitoring risk, control and governance systems (including financial reporting) in the Community Relations Council. Additionally, the Committee advises me, as the Accounting Officer on the adequacy of internal and external audit arrangements to ensure adequate levels of assurance.

The Chair of the ARAC provides an update report at each Board meeting. Typical issues that are reported by the Chair of the ARAC include risk management, fraud investigations, audit reports, update on implementation of audit recommendations and service continuity planning.

The ARAC met seven times during the financial year. Membership of the ARAC in 2024-25 comprised a Chairperson and two Members, all of whom are Board Members.

The members of the ARAC during 2024-25 and their attendance at the meetings during 2024-25 is detailed in the table below:

Name	No of Meetings Attended	Total Possible Attendance
Mr. John McCallister (Chairperson)	7	7
Mr. Michael McDonnell	6	7
Mr. Rory Campbell	7	7

Assessment of the ARAC was conducted by the Chair of the ARAC at the end of the 2024-25 financial year. The Chair noted that during that year the Committee reviewed the Risk Register at every meeting; received the NIAO Report to Those Charged with Governance; oversaw the review of a number of audit recommendations; received 'satisfactory' rated reports from the internal auditors on their review of 'Grants Management', 'Governance and Risk Management', and 'Engagement Good Relations Award Administration'. The Chair of the ARAC concluded that he was satisfied with their performance.

During the financial year the ARAC considered and advised senior management on the key strategic risks, audit strategy and audit reports. The programme of work completed during the financial year included:

- review of the corporate risk register;
- scrutiny of the Annual Report and Accounts;
- consideration of internal audit strategy;
- consideration of NIAO audit strategy;
- review of internal and external audit findings;
- monitoring of residual audit recommendations; and
- consideration of potential audit issues arising from grant awards.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee

The role of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is to advise the Board on operations, policies and strategies related to financial management, financial reporting, procurement, facilities, information technology, human resources, information governance, equality matters and other corporate services. The Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee provides an update report at each board meeting on these issues.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee met four times during the financial year. Membership of the Committee in 2024-25 comprised a Chairperson and three Members, all of whom are Board Members.

The members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee during 2024-25 and their attendance at the meetings detailed in the table below:

Name	No of Meetings Attended	Total Possible Attendance
Mr. Martin McDonald (Chair)	3	4
Mr. Michael McDonnell	3	4
Ms. Nisha Tandon	3	4
Ms. Audrey Simpson	4	4

Assessment of the Finance and General Purposes Committee was conducted by the Chair of the Committee at the end of the financial year. The Chair noted that during the year, the Committee: reviewed CRC's performance against the Business Plan, quarterly; reviewed and approved a number of policies; and received and approved the 2023/24 Annual Report and Accounts. The Chair was satisfied with the performance of the Committee.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee considered and advised senior management on key financial and other operational matters. The programme of work completed during the financial year considered:

- 2024-25 Business Plan delivery
- Financial Management
- Vouching and Verification
- Procurement
- Pay and Reward
- Staffing and Engagement
- Equality and Disability Action Plan Updates
- Premises and Facilities Management, including Health and Safety.

Accounting Officer

In my role as Accounting Officer, I function with the support of the Board keeping them informed of specific business implications or risks and, where appropriate, the measures that could be employed to manage them.

As Accounting Officer, I have ensured the organisation's progress in implementing an appropriate and proportionate system of internal control in accordance with all Government guidance.

The Community Relations Council's Annual Report and Accounts are prepared in a form directed by The Executive Office with that form having been approved by the Department of Finance.

5. Quality of Data Provided to the Board

The Board is satisfied as to the quality of data and information provided which is always thoroughly reviewed. At present the Board receives standing information for each meeting on key areas such as delivery, performance, finance and human resources. Briefing papers on other material issues are provided as they arise. All papers are issued a week in advance of any Board meeting to allow members to review and, where appropriate, to raise questions in advance. The relevant business area attends Board meetings to support discussions or is asked to produce more detailed information in advance of the meeting. All statistical and financial information is provided by professionally qualified accountants. All reports/papers conform to a standard layout to ensure the appropriate focus on key issues. Financial and performance data is extracted from the accounting and operational systems and is therefore subject to regular, planned internal quality assurance checks and independent audits.

6. Board Effectiveness

Assessment of the Board and Board members was conducted by the Chair. Examples of the areas considered by the review include: attendance, contribution to strategic direction, adherence to the code of conduct, relationships and training. The Chair concluded that he was satisfied with Board performance. The Chair met with TEO on 7th May 2025 to provide an update on the work of the Community Relations Council and complete an appraisal of his performance as Chair.

7. Internal Control and Risk Management

The Community Relations Council has procedures in place to ensure that it identifies its strategic and operational risks and determines a control strategy. As Accounting Officer, I have overall responsibility for the Community Relations Council's corporate business and for ensuring the effective management of the associated risks. All relevant internal control considerations, including any issues of risk, are taken into account with regard to the achievement of the Community Relations Council's policies, aims and objectives, and where necessary, are brought to the attention of the sponsoring department, The Executive Office. An important element of the system of internal control is provision of assurance to The Executive Office by way of the Quarterly Assurance Statement. The Community Relation Council's internal control accords with best practice and applicable guidance.

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives, it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to:

- identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of policies, aims and objectives;
- evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised; and
- manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The system of internal control has been in place in the Community Relations Council for the year ended March 2025 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Report and Accounts, and accords with Department of Finance guidance.

To assist in the risk management process, the consideration of risks is mapped out in the Community Relations Council's corporate Risk Register which is scrutinised and updated at each ARAC meeting and annually at the Board Meeting. The Register:

- identifies the Community Relations Council's risks; and
- analyses the risks related to the current Business Plan, including provision for the mitigation and control of risks.

All new business activities are assessed for key risks and controls are put in place.

During 2024-25 the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee reviewed the risk strategy and register. The risk strategy and register are aligned with the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) publication "Good Practice in Risk Management", with the key risks being reviewed by the management team in advance of being presented to and considered at each meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

The table below summarises the key risks which have been assessed as red and amber residual risks and were reported at the last meeting of the ARAC in the 2024-25 financial year.

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Mitigations</i>
Resources - Financial	In developing a business case to implement Department of Finance Pay Remit guidance it has become apparent that employees' pension schemes and pension contributions is a complicated and dynamic area, and as such the financial implications have significant inherent uncertainty.	An updated Business Case has been submitted. The Community Relations Council continues to liaise with staff and the union and to work with The Executive Office and Department of Finance to achieve full compliance with Department of Finance guidance. On the advice of TEO, a procurement exercise was completed in January 2025, seeking independent firms to complete the financial, equality and legal aspects of the Business Case. This procurement was unsuccessful. TEO were notified of this and asked for advice on next steps. TEO recommended CRC seek an agency worker to complete the financial aspects of the Business Case. As of 11th August 2025 no agency worker has been identified. In the meantime, TEO are exploring whether a member of the Strategic Investment Board would be able to assist with the Business Case. CRC await an update from TEO on this.
Resources - Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of staffing issues within CRC.	CRC Director of Finance, Admin and Personnel left on 2 nd April 2024 to take up a new post. Recruitment has been attempted many times, including May 2025, however each exercise has been unsuccessful. CRC will pursue another recruitment exercise once the

		Pay Remits have been approved by TEO and staff salaries are in line with NICS colleagues. Temporary cover is being provided by an Interim Finance Manager. A new DFAP Team structure was considered and approved by the F&GP Committee and Board. It was implemented in April 2025 and has helped mitigate this risk.
Resources – Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of recent correspondence relating to the NILGOSC Pension Scheme	CRC has received legal correspondence about the effects of changes made to pensions as a result of the enactment of the Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014. Legal advice has been taken. CRC's solicitors drafted a response to the correspondence. With the approval of the Chair, the submission was made to the Tribunal Service on Friday 25th November. This letter has been shared with Board members. TEO has been notified and the Board is being updated regularly. In September 2023 CRC's solicitors updated on this issue. Originally the test cases were to be heard in July 2023, however, there was a delay in a consultation process, and therefore the cases have been stayed until October. CRC received correspondence from DoF informing of the outcome of the consultation: <i>After careful consideration of the responses received the Department of Finance will continue with the proposed legislation, which will be made and laid in advance of 1 October 2023. This will restore eligible pension members with service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 to a position they would have been in had the discrimination not occurred, giving them a choice of alpha or PCSPS(NI) benefits for 2015-22.</i> However, CRC's legal advisors stated that this Government decision will not affect whether test cases progress, as there is still the issue of injury to feelings for the tribunal to decide on. NILGOSC has been in contact with CRC in June to receive information in relation to affected staff and a response has been provided. An update from the legal advisors was sought in December 2024. They informed CRC that there are still ongoing test cases going through the courts, of which CRC is not one. Therefore, there is no change to this risk.
Resource – Financial	This risk considers the impact CRC faces in terms of the 2024-25 and	2025-26 Opening budget allocation letter/s received dated 5 th March 2025, and 11 th April 2025. A final allocation letter was

	2025-26 budgets from The Executive Office.	subsequently received dated 11th July 2025, based on the outcome of the 2025-26 June Monitoring round. A resource budget of £3,201k (including £57k for depreciation) has been confirmed along with a CAPEX budget of £10k A matching GIA – Cash of £3,298k which includes 5% headroom has been allocated for 2025-26. The allocation still falls short of the final out-turn position for 2024-25 and anything previously disallowed will be bid for in the October 2025 monitoring round. Submission to me made on/before 19th August 2025.
Resource – Staffing	This risk considers the impact of the delay in issuing members with official correspondence setting out details of their tenure on the Board, following the end of their first term in June 2024.	CRC Board members' Term of Office all ended on 31st May. TEO has made a submission to Ministers on next steps. The matter has been raised by CRC on numerous occasions with TEO and information provided in relation to members interest in either 18- or 36-month appointments. The Board received their official letters from Ministers in May 2025. Three Board members second terms are due to end on 30th November. One other member of CRC's Board has since stepped down on the 1st July 2025, and another hopes to step down in December due to work commitments. This would leave CRC's Board below quorum. CRC asked those members due to leave at the end of 2025 whether they would consider staying on until TEO's recruitment exercise was complete. All members agreed to continue on.

There are also a number of other processes which contribute to the management of risks and corporate governance in the organisation:

- The Corporate and Business Planning Process:
The Community Relations Council's Strategic Plan was approved by Ministers in January 2021. The Strategic Plan is supported by annual Business Plans.
- The Performance Management System:
Performance is monitored throughout the year, reviewed annually by the Board and reported to The Executive Office quarterly in writing and during Accountability and Liaison Meetings.
- HR Policies:
HR policies are designed to ensure that the Community Relations Council has the appropriate numbers of staff with suitable skills to meet its objectives; a system is in place for managing attendance at work and levels of absence are reviewed regularly by

the Board and reported to The Executive Office; independent HR guidance supports the organisation in ensuring that it operates in compliance with employment law.

- Budgets and Priorities Setting Including In-year Monitoring Processes:
Budgets and priorities setting are in place and reviewed quarterly in association with The Executive Office. Ongoing downward pressure on government budgets continues to be a risk for the Community Relations Council but this is reviewed regularly by the Board.
- The Community Relations Council's Fraud Policy and Response Plan, Incorporating Arrangements for Whistle Blowing:
The fraud policy and response plan details responsibilities regarding the prevention of fraud and the procedures to be followed in the event of a fraud being detected or suspected. The Annual Report highlights cases of suspected fraud or irregularity and how the Community Relations Council is responding to those claims. Note 18 on page 85 Financial Regularity provides further information.

No 'Raising Concerns' incidents occurred at CRC in 2024-25.

- Gifts and Hospitality:
In line with recommended practice, the Community Relations Council has arrangements in place for the management of gifts and hospitality and all are included on a Gifts and Hospitality Register.
- Third Party Organisations:
Related party transactions are reported in the Accounts.
- Service Continuity Plan:
The Community Relations Council reviewed and updated its Service Continuity Plan in November 2024. The Service Continuity Plan was tested in November 2024 along with a test of the Fire Evacuation Procedures.
- Management of Information Risks:
Safeguarding information and its subsequent effective use is a key element supporting the Community Relations Council in the delivery of its objectives. Central to achieving this is the effective management of information risk. As part of an ongoing process to identify and control risks to information, the Community Relations Council takes assurance on its information arrangements and practices from all internal and external audits. During 2024-25 the Community Relations Council maintained and operated its Information Governance policies and procedures, including Data Protection, Information Security, Records Management and Document Retention.

Review of Effectiveness

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors, the ARAC, which oversees the work of the internal auditor, the executive managers within the Community Relations Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, and comments made by the external auditors in their Report to Those Charged with Governance and other reports. The Board, and the ARAC have advised me on the implications of my review of the effectiveness

of the system of internal control and plans to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the control environment are in place.

8. Sources of Independent Assurance

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit function is independent of the organisation and is provided under contract by SCC. Internal Audit has no executive powers. It provides assurance by giving an independent and objective opinion, to the Accounting Officer and the ARAC, on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Community Relations Council's systems of internal control and risk management.

During the 2024-25 year Internal Audit operated in accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). In April 2025 this changed to the Global Internal Audit Standards. The primary role of Internal Audit is to provide the Accounting Officer and the Board with an independent and objective opinion on risk management, control and governance, by measuring and evaluating their effectiveness in achieving the agreed objectives.

Internal Audit has played a crucial role in the review of the effectiveness of risk management, controls and governance in the Community Relations Council by:

- focusing audit activity on the key business risks;
- being available to guide managers and staff through improvements in internal controls;
- auditing the application of risk management and control as part of Internal Audit reviews of key systems and processes; and
- providing advice to management on internal governance implications of proposed and emerging changes.

For the year to 31st March 2025, the internal auditors have conducted reviews in line with their Annual Audit Plan covering:

Function	Date of final report	Assurance rating
Grants Administration and Distribution	April 2025	Satisfactory
Governance and Risk Management	May 2025	Satisfactory
Engagement Good Relations Awards Administration	May 2025	Satisfactory

Internal Audit's Annual Assurance Statement issued an overall satisfactory rating with regard to the Community Relations Council's risk management, control and governance arrangements operating effectively and providing a satisfactory assurance in relation to the effective and efficient achievement of the Community Relations Council's objectives.

All audit recommendations are implemented on a timely basis and progress is reported during each meeting of the ARAC.

External Audit

The Community Relations Council is subject to independent scrutiny from its external auditor, the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO). NIAO is independent of the organisation and Government and is tasked by the Assembly to hold public bodies to account for their use of public money. The Comptroller and Auditor General works closely with the Assembly's Public Accounts Committee which can require Accounting Officers to account for their actions in relation to the management of public funds.

The audit of the Community Relations Council Annual Report and Accounts for 2024-25 was contracted out by the NIAO to the company, Cavanagh Kelly. A representative from the NIAO and Cavanagh Kelly is invited to attend all the meetings of the ARAC at which corporate governance and risk management matters are routinely considered.

The NIAO audits, certifies and reports on the Accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Northern Ireland Order 2013, along with selected disclosures as recommended in the 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice' applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard FRS 102 (effective 1 January 2019)' and the 2024-25 HM Treasury Financial Reporting Manual.

Data Losses

There were no data losses during the year.

Significant Issues

Current Department of Finance guidance FD (DFP) 09/18 sets out that a review should be conducted annually to ensure that staff salary maintains the principle of 'no better off, no worse off' as a result of their employees' pension contributions. Presently the Community Relations Council increases the basic salaries for all but eight employees (whose contracts began after the guidance was issued) by making an additional contribution of 6% on gross earnings to compensate employees for superannuation contributions payable to NILGOSC pension scheme. Of this cost to the Community Relations Council there is uncertainty concerning the regularity of a portion of this 6% totalling £17,401. This arrangement was originally put in place to ensure that employees were not disadvantaged as a result of what were historically higher contributions to the NILGOSC pension scheme compared to the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) (NI).

During the 2019-20 financial year the Department of Finance wrote to The Executive Office stating that it is imperative that a business case for full implementation of Department of Finance Pay Remit guidance is prioritised and that options for a longer-term solution are considered before the submission of the 2018-19 Pay Remit to the Department of Finance. The Executive Office then met the Community Relations Council's Board to inform them that they wished to have received the CRC business case before the close of the 2019-20 financial year. The Board established a sub-group to consider the issues, to develop a business case and identify a preferred option to resolve the issues. Following meetings of the sub-group a business case with a recommended preferred option was submitted to The Executive Office in

March 2020 and then updated on 8th July 2020 following The Executive Office review. Queries and comments were received from The Executive Office during December 2020 and reviewed by the sub-group. The Chair met with The Executive Office Accounting Officer, in February 2021, and subsequently wrote to him on 24th February, to seek an agreed and safe way forward on all outstanding matters.

No further communication was received from The Executive Office in relation to resolving the implementation of Department of Finance guidance FD (DFP) 09/18 until The Executive Office wrote to CRC on 24th June 2021 that it was consulting with DoF to understand the pension issue affecting other Arms-Length Bodies.

The Community Relations Council received notice in March 2022 of the approval of all outstanding Pay Remits. The 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22 Pay Remits were all processed and paid to all affected staff (current and previous) on 24th March 2022. 2022/23 Pay Remit was paid in September 2024 and 2023/24 Pay Remit paid in November 2024.

Following correspondence from The Executive Office on 19th April 2023 the Community Relations Council and The Executive Office have been meeting regularly. On 2 January 2024 the Community Relations Council supplied The Executive Office with an updated Business Case approved by the Board's Pension Sub-group. A range of options were set out in the business case. Due to financial staff shortages in Community Relations Council, The Executive Office instructed the organisation to initiate a procurement process to engage external expertise to develop and finalise the business case. Unfortunately, no bids were received. The Executive Office then recommended CRC seek assistance from a temporary agency worker to complete the Business Case. As of 11th August 2025 no temporary agency worker has been identified. The Executive Office is now pursuing a new avenue to assist with the completion of this Business Case. CRC continue to pursue a resolution to this issue and engage with The Executive Office regularly.

Significant Internal Control Problems

There were no significant internal control problems noted in the year to 31st March 2025.

9. Conclusion in relation to Risk Management Status

The Community Relations Council has a system of accountability on which I rely, as Accounting Officer, to form an opinion on the probity and use of public funds, as detailed in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

Having considered the accountability framework, and in conjunction with assurances given to me by the ARAC, I am satisfied that the controls in place to manage risks are appropriate and sound. Any significant internal control issues are reported to the ARAC, the Board and The Executive Office. These controls provide reasonable assurance that risks will not occur or if a risk does occur that it will be detected and corrected in sufficient time to reduce the impact of the risk to tolerable or negligible levels.

B) Remuneration and Staff Report

Remuneration Policy

The appointment and value of remuneration of the Chair is the responsibility of The Executive Office and is carried out in line with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (OCPANI) guidance on public appointments. The Chair's performance is reviewed by The Executive Office.

Appointment of senior staff is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The remuneration of staff aligns with the Northern Ireland Civil Service pay scales and includes a pension allowance uplift for those employed prior to guidance from Department of Finance during 2013. The performance of the Chief Executive Officer is reviewed by the Chair. The notice period for all senior staff members of the Community Relations Council does not exceed six months.

Appointment of all other staff is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The remuneration of staff aligns with the Northern Ireland Civil Service pay scales and includes a pension allowance uplift for those employed prior to guidance from the Department of Finance during 2013. Performance is appraised by line managers in respect of achievement of agreed objectives. The arrangements for early termination of senior staff are made in accordance with the employment contract of the relevant individual.

All current members of the Board took up their positions on 1st June 2019 and were appointed for three years. The Chair took up position on 1st June 2019 following appointment by The Executive Office. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in the individual receiving compensation. During the year, no early termination payments were paid. In the absence of Ministers, the Executive Office extended the term of office of all members effective from 1st June 2024.

The Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association of the Community Relations Council makes provision for the Chair and other members to be remunerated. In October 2017 the Community Relations Council received approval from the Charity Commission NI to remunerate the Board and the Chair. On 16th April 2019 the Board approved amendments to the Articles of Association to allow The Executive Office to make appointments to the Board.

Remuneration (including salary) and Pension Entitlements (audited)

The following directors, who were in post at 31st March 2025, and senior staff received emoluments directly from the Community Relations Council during the year:

	2024-25 Salary/ Fee	2024-25 Pension Benefits * to nearest £'000	2024-25 Total £'000	2023-24 Salary/ Fee £'000	2023-24 Pension Benefits * to nearest £'000	2023-24 Total £'000
J Irwin CEO	80-85	40	120-125	70-75	36	105-115
M McDonald (Chairperson)	5-10	-	5-10	5 - 10	-	5 - 10
C Harris	5-10	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
J McCallister	0-5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
N Tandon	0-5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
A Simpson	0-5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
M Braniff	0-5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5

**The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus (the real increase in any lump sum) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases exclude increases due to inflation or any increase or decrease due to a transfer of pension rights. The figures presented are provided to the Community Relations Council on request by NILGOSC.*

Mr. M McDonnell, Ms C Harris, Mr. R Campbell and Ms. S McClelland did not claim an attendance allowance during the financial year.

Salary

Salaries consist of gross salary to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation and any ex-gratia payments.

Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the employer and treated by the HM Revenue & Customs as taxable emoluments.

Neither bonus nor benefits in kind were paid to the Chair, the Chief Executive Officer, or any other directors during either period. No Community Relations Council employee received a benefit in kind in this period.

Ratio of Median Remuneration to Highest Paid Director (audited)

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid director in their organisation and the median remuneration of the organisation's workforce.

	2024-25	2023-24
Band of Highest Paid Director's Total Remuneration (£)	£82,500	72,500
75th Percentile Total Remuneration (£)	41,677	34,164
PAY RATIO	1.9:1	2.1:1
Median Total Remuneration (£)	35,008	29,330
PAY RATIO	2.3:1	2.4:1
25th Percentile Total Remuneration (£)	28,622	27,054
PAY RATIO	2.8:1	2.7:1
Ratio (75th percentile)	1.94	2.12
Ratio (midpoint)	2.31	2.47
Ratio (25th percentile)	2.82	2.68
Change of highest paid Director (%)	13.79%	0%
Change of whole entity (%)	20.29%	-15.44%

The banded total remuneration of the highest-paid director in the Community Relations Council in the financial year 2024-25 was £80-85k (2023-24: £70k- £75k). The median remuneration of the workforce, for 2024-25 £35,008 (2023-24 £29,330). Salaries for employees at the Community Relations Council range from £25k-£30k to £80k-£85k (2023-24: £25k-£30k to £70k-£75k).

Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance related pay, and benefits-in-kind. It does not include severance payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

Pension Benefits (audited)

	Accrued Pension at pension age as at 31/03/2025 & related lump sum £	Real increase (decrease) in pension & related lump sum £	CETV at 31/03/2025 £000's	CETV at 31/03/2024 £000's	Real increase in CETV £000's
J Irwin					
Chief Executive Officer	46,703	5,770	901	813	(88)

CRC are required to follow annual guidance on reporting requirements promulgated by HM Treasury through Public Expenditure System (PES) papers.

Compensation for loss of office (audited)

No members of staff received compensation for loss of office or exit packages during the year ended 31st March 2025.

Pensions

Introduction

The Community Relations Council participates in a defined benefit pension scheme administered by NILGOSC for all permanent staff. The employer makes a contribution of 19% (2023-24: 19%) of basic salary to the NILGOSC pension scheme. The employee does not have to join this scheme. Further details can be found on www.nilgosc.org.uk.

The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach pension age or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the Scheme if they are at or over pension age. The NILGOSC pension age is 65.

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is a funded defined benefit plan with benefits earned up to 31st March 2015 being linked to final salary. Benefits after 31st March 2015 are based on a Career Average Revalued Earnings (CARE) scheme. Details of the benefits earned over the period covered by this disclosure are set out in 'The Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014' (as amended) and 'The Local Government Pension Scheme (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (as amended)'.

Funding / Governance Arrangements of the LGPS

The funded nature of the LGPS requires participating employers and their employees to pay contributions into the Fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension liabilities with investment assets. Information on the framework for calculating contributions to be paid is set out in the LGPS Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 and the Fund's Funding Strategy Statement. The last actuarial valuation was at 31st March 2022 and the contributions to be paid until 31st March 2026 resulting from that valuation are set out in the Fund's, Rates and Adjustments Certificate. The Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (The Committee) is responsible for the governance of the Fund.

Assets

The assets allocated to the Employer in the Fund are notional and are assumed to be invested in line with the investments of the Fund for the purposes of calculating the return over the accounting period. The Fund holds a significant proportion of its assets in liquid investments. As a consequence, there will be no significant restriction on realising assets if a large payment is required to be paid from the Fund in relation to an employer's liabilities. The assets are invested in a diversified spread of investments and the approximate split of assets for the Fund as a whole (based on data supplied by the Committee) is shown in the disclosures.

The Committee may invest a small proportion of the Fund's investments in the assets of some of the employers participating in the Fund if it forms part of their balanced investment strategy.

Asset Volatility

The liabilities used for accounting purposes are calculated using a discount rate set with reference to corporate bond yields at the accounting date. If assets underperform this yield this will create a deficit in the accounts. The Fund holds a significant proportion of growth assets which, while expected to outperform corporate bonds in the long term, creates volatility and risk in the short term in relation to the accounting figures.

Changes in Bond Yield

A decrease in corporate bond yields will increase the value placed on the liabilities for accounting purposes although this will be marginally offset by the increase in the assets as a result (to the extent the Fund invests in corporate bonds).

Inflation Risk

The majority of the pension liabilities are linked to either pay or price inflation. Higher inflation expectations will lead to a higher liability value. The assets are not perfectly correlated with inflation meaning that an increase in inflation will increase the deficit.

Life Expectancy

The majority of the Fund's obligations are to provide benefits for the life of the member following retirement, so increases in life expectancy will result in an increase in the liabilities.

Exiting Employers

Employers which leave the Fund (or their guarantor) may have to make an exit payment to meet any shortfall in assets against their pension liabilities. If the Employer (or guarantor) is not able to meet this exit payment the liability may in certain circumstances fall on other employers in the Fund. Further the assets at exit in respect of 'orphan liabilities' may, in retrospect, not be sufficient to meet the liabilities. This risk may fall on other employers. 'Orphan liabilities' are currently a small proportion of the overall liabilities in the Fund.

The Real Increase in the Value of the CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV effectively funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

Staff Report

Analysis of Staff Costs (Audited)

	Permanent Staff £	Others £	Board £	2024-25 Total £	2023-24 Total £
Wages and Salaries	567,567	141,064	18,986	727,618	758,605
Social security costs	66,028	-	-	66,028	52,626
Employers pension cost					
<u>Analysed as:</u>					
Current service cost	116,951			116,951	108,636
Total Net Costs	750,546	141,064	18,986	910,596	919,867
Less recoveries in respect of outward secondments	(57,052)			(57,052)	(46,570)
Total Net Costs	693,494	141,064	18,986	853,544	873,297

Average number of persons employed (Audited)

The average number (subject to audit) of whole-time equivalent persons employed during the period was as follows:

	Permanent Staff	Others	Chair	2024-25 Total	2023-24 Total
Total	17	-	1	18	18

On a headcount basis there were 17 (2023-24: 17) full time members of staff employed during the period (15 at year end). There were no staff employed part time (2023-24: 1). On average two members of staff were engaged via a recruitment agency (2023-24: 2).

Sickness Absence Data

The total number of working days lost through sickness during the period by the Community Relations Council staff was 33 days. This represented 0.78% of available working days for the Community Relations Council employees, of which 0.19% was due to long-term sickness absence. Sickness absence during the previous financial year (2023-24) was 74 days, representing 1.74% of available working days.

Staff Composition

At the end of the financial year the gender split amongst Board Members and employees was as follows:

	Male No.	Female No.
Council Members	4	5
Employees:		
Grade 6	-	1
DP	2	1
SO	2	3
EO	1	5
AO	1	1
	-----	-----
Total	6	11
	-----	-----

An analysis of staff costs for (2024-25: £853,544) (2023-24: £873,297) is provided in Note 3 on page 71.

Staff Turnover

At the end of this financial year, Community Relations Council had 11.8% full-time permanent vacancy.

Consultancy

The Community Relations Council did not incur expenditure related to consultancy during the 2024-25 financial year.

Employees Matters

The Community Relations Council provides equal opportunities to its employees and are committed to the principle of equality for all Section 75 groups. This includes only having regard to the aptitudes and abilities of persons and in doing so apply employment policies that are fair, equitable and consistent with the needs of the business. The Community Relations Council's equal opportunities policy aims to ensure no job applicant, employee or worker is discriminated against either directly or indirectly. The recruitment and selection of staff for the Community Relations Council is designed to ensure that applicants are treated in a fair and consistent manner, that the best person is appointed and to provide a reasonable adjustment for suitable persons whenever requested.

The Community Relations Council have appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure that disability duties are complied with and effectively implemented. The Community Relations Council reviews its policies, procedures and practices to identify any amendments or actions needed to meet its disability duties on a regular basis. During the year the Community Relations Council has applied its Disability Action Plan.

There were no significant Health and Safety issues during the year that were directly related to the operations of the Community Relations Council and all minor issues are recorded and are available for inspection. During the year a Fire Risk Assessment was completed for Equality House. All fire equipment was serviced and replaced where necessary.

The Community Relations Council operate a performance management system intended to align employee activities to its objectives. The process identifies training requirements and career development opportunities to meet both the Community Relations Council's and the employee's needs.

All employees have the option to join a Trade Union. The Community Relations Council currently operate a procedural agreement with Unite the Union.

Off-Payroll Engagements

The Community Relations Council had no off-payroll engagements during the 2024-25 financial year (2023-24: £nil).



.....
J Irwin – Accounting Officer

22nd September 2025

.....
Date

C Assembly Accountability and Audit Report

Overview

Regularity of Expenditure (audited)

The Community Relations Council ensures the regularity of its expenditure by application of the requirements contained within Managing Public Money Northern Ireland and its Management Statement.

As described on page 48-49, the Community Relations Council is working with The Executive Office and the Department of Finance to resolve uncertainty concerning the regularity of an additional contribution of 6% on gross earnings for employee's superannuation contributions payable to the NILGOSC pension scheme totalling £17,401.

Fees and Charges (audited)

The Community Relations Council did not earn an income through fees or charges during the 2024-25 financial year.

Remote Contingent Liabilities (audited)

No remote contingent liabilities are known to have existed at the 31st March 2025.

There were no losses or special payments made during the year.

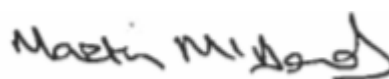
Signed on behalf of the Board of Directors.



.....
M McDonald – Chairperson

22nd September 2025

.....
Date



.....
J Irwin – Accounting Officer

22nd September 2025

.....
Date

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

NORTHERN IRELAND COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council for the year ended 31 March 2025 under the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013. The financial statements comprise: the Statement of Financial Activities; Balance Sheet; Cash Flow Statement; and the related notes, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the Government Financial Report Manual.

I have also audited the information in the Directors' Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's affairs as at 31 March 2025 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my certificate.

My staff and I are independent of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

The going concern basis of accounting for the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer and Directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

Other Information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements, the parts of the Directors' Report described in that report as having been audited, and my audit certificate and report. The Accounting Officer and Directors are responsible for the other information included in the annual report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion:

- the parts of the Directors' Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual; and
- the information given in the Strategic Report and Directors' Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Strategic Report and Directors' Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Strategic Report and Directors' Report.

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Directors' Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by the Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer and Directors for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's and Directors' Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer and Directors are responsible for:

- preparing the Annual Report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report, in accordance with the Companies Act 2006;
- the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- ensuring such internal controls are in place as deemed necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; and
- assessing the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulation, including fraud.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

My procedures included:

- obtaining an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council through discussion with management and application of extensive public sector accountability knowledge. The key laws and regulations I considered included governing legislation and any other relevant laws and regulations;
- making enquires of management and those charged with governance on the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's compliance with laws and regulations;
- making enquiries of internal audit, management and those charged with governance as to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's susceptibility to irregularity and fraud, their assessment of the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and irregularity, and their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud and irregularity;
- completing risk assessment procedures to assess the susceptibility of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur. This included, but was not limited to, an engagement director led engagement team discussion on fraud to identify particular areas, transaction streams and business practices that may be susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the posting of unusual journals;
- engagement director oversight to ensure the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework throughout the audit;
- documenting and evaluating the design and implementation of internal controls in place to mitigate risk of material misstatement due to fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- designing audit procedures to address specific laws and regulations which the engagement team considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements in terms of misstatement and irregularity, including fraud. These audit procedures included, but were not limited to, reading board and committee minutes, and agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation and approvals as appropriate, testing of journal entries, discussing regularity with management and reading internal audit reports;
- addressing the risk of fraud as a result of management override of controls by:
 - performing analytical procedures to identify unusual or unexpected relationships or movements;
 - testing journal entries to identify potential anomalies, and inappropriate or unauthorised adjustments;
 - assessing whether judgements and other assumptions made in determining accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and
 - investigating significant or unusual transactions made outside of the normal course of business.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Dorinna Carville'.

**Dorinna Carville
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
BELFAST
BT7 1EU**

30 September 2025

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Statement of Financial Activities (Including Income & Expenditure Account) for Year Ended 31 March 2025

		All Restricted and Unrestricted Funds 2024-25 £	All Restricted and Unrestricted Funds 2023-24 £
	Note		
Income and endowments from:			
Donations and Legacies	2	3,150,000	3,384,000
Secondments		57,052	46,570
		-----	-----
Total		3,207,052	3,430,570
		-----	-----
Expenditure on:			
Charitable activities	4	3,254,936	3,110,854
		-----	-----
Net income/(expenditure) before tax for the reporting period		(47,884)	319,716
Other recognised gains/(losses):			
Actuarial gain /(loss) on defined benefit pension scheme	16	-	(195,000)
		-----	-----
Net movement in funds		(47,884)	124,716
		-----	-----
Reconciliation of funds:			
Fund balances brought forward at 1 April		(241,733)	(366,449)
		-----	-----
Net movement in funds		(47,884)	124,716
		-----	-----
Fund balances carried forward at 31st March	14	(289,617)	(241,733)
		=====	=====

All of the activities of the company are classed as continuing, and all recognised gains and losses have been included in the results for the year as set out above.

The notes on pages 67 to 85 form part of these Accounts

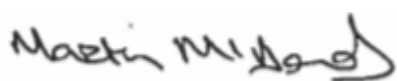
The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2025

		2024-25 £	2023-24 £
	Note		
Fixed assets			
Tangible fixed assets	7	95,709	145,323
Intangible fixed assets	8	11,406	10,486
		-----	-----
		107,115	155,809
Current assets			
Debtors and prepayments	9	27,274	24,741
Cash at bank and in hand	10	139,362	137,108
		-----	-----
		166,636	161,849
Liabilities			
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	(497,878)	(441,828)
Finance Leases	11	(48,737)	(50,067)
		-----	-----
Net current assets or (liabilities)		(379,979)	(330,046)
Total assets less current liabilities		(272,864)	(174,237)
Non - Current Liabilities - Finance Leases	11	(16,753)	(67,496)
Defined benefit pension asset/(liability)	16	-	-
		-----	-----
Total net assets/liabilities		(289,617)	(241,733)
		=====	=====
The funds of the charity			
Restricted Income Funds	14	(289,617)	(241,733)
Restricted Pension Reserve	14	-	-
		-----	-----
Total charity funds		(289,617)	(241,733)
		=====	=====

In the view of the Board an exemption from the audit requirements of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006 is available under section 482 of that Act, since the company meets the Department of Finance's definition of a non-profit making company and is subject to a public sector audit under the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Northern Ireland Order 2013, being an order issued under Article 5(3) of the Audit and Accountability (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. The Council therefore claims this exemption.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 22nd September 2025 and signed on its behalf by:



.....
M McDonald – Chairperson



.....
J Irwin – Accounting Officer

The notes on pages 67 to 85 form part of these Accounts

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Cash Flow Statement for Year Ended 31st March 2025

		2024-25	2023-24
	Note	£	£
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash (used in) / provided by operating activities	12	12,163	62,912
		-----	-----
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	7	(7,317)	(17,598)
Purchase of intangible fixed assets	8	(2,592)	(9,342)
		-----	-----
Net cash (used in) investing activities		(9,909)	(26,940)
		-----	-----
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		2,254	35,972
Opening cash and cash equivalents at 1st April	10	137,108	101,136
		-----	-----
Closing cash and cash equivalents at 31st March	10	139,362	137,108
		=====	=====

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

The notes on pages 67 to 85 form part of these Accounts

Notes to the Accounts for Year Ended 31st March 2025

1. Accounting policies

These Accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 2006, along with selected disclosures as recommended in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) (FRS 102). The particular policies adopted by the Community Relations Council for the year ended 31st March 2025 are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

The principal accounting policies are as follows:

Accounting convention

The Accounts are prepared under the historical cost convention. The directors do not consider the current costs of any of the year's transactions or closing balances to be materially different from the historical cost. The financial statements are presented in sterling, rounded to the nearest pound.

Basis of accounting

Grant Income is recognised in accordance with the performance model set out in FRS 102. Expenditure is treated on the accruals basis of accounting. Without limiting the information given, as the Community Relations Council is a charity that is a public benefit entity, the Accounts are prepared to meet the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities SORP (FRS 102), Accounting Standards issued or adopted by the Accounting Standards Board and accounting and disclosure requirements issued by the Department of Finance. Income from grants, including Grant in Aid, is recognised when there is evidence of entitlement, receipt is probable, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Going Concern

The Executive Office wrote to the Community Relations Council confirming that funding had been secured for the 2025-26 financial year. The Board is satisfied that the Community Relations Council is a going concern on the basis that it has a reasonable expectation that the Community Relations Council will continue to operate for the foreseeable future. In January 2021 the Community Relations Council received Ministerial approval for the 2020-24 Strategic Plan from The Executive Office. The 2025-26 Business Plan has been drafted and is with The Executive Office officials pending Ministerial approval. The budgets for 2025-26 have been agreed across the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). The financial statements are therefore prepared on the going concern basis.

Income

Income comprises all funding provided to the company for its own purposes. Grant income is recognised as follows:

- A grant that does not impose specified future performance-related conditions on the recipient is recognised in income when the grant proceeds are received or receivable.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

- A grant that imposes specified future performance-related conditions on the recipient is recognised in income only when the performance-related conditions are met.
- Grants received before the revenue recognition criteria are satisfied are recognised as a liability.

Taxation

The Company is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from Income and Capital taxes, but not Value Added Tax (VAT).

The majority of the Community Relations Council incoming resources is through grant funding which is outside the scope of VAT. Accordingly the Community Relations Council is not VAT registered and amounts in these accounts are inclusive of VAT where charged.

Provisions

The Company makes provisions for liabilities and charges where, at the balance sheet date, a legal or constructive liability exists (i.e. a present obligation from past events exists), where the transfer of economic benefits is probable, and a reasonable estimate can be made. Where the time value of money is material, the Community Relations Council discounts the provision to its present value using a standard Government discount rate.

Fixed assets

Fixed assets are stated on the balance sheet at cost and depreciated in order to write off the original cost of the assets over their expected useful lives on a straight-line basis over the following number of years:

Fixtures and fittings	5 years
Computer equipment	5 years

Indexation is not applied due to the short life nature of these assets i.e. less than 5 years. The minimum level of capitalisation of tangible fixed assets is £500.

Intangible fixed assets

Software licences for internal recording and reporting systems and other software such as the Grants Management System are capitalised as intangible assets. All intangible assets are amortised over their useful life i.e. 5 years, or the length of the licence. Indexation is not applied due to the short life nature of these assets i.e. less than 5 years. The minimum level of capitalisation of an intangible asset is £500.

Debtors

Debtors are measured on initial recognition at the amount receivable and subsequently at the cash amount expected to be received.

Creditors

Creditors are measured on initial recognition at the amount payable and subsequently at the cash amount expected to be paid.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Grants payable

Grant expenditure is recorded in the period in which the recipient carries out the activity which created the entitlement. Unpaid and unclaimed grants may represent obligations to be recognised as liabilities where there is evidence of entitlement. Where the amount of the claim is not known at the Balance Sheet date, an estimate will be made. Overpayments of grants are shown as receivables at the Balance Sheet date.

Financial Instruments

The Council has limited powers to borrow or invest surplus funds and financial assets and liabilities are generated by day-to-day operational activities rather than being held to change the risks facing the Council in undertaking activities. Therefore, the Council is exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

Currency risk: The Company is principally a domestic organisation with the great majority of transactions, assets and liabilities being in the UK and Sterling based. The Company has no overseas operations. The Company therefore has low exposure to currency rate fluctuations.

Interest rate risk: The Company has limited powers to borrow or invest and therefore has low exposure to interest rate fluctuations.

Credit risk: Because the Company's income comprises all funding provided to it for its own purposes, the Company has low exposure to credit risk.

Liquidity risk: Since the Company receives the majority of its funding from The Executive Office, it is therefore not exposed to significant liquidity risks.

Employee Benefits

Staff costs must be recorded as an expense as soon as an organisation is obliged to pay them. This includes the cost of any untaken leave at the year end. This cost has been calculated using the untaken leave per staff member and applying this to their annual salary to calculate the leave balance as at 31st March 2025.

Redundancy and termination benefits

The exit costs associated with Voluntary Exit packages as funded by the Public Sector Transformation Fund, a facility provided through the 2014 Stormont House Agreement, are accounted for in full in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year departure is agreed.

Pension

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) Scheme.

The pension costs are assessed in accordance with the advice of independent qualified actuaries using the market led approach. The latest actuarial valuations of the scheme were at 31st March 2022.

Pension scheme assets are measured using market value. Pension scheme liabilities are measured using the projected unit method and discounted at the current rate of return on a high quality corporate bond of equivalent term to the liability.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

The increase in the present value of the liabilities of the Community Relations Council's defined benefit pension scheme arising from employee service in the period is charged to the SOFA so as to recognise the cost of pensions over the employees' working lives.

The Community Relations Council is no longer required to recognise an expected return on assets item in the SOFA. This is now replaced with a net financing charge which is based on the discount rate assumption.

Actuarial gains and losses are recognised in the SOFA.

Expenditure

Support costs include all expenditure directly relating to the objectives of the company.

Support costs, detailed on page 74 comprises the costs involved in complying with constitutional and statutory requirements and any other costs which cannot be treated as direct charitable expenditure.

Costs incurred for meetings, seminars and other specific expenditure relating to the individual programmes are classified as programme costs, detailed on page 89.

Funds

The company has two types of funds for which it is responsible, and which require separate disclosure. These are as follows:

Restricted funds

Grant in aid received which is earmarked by the funder for specific purposes and within the overall aims of the company.

Pension Fund

The Charities SORP (FRS 102) requires the valuation of the net defined benefit liability to be included within the accounts.

Changes in Accounting Policy and Disclosure

Impending application of newly issued accounting standards not yet effective.

Charities SORP (FRS 102) Charitable Activities

Expenditure on charitable activities is reported as a functional analysis of the work undertaken by the Community Relations Council in note 5 on pages 75. The key activities of the Community Relations Council being grant making, policy, communication, cultural diversity, district council development and production of the Peace Monitoring Report. Under these headings are included grants payable and costs of activities performed directly by the charity, together with associated support costs.

Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute directly to more than one activity are apportioned between those activities on a per capita basis. Support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are also apportioned between the activities being supported on a per capita basis.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Leases

IFRS 16 Leases replaced IAS 17 Leases and is effective with EU adoption from 1 January 2019. In line with the requirements of FReM, IFRS 16 has implemented, as interpreted and adapted for the public sector, with effect from 1st April 2022. The interest element of any lease classified as a finance lease payment is charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure over the period of the lease at a constant rate in relation to the balance outstanding.

2. Income from donations and legacies and charitable activities

	Restricted Funds 2024-25 £	Total Funds 2024-25 £	Total Funds 2023-24 £
<u>Donations and legacies</u>			
Grant in Aid from The Executive Office	3,150,000	3,150,000	3,384,000
	----- 3,150,000 -----	----- 3,150,000 -----	----- 3,384,000 -----

3. Analysis of Staff Costs

	Permanent Staff £	Others £	Board £	2024-25 Total £	2023-24 Total £
Wages and Salaries	567,567	141,064	18,986	727,618	758,605
Social security costs	66,028	-	-	66,028	52,626
Employers pension cost					
<u>Analysed as:</u>					
Current service cost	116,951			116,951	108,636
Total Net Costs	750,546	141,064	18,986	910,596	919,867
Less recoveries in respect of outward secondments	(57,052)			(57,052)	(46,570)
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total Net Costs	693,494	141,064	18,986	853,544	873,297
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

The difference between the current service cost in this Analysis of Staff Costs and the amount included in the pension scheme note (note 16) is due to the difference between the estimated employer pension contributions notified to the actuary for valuation purposes and the actual amount incurred.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Average number of persons employed

The average number of whole-time equivalent persons employed during the period was as follows:

	Permanent Staff	Others	Chair	2024-25 Total	2023-24 Total
Total	17	-	1	18	18

On a headcount basis there were 17 (2023-24 17) full time members of staff employed during the period (15 at year end). There were no staff employed part time. (2023-24:1). On average two members of staff were engaged via a recruitment agency (2023-24: 2).

Exit Packages

There were none in 2024-25 or 2023-24.

Redundancy and other departure costs are paid in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Service Compensation Scheme, a statutory scheme made under the Superannuation Act 1972. No persons retired early on ill-health grounds in 2024-25 (2023-24: None)

Remuneration of key management

As reported in the Remuneration Report on pages 50 to 54 one member of staff received a salary within the band £80k - £85k.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

4. Analysis of Expenditure on Charitable Activities

Key Activities	Activities Undertaken Directly	Grant Funding Activities	Support Cost	Total 2024-25
	£	£	£	£
Funding and Development	286,975	2,031,147	321,771	2,639,893
Community Engagement	314,039	-	301,004	615,043
Total	601,014	2,031,147	622,775	3,254,936

Key Activities	Activities Undertaken Directly	Grant Funding Activities	Support Cost	Total 2023-24
	£	£	£	£
Funding and Development	267,281	1,910,934	330,062	2,508,277
Community Engagement	292,263	-	310,314	602,577
Total	559,544	1,910,934	640,376	3,110,854

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Analysis of Support Costs

2024-25 Support Costs	Funding and Development £	Community Engagement £	Basis of Allocation
Facilities	45,198	38,881	Per Capita
HR	40,587	38,324	Per Capita
IT	63,849	56,663	Per Capita
Finance	73,197	73,196	Per Capita
Governance	98,940	93,940	Per Capita
	-----	-----	
Function Total	321,771	301,004	
	-----	-----	
2023-24 Support Costs	Funding and Development £	Community Engagement £	Basis of Allocation
Facilities	47,036	40,531	Per Capita
HR	42,269	39,347	Per Capita
IT	64,645	57,308	Per Capita
Finance	94,605	94,605	Per Capita
Governance	81,507	78,523	Per Capita
	-----	-----	
Function Total	330,062	310,314	
	-----	-----	

The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) performs the annual statutory audit of the Community Relations Council at a cost of £22,400 (2023-24: £21,900). There was an amount payable to the NIAO at the 31st March 2025 of £1,382 for the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) (2023-24: £0).

Staff travelling and subsistence costs totalled £3,872 in 2024-25 (2023-24: £3,777) This is included in the Support Costs above.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

5. Grant expenditure

	Grants payable £	Support costs £	2024-25 Total £
Grants schemes			
Small grants schemes	170,380	136,473	306,853
Publications and Media	-	-	-
Core Funding	1,278,404	161,768	1,440,172
Pathfinder	-	-	-
North Belfast Strategic Fund	582,363	23,530	605,893
	2,031,147	321,771	2,352,918
	Grants payable £	Support costs £	2023-24 Total £
Grants schemes			
Small Grants Scheme	163,679	139,990	303,669
Publications and Media	-	-	-
Core Funding	1,168,831	165,936	1,334,767
Pathfinder	-	-	-
North Belfast Strategic Fund	578,424	24,136	602,560
	1,910,934	330,062	2,240,996

A statement of grant making policies in the Directors' Report provides further information on these grant schemes. Of the grants that have been paid, none of the grants have been made to individuals (2023-24: None).

6. Statement of Net (Expenditure)/Income by Operating Segment:

IFRS 8 “Operating Segments” requires disclosure of financial information about an organisation's reportable segments based on the internal reporting arrangements as reviewed by the “Chief Operating Decision Maker” (CODM). The CODM for the Community Relations Council is deemed to be the Board Members since they have the authority for directing the main activities throughout the year. The Board approves the annual budget and at each Board meeting reviews management accounts.

The Board considers financial information that supports delivery of the Community Relations Council's T:BUC objectives as a whole rather than discrete financial information for each internal function. On this basis the Community Relations Council does not have the basis for segmental reporting.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

7. Tangible fixed assets

Year End 31st March 2025	Computer Equipment	Fixtures and Fitting	Buildings Right of Use	Total
Cost:	£	£	£	£
Balance at 1st April 2024	76,972	74,994	216,253	368,219
Additions	5,857	1,460	-	7,317
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2025	82,829	76,454	216,253	375,536
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Accumulated depreciation:				
Balance at 1st April 2024	53,792	69,294	99,810	222,896
Charge for year	5,053	1,973	49,905	56,931
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2025	58,845	71,267	149,715	279,827
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Net book value:				
At 31st March 2025	23,984	5,187	66,538	95,709
	=====	=====	=====	=====
At 1st April 2024	23,180	5,700	116,443	145,323
	=====	=====	=====	=====
Asset Financing				
Owned	23,984	5,187	-	29,171
Finance Lease	-	-	66,538	66,538
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Net Book Value at 31st March 2025	23,984	5,187	66,538	95,709
	=====	=====	=====	=====

Year End 31st March 2024	Computer Equipment	Fixtures and Fittings	Buildings Rights of use	Total
Cost:	£	£	£	£
Balance at 1st April 2023	62,234	72,134	216,253	350,621
Additions	14,738	2,860	-	17,598
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2024	76,972	74,994	216,253	368,219
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Accumulated depreciation:				
Balance at 1st April 2023	48,029	67,435	49,905	165,369
Charge for year	5,763	1,859	49,905	57,527
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2024	53,792	69,294	99,810	222,896
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Net book value:				
At 31st March 2024	23,180	5,700	116,443	145,323
	=====	=====	=====	=====
At 1st April 2023	14,205	4,699	166,348	185,252
	=====	=====	=====	=====
Asset Financing				
Owned	23,180	5,700	-	28,880
Finance Lease			116,443	116,443
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Net Book Value at 31st March 2024	23,180	5,700	116,443	145,323
	=====	=====	=====	=====

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

8. Intangible fixed assets

Year End 31st March 2025

	Software Licences	Total
Cost:	£	£
Balance at 1st April 2024	44,006	44,006
Additions	2,592	2,592
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2025	46,598	46,598
	-----	-----
Accumulated amortisation:		
Balance at 1st April 2024	33,520	33,520
Charge for year	1,672	1,672
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2025	35,192	35,192
	-----	-----
Net book value:		
At 31st March 2025	11,406	11,406
	=====	=====
At 1st April 2024	10,486	10,486
	=====	=====

Year End 31st March 2024

	Software Licences	Total
Cost:	£	£
Balance at 1st April 2023	34,664	34,664
Additions	9,342	9,342
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2024	44,006	44,006
	-----	-----
Accumulated amortisation:		
Balance at 1st April 2023	26,976	26,976
Charge for year	6,544	6,544
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2024	33,520	33,520
	-----	-----
Net book value:		
At 31st March 2024	10,486	10,486
	=====	=====
At 1st April 2023	7,688	7,688
	=====	=====

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

9. Debtors: amounts due in less than one year	2024-25	2023-24
	£	£
Prepayments	27,202	24,741
Other Debtors	72	-
	-----	-----
	27,274	24,741
	=====	=====

10. Cash and cash equivalents

	2024-25	2023-24
	£	£
Balance at 1st April	137,108	101,136
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	2,254	35,972
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March	139,362	137,108
	=====	=====

Cash and cash equivalents are comprised entirely of cash on hand and are held in commercial banks. The Community Relations Council does not have any demand deposits or any short-term, highly liquid investments.

11. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2024-25	2023-24
	£	£
Grants payable	256,705	224,409
Other creditors	63,390	18,667
Accruals	143,083	164,052
	-----	-----
	463,178	407,128
	=====	=====

Creditors: Finance Leases

	2024-25	2022-25
	£	£
Amounts falling due within one year	48,737	50,067
Amounts falling due after one year	16,753	67,496
	-----	-----
	65,490	117,563
	=====	=====

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Deferred Income	2024-25	2023-24
	£	£
Amount deferred in year	34,700	34,700
	-----	-----
	34,700	34,700
	=====	=====

12. Notes to the cash flow statement		2024-25	2023-24
		£	£
Net incoming resources	Note	(47,884)	319,715
Adjustments for:			
Depreciation/amortisation charge	7&8	58,603	64,071
Decrease/(increase) in debtors	9	(2,533)	(16,655)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	11	56,050	(253,626)
Revaluation of ROUA		(5,612)	-
Building Rent Payment	15	(50,410)	(50,885)
Interest Charge		3,949	1,291
Current and past service cost	16	118,000	108,000
Less: Employer pension contributions	16	(115,000)	(98,000)
Interest on net defined benefit liability	16	(47,000)	11,000
Interest on unrecognised assets	16	44,000	-
		-----	-----
Net cash provided by / (used in) operating activities		12,163	62,911
		=====	=====

13. Net income is stated after charging	2024-25	2023-24
	£	£
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	56,931	57,527
Amortisation of intangible fixed assets	1,672	6,544
Auditors' remuneration	22,400	21,900
National Fraud Initiative fee	1,382	-
Revaluation of ROUA	(5,612)	-
	=====	=====

The cost incurred in respect of Statutory Audit fees during the year ended 31st March 2025 was £22,400 (2023-24: £21,900).

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

14. Fund balances - Outline summary of fund movements

Fund name	Fund balances brought forward £	Income £	Expenditure £	Gains and Losses £	Fund Balance Carried forward £
Restricted Fund	(241,733)	3,207,052	(3,254,936)	-	(289,617)
Pension Reserve	-	-	-	-	-
Total Funds	<u>(241,733)</u>	<u>3,207,052</u>	<u>(3,254,936)</u>	<u></u>	<u>(289,617)</u>

Any funds above must be spent on direct charitable expenditure and associated administration and overhead costs.

With effect from 1st April 2021, The Executive Office has put in place a guarantee in respect of the pension liabilities of the Community Relations Council.

15.1 Quantitative disclosures around right-of-use asset

Buildings	Total 2024-25	Total 2023-24
	£	£
Right-of-use assets		
Opening Balance	116,443	166,348
Depreciation expense	<u>(49,905)</u>	<u>(49,905)</u>
Closing Balance	66,538	116,443

15.2 Quantitative disclosures around lease liabilities

	2024-25	2023-24
	£	£
Obligations under finance leases for the following periods comprise:		
Buildings		
Later than one year and not later than five years	50,410	50,885
Less than five years	16,803	67,847
Less Interest element	<u>(1,723)</u>	<u>(1,169)</u>
Present Value of obligations	65,490	117,563
Other		
Current portion	48,737	50,067
Non-current portion	16,753	67,496

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

15.3 Quantitative disclosures around cash outflow for leases

	2024-25	2023-24
	£	£
Total cash outflow for leases	50,410	50,855

The Community Relations Council signed a Memorandum of Temporary Occupation (MOTO) agreement for premises at Equality House on the 1st April 2016. The MOTO expired on 31st July 2021 and has been further extended to 31st July 2026 subject to review. The commitments of IFRS 16 Leases under this MOTO are noted.

16. Commitments under Defined Benefit Pension Scheme

The assets of the pension scheme are held separately from those of the Community Relations Council and are administered by NILGOSC. The pension cost is determined on the advice of independent qualified actuaries. The latest actuarial valuation of the Community Relations Council's liabilities took place at 31st March 2022.

Pension surpluses are not recognised (and are therefore restricted to nil). This reflects the standard approach (following IFRIC14) to determining the level of surplus to recognise.

The scheme is funded, and the employer contributions were 19% for the year ended 31st March 2025 (2023-24: 19%). From 1st April 2024 employer contributions remain at 19% of pensionable pay. Employer contributions to the Fund for the accounting period ended 31st March 2025 totalled £115,000 (31st March 2024: £98,000). The employees' contributions vary between 6.5% and 8.5% of pensionable pay. As required by The Charities SORP (FRS 102), the defined benefit liabilities have been measured using the projected unit credit method. The tables below state the actuarial assumptions upon which the valuation of the scheme was based.

Key Assumptions	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
Discount rate	5.8%	4.8%	4.7%
CPI Inflation	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%
Pension increases	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%
Pension accounts revaluation rate	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%
Salary increases	4.0%	4.1%	4.2%
Asset Allocation	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
Equities	41.3%	39.7%	41.3%
Property	9.5%	9.3%	10.5%
Government bonds	15.7%	15.0%	20.5%
Multi Asset Credit	13.0%	13.0%	13.1%
Corporate bonds	3.9%	4.6%	2.7%
Cash	10.7%	12.4%	5.9%
Other	5.9%	6.0%	6.0%
	-----	-----	-----
Total	100%	100%	100%
	-----	-----	-----

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Mortality Assumptions

The mortality assumptions are based on the recent actual mortality experience of members within the Fund and allow for expected future mortality improvements. Sample life expectancies at age 65 resulting from these mortality assumptions are shown below

	2024-25	2023-24
	Years	Years
Males		
Member aged 65 at accounting date	21.6	21.7
Member aged 45 at accounting date	22.2	22.7
Females		
Member aged 65 at accounting date	24.5	24.6
Member aged 45 at accounting date	25.2	25.6

Reconciliation of funded status to Balance Sheet

	2024-25	2023-24
	£	£
Fair value of assets	9,027,000	8,743,000
Present value of funded defined benefit obligation	(6,677,000)	(7,831,000)
	-----	-----
Funded status	2,350,000	912,000
Unrecognised asset	(2,350,000)	(912,000)
	-----	-----
Asset/(liability) recognised on the balance sheet	-	-
	-----	-----

Amounts recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities

	2024-25	2023-24
	£	£
Operating Cost		
Current service cost	118,000	108,000
Financing Cost		
Interest on net defined benefit liability	(47,000)	(11,000)
	-----	-----
Pension expenses recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities	115,000	97,000

Amounts recognised in other comprehensive income

Assets gains/(losses) arising during the period	(93,000)	393,000
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in financial assumptions	1,441,000	296,000
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in demographic assumptions	59,000	117,000
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to liability experience	(13,000)	(89,000)
Actuarial gain/(loss) due to restriction of surplus	(1,394,000)	(912,000)
	-----	-----
Total amount recognised in other comprehensive income	-	(195,000)

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

	2024-25	2023-24
	£	£
Opening defined benefit obligation	7,831,000	7,832,000
	-----	-----
		--
Current service cost	118,000	108,000
Interest expense on defined benefit obligation	372,000	365,000
Contributions by participants	46,000	40,000
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in Financial Assumptions	(1,441,000)	(296,000)
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in Demographic Assumptions	(59,000)	(117,000)
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to Liability Experience	13,000	89,000
Actuarial losses/(gains) on liabilities	-	-
Net benefits paid out	(203,000)	(190,000)
	-----	-----
		--
Closing defined benefit obligation	6,677,000	7,831,000
	=====	=====
 Changes to the fair value of assets during the period		
	2024-25	2023-24
	£	£
Opening fair value of assets	8,743,000	8,026,000
	-----	-----
Interest income on assets	419,000	376,000
Remeasurement (losses)/gains on assets	(93,000)	393,000
Contributions by the employer	115,000	98,000
Contributions by participants	46,000	40,000
Net benefits paid out	(203,000)	(190,000)
	-----	-----
 Closing fair value of assets	9,027,000	8,743,000

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Movement in Deficit during the year	2024-25 £	2023-24 £
Net defined benefit pension liability at the beginning of the year	-	194,000
	-----	-----
Current service cost	(118,000)	(108,000)
Employer contributions	115,000	98,000
Interest on the net defined benefit liability	47,000	(11,000)
Interest on unrecognised asset	(44,000)	-
Actuarial (losses)/gains	-	195,000
	-----	-----
Net defined benefit pension asset/(liability)at the end of the year	-	-
	=====	=====

Actual return on assets	2024-25 £	2023-24 £
Interest income on assets	419,000	376,000
Gain/(loss) on assets	(93,000)	393,000
	-----	-----
Actual return on assets	326,000	769,000
	=====	=====

The split of the defined benefit obligation at the last valuation date between the various categories of members was as follows:

Active members	33%
Deferred Pensioners	32%
Pensioners	35%

17. Related party transactions

	2024-25 £	2023-24 £
The Executive Office	3,150,000	3,384,000

During the year, the Community Relations Council has had various material transactions with the Good Relations and Governance Branch of The Executive Office which is regarded as a related party. The Community Relations Council received a total of £3,150,000 (2023-24: £3,384,000) in Grant in Aid from The Executive Office during 2024-25.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

	2024-25 £	2023-24 £
ECNI	128,762	131,251

ECNI is regarded as a related party since it is an Arm's Length Body of The Executive Office. The Community Relations Council relocated premises to Equality House on 23rd March 2016. The amount paid to ECNI during the 2024-25 financial year totalled £128,762 (2023-24: £131,251).

Directors:

Some Directors of the Company may also carry out various roles within organisations which receive financial assistance from the Community Relations Council. The Directors disclose these interests on an annual basis by submitting 'Declaration of Interests' returns. Relevant interests are also declared during the normal business and procedures of the Board and its Committees. During the year, the following payments were made to organisations related to Directors:

- Nisha Tandon is Executive Director of ArtsEkta, which was in receipt of a two grants (one grant of £5,000 and one grant of £2,982) under the CRCD programme totalling £7,982 (2023-24: £5,000).

18. Financial Regularity

No cases of financial irregularity that required investigation by the Community Relations Council occurred in the 2024-25 financial year.

19. Contingent Liabilities

No contingent liabilities are known to have existed at the 31st March 2025.

20. Events after the reporting date

There have been no significant events since the balance sheet date that would affect these accounts or require disclosure.

Date of authorisation for issue

The Accounting Officer authorised these Accounts for issue on 30th September 2025.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Appendix 1

Additional Disclosures to comply with FReM

This additional disclosure has been prepared in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM). FReM is a technical guide for the preparation of financial statements of public bodies. The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Community Relations Council for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected.

FReM requires Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB) to regard grant in aid received as contributions from controlling parties giving rise to a financial interest in the residual interest of the body, and hence accounted for as financing, i.e. by crediting them to the income and expenditure reserve. Grants are recognised as financing in the year which they are received.

On 1st April 2012, the Community Relations Council was designated as an Executive NDPB and as a result cannot recognise Grant in Aid as income. If the Community Relations Council were to comply with FReM, the following statements would be the effect of this compliance.

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure

	Note	2024-25 £	2023-24 £
Income		57,052	46,570
Total Operating Income		57,052	46,570
Expenditure			
Staff costs	3	910,596	919,867
Grant expenditure	4	2,031,147	1,910,934
Purchase of goods and services	App 1	254,005	219,617
Depreciation and impairment charges	App 1	58,603	64,071
Other Operating Expenditure	App 1	585	(3,635)
Total Operating Expenditure		3,254,936	3,110,854
Net Expenditure for the year		(3,197,884)	(3,064,284)
Other Comprehensive Expenditure			
Actuarial gain/(loss) on defined benefit pension scheme	16	-	(195,000)
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year		(3,197,884)	(3,259,284)
		=====	=====

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2025

		2024-25 £	2023-24 £
	Note		
Non-current assets			
Tangible Fixed assets	7	95,709	145,323
Intangible assets	8	11,406	10,486
Defined benefit pension asset	16	-	-
		-----	-----
Total non-current assets		107,115	155,809
Current assets			
Trade and other receivables	9	27,274	24,741
Cash and cash equivalents	10	139,362	137,108
		-----	-----
Total current assets		166,636	161,849
		-----	-----
Total assets		273,751	317,658
		-----	-----
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	11	(497,878)	(441,828)
Finance Lease		(48,737)	(50,067)
		-----	-----
Total current liabilities		(546,615)	(491,895)
		-----	-----
Total assets less current liabilities		(272,864)	(174,237)
Non-current liabilities			
Finance Lease	11	(16,753)	(67,496)
		-----	-----
Total assets less total liabilities		(289,617)	(241,733)
		=====	=====
Taxpayers' equity and other reserves			
General fund	14	(289,617)	(241,733)
		-----	-----
Total Equity	14	(289,617)	(241,733)
		=====	=====

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Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31st March 2025

		2024-25 £	2023-24 £
Cash flows from operating activities	Note		
Net Operating Cost		(3,254,936)	(3,110,854)
Adjustments for:			
Depreciation/amortisation charge	7/8	58,603	64,071
(Increase)/Decrease in debtors	9	(2,533)	(16,655)
(Decrease)/Increase in creditors	11	56,050	(253,626)
Revaluation of ROUOA		(5,612)	-
Building Rent Payment	15	(50,410)	(50,885)
Interest Charge		3,949	1,291
<i>Movement in pension scheme deficit:</i>			
- Current service cost	16	118,000	108,000
- Employer pension contributions	16	(115,000)	(89,000)
- Interest on net defined benefit liability	16	(47,000)	(11,000)
- Interest on unrecognised asset	16	44,000	
		-----	-----
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(3,194,889)	(3,367,658)
		-----	-----
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	7	(7,317)	(17,598))
Purchase of intangible fixed assets	8	(2,592)	(9,342)
		-----	-----
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from investing activities		(9,909)	(26,940)
		-----	-----
Cash flows from financing activities			
Grants from sponsoring department	2	3,150,000	3,384,000
Secondment Income		57,052	46,570
		-----	-----
Net financing		3,207,052	3,430,570
		-----	-----
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents in the period		2,254	35,972
		-----	-----
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period		137,108	101,136
		-----	-----
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period		139,362	137,108
		=====	=====

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year ended 31st March 2025

		General Fund £	Taxpayers' Equity £
Balance at 31st March 2023		(366,449)	(366,449)
Grant-in-aid from The Executive Office	2	3,384,000	3,384,000
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year	App. 1	(3,064,284)	(3,064,284)
Actuarial Gain/(Loss) for year	16	(195,000)	(195,000)
		-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2024		(241,733)	(241,733)
Grant-in-aid from The Executive Office	2	3,150,000	3,150,000
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year	App. 1	(3,197,884)	(3,197,884)
Actuarial Gain/(Loss) for year	16	-	-
		-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2025		(289,617)	(289,617)
		=====	=====

Other Operating Costs

Purchase of goods and services	Note	2024-25 £	2023-24 £
Programme Costs		84,778	62,843
Postage, stationery and photocopier costs		3,992	4,582
Telephone		4,271	2,770
Rentals under operating leases		49,522	51,564
Repairs and maintenance		55,918	51,188
Professional fees		17,687	5,752
Sundry expenses		-	-
HR costs		6,567	13,160
External audit services		22,400	21,900
Internal audit services		8,800	5,785
Bank charges		70	73
		-----	-----
		254,005	219,617
		-----	-----

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Depreciation and impairment charges

Depreciation	7	56,931	57,527
Amortisation	8	1,672	6,544
		58,603	64,071

Other Operating Expenditure

		2024-25	2023-24
		£	£
Staff travel and subsistence		3,872	3,777
Members and Committee expenses		1,376	2,297
Interest - Right of Use of Assets		3,949	1,291
Interest on net defined pension liability	16	(47,000)	(11,000)
Interest on unrecognised asset	16	44,000	-
Revaluation ROUA		(5,612)	-
		585	(3,635)

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Appendix 2: Grants Paid in 2024-25

Core Grant Scheme Awards 2024 – 2025

NB: **Multiple Councils** – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 2 – 4 District Council areas
Regional Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 5 – 11 District Council areas

Reference	Name	Project Description	Amount (£)
Antrim and Newtownabbey			
CFC24/61007	Community Relations Forum	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	38,364.30
Total for Antrim and Newtownabbey			38,364.30
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon			
CFC24/61021	Shankill Parish Caring Association	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	28,670.40
Total for Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon			28,670.40
Belfast			
CFS24/60024	Belfast Interface Project	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	15,264.75
CFS24/60033	Belfast YMCA Limited	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	28,950.58
CFS24/60045	Falls Women's Centre	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	32,608.89
CFS24/60055	Belfast Library and Society for Promoting Knowledge	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	49,663.00
CFC24/61008	East Belfast Mission	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	46,616.40
CFC24/61019	Forthspring Inter Community Group	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	31,712.40

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

CFC24/61022	Intercomm Ireland	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	27,386.10
Total for Belfast			232,202.12
Derry City and Strabane			
CFS24/60003	St. Columb's Park House	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	49,544.80
CFS24/60053	Holywell Trust	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	80,869.26
CFC24/61009	An Gaeláras Limited	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	29,638.80
CFC24/61018	The Churches Trust	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	47,679.50
Total for Derry City and Strabane			207,732.36
Multiple			
CFS24/60027	Partisan Productions	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	33,100.38
CFS24/60032	North West Play Resource Centre (The Playhouse)	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	37,010.00
CFS24/60049	Falls Community Council	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	36,615.94
CFS24/60059	Ulster GAA	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	47,457.00
CFS24/60067	Londonderry Bands Forum	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	48,917.10

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

CFC24/61011	Springboard Opportunities Limited	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	33,022.55
CFC24/61012	Youth Link : NI	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	50,124.84
CFC24/61013	Community Relations in Schools (CRIS)	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	71,994.83
CFC24/61014	Trademark	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	56,126.29
CFC24/61017	The Corrymeela Community	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	50,571.66
CFC24/61020	TIDES Training	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	45,007.20
Total for Multiple			509,947.79
Newry Mourne and Down			
CFC24/61023	Harmony Community Trust	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	9,271.70
Total for Newry Mourne and Down			9,271.70
Regional			
CFS24/60044	PeacePlayers International - Northern Ireland	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	55,605.86
CFS24/60057	Irish School of Ecumenics	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	30,000.00
CFS24/60062	Boys & Girls Clubs	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	10,960.43

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

CFC24/61010	Rural Community Network	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	65,800.80
CFC24/61015	Youth Initiatives NI	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity.	29,531.70
Total for Regional			191,898.79
Overall Total			1,218,087.46

Community Relations Cultural Diversity Grant Scheme Awards 2024 – 2025

NB: **Multiple Councils** – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 2 – 4 District Council areas
 Regional Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 5 – 11 District Council areas

Reference	Organisation	Project Description	Amount (£)
Antrim and Newtownabbey			
CRCD24/62110	Community Relations in Schools (CRIS)	This case-study research will investigate the impact that purposeful investment in GR, trust building & collaboration has on teaching & learning across school networks.	4,950.00
CRCD24/62145	ACT Initiative	Bridge building creating awareness and education including respect for others, series of talks, worldly food tastes and museum visitations.	2,166.00
CRCD24/62230	The Breen Centre	This project will challenge perception, support attitudinal change and acceptance by learning about the story of Ireland through social history and explore future relationship building.	2,966.18
Total for Antrim and Newtownabbey			10,082.18
Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon			
CRCD24/62007	The John Hewitt Society	The John Hewitt International Summer School is an annual much celebrated week-long Festival of Literature and the Arts at the Market Place Theatre Armagh.	1,968.00

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CRCD24/62027	Glenavon FC Academy	The group are delivering a 5 week good relations project that uses football as a hook to encourage a change in hearts and minds.	2,284.50
CRCD24/62036	TADA Rural Support Network	A multicultural celebration event to bring together a diverse range of cultures to promote understanding, respect and engagement with all sections of the community.	4,900.00
CRCD24/62047	Connecting Minds Project	The Mindful Friendship and Citizenship will teach secondary school students mindfulness promoting empathy, respect and cultural inclusion to enhance community relations among diverse religious backgrounds.	4,995.00
CRCD24/62251	Connecting Minds Project	Engaging youth, migrant and local families through workshops, planting activities, and cultural events to promote inclusion, celebrate diversity, and build stronger communities.	4,900.00
Total for Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon			19,047.50
Belfast			
CRCD24/62012	Mornington Community Project	Women Together: Developing Cross Community Connections promoting reconciliation through creating a dedicated cross-community Women's Group who will lead a family project focused on good relations.	3,778.03
CRCD24/62037	EPIC	The British Irish Association Conference offers a unique opportunity to access and network with key individuals and organisations across the United Kingdom and Ireland.	574.16
CRCD24/62055	International Brigade Commemoration Committee	"Ireland and International Medical Aid in Spanish Civil War." Focuses on uniting against prejudice and includes an interesting connection with Belfast.	88.15
CRCD24/62061	Coiste na nIarchimí	To interact along with other organisations, with leading politicians and community leaders to promote the work of the organisation towards reconciliation.	574.16
CRCD24/62096	Limestone United Cross-community Project	By shared learning and understanding we can tackle intolerance and hate in our community with young people becoming agents of change in their community.	1,085.59
CRCD24/62097	All Nations Ministries	During CR week, organising two events - Wed 18th September a bus tour, and on Saturday 21st Sept an Intercultural Workshop for newcomers to NI.	1,051.26

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CRCD24/62114	Prison Arts Foundation	A group of male ex-prisoners develop a screenplay with a 'community relations' and 'transformative arts' focus and perform it through spoken word.	4,135.24
CRCD24/62128	Community Relations in Schools (CRIS)	A schools-based peacebuilding programme targeting young people, parents and staff across the Shankill/Ardoyne interface by utilising a whole school community approach to partnership working.	4,439.76
CRCD24/62148	Falls Women's Centre	A cultural event inviting 30 women from both communities and diverse backgrounds to come together to share skills, creativity and traditions.	520.00
CRCD24/62149	Spórtlann na hÉireann	Fearadh na Fáilte will see the Irish language community lead a week-long anti-racism festival, welcoming people of various backgrounds to share their cultures.	4,448.00
CRCD24/62166	Mediation NI	9 Conversations Diverse group of women who wish to strengthen relationships with self and others through developing resilience and creativity together.	2,425.00
CRCD24/62171	Arts Ekta	A programme for refugee and asylum seekers across the city with the aim of improving emotional health and social wellbeing through creative and cultural activities.	2,982.00
CRCD24/62197	Politics in Action	The project will bring together a cross-community group of 300 young people from schools across Belfast culminating in a conference on 7th February 2025.	4,980.00

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

CRCD24/62221	Imagine Belfast Ltd.	This project will involve over 20,000 people in at least 100 events examining issues of diversity, culture and politics during 24-30 March 2025.	7,000.00
CRCD24/62229	Forthspring Inter Community Group	Participants will collaboratively create art inspired by their cultural heritage and experiences while cultivating a shared garden space.	4,015.00
CRCD24/62244	Belfast YMCA Limited	Highlighting personal stories of resilience and connection, this video celebrates 175 years of Belfast YMCA's peacebuilding through individual experiences and impactful storytelling.	2,100.00
CRCD24/62250	Kitsch Sisters CIC	This project explores cultural diversity through gardening, creative crafts, empowering women, challenging stereotypes, and fostering community resilience and cross-cultural understanding.	2,130.00
CRCD24/62254	Youth Initiatives NI	Crosslinks Good Relations Arts showcase - an original theatre production written/designed by 14-20yrs participants who have been participating in a GR program for 6 months.	1,500.00
Total for Belfast			47,826.35
Causeway Coast and Glens			
CRCD24/62089	Cushendun Building Preservation Trust (CBPT)	CBPT's programme of activities and events for all ages and backgrounds to participate in, support creative learning and develop skills in culture and heritage.	1,300.00
Total for Causeway Coast and Glens			1,300.00
Derry and Strabane			
CRCD24/62017	Community Dialogue	An education programme to better understand how sectarianism and religious ideology entrenches and embeds violence and the learning for Northern Ireland.	1,783.60

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CRCD24/62018	The Churches Trust	This play focuses on bringing children from different backgrounds together through creative arts. They will learn about shared commonalities through the story of Columba.	1,870.00
CRCD24/62038	An Gaeláras Limited	Providing language classes in a venue accessible to people from communities where learning Irish is not viewed as traditional, e.g. communities described as broadly Unionist.	2,100.00
CRCD24/62100	Bloody Sunday Trust	A cross-community/dialogue project delivered by Bloody Sunday Trust on three key issues relevant to coming out of conflict namely justice/legacy, shared islands and Racism.	3,337.50
CRCD24/62117	The Churches Trust	To host a human library event focusing on groups within Section 75 of Northern Ireland Act 1998, followed by supper and music. Columba Heritage walk	1,010.75
CRCD24/62119	Dergview Academy	The group will run a community relations programme over 3 days from September 13th to 15th in Castlederg, to include mixed activities & family fun programmes.	1,500.00
CRCD24/62139	Kerala Association	Bringing people from different communities through food, art, culture, music, dance and education. Thus building good relations between them.	1,350.00
CRCD24/62176	Citizens of Senior Years	The project will work with two groups – Citizens of Senior Years and a youth group from Rutledge Training.	4,807.00
Total for Derry and Strabane			17,758.85
Fermanagh and Omagh			
CRCD24/62180	Core Smart Fit Community Interest Company	The group will deliver a 3-day series of good relations workshops for 50 young people from the Omagh area including a trip to Owenkillew Activity Centre.	5,415.70
Total for Fermanagh and Omagh			5,415.70
Mid and East Antrim			
CRCD24/62006	Cairncastle Ulster-Scots Cultural Group	A Cross Community Festival of music & dance with a diverse range of participants from both indigenous communities and ethnic minority community.	2,500.00
CRCD24/62238	Cairncastle Ulster-Scots Cultural Group	A cross community soiree of music, dance & history with a diverse range of participants from both indigenous communities.	1,500.00
Total for Mid and East Antrim			4,000.00

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Mid Ulster			
CRCD24/62046	Donaghmore District Community Association (DDCA)	The project will foster trust, tolerance, and enhance the understanding of various cultures and traditions within our community through drama, creative writing, sports, and art.	3,150.00
CRCD24/62093	Bardic Educational Arts and Media	POD will engage 80 students from Mid Ulster post-primary schools, collaborating with partner schools to explore Good Relations themes through interactive workshops, creating digital content.	3,509.00
CRCD24/62135	desertcreatives	To host a series of 5 events in our coffee bar with musicians from different cultural traditions to share music in a cross community shared space.	1,470.00
CRCD24/62151	Dungannon Area Churches Forum	Outdoor carol service inviting local different nationalities to sing with a local choir traditional carols and some from their own counties plus Christmas treats.	730.00
CRCD24/62204	Woven Housing Association	The proposed project will design culture calendars for all tenants, and co-ordinate two multi-culture events for tenants and their families in the Dungannon area.	2,360.00
Total for Mid Ulster			11,219.00

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Multiple			
CRCD24/62005	British Youth Music Theatre	The project celebrates/acknowledges the important role of peace builders, promoting awareness amongst young cast members and audiences at the Lyric and Riverside Theatres.	2,450.00
CRCD24/62094	EMSONI - Ethnic Minority Sports Organisation NI	Confederation festival is a summer intercultural multi-sports festival, designed to use sport to bring diverse people together to promote connectivity, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.	3,350.00
CRCD24/62099	Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum	A GRW programme 1. To increase the reach of the Inter-Faith Forum 2. To develop capacity 3. To build sustainability.	1,580.00
CRCD24/62121	Multi-Ethnic Sports And Cultures Northern Ireland(MSCNI)	We plan to use the festival to bring together youth from both local and marginalised communities, engage girls and women in netball and volleyball.	2,106.00
CRCD24/62234	The Egyptian Society of Northern Ireland	This event celebrates Ramadan, emphasizing mutual understanding and respect through cultural exchange, shared traditions, and dialogue, promoting peaceful integration between our minority and local communities.	2,100.00
CRCD24/62239	Karma Kalakendram	Keraleeyam – Kaleidoscope Keraleeyam, in Belfast and Lisburn, promotes cultural diversity and unity through Kerala's arts, cultural seminars, cultural workshops and dance drama program.	1,500.00
Total for Multiple			13,086.00
Newry, Mourne and Down			
CRCD24/62165	Greenhill YMCA	Exploring global justice themes of inclusion, diversity, racism and sectarianism in a Northern Irish context.	3,644.00
CRCD24/62183	Newry Street Unite	Newry Street Unite plan to deliver a programme providing an opportunity for services users to engage with newcomers to Northern Ireland.	1,626.00
Total for Newry, Mourne and Down			5,270.00
Regional			
CRCD24/62010	Success Dragon & Lion Dance Association	Provide a multi-cultural World Culture Share event, which will be entertaining, educational and inclusive. It aims to reduce stereotyping, racism and develop ongoing partnerships.	2,500.00

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CRCDD24/62013	Maiden City Festival	Maiden City Festival - an arts and culture festival running outreach events ahead of a week-long festival in the week before Relief of Londonderry celebrations.	3,525.00
CRCDD24/62014	Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)	An event in Parliament Buildings in September 2024, to promote democratic participation in migrant and minority ethnic communities.	1,825.65
CRCDD24/62025	Thrive Ireland	To produce an 8 episode podcast using in depth interviews and conversational exploration with inspiring global and local peacemakers.	4,881.12
CRCDD24/62032	Arts Ekta	This proposal will deliver the 18th edition of the multi award winning Belfast Mela, Northern Ireland's largest and leading celebration of cultural diversity.	5,000.00
CRCDD24/62053	Irish School of Ecumenics	Bi-annual CONNECT conferences bring together representatives of Church Fora to share experiences and learning, promoting reconciliation, and an end to sectarianism. Newsletter disseminates learnings more widely.	1,515.00
CRCDD24/62072	Parallel Histories	We will bring together young people from Protestant and Catholic communities to debate controversial historical topics in two conferences at Stormont.	3,993.50
CRCDD24/62122	APAC	A community visual art exhibition and magazine created by APAC's Big Book network will be delivered to 10 provincial locations and two Belfast locations.	3,016.00
CRCDD24/62130	The Corrymeela Community	To host a multi-cultural event as part of Community Relations Week and to celebrate the International Day of Peace 21 September 2024.	2,400.00
CRCDD24/62131	Victim Support NI	Victim Support NI & it's partners will facilitate the 'We Stand Together' anti-hate crime campaign to increase awareness about hate crime & available support/advocacy.	3,458.00
CRCDD24/62191	Hillside Men's Shed	This project is an expansion of an already established Good Relations project amongst three Men's Sheds, facilitating challenging conversations around culture and identity.	4,979.74
CRCDD24/62228	Volunteer Now	Volunteer Now would like to update our Volunteering and Belonging Together Toolkit to make it more relevant and responsive to meet needs.	5,000.00

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CRCD24/62241	NI Hyatt Ltd	The Arabic Festival unites diverse communities through music, dance, food, and family activities, fostering cultural understanding, dialogue, and stronger community bonds in a welcoming environment.	2,480.00
CRCD24/62264	Community Relations in Schools (CRIS)	Create series of impact case studies ranging from 30secs to 10mins. Dissemination will be wide across events and used as resources in programme delivery.	3,156.00
CRCD24/62266	Belfast Exposed	Belfast Exposed will engage an external consultant to conduct an in-depth consultation with cross-community groups and individuals, including those from diverse communities.	2,484.00
Total for Regional			50,214.01
Overall Total			185,219.59

North Belfast Grant Awards 2024 - 2025

Reference	Name	Short Description	Amount
Belfast			
NBF24/63015	Greater Whitewell Community Surgery	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	42,451.00
NBF24/63012	Ashton Centre	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	90,000.00
NBF24/63013	Ballysillan Community Forum	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	48,600.00
NBF24/63011	Ardoyne Youth Enterprises	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	72,311.00
NBF24/63014	Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	97,200.00
NBF24/63016	Intercomm	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	76,500.00
NBF24/63020	Ligoniel Improvement Association	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	54,996.00
NBF24/63017	Mount Vernon Community Development Fund	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	27,000.00
NBF24/63019	The Vine Centre	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	12,156.00
NBF24/63018	Shankill Women's Centre (SWC)	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	81,000.00
Total for Belfast			602,214.00

Accounts

Company Registration No. NI24026

Charity No. 107530

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council
Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31st March 2024

Presented to The Northern Ireland Assembly by the Community Relations Council on 28th
November 2024

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

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General Information

Chair	M McDonald
Registered office	Equality House Shaftesbury Square Belfast BT2 7DP
Auditors	Comptroller and Auditor General Northern Ireland Audit Office 106 University Street Belfast BT7 1EU
Solicitors	Lewis Silkin 220 Ormeau Road Belfast BT7 2FY
Principal bankers	Bank of Ireland Donegal Place Belfast
Charity number	107530
Company registration number	NI24026
Website:	<u>https://www.community-relations.org.uk/</u>

Chair's Foreword

2023-24 was a difficult year for many organisations working in the community and voluntary sector given the wide range of budget cuts for both delivery agents and grant recipients as a result of Departmental needs to reduce *spending*. This was particularly difficult for those of us working in the good relations/community relations sector. The cost-of-living crisis made life much more difficult for local communities as they struggled to meet essential needs and still maintain their efforts in building good and sustainable relationships across the province.

In addition, Community Relations Council dealt with a number of staff changes at various levels within the organisation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our staff group for their resilience and flexibility in managing an ever changing and demanding work programme. This year saw a number of CRC staff fulfil 20 years of service with the organisation: Jacqueline Irwin, Ian Thompson and Jo Adamson.

I do not underestimate the effort and input of all the above staff, nor do I take it for granted.

Staff are our greatest asset and the landmark of 20 years of service is a significant milestone in the CRC journey. They join our longest serving member of staff, Ellana Tomasso who has been with CRC for 30 years, an amazing commitment and contribution to the work of the organisation. Thank you to each and every one of you for your continued support.

I would also like to thank my fellow board members for their continued support throughout 2023-24 which saw the organisation achieve fully its operational objectives and targets. To our partners in government -The Executive Office – I acknowledge their support and guidance over the year which saw our working relationship develop and flourish enabling us to serve better the needs of all those working tirelessly in the sector to maintain peace and prosperity.

The restoration of devolved government in early February 2024, after a twenty-four-month hiatus, was warmly welcomed. The positive messaging by the First and Deputy First Minister around good relations has provided an added impetus and optimism to everyone working in the good relations and social cohesion environment.

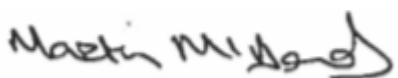
CRC board members have had their first term extended to June 2024 and look forward to working with TEO colleagues and Ministers in exploring options for the future development of the organisation.

Over the year we continued to deliver both small grants and Core grants as part of our role in meeting the headline actions of the TBUC strategy. Unfortunately, both our Pathfinder and Publication grants were suspended due to necessary budget cuts. Our engagement team facilitated three TBUC events across the region during the year. In June 2023 the theme was "Good Relations: A Look Forward." The second meeting of the Forum this year took place during Good Relations Week in September 2023. The theme was "The Good Friday Agreement, 25 years on." The final event was in March 2024 and covered the recently published sixth edition of the Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report.

Good Relations Week (GRW) was launched in May 2023 and covered the period 18th -24th September 23. We were delighted to have Tim McGarry as our GRW Ambassador, and he certainly brought humour and focus to the events he facilitated.

The Good Relations Awards are a key event in the year for both CRC and an ever-growing range of partners. They provide an opportunity to recognise not just the overall winner but a number of other individuals working in shared housing, youth work, ethnic minority sports and volunteering. The 2024 Exceptional Achievement winner was Betty Carlisle MBE. Betty has been the CEO of Shankill Women's Centre for the past 23 years. Her passion and drive for community work has resulted in continued development and growing success, with a new Shankill Shared Women's Centre opening in 2024.

I am delighted as Chair to present this year's Annual Report which gives details on how we have managed our finances, provided good governance and managed our risks in a comprehensive way. Can I conclude by thanking our Chief Executive, Jacqueline Irwin, for her leadership and vision in managing the organisation over the last year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin McDonald', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Martin McDonald

Chair

Community Relations Council

Chief Executive's Comment

In the latter part of 2023-24 we were pleased to see the return of Ministers to the NI Executive. Ministers face many challenging issues, but their return has provided hope and the positive, respectful tone set by the First and Deputy First Ministers is a welcome context in which to carry out the work of building good community relations.

The Community Relations Council is an Arm's Length body of The Executive Office and a key delivery partner responsible for funding programmes across the region to tackle sectarianism, racism, and to build good community relationships now and for the future. 2023-24 has been a financially challenging year across the public sector. The Community Relations Council had to suspend three grant schemes due to cuts in its budget. Despite having these challenges, as this report demonstrates, the organisation mitigated the impact on grants and managed its reduced budget to the high standard required of public bodies, reported to our sponsoring department and others in a timely and transparent way.

In 2023-24 115 organisations and projects received funding totalling £1,910,934 across our grant schemes: Community Relations and Cultural Diversity (CR/CD) Small Grant Scheme, the Core Funding Grant Scheme, and The Executive Office's North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme. Due to funding cuts faced across the public sector in this financial year, the Community Relations Council was unable to open its Pathfinder Grant Scheme, or its Publications and Media Schemes. In the absence of these grant schemes, those seeking funds were directed to our small grant scheme. We hope that the funding available will improve in 2024-25 but at the time of writing this report the financial situation across public services does not look encouraging.

The financial pressures of the year affected the majority of the organisations we fund across the region, but it was inspiring to see how they managed to overcome the funding challenges and find ways to continue to build good cross-community relationships, often at the same time as delivering other services at a local level. Good community relationships are essential as we continue to meet the challenge of this funding crisis as they provide the best context into which to delivery other public, voluntary and community services.

Despite the challenging financial environment in 2023-24, the Community Relations Council continued to be a hub for the exchange of learning and best practice, through our online and in-person development and engagement work with funded groups and wider networks in the voluntary and community sector, with policymakers and academics. During the year we organised three meetings of the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Engagement Forum on behalf of The Executive Office. The Forum continues to be a platform for structured engagement between those involved in the design of policy and those working in various aspects of delivery. The complex weave of perspectives necessary to reflect the diversity of our community is represented in those that attend and the themes of the Forum meetings. With the return of Ministers, we look forward to the conclusion of the review of the Together: Building a United Community strategy in the coming year and to working with The Executive Office in the co-design processes that will develop the refreshed strategy.

Good Relations Week 2023 offered a choice of in-person or online events. As always, we were grateful to the steering group which included representatives from The Executive Office, the Department for Justice, the Education Authority, Libraries NI, The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, The Rainbow Project, Another World Belfast, NI Environment Link and The Nerve Centre and new members Disability Action, NI Local Government Association, and the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland. We were also grateful to Tim McGarry who was this year's ambassador and to everyone who organised or attended the events. Good Relations Week belongs to you.

Communications on our website, X (formerly Twitter) and e-news continued to be a valuable source of information. The Community Relations Council has grown its X and Facebook followers. We now have 8,002 followers on X and 4,216 followers on Facebook. During the year, the website attracted 10,760 users and had 45,400 page views. The usage figures appear lower than last year but having investigated the matter we have been advised that the decrease is due to a change in the "Cookie" policy from the previous framework for this service. This means that when users choose not to accept Cookies we are no longer able to track the activity on our site.

The annual Good Relations Awards are co-ordinated by the Community Relations Council and delivered in partnership with The Executive Office. We were delighted that Junior Minister Aisling Reilly and Junior Minister Pam Cameron were able to attend the award ceremony. We were also pleased that this year's awards attracted seventy-five entries across the five categories. The awards highlight exceptional achievement in promoting community relations, intercultural work, and peacebuilding. This work is strengthening a shared community spirit across the region, improving people's lives and their outlook for the future. We are delighted to deliver the awards in partnership with Volunteer Now, the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA), NI Youth Forum and the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI), all of whom encouraged local groups, individuals and organisations from across the region to get involved and to submit nominations for the 2024 Good Relations Awards programme. This year's winners were Elizabeth (Betty) Carlisle (Community Relations Council Exceptional Achievement Award -peace building); Yvonne Heaney (Good Relations Volunteer of the Year Award); David Patterson (Good Relations Community Champion Award); Crosslink Volunteer Team Youth Initiative (Good Relations Youth Award -Under 25s); Waterside Shared Village (Good Relations Connecting Communities Project of the Year). Congratulations to all the winners, runners-up and all those nominated – your work does not go unnoticed. You are building a positive future that will benefit everyone.

The Community Relations Council now routinely delivers services in person and on-line. This approach has allowed people to attend our events regardless of where they are geographically. It has reduced the number of unnecessary journeys and assisted our aim to work in a sustainable way that contributes to combatting the environmental challenge we all face. We continue to believe that these small actions, if taken by a large enough number of other organisations, and in conjunction with wider systemic and targeted public policy intervention will make a positive difference.

In December 2023 we published the sixth edition of the Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report. Work on the seventh edition will start in early 2025. As always, the project was independently funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. We are grateful for their continued support of this important report. The report was independently authored by Professor Ann-Marie Gray and her team, supported by an independent advisory group. The data contained in the report is gathered under a wide variety of themes and from various sources. The various ways in which the independence of the report is underpinned are important to ensuring that it is trusted. The multiple dimensions examined in the report are an indication of the complexity of the peace process and the range of issues in our past and present, that can affect it in planned and unplanned ways. It also clearly demonstrates that we are not all experiencing the peace process in the same way. For those involved in community relations work, the challenge lies in acknowledging and working with the differing perspectives because that is the reality of pluralist societies. The work is not about bringing everyone to the same point of view but learning to live well together with our differences. After so many years of conflict it is clear that it will take a long time to learn to live together well. We have already come through many stops and slips in our peace process, so we know it is not guaranteed but we also know that it has the capacity to endure. We should take encouragement from that.

In the coming year the Community Relations Council will complete work on its next strategic plan, aligned to the next Programme for Government and the revised Together: Building a United Community strategy when both are published. We will continue to keep refreshing our approach to peace-building and good relations to ensure it is relevant to the times we live in, the needs of the community, and the most effective things to do now.

Although 2023-24 was a financially difficult year, what the Community Relations Council delivered could not have been achieved without the support of The Executive Office, for which we are grateful.

I also want to thank our Chair, Martin McDonald and the members of the Board for their support and guidance to me during the year. My thanks also go to fellow staff members for what they did to build and sustain good community relations in this challenging year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Irwin', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jacqueline Irwin

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Strategic Report

i) Performance Overview

The directors are pleased to present their Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024. This overview section gives a summary on the creation of the Community Relations Council, its aims and objectives, the risks it currently faces and its achievements over the 2023-24 year.

Principal Activities

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council was established by government in 1990 as an independent charity and a company limited by guarantee.

The overall aim for the Community Relations Council, as set out in its Articles of Association, is the advancement of education and of other charitable purposes beneficial to the community in Northern Ireland (“the area of benefit”), and in particular, but not so as to limit the generality of the foregoing, the advancement of education in, and the understanding of, the different cultural traditions of the peoples of the area of benefit and the improvement of community relations in the area of benefit.

The Board of the Community Relations Council has nine members, meets every six weeks and is supported by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Community Relations Council is responsible for delivery of the organisation's strategy and is supported by three Directors: Director of Funding and Development, Director of Community Engagement and Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel. The staffing structure of the Community Relations Council is currently made up of 17 employees as presented in the organisation chart shown on page 15. The Community Relations Council encourages and develops employees to enhance the contribution they make to the Community Relations Council's work and the issues important to developing good community relations. Although this is a small team, the Community Relations Council routinely works in partnership across the region with other bodies that have good relations objectives.

The Community Relations Council delivered its 2023-24 operational plan in an agile mix of on-line and in-person activities. This approach enables the organisation to deliver a more sustainable programme with a reduced impact on the environment.

Review of activities

Strategic Plan 2020-24

The Community Relations Council takes its planning objectives from “Together: Building a United Community” (T:BUC) published by The Executive Office in 2013. Following public consultation, the Community Relations Council's 2020-23 Strategic Plan was approved by Ministers in January 2021. It sets out the strategic objectives of the Community Relations Council in the context of T:BUC and provides the strategy for the work delivered by the Community Relations Council during 2023-24. With the agreement of The Executive Office CRC's 2020-23 Strategic Plan was extended to 2024 to facilitate alignment with the outcome of the Department's review of Together: Building a United Community.

The Community Relations Council promotes good relations among the citizens and communities of Northern Ireland and supports the delivery of the Programme for Government (PfG) and the T:BUC strategy. To fulfil these aims the Community Relations Council focuses on the following areas of activity set out in our 2020-24 Strategic Plan:

- a) Distribution of funding, in collaboration with The Executive Office, to build and support good community relationships.
- b) Promotion of learning, best practice and assist good communication between all relevant sectors and Government in the delivery of the T:BUC Strategy and good relations outcomes.
- c) Ensuring the efficient and effective use of public resources allocated to it by operating to the highest standard of corporate governance in line with relevant guidance and best practice.

Business Plan 2023-24

The business model employed by the Community Relations Council to ensure delivery of its key priorities and achievement of its objectives is implemented through three key functional activities; Funding and Development; Community Engagement; and Finance, Administration and Personnel.

The Community Relations Council's 2023-24 Business Plan had the following three strategic objectives:

- a) Delivering funding that contributes to sustainable development, well-being and the common good by building and supporting good community relationships.
- b) Supporting effective delivery and learning between all sectors and government to assist implementation of the Programme for Government and T:BUC strategy.
- c) Ensuring the efficient and effective use of allocated resources and public expenditure by ensuring that CRC delivers a well governed, trusted and effective public service.

Risk and Uncertainty

The Community Relations Council, as a community relations development organisation with a funding role, must be prepared to deal with opportunities and risks associated with the nature of its work. The Community Relations Council's appetite for risk is determined by the belief that it is not possible to eliminate risk. There will always be a level of residual risk associated with the work that cannot be eliminated but may be mitigated to an acceptable level.

A series of risks related to delivery of the Community Relations Council's objectives were managed during the year. The Community Relations Council has identified the following as the principal risks and uncertainties facing the organisation at 31st March 2024:

<u>Risk</u>	<u>Impact</u>	<u>Mitigations</u>
Resources - Financial	In developing a business case to implement Department of Finance Pay Remit guidance it has become apparent that employees' pension schemes and pension contributions is a complicated and dynamic area, and as such the financial implications have significant inherent uncertainty.	An updated Business Case has been submitted. The Community Relations Council continues to liaise with staff and the union and to work with The Executive Office and Department of Finance to achieve full compliance with Department of Finance guidance.
Resources - Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of staffing issues within CRC.	CRC Director of Finance, Admin and Personnel left on 2 nd April 2024 to take up a new post; recruitment is underway. Temporary cover is being provided by an Interim Finance Manager. Recruitment is underway for the Core Funding Officer post. Temporary cover is in place for two staff on maternity leave.
Resources – Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of recent correspondence relating to the NILGOSC Pension Scheme	CRC has received legal correspondence about the effects of changes made to pensions as a result of the enactment of the Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014. Legal advice has been taken. CRC's solicitors drafted a response to the correspondence. With the approval of the Chair, the submission was made to the Tribunal Service on Friday 25 th November 2022. This letter has been shared with Board members. TEO was notified and the Board is being updated regularly. In September 2023 CRC's solicitors updated on this issue. Originally the test cases were to be heard in July 2023, however, there was a delay in a consultation process, and therefore the cases were stayed until October 2023. CRC received correspondence from DoF informing of the outcome of the consultation: <i>After careful consideration of the responses received the</i>

		<i>Department of Finance will continue with the proposed legislation, which will be made and laid in advance of 1 October 2023. This will restore eligible pension members with service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 to a position they would have been in had the discrimination not occurred, giving them a choice of alpha or PCSPS(NI) benefits for 2015-22.</i> However, CRC's legal advisors have since stated that this Government decision will not affect whether test cases progress, as there is still the issue of injury to feelings for the tribunal to decide on.
Resource – Financial	This risk considers the impact CRC faces in terms of the 2023/24 and 2024/25 budgets from The Executive Office.	2023/24: CRC received the opening budget letter in June 2023. The budget includes a 10% reduction in funding compared to the 2022/23 budget. The letter also states that CRC only has the authority to spend 65% of the budget, while the Treasury agrees the full Northern Ireland budget. On 21st September 2023 CRC received notice from TEO that the 65% cash cap had now been lifted by the Secretary of State, following the passing of legislation in Parliament. CRC submitted a budget exercise to TEO on 8th November 2023. This exercise details CRC's budget position, cash position, and anticipated accruals, and any pressures to TEO. CRC received confirmation of the additional Cash requirement and Capital request in January 2024, however concerns were noted by the ARAC committee over ability to spend at such late notice 2024/25: CRC has not received its budget for the new financial year but on 26th March 2024 an email from TEO stated "Finance has confirmed you should assume the same opening baseline as

		2023/24, less any adjustment for IFRS rental payments”.
Technology	This risk considers the impact CRC faces in relation to Information Technology.	CRC was advised early February 2024 that the 2 long term and entire IT Support team members were leaving ECNI – the organisation who solely manage CRC’s IT services, implementation, and support. This was a considerable risk as they are a regular, necessary resource which enables the function of CRC through IT which is now the fundamental and basic requirement for all work and communication. With the assistance of CPD, ECNI has now engaged in a one-year contract with the new company established by the aforementioned leavers – this temporary, emergency solution ensures continuity of cover, albeit under a different form of contract. Long term solutions will continue to be investigated including IT Assist.

A more detailed explanation of the Community Relations Council’s Internal Control and Risk Management process, including the Community Relations Council’s principal risks and uncertainties, is included on pages 43 to 50.

The Community Relations Council monitors its performance by comparing actual performance to targeted performance as detailed in the 2023-24 business plan. Performance against business plan targets is reported through the management team to the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Board and The Executive Office. Where comparison between targeted and planned performance has indicated a risk that a business plan objective may not be achieved then mitigating action will be taken and if necessary, reported on the risk register.

Going Concern

The Board is satisfied that the Community Relations Council is a going concern on the basis that it has a reasonable expectation that the Community Relations Council will continue to operate for the foreseeable future. In January 2020-21 the Community Relations Council received Ministerial approval for the 2020-23 Strategic Plan from The Executive Office. The Executive Office has agreed that the Strategic Plan should be extended for 1 year to allow time for the alignment of the next strategic plan with the outcome of the review of Together: Building a United Community and the next Programme for Government. The Board has commenced work on the new strategy and intends to align the final draft with the new Programme for Government, before undertaking public consultation on it. The 2024-25 business plan is at an advanced stage of preparation and is with The Executive Office officials pending Ministerial approval. Funding was secured for the 2023-24 financial year and budgets across the NI Civil Service have been agreed for 2024-25. The Executive Office wrote to the Community Relations

Council advising of the opening budget position which was the same as that for 2023-24. The financial statements are therefore prepared on the going concern basis.

The Restricted Pension Reserve, which is the valuation of the company's pension scheme at 31st March 2024 was fully restricted to zero. With effect from 1st April 2019, The Executive Office has provided a guarantee to Northern Ireland Local Government Office Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) in respect of any deficit. In the event that the Community Relations Council becomes insolvent or enters into liquidation, The Executive Office will pay to NILGOSC any unpaid scheme liabilities. The guarantee mitigates the Community Relations Council's solvency and liquidity risk in respect of the Restricted Pension Reserve.

Summary Performance Appraisal

During the year the Community Relations Council achieved delivery of 22 key performance indicators (KPIs).

This included the following achievements:

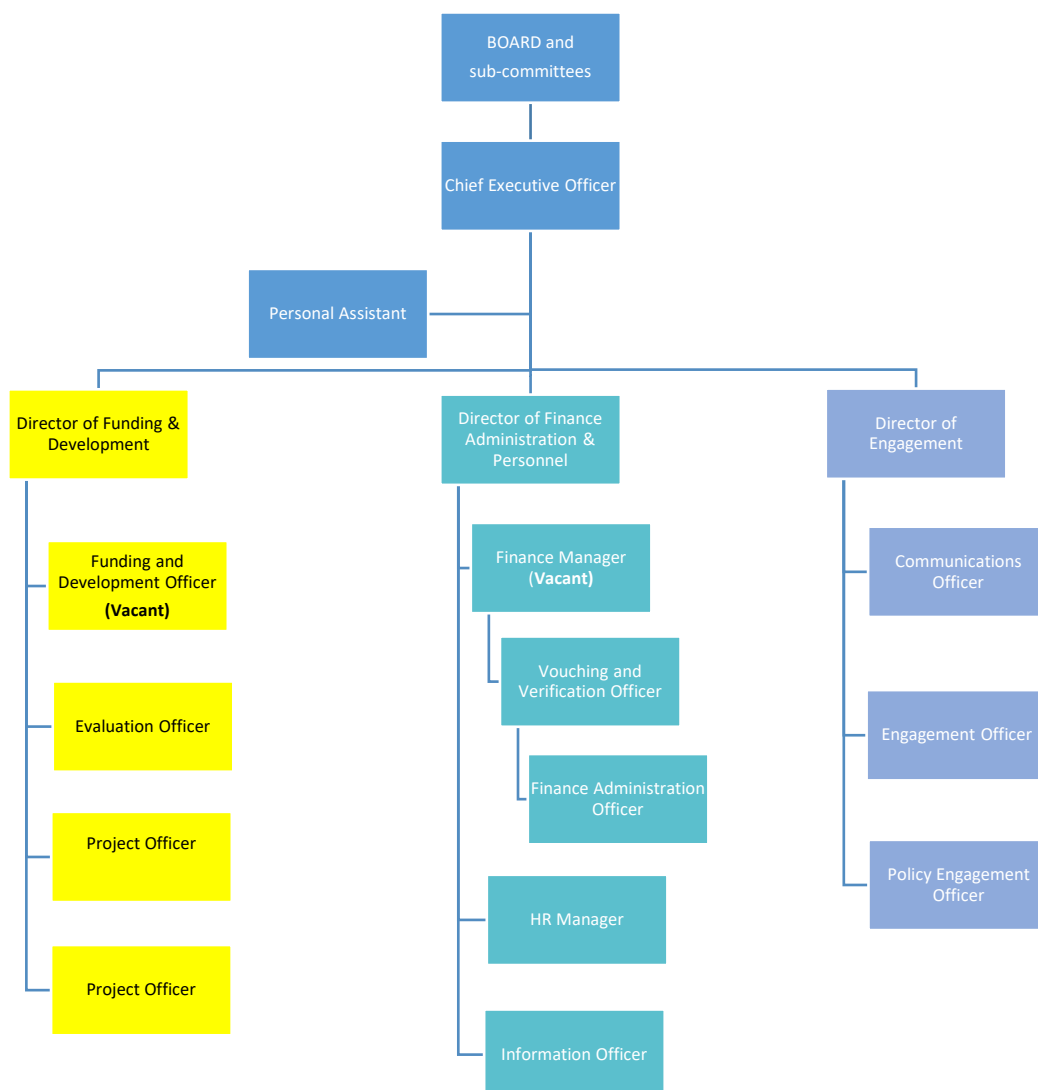
- 100% of applications for 2023/24 Core Funding has been processed within the agreed timescale. A total of 31 awards have been made with a value of £1,236,876.
- A total of 74 CRCD small grants awards were funded in 2023-24
- Over the year 452 people attended the three Together: Building a United Community Engagement Forums. 24% were new attendees, with 88% rating the Engagement Forum as good, very good or excellent.
- CRC's Good Relations Week 2023 (GRW23) took place from 18th to 24th September 2023 under the theme of "Together". 221 events were registered. Media coverage for GRW23 grew by 56%.
- Good Relations Awards 2024 attracted a record 75 nominations across the five categories.
- Three Shared Learning Events took place with CRC staff and The Executive Office colleagues on the topic of Good Relations work and Monitoring and Evaluation.
- The sixth Peace Monitor Report was launched on 21st December 2023. Subsequent dissemination events including presentations and discussion have also taken place.
- 32% of CRC Newsletter subscribers are highly engaged in and regularly open the monthly eNews.
- Social Value Report on CRC Core funding scheme completed.
- Delivered an event for the District Council Good Relations Programme on 30th January 2024. All Councils were represented.
- CRC's Internal Audits all received a 'satisfactory' assurance. These reports related to: The operation of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Grant Administration; and

the previous year's recommendations. Only one priority three recommendation was received.

- 83.4% annual budget allocated to funding and engagement activities.

The continued downward pressures on public sector finance are always a risk to the Community Relations Council being able to deliver its full strategic ambition. Strained relationships and other pressures in the political arena also represent a risk to community relations. These risks are considered as part of the Community Relations Council's risk management process, with additional mitigating actions identified and reported to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Organisation Chart



ii) PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

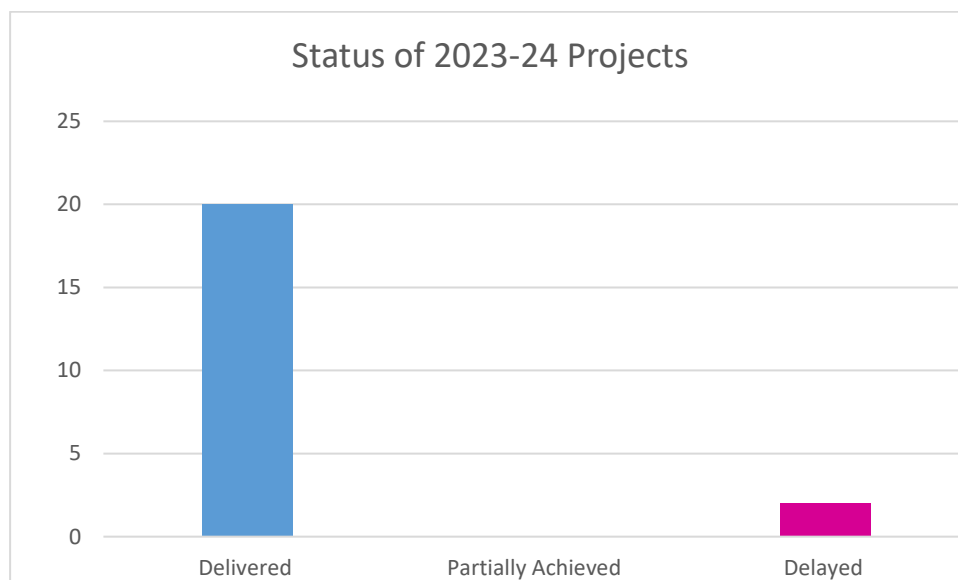
A) Summary

The key undertakings during 2023-24 to deliver on the Community Relations Council's priorities included:

1. The distribution of the Executive Office funding provided to the Community Relations Council for 2023-24 to assist with achievement of the Programme for Government (PfG) and T:BUC strategic outcomes.
2. Contributing to the implementation of the T:BUC Strategy and related PfG outcomes by providing policy feedback to TEO through a series of events including the T:BUC Engagement Forum, inputting to relevant T:BUC sub-groups and giving guidance on good relations best practice to relevant stakeholders.
3. The encouragement and celebration of good relations through the Good Relations Awards and the delivery of the annual Good Relations week with a mixture of online, in-person and hybrid events in collaboration with The Executive Office, the Department for Justice, the Education Authority, Libraries NI, The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, The Rainbow Project, Another World Belfast, NI Environment Link and The Nerve Centre. New members joined the steering group from Disability Action, NI Local Government Association, and Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.
4. The dissemination of resources to share learning and best practice within and between relevant public bodies and the voluntary and community sector.
5. Recommencement of the Shared Space Project. The purpose of the project is to connect those who carry out research on themes related to peace, conflict, social cohesion and community relations with those who are working on those issues in practice. The project builds on the previous Shared Space Journal published by CRC. CRC is revisiting and renewing this initiative with support from Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University and The Open University.
6. Delivery of our operational plan in a manner that was underpinned by a commitment to public service values including transparency, accountability, equality, efficiency and our commitment to sustainability and our pledges related to the environment, health, and our shared earth.
7. Managing the ongoing financial and staffing pressures in 2023-24 by continuous employee and stakeholder engagement; and by maintaining appropriate risk management, assurance, and accountability processes.

The 2023-24 business plan was laid out in the three strategic areas, Funding; T:BUC Engagement; and Delivery and Trusted and Effective Public Service and Good Governance.

The performance of the Community Relations Council is set out in the chart below which summarises stages of completion of each of the projects undertaken during 2023-24. Further detail for each project is given on pages 18 to 26.



Long Term Expenditure Trend

Long term Expenditure Analysis	<u>2020-21</u>	<u>2021-22</u>	<u>2022-23</u>	<u>2023-24</u>	<u>2024-25 Projections</u>
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Grants	2,103	2,252	2,323	1,911	2,001
Programme Costs	54	76	60	60	80
Salaries	892	979	909	920	900
Overheads	242	296	288	220	230
Total Expenditure	3,291	3,603	3,580	3,111	3,211

Since 2016-17 the Community Relations Council has been allocated £670k for North Belfast Group grant awards without receiving additional resource to administer the scheme.

During this extended period of financial constraint, the Community Relations Council continues to protect, as far as possible, resources being allocated to funded groups by minimising cuts to grants and programme costs.

B) Detailed Performance Analysis

The directors are pleased to present Detailed Performance Analysis for the year ended 31st March 2024. This analysis section provides detail on the performance of the Community Relations Council by its key functions and objectives during the 2023-24 year.

Key Performance Indicators

The Community Relations Council Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are included in the annual business plan. Performance against those indicators is reported to the Board and to The Executive Office each quarter. The risk management process is designed to ensure that sufficient internal control is in place to manage uncertainty in achieving the Community Relations Council's KPIs and to identify additional action where necessary.

Programme for Government

The Community Relations Council's KPIs have an outcome focus that aims to ensure that work undertaken by the organisation leads to a real difference to society. Peace-building and improving community relations contribute to the conditions in which all of the existing Programme for Government (PfG) indicators and outcome are more likely to be achieved. With the return of Ministers it is anticipated that there will be a new Programme for Government with related indicators and outcomes. However, in 2023-24 there were a number of these existing draft PfG indicators and outcomes to which the work of the Community Relations Council is particularly relevant:

Indicators		Outcomes
1. Reduce crime (relevant to CRC, crime motivated by sectarianism or racism)	30. Improve our attractiveness as a destination	7. We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other
26. Increase respect for each other	31. Increase shared space	9. We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity
27. Improve cultural participation	35. Increase reconciliation	10. We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest
28. Increase the confidence and capability of people and communities	40. Improve our international reputation	

The Community Relations Council's annual business plan contributes towards the delivery of the Together: Building a United Community strategy's priorities and associated outcomes. The strategy outlines how Government, community and individuals will work together to build a united community and achieve change. The strategy is currently under review.

Funding and Development

In 2023-24 the Community Relations Council delivered the Community Relations and Cultural Diversity Small Grant Scheme, the Core Funding Grant Scheme and on behalf of The Executive Office, the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme (NBSGRP). The Pathfinder

Scheme, the Publications and the Media Scheme did not operate during 2023-24 due to a cut in the organisation's budget. In total, 115 organisations and projects received funding offers of £1,910,934.

Thirty-one organisations received grants awards of £1,168,831 from the Core Fund and ten organisations received grant awards totalling £578,424 from North Belfast Group. In addition to the Core Fund and North Belfast Group schemes, the Community Relations Council awarded £163,679 in funding to 74 projects from 107 applications received under the CRCD funding programme dealing with the legacy of the conflict, peace-building, tackling sectarianism and racism, and building good relations in our diverse community.

Since 1st April 2018, in collaboration with The Executive Office, the Community Relations Council is operating the Code of Practice for Reducing Bureaucracy. During the 2021-22 business year the Community Relations Council moved all of its processes online and in 2022-23 adopted procedures that introduce a risk-based approach to verification of expenditure. The risk-based approach to verification was maintained in 2023-24.

Grant Expenditure to Date - District Council Areas - 2023-2024

	Core £'s	CRCO £'s	North Belfast £'s	Total £'s
Multiple	135,744.57	19,375.35	-	155,119.92
Regional	465,026.82	48,815.41	-	513,842.23
Antrim and Newtownabbey	38,364.30	4,965.50	-	43,329.80
Ards and North Down	-	-	-	
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	28,670.40	7,279.49	-	35,949.89
Belfast	185,829.93	47,800.66	602,028.00	835,658.59
Causeway Coast and Glens	45,529.20	1,413.50	-	46,942.70
Derry City and Strabane	224,239.45	16,812.32	-	241,051.77
Fermanagh and Omagh	-	9,148.80	-	9,148.80
Lisburn and Castlereagh City	-	2,383.08	-	2,383.08
Mid and East Antrim	-	2,450.00	-	2,450.00
Mid Ulster	65,800.80	-	-	65,800.80
Newry Mourne and Down	47,670.39	7,595.00	-	55,265.39
Total	1,236,875.86	168,039.11	602,028.00	2,006,942.97

NB: **Multiple Councils** – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 2 – 4 District Council areas

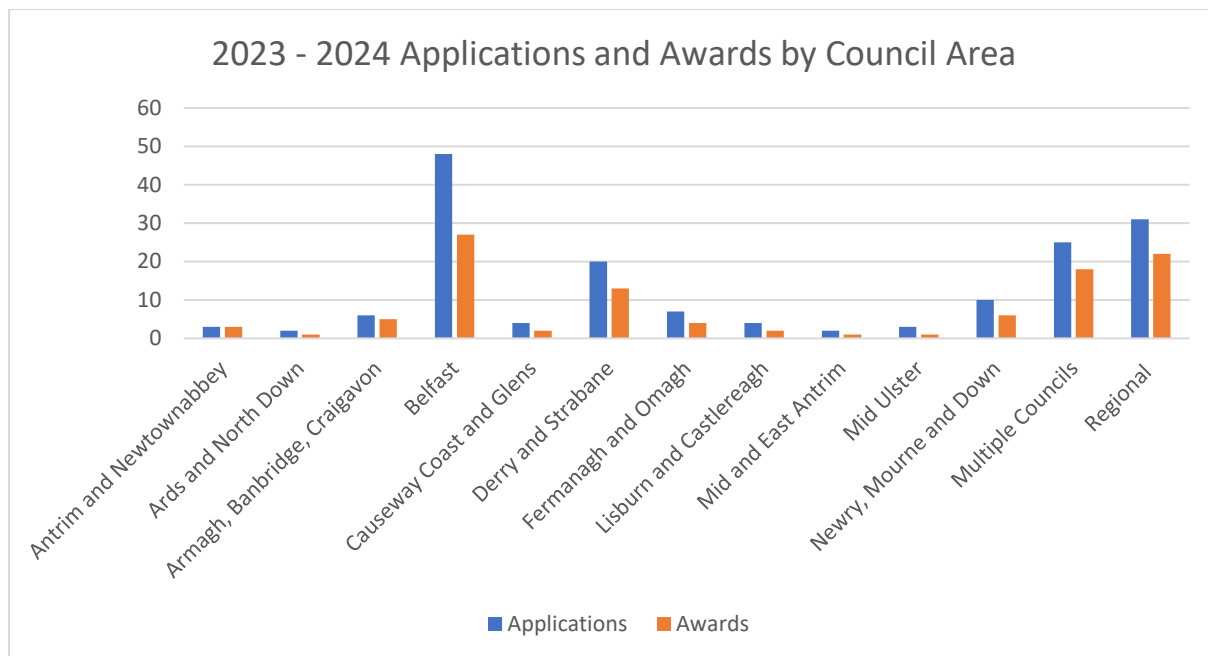
Regional Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 5 – 11 District Council areas

Where there are areas of low grant application the Community Relations Council has put in place welcoming statements to encourage community relations activity.

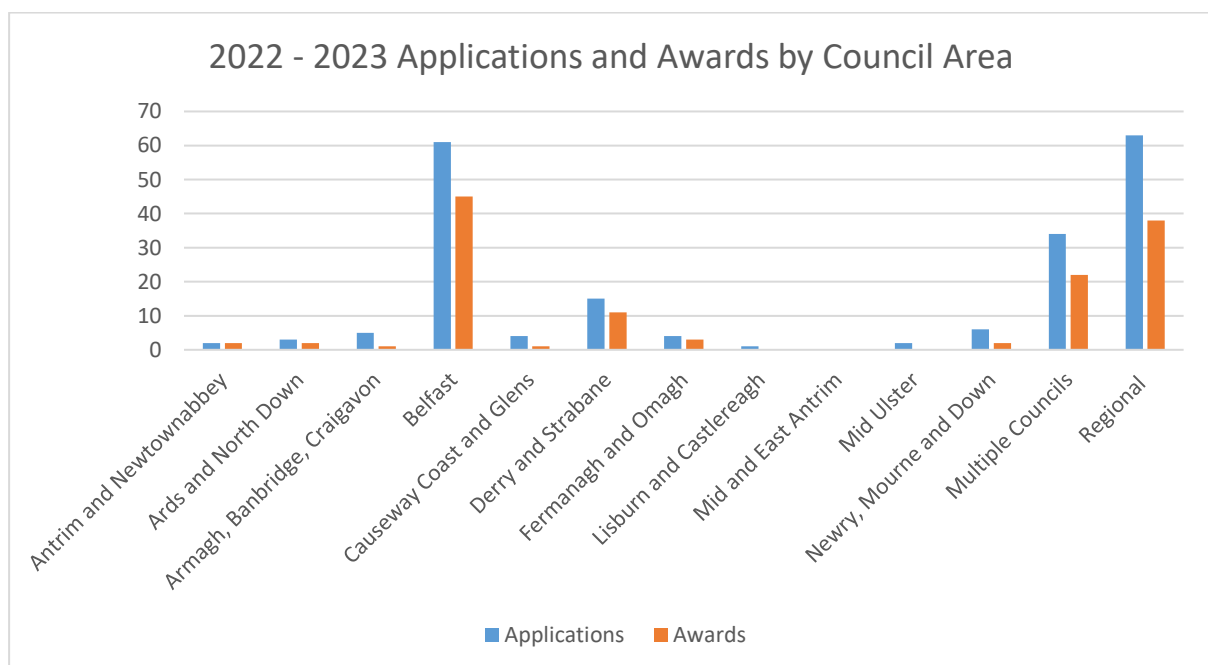
These numbers are detailed on pages 93-101 (Grants paid in 2023-2024). These are 'cash' accounting numbers versus 'resource' accounting numbers reported on page 76

FUNDING – Applications and Awards by Council Area

2023-24 Applications and Awards by Council Area



For comparison: 2022/23 Applications and Awards by Council Area



Performance Highlights

FUNDING - Performance Highlights			
Scheme	Applications Processed as planned		Total Funding
	Target	Performance	
Core Funding	49	49	£1,236,876
CRCO	107	107	£168,039
NBSGRP	10	10	£602,028
Media*	0	0	£0
Pathfinder*	0	0	£0
Publications*	0	0	£0
TOTAL	166	166	£2,006,943

*NB: Pathfinder, Media and Publications Schemes did not operate in 2023-24 year due to budget constraints

Community Engagement

The Community Relations Council provides development support and engagement opportunities as a hub for the exchange of learning and best practice among our funded groups and wider networks. The relationship between policy, practice and reflective evaluation remains at the heart of the work of the Community Relations Council, well-crafted public policy and effective service delivery depends on it.

During the year the Community Relations Council coordinated and delivered three T:BUC Engagement Forums. After a period of being delivered via online and hybrid formats these events have now returned to taking place in person. The Engagement Forums took place on:

- 13th June 2023. The event was titled "Good Relations: A Look Forward."
- 19th September 2023. The event was titled "The Good Friday Agreement, 25 years on."
- 12th March 2024. The event was titled "Peace Monitor Report."

The Engagement Forum provides a platform for formalised and structured engagement to influence positive outcomes from the T:BUC strategy through co-design, co-working and a shared learning approach. The diversity of those attending the meetings provides a broad and inclusive perspective that can assist with the achievement of the vision and aims of the T:BUC Strategy. The Community Relations Council continues to encourage a wide participation in the T:BUC Engagement Forum to reflect our community.

The Community Relations Council also organises and facilitates a series of Shared Learning Forums for funded groups to meet and learn from each other's practice.

The annual Good Relations Week, co-ordinated by the Community Relations Council took place from 18th to 24th September 2023 under the theme of "Together". The Week is designed to showcase good practice and encourage wide engagement. The Community Relations Council was joined on the steering group by The Executive Office, the Department for Justice, the Education Authority, Libraries NI, The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, The Rainbow Project, Another World Belfast, NI Environment Link and The Nerve Centre. Last year new members joined the steering group from Disability Action, NI Local Government Association, and Community Foundation for Northern Ireland. The launch of the week was also supported

Local Authorities, many of whom organised a local launch in their areas. The launch and the week of activities attracted extensive media coverage as well as coverage in the regional press.

The 2024 Good Relations Awards continued to include five categories with partners from NICVA, Volunteer Now, NI Youth Forum and Community Foundation for Northern Ireland adding their expertise to the assessment of the Award nominations. Panels met in February 2024 to assess a total of 75 nominations received across all the categories. The Awards were presented to recipients by Junior Ministers at a special event in Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey on 12th March 2024.

The email newsletter, eNews, has been issued every month during the year. The eNews covers CRC and T:BUC funding opportunities, as well as sharing stories of community-based groups and organisations who are working hard to build united communities at the local level.

Social media was also used to communicate our messages. The Community Relations Council has grown its X and Facebook followers to 8,002 followers on X and 4,216 followers on Facebook. Our website continues to provide a valuable resource for information, as well as keeping people up to date with news from the sector. During the year, the Community Relations Council website attracted 10,760 users and had 45,400 page views.

This year the Community Relations Council started work on The Shared Space Project 2024. The Community Relations Council is facilitating this initiative in conjunction with Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University and The Open University. The purpose of the project is to connect those who carry out research on the broad range of themes that intersect with peace, conflict, social cohesion and community relations with those who are working on those themes in practice. The project builds on the previous Shared Space Journal published by CRC. This was a multi-disciplinary research journal addressing themes of peace, conflict and community relations in Northern Ireland. A project team has met, an information sheet has been produced and a new focused section of the website has been established.

The Community Relations Council this year continued its engagement with minority ethnic and faith communities through our work on stakeholder clinics and working with the Interfaith Forum for Good Relations Week 2023.

During 2023/2024 the Community Relations Council has been working more closely with the District Council Good Relations Programme at the request of TEO. Staff have been attending monthly update meetings with Councils and presenting at sub-regional council cluster meetings organised by TEO. CRC delivered a Shared Learning event for the District Council Good Relations Programme on 30th January 2024 in Cookstown at which all Councils were represented.

T:BUC Engagement and Delivery

Objective	Output	Highlights
In conjunction with TEO deliver the T:BUC Engagement Forum.	Three meetings of Engagement Forum were delivered on 13th June 2023, 19th September 2023 and 12th March 2024. Produced a summary report and production of key messages/evaluation document for each event.	Summary and key messages and evaluation documents were completed. Events were well attended. Attendees and participants included TEO staff, community practitioners, policy makers and academics amongst others. Over the year 452 people attended the three Engagement Forums. 24% of attendees at the three T:BUC Engagement Forums were new. 88% of attendees at the T:BUC EF rated the events as good, very good or excellent
Influence good relations policy outcomes by inputting to relevant PfG and T:BUC subgroups and providing information and feedback to relevant stakeholders.	Participating in the T:BUC Structures. Provided advice and shared learning opportunities. Guidance on funding requirements to funded groups. Collate and disseminate resources. Participated in funding fairs. Delivered four Shared Learning Events for core funded and North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme groups. Sixth Peace Monitor Report printed. Completed Social Value research for CRC Core Funding Programme. Worked with TEO on Good Relations Workforce Survey. Worked with TEO on the District Council Good Relations Programme.	Throughout the year CRC provided support to funded groups including delivery of events online and face-to-face, online grant procedures, regular website updates, social media posts and the monthly eNews. A programme of four Shared Learning events was delivered. This year these events with delivered with both in-person and online participation. 75% of participants rate the Shared Learning Events as very good, very good or excellent overall. 13 funding fairs were delivered across the region focussing on areas of low grant uptake. We were pleased to work alongside Councils and community partners in delivering these events. Social Value report on Core Funding scheme completed. Sixth Peace Monitor Report was launched 21st December 2023. Delivered a Shared Learning event for the District Council Good Relations Programme on 30th January 2024. All Councils were represented. Also participated in regular District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP) meetings with TEO.

Promote Good Relations work through the delivery of Good Relations Week, the Good Relations Award and other activities.	Good Relations Week delivered in online, hybrid and in-person formats during September 2023. The week saw the delivery of a programme of engagement events, lessons learned and best practice with other groups and organisations within and connected to the community relations sector. An evaluation report was produced. 2024 Good Relations Award presentation event took place on 12th March 2024 in Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey.	221 event listings covering every council area across a range of themes during Good Relations Week 2023. 182 pieces of print and online media coverage about the Week. 16 pieces of broadcast (TV & radio) coverage. 310 pieces of social media coverage from media outlets and third-party organisations. Media coverage for GRW23 grew by 56%. Positive feedback received in the event evaluation. 15 people recognised for their peacebuilding efforts and contribution through the 2024 Good Relations Awards. There was one winner and two runners up for each Award. A record 75 Award nominations were received.
Co-ordinate and lead on work emerging from Good Relations Week and CRC's own sustainability pledges that focus on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.	Participation and engagement with stakeholders to develop a programme of work raising awareness of the UN Sustainable Development Goals with CRC stakeholders.	2 meetings with potential partners to investigate existing sustainable development resources that can be adapted for good relations stakeholders.
Engagement and communication with the sector via relevant media platforms.	Regular updates of CRC social media platforms. News information produced and circulated widely. Video content created. Shared Space Research project started.	X Followers: 8,002. Facebook Followers: 4,216. Website Page Views: 45,400. Users 10,760 Email marketing subscribers: 2,907 12 Monthly eNews produced and distributed. New videos on CRC website and YouTube channel covering for example GRW23, GR Award winners and CR/CD funded work. New Shared Space Project website drafted. Shared Space Project development group met. Explainer information sheet on Shared Space Project developed and circulated.

Peace Monitoring Report

The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust provided the Community Relations Council with a grant award to fund two further editions of the Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report. Production of the sixth edition was completed in 2023. In December 2023 the sixth edition of the Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report was published by the Community Relations Council. £34,700 of the funds received from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust have been treated as deferred income and are included within Accruals & Deferred Income on the Balance Sheet in the 2023-24 financial year.

The Community Relations Council is grateful to The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for funding this project. It is anticipated that work will commence on the seventh edition of the report early in 2025.

Financial Summary

The Statement of Financial Activities on page 65 indicates that the company had incoming resources of £3,430,570 (2022-23 - £3,310,999) in the year. Note 2 on page 72 shows The Executive Office as being the sponsor of 98.6% (2022-23 98.7%) of this income. In line with the “Charities SORP FRS 102” the Community Relations Council recognises income as it is received and expenditure as it is incurred. As a result, income exceeded outgoing resources of £3,110,854 by £319,716 (2022-23 – income was exceeded by outgoing resources of £3,579,963 by £268,964)

The Community Relations Council was allocated a resource budget of £3,096,000 for the year to 31st March 2024 by The Executive Office. This budget funded net resource expenditure of £3,066,000 (excluding actuarial movements on the pension liability) which represented 100% of total funding allocated to The Community Relations Council by The Executive Office. The Community Relations Council was also allocated a capital budget of £30,000 for the year to 31st March 2024 by The Executive Office. This budget funded capital expenditure of £26,940.

The Balance Sheet on page 66 shows that the company had a fund deficit of £ (241,733) at 31st March 2024 (2022-23 – deficit of £ (366,449)). The organisation’s Restricted Reserve at 31st March 2024 was a deficit of £ (241,733), (2022-23 – deficit of £ (366,449) of which £ (241,733) was a deficit in the income reserve (2022-23 – a deficit of £560,449). The valuation of the company’s pension scheme as at 31st March 2024, for the purposes of IAS19, was fully restricted to zero. (2022-23 - surplus of £194,000).

Corporate Social Responsibility

The Community Relations Council is committed to complying with all its Human Rights and Equality obligations and best practice. The Community Relations Council applies its equal opportunities policy to prevent any instances of direct and indirect discrimination. The Community Relations Council applies its Equality Scheme which has been approved by ECNI. The scheme is developed in compliance with practice recommended by ECNI to promote equality and good relations as envisaged in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Community Relations Council applies its Disability Action Plan, which has been reviewed by ECNI.

The Community Relations Council monitors and applies its Fraud policy and procedures, including anti-bribery procedures, and subsequently provided training to all Community Relations Council employees. In addition to the Fraud policy, the Community Relations Council apply a suite of policies and procedures to ensure appropriate anti-corruption measures are taken including its Financial Manual, Procurement procedures and Whistleblowing procedures.

iii) Other matters – Sustainability report

The Community Relations Council is committed to the Northern Ireland Executive's Sustainable Development Strategy and has introduced policies and practices to encourage efficiency in the use of resources. These include the 100% use of recycled paper and the introduction of multifunction printing/copying/scanning devices which are set to duplex printing. The Community Relations Council is located in Equality House, a modern office building in Belfast that houses other Arm's Length Bodies. In doing so the Community Relations Council makes a contribution to Government targets for better use of its overall estate. The Community Relations Council participates in the Equality House facilities committee with the other Arm's Length Bodies. The Community Relations Council has undertaken a number of projects to move its services online and away from paper-based processes. The realisation of the full benefits of these projects was hastened by the move to remote working due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The lack of travel and the use of online conferencing for events has also assisted our contribution to the sustainable development strategy.

Through its earlier work in preparation for its Strategic Plan 2020-23 the Community Relations Council has noted a substantial and growing interest in wider environmental issues, including concerns around climate change, global warming, sustainable development and recycling. In its strategic plan the Community Relations Council notes that the concepts of well-being and the common good provide a link between good relations and a wide range of other issues, including environmental issues. The Community Relations Council appointed an Environmental Champion who aims to improve and monitor the sustainability and environmental goals of the organisation. Last year the Board approved a strategy to improve CRC's environmental impact by: introducing a 'Digital First' policy to publications; eliminating the purchase or single use plastic; continuing to implement a paperless office; working to become a 'FairTrade' office; adding criteria to the procurement policy relating to sustainability and environmental standards. The organisation has an Agile work method that blends in-person and on-line working in a manner designed to have a positive environmental

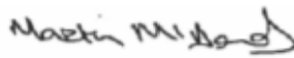
impact. The Community Relations Council will continue to explore the interconnection between good relations and environmental issues.



.....
J Irwin - Accounting Officer

14th November 2024

.....
Date



.....
M McDonald - Chairperson

14th November 2024

.....
Date

DIRECTORS' REPORT

A) Corporate Governance Report

i) Trustee's and Directors' Report

Structure, Governance and Management

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council is a company limited by guarantee, with no share capital, and is registered as a charity by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 2006, along with selected disclosures as recommended in the 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard FRS 102 (effective 2nd October 2019)'.

The Directors have complied with guidance published by the Charities Commission.

Organisational Structure

The Community Relations Council is governed by the Members of the Council. Where the Articles of Association refer to the Council, it can also be read as the Company, which shall mean the Members of the Council can also be read as the Directors of the Company.

The Council has capacity to register 24 members and there was a total of nine members in post during the year. The Council aims to meet every six weeks, holding at least six meetings during any 12-month period. A scheme of delegation is in place and day-to-day responsibility for provision of services rests with the Chief Executive, Jacqueline Irwin, supported by the Senior Management Team. The Senior Management Team consists of the Director of Funding and Development, Director of Community Engagement and Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel.

The Chief Executive, with the assistance of the Senior Management Team, manages the day-to-day activities of the Council and reports directly to the Chairperson. The Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team also provide progress reports to all Council meetings.

Directors

The directors of the company at 31st March 2024 were as follows:

Mr. Martin McDonald	(Chair)	Mr. Michael McDonnell
Mr. Rory Campbell		Ms. Claire Harris
Ms. Audrey Simpson		Mr. John McCallister
Dr. Máire Braniff		Ms. Nisha Tandon
Ms Sheila McClelland		

Board members, including the Chair, are appointed by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service following a recruitment exercise led by The Executive Office in a manner intended to comply fully with guidance from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Northern Ireland (OCPANI). All current members took up their positions on 1st June 2019 and were appointed for three years. In the absence of Ministers to take decisions during the larger part of 2023-24. The Executive Office extended the term of office of all members effective from 1st June 2024.

Following appointment, all directors receive ‘On Board’ training conducted by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), Equality and Recruitment training, conducted by ECNI, induction into the role by The Executive Office as its Arm's Length Body and a full induction into the work of the Community Relations Council conducted by Community Relations Council staff. Induction training for new members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the Community Relations Council is also provided into the work of those committees.

Statement of Grant Making Policies

The Community Relations Council provides grant aid and advice to voluntary and community groups in support of projects which have a community relations purpose or value. The Council has a variety of funding schemes each tailored to promote certain aspects of community relations:

- The Community Relations and Cultural Diversity Small Grant Scheme is intended to help community/voluntary groups in Northern Ireland develop their capacity to engage in community relations work and to enhance the community relations potential of projects they undertake. The maximum award payable for this grant is £10,000.
- The Core Funding Grant Scheme is designed to support voluntary and community organisations to develop community relations work in a strategic manner, on a regional basis. Support is specifically targeted at work to combat sectarianism in Northern Ireland on a strategic long-term basis. The amount awarded normally ranges between £20,000 and £85,000.
- The Publications Grant Scheme aims to encourage the production and dissemination of publications that will contribute to greater understanding and better community relations in Northern Ireland. The maximum award payable for this grant is £5,000.

This grant scheme did not operate during 2023-24 due to cuts in the budget received from The Executive Office.

- The Media Grant Scheme aims to assist with the dissemination of community relations priorities via print, broadcast or other widely accessible media. This grant scheme did not operate during 2023-24 due to cuts in the budget received from The Executive Office.
- The Pathfinder Scheme contributes towards the salary and running costs of organisations or projects which are considered of strategic importance in promoting community relations work in Northern Ireland. The Pathfinder Scheme is not an open scheme to which groups can apply; discussion with the Director of the Funding and Development Programme will precede any proposal made to this scheme. This scheme also supports emergency intervention funding through small project grants. This grant scheme did not operate during 2023-24 due to cuts in the budget received from The Executive Office.
- The North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme (NBSGRP) is a funding scheme administered by the Community Relations Council on behalf of The Executive Office. It is a Ministerial scheme, and its overall strategy remains with The Executive Office. The key aim of the Programme is to develop relations within and between communities in North Belfast. Responsibility for the administrative aspects of the Programme were transferred to the Community Relations Council during 2016-17. The programme made awards up to £100,000 during the 2023-24 financial year.

Details of the grants awarded during the 2023-24 financial year are shown on pages 93-101.

Community Engagement

The Community Relations Council seeks to promote learning, best practice and good communication between all relevant sectors and government to assist effective implementation of the Programme for Government and T:BUC strategy by:

- providing development support and engagement opportunities as a hub for the exchange of learning and best practice among our funded groups and wider networks. The relationship between policy, practice and reflective evaluation remains at the heart of the work of the Community Relations Council, well-crafted public policy and effective service delivery depends on it;
- leading on the coordination and delivery of the T:BUC Engagement Forum events that bring together good relations practitioners, voluntary & community sector and government to assist effective implementation of the Programme for Government and T:BUC strategy;
- co-ordinating the annual Good Relations Week which takes place annually in September. The week is designed to showcase good practice and encourage wide engagement;

- co-ordinating the Good Relations Awards to highlight exceptional achievement in promoting community relations, intercultural work and peacebuilding in Northern Ireland; and
- promoting the work and the activities of the Community Relations Council and others within the sector through monthly email newsletters, its website and social media channels.

Future plans

As an Arm's Length Body of The Executive Office our strategic direction, confirmed by Ministers, is to be a key delivery agent for departmental good relations policy, including the implementation of the aims and objectives of the T:BUC strategy and an outcome based approach to delivery. This includes promoting policy through positive engagement with relevant stakeholders in the community and establishing and implementing best practice.

- The Community Relations Council will finalise work on its next Strategic Plan, carry out a public consultation and seek approval of the final draft from The Executive Office ministers. Subject to the timing of their publication, the plan will align with the new Programme for Government and the revised T:BUC strategy. The Strategic Plan will build on the Community Relations Council's role as a trusted and critical link between government and all sections of society, continuing to promote good practice in building peace and good relations.
- The organisation will continue to take a co-ordinated approach to grant funding focused on T:BUC priorities and objectives. The organisation will continue to review the distribution of its grants and put in place any necessary mitigations to achieve the goals set out in the new Strategic Plan.
- The organisation will continue to develop its suite of key performance indicators and targets to enhance strategic decision making and better demonstrate the impact of the work undertaken by the Community Relations Council. The organisation will continue to emphasise an outcomes-based approach and incorporate the good relations indicators emerging from the revised T:BUC Strategy as the basis of its performance monitoring framework. The organisation will also explore the value of other evaluation methods that align with the overall objectives of the strategy.
- The organisation will continue to deliver a programme of engagement and shared learning. It will also contribute to any new architecture and thematic groups emerging from the revised T:BUC strategy.
- During 2024-25 the Community Relations Council will continue to implement the *'Partnership Agreement'* with The Executive Office (which replaced the previous Management Statement/Financial Memorandum).
- The organisation will continue to operate agile working methods in a manner that is consistent with public sector guidance.

Employee and Board involvement

The Board of the Community Relations Council is responsible for establishing the overall strategic direction of the Community Relations Council. In doing so it will approve the triennial strategic plan, the annual business plan, corporate policies and provide assurance to The Executive Office that appropriate action is being taken on strategic, financial, legal and governance matters. Employees are responsible for implementing the Board's decisions, including reporting and providing assurance to the Board on the Community Relations Council's performance in implementing the Board decisions. Staff involvement includes attendance at Board meetings, joint planning sessions with Board members, monthly staff meetings, the use of project teams and performance management tailored to support the achievement of strategic objectives.

Personal data related incidents

The Community Relations Council is required to report on personal data related incidents and accordingly have a control system to meet these responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The control system has been established to ensure the appropriate handling of personal data and information used for operational and reporting purposes through the development of appropriate strategy and policy.

There were no breaches of personal data during 2023-24.

Freedom of Information

During 2023-24 year the Community Relations Council received one (2022-23: two) Freedom of Information (FOI) request. The request was responded to in a timely way and in a manner consistent with the Community Relations Council's publication scheme.

Pensions

The Community Relations Council participates in a defined benefit pension scheme administered by the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) for all permanent staff. Further details are set out in the Remuneration Report on pages 51 to 55, the accounting policies on pages 67 to 71 and commitments under Defined Benefit Pension Scheme in Note 16 on pages 83 to 86.

Reporting of Complaints

The Community Relations Council received no complaints during 2023-24.

The Community Relations Council's Complaints Policy can be accessed via the [website \(https://www.community-relations.org.uk/contact-us\)](https://www.community-relations.org.uk/contact-us).

Prompt Payment Policy

The Community Relations Council is committed to the prompt payment of bills for goods and services received in accordance with the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998. Unless otherwise stated in the contract, payment is due within 30 days of the receipt of the goods or services, or presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand, whichever is later. Regular reviews conducted during the year to measure how promptly the Community Relations Council paid its bills found that 93% (2022-23: 95%) of bills were paid within this standard. It was also noted that 67% (2022-23: 82%) of bills were paid within 10 days.

Related Parties

Details of the company's related parties are set out in note 17 to the Accounts.

Register of interests

The Chair, Board of Directors, Chief Executive and Senior Management Team are required to register all interests, direct or indirect, which members of the public might reasonably think could influence their judgment. The register of interests is available on the Community Relations Council website or for public inspection by contacting the Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel, Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast. BT2 7DP.

Corporate Governance

The Governance Statement is set out on pages 37 to 50.

Auditors

The Comptroller and Auditor General has the statutory responsibility for the audit of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council under the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013.

ii) Statement of Accounting Officer's and Directors' Responsibilities

Under the Companies Act 2006, the Directors are required to prepare for each financial year, a statement of accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for Charities. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Community Relations Council and of its income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer and Directors are required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) and in particular to:

- observe the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the FReM have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the Accounts;
- prepare the Accounts on a going concern basis; and
- confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Accounting Officer of The Executive Office has appointed the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's assets, are set out in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

As required by the Companies Act 2006, the Accounting Officer and Directors are also responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the accounts comply with the Companies Act 2006. The Accounting Officer and Directors have a general responsibility taking steps as are reasonably available to safeguard the assets of the company and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

Statement of disclosure of information to the auditors

The Accounting Officer and Directors confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and the Accounting Officer takes personal responsibility for the annual report and accounts and the judgments required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Accounting Officer and Directors confirm that, for all directors in office at the date of this report:

- So far as the Accounting Officer and each director is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditors are unaware.
- The Accounting Officer and each director has taken all the steps that he/she ought to have taken in his/her duty as a director in order to make himself/herself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditors are aware of that information.
- The Trustees have complied with their duty in Section 11 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to guidance published by the Charity Commission.

iii) Governance Statement

1. Introduction

This statement is given in respect of the Community Relations Council for the year ended 31st March 2024. It outlines the Community Relations Council's governance framework for directing and controlling its functions and how assurance is provided to support me in my role as Accounting Officer for the Community Relations Council.

The Community Relations Council's governance structures are developed in line with Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI), Departmental and other requirements and guidance. The Board of the Community Relations Council has corporate responsibility for ensuring that the organisation fulfils the responsibilities, aims and objectives set by the Board and agreed with The Executive Office and Ministers including promoting the efficient, economic and effective use of staff and other resources. As Accounting Officer, I have a duty to satisfy myself that the Community Relations Council has adequate governance systems and procedures in place to promote the effective, efficient conduct of its business and to safeguard financial propriety and regularity.

The Community Relations Council is an Arm's Length Body of The Executive Office and a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. It has been formally governed as an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) since April 2012.

The Community Relations Council operates in accordance with a Partnership Agreement with The Executive Office as laid out in the NI Code of Good Practice. This sets out the relationship between the two organisations and defines the financial and administrative framework of the Community Relations Council. The Community Relations Council's primary source of income is grant-in-aid provided by its sponsoring Department, The Executive Office. The Partnership Agreement sets out the conditions on which grant-in-aid is paid and the related financial delegations of the Community Relations Council. The Partnership Agreement replaced the Management Statement Financial Memorandum previously approved by the Board and The Executive Office.

Within this overall framework, it is the role of the Community Relations Council to determine its policies and activities.

2. Compliance with Corporate Governance Code

The Community Relations Council applies the principles of the Department of Finance's *Corporate governance in central government departments: Code of good practice (2013)* where applicable and any other relevant guidance received from government as it continues to strengthen its governance arrangements.

At the 31st March 2024 the Community Relations Council is compliant with the Code.

3. Governance Framework

The Community Relations Council has developed key organisational structures and relationships which support the delivery of corporate governance and which are:

- The Executive Office Ministers;

- The Executive Office Departmental Accounting Officer;
- the Board;
- the Accounting Officer;
- the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee;
- the Finance and General Purposes Committee;
- internal Audit function; and
- external Audit function (NIAO).

These key structures and relationships along with their responsibilities and performance are explained in detail in the relevant sections below.

4. Governance Responsibilities and Performance

Ministers

Relationships between the Community Relations Council and the Ministers are governed by the arm's length principle, wherein the primary role of Ministers is to set the Community Relations Council's strategic and financial framework including the structure of its funding and governance.

These responsibilities are discharged on a day-to-day basis on the Ministers' behalf and in their absence, by the Sponsoring Body. Within this framework, it is the role of this organisation to determine its policies and activities in keeping with the objectives of Government policy and guidance.

Board and Sub – Committees

Board members have individual and collective responsibility for ensuring that the Community Relations Council fulfils its functions in accordance with its remit and that its activities ensure value for money within a framework of best practice, regularity and propriety.

The Community Relations Council has capacity for 24 members and there was a total of nine members in post during the year. The Community Relations Council aims to meet every six weeks, holding at least six meetings during any 12-month period. A scheme of delegation is in place and day-to-day responsibility for provision of services rests with the Chief Executive, Dr. Jacqueline Irwin, supported by the Senior Management Team.

The Board supports the delivery of effective corporate governance and operates within best practice guidelines set out in the Department of Finance's Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice (2013). The Board takes an objective long-term view of the business of the Community Relations Council, leading its strategic planning

process and assisting me as Accounting Officer in meeting the corporate governance responsibilities for the Community Relations Council.

In addition, the Memorandum and Articles of Association set out the Board's responsibility to establish and oversee corporate governance arrangements. Notwithstanding this, all tiers of management have commensurate responsibilities for ensuring that good governance practices are followed at an organisational/business level.

The key aspects of the Board's role include:

- setting the strategic direction for the Community Relations Council, including its vision, values and strategic objectives, and overseeing the implementation of the strategic and business plans, performance against its commitments to The Executive Office, and budget;
- developing, promoting and overseeing the implementation of policies and programmes in line with the Community Relations Council's strategic direction;
- leading and overseeing the process of change and encouraging innovation, to enhance the Community Relations Council's capability to deliver;
- monitoring performance via the Community Relations Council's corporate plans, budgets and targets, and assessing and managing the strategic risk to delivery;
- overseeing the strategic management of the Community Relations Council's staff, finance, information and physical resources, including setting training and health and safety priorities;
- establishing and overseeing the implementation of the Community Relations Council's corporate governance arrangements, including risk management; and
- overseeing and monitoring progress against all of the Community Relations Council's equality of opportunity, good relations and human rights obligations.

In line with best practice, the operational procedures of the Board are kept under continuous review. The Chair has reviewed the number of meetings of the Board and its committees as they relate to the completion of the business plan for the year. He has also reviewed attendance, chairing of committees and the findings of this year's audit reports and is satisfied with performance for the year. During 2020-21 an Internal Audit report concluded that controls designed to mitigate risks associated with board effectiveness and corporate governance provided a satisfactory level of assurance.

During the year the Board received reports during each meeting on the delivery of business plan objectives; financial management and budget monitoring; HR and other resource priorities; and reports from the ARAC in relation to resilience of security and information assurance, contingency planning and business continuity planning.

The Board keeps under review the format and content of Board papers in line with good practice in relation to corporate governance and considers the information provided to be sufficient to allow it to discharge its strategic planning and corporate governance responsibilities.

The Board held eight meetings during 2023-24 in April, May, August, September, November, January, and twice in March. The attendance at the meetings of directors in post at 31st March 2024 during the year is detailed in the table below:

Name	No of Meetings Attended	Total Possible Attendance
Mr. Martin McDonald (Chair)	8	8
Mr. Michael McDonnell	5	7
Ms. Claire Harris	1	1
Mr. John McCallister	7	7
Ms. Nisha Tandon	5	8
Ms. Audrey Simpson	6	8
Dr. Máire Braniff	6	8
Mr. Rory Campbell	5	8
Ms Sheila McClelland	4	8

Mr John McCallister and Mr. Michael McDonnell volunteered to sit on the Core Funding Appeals Panel. This resulted in both Mr J McCallister and Mr. Michael McDonnell being prevented from attending the Board meeting that considered applications for Core Funding. As a result, maximum possible attendance for these members was reduced to seven meetings.

Ms C Harris was on maternity leave for a portion of 2023-24.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

The purpose of the ARAC is to support the Accounting Officer in monitoring risk, control and governance systems (including financial reporting) in the Community Relations Council. Additionally, the Committee advises me, as the Accounting Officer on the adequacy of internal and external audit arrangements to ensure adequate levels of assurance.

The Chair of the ARAC provides an update report at each Board meeting. Typical issues that are reported by the Chair of the ARAC include risk management, fraud investigations, audit reports, update on implementation of audit recommendations and service continuity planning.

The ARAC met six times during the financial year. Membership of the ARAC in 2023-24 comprised a Chairperson and two Members, all of whom are Board Members.

The members of the ARAC during 2023-24 and their attendance at the meetings during 2023-24 is detailed in the table below:

Name	No of Meetings Attended	Total Possible Attendance
Mr. John McCallister (Chairperson)	6	6
Mr. Michael McDonnell	6	6
Mr. Rory Campbell	5	6

Assessment of the ARAC was conducted by the Chair of the ARAC at the end of the 2023-24 financial year. The Chair noted that during that year the Committee reviewed the Risk Register at every meeting; received the NIAO Report to Those Charged with Governance; oversaw the implementation of a number of audit recommendations; received 'satisfactory' rated reports from the internal auditors on their review of 'The Finance and General Purposes Committee', 'Grant Administration', and 'Review of the previous Audit Recommendations'. The Chair of the ARAC concluded that he was satisfied with their performance.

During the financial year the ARAC considered and advised senior management on the key strategic risks, audit strategy and audit reports. The programme of work completed during the financial year included:

- review of the corporate risk register;
- scrutiny of the Annual Report and Accounts;
- consideration of internal audit strategy;
- consideration of NIAO audit strategy;
- review of internal and external audit findings;
- monitoring of residual audit recommendations and
- consideration of potential audit issues arising from grant awards.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee

The role of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is to advise the Board on operations, policies and strategies related to financial management, financial reporting, procurement, facilities, information technology, human resources, information governance, equality matters and other corporate services. The Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee provides an update report at each board meeting on these issues.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee met three times during the financial year. Membership of the Committee in 2023-24 comprised a Chairperson and three Members, all of whom are Board Members.

The members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee during 2023-24 and their attendance at the meetings detailed in the table below:

Name	No of Meetings Attended	Total Possible Attendance
Mr. Martin McDonald (Chair)	3	3
Mr. Michael McDonnell	3	3
Ms. Nisha Tandon	2	3
Ms. Audrey Simpson	2	3

Assessment of the Finance and General Purposes Committee was conducted by the Chair of the Committee at the end of the financial year. The Chair noted that during the year, the

Committee: reviewed CRC's performance against the Business Plan, quarterly; reviewed and approved a number of policies; and received and approved the 2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts. The Chair was satisfied with the performance of the Committee.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee considered and advised senior management on key financial and other operational matters. The programme of work completed during the financial year considered:

- 2023-24 Business Plan delivery
- Financial Management
- Vouching and Verification
- Procurement
- Pay and Reward
- Staff Engagement
- Equality and Disability Action Plan Updates
- Premises and Facilities Management, including Health and Safety.

Accounting Officer

In my role as Accounting Officer, I function with the support of the Board keeping them informed of specific business implications or risks and, where appropriate, the measures that could be employed to manage them.

As Accounting Officer, I have ensured the organisation's progress in implementing an appropriate and proportionate system of internal control in accordance with all Government guidance.

The Community Relations Council's Annual Report and Accounts are prepared in a form directed by The Executive Office with that form having been approved by the Department of Finance.

5. Quality of Data Provided to the Board

The Board is satisfied as to the quality of data and information provided which is always thoroughly reviewed. At present the Board receives standing information for each meeting on key areas such as delivery, performance, finance and human resources. Briefing papers on other material issues are provided as they arise. All papers are issued a week in advance of any Board meeting to allow members to review and, where appropriate, to raise questions in advance. The relevant business area attends Board meetings to support discussions or is asked to produce more detailed information in advance of the meeting. All statistical and financial information is provided by professionally qualified accountants. All reports/papers conform to a standard layout to ensure the appropriate focus on key issues. Financial and performance data is extracted from the accounting and operational systems and is therefore subject to regular, planned internal quality assurance checks and independent audits.

6. Board Effectiveness

Assessment of the Board and Board members was conducted by the Chair. Examples of the areas considered by the review include: attendance, contribution to strategic direction, adherence to the code of conduct, relationships and training. The Chair concluded that he was satisfied with Board performance. The Chair met with TEO on 23rd April 2024 to provide an update on the work of the Community Relations Council and complete an appraisal of his performance as Chair.

7. Internal Control and Risk Management

The Community Relations Council has procedures in place to ensure that it identifies its strategic and operational risks and determines a control strategy. As Accounting Officer, I have overall responsibility for the Community Relations Council's corporate business and for ensuring the effective management of the associated risks. All relevant internal control considerations, including any issues of risk, are taken into account with regard to the achievement of the Community Relations Council's policies, aims and objectives, and where necessary, are brought to the attention of the sponsoring department, The Executive Office. An important element of the system of internal control is provision of assurance to The Executive Office by way of the Quarterly Assurance Statement. The Community Relation Council's internal control accords with best practice and applicable guidance.

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives, it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to:

- identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of policies, aims and objectives;
- evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised; and
- manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The system of internal control has been in place in the Community Relations Council for the year ended March 2024 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Report and Accounts, and accords with Department of Finance guidance.

To assist in the risk management process, the consideration of risks is mapped out in the Community Relations Council's corporate Risk Register which is scrutinised and updated at each ARAC meeting and annually at the Board Meeting. The Register:

- identifies the Community Relations Council's risks; and
- analyses the risks related to the current Business Plan, including provision for the mitigation and control of risks.

All new business activities are assessed for key risks and controls are put in place.

During 2023-24 the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee reviewed the risk strategy and register. The risk strategy and register are aligned with the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) publication “Good Practice in Risk Management”, with the key risks being reviewed by the management team in advance of being presented to and considered at each meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

The table below summarises the key risks which have been assessed as red and amber residual risks and were reported at the last meeting of the ARAC in the 2023-24 financial year.

<u>Risk</u>	<u>Impact</u>	<u>Mitigations</u>
Resources - Financial	In developing a business case to implement Department of Finance Pay Remit guidance it has become apparent that employees’ pension schemes and pension contributions is a complicated and dynamic area, and as such the financial implications have significant inherent uncertainty.	An updated Business Case has been submitted. The Community Relations Council continues to liaise with staff and the union and to work with The Executive Office and Department of Finance to achieve full compliance with Department of Finance guidance.
Resources - Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of staffing issues within CRC.	CRC Director of Finance, Admin and Personnel left on 2 nd April 2024 to take up a new post; recruitment is underway. Temporary cover is being provided by an Interim Finance Manager. Recruitment is underway for the Core Funding Officer post. Temporary cover is in place for two staff on maternity leave.
Resources – Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of recent correspondence relating to the NILGOSC Pension Scheme	CRC has received legal correspondence about the effects of changes made to pensions as a result of the enactment of the Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014. Legal advice has been taken. CRC’s solicitors drafted a response to the correspondence. With the approval of the Chair, the submission was made to the Tribunal Service on Friday 25 th November 2022. This letter has been shared with Board members. TEO was notified and the Board is being updated regularly.

		In September 2023 CRC's solicitors updated on this issue. Originally the test cases were to be heard in July 2023, however, there was a delay in a consultation process, and therefore the cases have been stayed until October. CRC received correspondence from DoF informing of the outcome of the consultation: <i>After careful consideration of the responses received the Department of Finance will continue with the proposed legislation, which will be made and laid in advance of 1 October 2023. This will restore eligible pension members with service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 to a position they would were in had the discrimination not occurred, giving them a choice of alpha or PCSPS(NI) benefits for 2015-22.</i> However, CRC's legal advisors have since stated that this Government decision will not affect whether test cases progress, as there is still the issue of injury to feelings for the tribunal to decide on.
Resource – Financial	This risk considers the impact CRC faces in terms of the 2023/24 and 2024/25 budgets from The Executive Office.	2023/24: CRC received the opening budget letter in June 2023. The budget includes a 10% reduction in funding compared to the 2022/23 budget. The letter also states that CRC only has the authority to spend 65% of the budget, while the Treasury agrees the full Northern Ireland budget. On 21st September 2023 CRC received notice from TEO that the 65% cash cap had now been lifted by the Secretary of State, following the passing of legislation in Parliament. CRC submitted a budget exercise to TEO on 8th November 2023. This exercise details CRC's budget position, cash position, and anticipated

		accruals, and any pressures to TEO. CRC received confirmation of the additional Cash requirement and Capital request in Jan 24, however concerns were noted by the ARAC committee over ability to spend at such late notice 2024/25: CRC has not received its budget for the new financial year but on 26th March an email from TEO stated "Finance has confirmed you should assume the same opening baseline as 2023/24, less any adjustment for IFRS rental payments".
Technology	This risk considers the impact CRC faces in relation to Information Technology.	CRC was advised early February 2024 that the 2 long term and entire IT Support team members were leaving ECNI – the organisation who solely manage CRC's IT services, implementation, and support. This was a considerable risk as they are a regular, necessary resource which enables the function of CRC through IT which is now the fundamental and basic requirement for all work and communication. With the assistance of CPD, ECNI has now engaged in a one-year contract with the new company established by the aforementioned leavers – this temporary, emergency solution ensures continuity of cover, albeit under a different form of contract. Long term solutions will continue to be investigated including IT Assist.

There are also a number of other processes which contribute to the management of risks and corporate governance in the organisation:

- The Corporate and Business Planning Process:
The Community Relations Council's Strategic Plan was approved by Ministers in January 2021. The Strategic Plan is supported by annual Business Plans.

- The Performance Management System:
Performance is monitored throughout the year, reviewed annually by the Board and reported to The Executive Office quarterly in writing and during Accountability and Liaison Meetings.
- HR Policies:
HR policies are designed to ensure that the Community Relations Council has the appropriate numbers of staff with suitable skills to meet its objectives; a system is in place for managing attendance at work and levels of absence are reviewed regularly by the Board and reported to The Executive Office; independent HR guidance supports the organisation in ensuring that it operates in compliance with employment law.
- Budgets and Priorities Setting Including In-year Monitoring Processes:
Budgets and priorities setting are in place and reviewed quarterly in association with The Executive Office. Ongoing downward pressure on government budgets continues to be a risk for the Community Relations Council but this is reviewed regularly by the Board.
- The Community Relations Council's Fraud Policy and Response Plan, Incorporating Arrangements for Whistle Blowing:
The fraud policy and response plan details responsibilities regarding the prevention of fraud and the procedures to be followed in the event of a fraud being detected or suspected. The Annual Report highlights cases of suspected fraud or irregularity and how the Community Relations Council is responding to those claims. Note 18 on page 87 Financial Regularity provides further information.

No 'Raising Concerns' incidents occurred at CRC in 2023-24.

- Gifts and Hospitality:
In line with recommended practice, the Community Relations Council has arrangements in place for the management of gifts and hospitality and all are included on a Gifts and Hospitality Register.
- Third Party Organisations:
Related party transactions are reported in the Accounts.
- Service Continuity Plan:
The Community Relations Council reviewed and updated its Business Continuity Plan in March 2022. The Business Continuity Plan was tested in May 2023 and November 2023. An internal audit of CRC's Business Continuity Plan was conducted in February 2023. The review concluded that Continuity Planning was 'satisfactory' and no priority one or two recommendations were made.
- Management of Information Risks:
Safeguarding information and its subsequent effective use is a key element supporting the Community Relations Council in the delivery of its objectives. Central to achieving this is the effective management of information risk. As part of an ongoing process to identify and control risks to information, the Community Relations Council takes assurance on its information arrangements and practices from all internal and external audits. During 2023-24 the Community Relations Council maintained and operated its Information Governance policies and procedures, including Data Protection, Information Security, Records Management and Document Retention.

Review of Effectiveness

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors, the ARAC, which oversees the work of the internal auditor, the executive managers within the Community Relations Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, and comments made by the external auditors in their Report to Those Charged with Governance and other reports. The Board, and the ARAC have advised me on the implications of my review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and plans to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the control environment are in place.

8. Sources of Independent Assurance

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit function is independent of the organisation and is provided under contract by ASM. Internal Audit has no executive powers. It provides assurance by giving an independent and objective opinion, to the Accounting Officer and the ARAC, on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Community Relations Council's systems of internal control and risk management.

Internal Audit operates in accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). The primary role of Internal Audit is to provide the Accounting Officer and the Board with an independent and objective opinion on risk management, control and governance, by measuring and evaluating their effectiveness in achieving the agreed objectives.

Internal Audit has played a crucial role in the review of the effectiveness of risk management, controls and governance in the Community Relations Council by:

- focusing audit activity on the key business risks;
- being available to guide managers and staff through improvements in internal controls;
- auditing the application of risk management and control as part of Internal Audit reviews of key systems and processes; and
- providing advice to management on internal governance implications of proposed and emerging changes.

For the year to 31st March 2024, the internal auditors have conducted reviews in line with their Annual Audit Plan covering:

Function	Date of final report	Assurance rating
Finance and General Purposes Committee	29th April 2024	Satisfactory
Grants Administration and Distribution	30th April 2024	Satisfactory
Previous year's audit recommendations	29th April 2024	Satisfactory

Internal Audit's Annual Assurance Statement issued an overall satisfactory rating with regard to the Community Relations Council's risk management, control and governance arrangements operating effectively and providing a satisfactory assurance in relation to the effective and efficient achievement of the Community Relations Council's objectives.

All audit recommendations are implemented on a timely basis and progress is reported during each meeting of the ARAC. Internal Audit completed a progress review of previous Internal Audit recommendations and found all recommendations have been implemented as agreed.

External Audit

The Community Relations Council is subject to independent scrutiny from its external auditor, the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO). NIAO is independent of the organisation and Government and is tasked by the Assembly to hold public bodies to account for their use of public money. The Comptroller and Auditor General works closely with the Assembly's Public Accounts Committee which can require Accounting Officers to account for their actions in relation to the management of public funds.

The audit of the Community Relations Council Annual Report and Accounts for 2023-24 was contracted out by the NIAO to the company, Cavanagh Kelly. A representative from the NIAO and Cavanagh Kelly is invited to attend all the meetings of the ARAC at which corporate governance and risk management matters are routinely considered.

The NIAO audits, certifies and reports on the Accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Northern Ireland Order 2013, along with selected disclosures as recommended in the 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice' applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard FRS 102 (effective 1 January 2019) and the 2023-24 HM Treasury Financial Reporting Manual.

Data Losses

There were no data losses during the year.

Significant Issues

Current Department of Finance guidance FD (DFP) 09/18 sets out that a review should be conducted annually to ensure that staff salary maintains the principle of 'no better off, no worse off' as a result of their employees' pension contributions. Presently the Community Relations Council increases the basic salaries for all but eight employees (whose contracts began after the guidance was issued) by making an additional contribution of 6% on gross earnings to compensate employees for superannuation contributions payable to NILGOSC pension scheme. Of this cost to the Community Relations Council there is uncertainty concerning the regularity of a portion of this 6% totalling £14,560. This arrangement was originally put in place to ensure that employees were not disadvantaged as a result of what were historically higher contributions to the NILGOSC pension scheme compared to the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) (NI).

During the 2019-20 financial year the Department of Finance wrote to The Executive Office stating that it is imperative that a business case for full implementation of Department of Finance Pay Remit guidance is prioritised and that options for a longer-term solution are considered before the submission of the 2018-19 Pay Remit to the Department of Finance. The Executive Office then met the Community Relations Council's Board to inform them that they wished to have received the CRC business case before the close of the 2019-20 financial year. The Board established a sub-group to consider the issues, to develop a business case and identify a preferred option to resolve the issues. Following meetings of the sub-group a business case with a recommended preferred option was submitted to The Executive Office in March 2020 and then updated on 8th July 2020 following The Executive Office review. Queries and comments were received from The Executive Office during December 2020 and reviewed by the sub-group. The Chair met with The Executive Office Accounting Officer, in February 2021, and subsequently wrote to him on 24th February, to seek an agreed and safe way forward on all outstanding matters.

No further communication was received from The Executive Office in relation to resolving the implementation of Department of Finance guidance FD (DFP) 09/18 until The Executive Office wrote to CRC on 24th June 2021 that it was consulting with DoF to understand the pension issue affecting other Arms-Length Bodies.

The Community Relations Council received notice in March 2022 of the approval of all outstanding Pay Remits. The 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22 Pay Remits were all processed and paid to all affected staff (current and previous) on 24th March 2022.

Following correspondence from The Executive Office on 19th April 2023 and a meeting on 18th May 2023 the Community Relations Council and The Executive Office have been meeting regularly. On 2 January 2024 the Community Relations Council supplied The Executive Office with an updated Business Case approved by the Board's Pension Sub-group. A range of options have been set out in the business case which will be subject to union negotiation.

Significant Internal Control Problems

There were no significant internal control problems noted in the year to 31st March 2024.

9. Conclusion in relation to Risk Management Status

The Community Relations Council has a system of accountability on which I rely, as Accounting Officer, to form an opinion on the probity and use of public funds, as detailed in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

Having considered the accountability framework, and in conjunction with assurances given to me by the ARAC, I am satisfied that the controls in place to manage risks are appropriate and sound. Any significant internal control issues are reported to the ARAC, the Board and The Executive Office. These controls provide reasonable assurance that risks will not occur or if a risk does occur that it will be detected and corrected in sufficient time to reduce the impact of the risk to tolerable or negligible levels.

B) Remuneration and Staff Report

Remuneration Policy

The appointment and value of remuneration of the Chair is the responsibility of The Executive Office and is carried out in line with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (OCPANI) guidance on public appointments. The Chair's performance is reviewed by The Executive Office.

Appointment of senior staff is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The remuneration of staff aligns with the Northern Ireland Civil Service pay scales and includes a pension allowance uplift for those employed prior to guidance from Department of Finance during 2013. The performance of the Chief Executive is reviewed by the Chair. The notice period for all senior staff members of the Community Relations Council does not exceed six months.

Appointment of all other staff is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The remuneration of staff aligns with the Northern Ireland Civil Service pay scales and includes a pension allowance uplift for those employed prior to guidance from the Department of Finance during 2013. Performance is appraised by line managers in respect of achievement of agreed objectives. The arrangements for early termination of senior staff are made in accordance with the employment contract of the relevant individual.

All current members of the Board took up their positions on 1st June 2019 and were appointed for three years. The Chair took up position on 1st June 2019 following appointment by The Executive Office. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in the individual receiving compensation. During the year, no early termination payments were paid. In the absence of Ministers, the Executive Office extended the term of office of all members effective from 1st June 2024.

The Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association of the Community Relations Council makes provision for the Chair and other members to be remunerated. In October 2017 the Community Relations Council received approval from the Charity Commission NI to remunerate the Board and the Chair. On 16th April 2019 the Board approved amendments to the Articles of Association to allow The Executive Office to make appointments to the Board.

Remuneration (including salary) and Pension Entitlements (audited)

The following directors, who were in post at 31st March 2024, and senior staff received emoluments directly from the Community Relations Council during the year:

	2023-24 Salary/ Fee	2023-24 Pension Benefits * to nearest £'000	2023-24 Total £'000	2022-23 Salary/ Fee £'000	2022-23 Pension Benefits * to nearest £'000	2022-23 Total £'000
J Irwin CEO	70-75	36	105-115	70-75	36	105-115
M McDonald (Chairperson)	5 - 10	-	5 - 10	5 - 10	-	5 - 10
C Harris	0 - 5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
J McCallister	0 - 5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
N Tandon	0 - 5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
A Simpson	0 - 5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
M Braniff	0 - 5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5

**The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus (the real increase in any lump sum) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases exclude increases due to inflation or any increase or decrease due to a transfer of pension rights. The figures presented are provided to the Community Relations Council on request by NILGOSC.*

Mr. M McDonnell, Mr. R Campbell and Ms. S McClelland did not claim an attendance allowance during the financial year.

Salary

Salaries consist of gross salary to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation and any ex-gratia payments.

Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the employer and treated by the HM Revenue & Customs as taxable emoluments.

Neither bonus nor benefits in kind were paid to the Chair, the Chief Executive, or any other directors during either period. No Community Relations Council employee received a benefit in kind in this period.

Ratio of Median Remuneration to Highest Paid Director (audited)

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid director in their organisation and the median remuneration of the organisation's workforce.

	2023-24	2022-23
Band of Highest Paid Director's Total Remuneration (£)	72,500	72,500
75th Percentile Total Remuneration (£)	34,164	35,595
Median Total Remuneration (£)	29,330	31,753
25th Percentile Total Remuneration (£)	27,054	29,007
Ratio (75th percentile)	2.12	2.04
Ratio (midpoint)	2.47	2.28
Ratio (25th percentile)	2.68	2.50
Change of highest paid Director (%)	0%	-6.18%
Change of whole entity (%)	-15.44%	-6.45%

The banded total remuneration of the highest-paid director in the Community Relations Council in the financial year 2023-24 was £70k-£75k (2022-23: £70k- £75k). The median remuneration of the workforce, for 2023-24 was £29,330 (2022-23 £31,753). Salaries for employees at the Community Relations Council range from £25k-£30k to £70k-£75k (2022-23: £25k-£30k to £70k-£75k).

Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance related pay, and benefits-in-kind. It does not include severance payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

Pension Benefits (audited)

	Accrued Pension at pension age as at 31/03/2024 & related lump sum £	Real increase (decrease) in pension & related lump sum £	CETV at 31/03/2024 £	CETV at 31/03/2023 £	Real increase in CETV £
J Irwin				*	
Chief Executive Officer	40,248	324	813	746	(67)

CRC are required to follow annual guidance on reporting requirements promulgated by HM Treasury through Public Expenditure System (PES) papers.

* Due to changes to the non-club transfer factors, provided by the Government Actuary's Department during the year the CETV calculations for the 2022-23 year have been re-run (£781) and provided as the starting input CETV value for the start of the 2023-24 year.

Compensation for loss of office (audited)

No members of staff received compensation for loss of office or exit packages during the year ended 31st March 2024.

Pensions

Introduction

The Community Relations Council participates in a defined benefit pension scheme administered by NILGOSC for all permanent staff. The employer makes a contribution of 19.5% (2022-23: 19.5%) of basic salary to the NILGOSC pension scheme. The employee does not have to join this scheme. Further details can be found on www.nilgosc.org.uk.

The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach pension age or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the Scheme if they are at or over pension age. The NILGOSC pension age is 65.

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is a funded defined benefit plan with benefits earned up to 31st March 2015 being linked to final salary. Benefits after 31st March 2015 are based on a Career Average Revalued Earnings (CARE) scheme. Details of the benefits earned over the period covered by this disclosure are set out in 'The Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014' (as amended) and 'The Local Government Pension Scheme (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (as amended)'.

Funding / Governance Arrangements of the LGPS

The funded nature of the LGPS requires participating employers and their employees to pay contributions into the Fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension liabilities with investment assets. Information on the framework for calculating contributions to be paid is set out in the LGPS Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 and the Fund's Funding Strategy Statement. The last actuarial valuation was at 31st March 2019 and the contributions to be paid until 31st March 2024 resulting from that valuation are set out in the Fund's, Rates and Adjustments Certificate. The Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (The Committee) is responsible for the governance of the Fund.

Assets

The assets allocated to the Employer in the Fund are notional and are assumed to be invested in line with the investments of the Fund for the purposes of calculating the return over the accounting period. The Fund holds a significant proportion of its assets in liquid investments. As a consequence, there will be no significant restriction on realising assets if a large payment is required to be paid from the Fund in relation to an employer's liabilities. The assets are invested in a diversified spread of investments and the approximate split of assets for the Fund as a whole (based on data supplied by the Committee) is shown in the disclosures.

The Committee may invest a small proportion of the Fund's investments in the assets of some of the employers participating in the Fund if it forms part of their balanced investment strategy.

Asset Volatility

The liabilities used for accounting purposes are calculated using a discount rate set with reference to corporate bond yields at the accounting date. If assets underperform this yield this will create a deficit in the accounts. The Fund holds a significant proportion of growth assets which, while expected to outperform corporate bonds in the long term, creates volatility and risk in the short term in relation to the accounting figures.

Changes in Bond Yield

A decrease in corporate bond yields will increase the value placed on the liabilities for accounting purposes although this will be marginally offset by the increase in the assets as a result (to the extent the Fund invests in corporate bonds).

Inflation Risk

The majority of the pension liabilities are linked to either pay or price inflation. Higher inflation expectations will lead to a higher liability value. The assets are not perfectly correlated with inflation meaning that an increase in inflation will increase the deficit.

Life Expectancy

The majority of the Fund's obligations are to provide benefits for the life of the member following retirement, so increases in life expectancy will result in an increase in the liabilities.

Exiting Employers

Employers which leave the Fund (or their guarantor) may have to make an exit payment to meet any shortfall in assets against their pension liabilities. If the Employer (or guarantor) is not able to meet this exit payment the liability may in certain circumstances fall on other employers in the Fund. Further the assets at exit in respect of 'orphan liabilities' may, in retrospect, not be sufficient to meet the liabilities. This risk may fall on other employers. 'Orphan liabilities' are currently a small proportion of the overall liabilities in the Fund.

The Real Increase in the Value of the CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV effectively funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

Staff Report

Analysis of Staff Costs

	Permanent Staff	Others	Board	2023-24	2022-23
	£	£	£	Total £	Total £
Wages and Salaries	561,587	186,359	10,659	758,605	621,525
Social security costs	52,626	-	-	52,626	57,185
Employers pension cost					
<u>Analysed as:</u>					
Current service cost	108,636	-	-	108,636	230,273
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total Staff Cost	722,849	186,359	10,659	919,867	908,983
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Note: Subject to Audit

Average number of persons employed

The average number (subject to audit) of whole-time equivalent persons employed during the period was as follows:

	Permanent Staff	Others	Chair	2023-24	2022-23
				Total	Total
Total	17	-	1	18	18

On a headcount basis there were 17 (2022-23 16) full time members of staff employed during the period (16 at year end). One (2022-23: 1) member of staff was employed part time. On average two members of staff were engaged via a recruitment agency (2022-23: 2).

Note: Subject to Audit

Sickness Absence Data

The total number of working days lost through sickness during the period by the Community Relations Council staff was 74 days. This represented 1.74% of available working days for the Community Relations Council employees, of which 0.96% was due to long-term sickness absence. Sickness absence during the previous financial year (2022-23) was 124 days, representing 2.9% of available working days.

Staff Composition

At the end of the financial year the gender split amongst Board Members and employees was as follows:

	Male No.	Female No.
Council Members	4	5
Employees:		
Grade 6	-	1
DP	3	1
SO	2	2
EO	1	5
AO	1	1
	-----	-----
Total	7	10
	-----	-----

An analysis of staff costs for (2023-24: £919,867) (2022-23: £908,983) is provided in Note 3 on page 72 to 74.

Staff Turnover

At the end of this financial year, Community Relations Council had 10.5% full-time permanent vacancy.

Consultancy

The Community Relations Council did not incur expenditure related to consultancy during the 2023-24 financial year.

Employees Matters

The Community Relations Council provides equal opportunities to its employees and are committed to the principle of equality for all Section 75 groups. This includes only having regard to the aptitudes and abilities of persons and in doing so apply employment policies that are fair, equitable and consistent with the needs of the business. The Community Relations Council's equal opportunities policy aim is to ensure no job applicant, employee or worker is discriminated against either directly or indirectly. The recruitment and selection of staff for the Community Relations Council is designed to ensure that applicants are treated in a fair and consistent manner, that the best person is appointed and to provide a reasonable adjustment for suitable persons whenever requested.

The Community Relations Council have appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure that disability duties are complied with and effectively implemented. The Community Relations Council reviews its policies, procedures and practices to identify any amendments or actions needed to meet its disability duties on a regular basis. During the year the Community Relations Council has applied its Disability Action Plan.

There were no significant Health and Safety issues during the year that were directly related to the operations of the Community Relations Council and all minor issues are recorded and are available for inspection. During the year a Fire Risk Assessment was completed for Equality House. All fire equipment was serviced and replaced where necessary.

The Community Relations Council operate a performance management system intended to align employee activities to its objectives. The process identifies training requirements and career development opportunities to meet both the Community Relations Council's and the employee's needs.

All employees have the option to join a Trade Union. The Community Relations Council currently operate a procedural agreement with Unite the Union.

Off-Payroll Engagements

The Community Relations Council had no off-payroll engagements during the 2023-24 financial year (2022-23: £nil).



.....
J Irwin – Accounting Officer

14th November 2024

.....
Date

C Assembly Accountability and Audit Report

Overview

Regularity of Expenditure (audited)

The Community Relations Council ensures the regularity of its expenditure by application of the requirements contained within Managing Public Money Northern Ireland and its Management Statement.

As described on page 49, the Community Relations Council is working with The Executive Office and the Department of Finance to resolve uncertainty concerning the regularity of an additional contribution of 6% on gross earnings for employee's superannuation contributions payable to the NILGOSC pension scheme totalling £14,560.

Fees and Charges (audited)

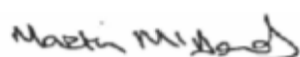
The Community Relations Council did not earn an income through fees or charges during the 2023-24 financial year.

Remote Contingent Liabilities (audited)

No remote contingent liabilities are known to have existed at the 31st March 2024.

There were no losses or special payments made during the year.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Directors.



.....
M McDonald – Chairperson

14th November 2024

.....
Date



.....
J Irwin – Accounting Officer

14th November 2024

.....
Date

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

NORTHERN IRELAND COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council for the year ended 31 March 2024 under the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013. The financial statements comprise: the Statement of Financial Activities, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow Statement; and the related notes, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the Government Financial Report Manual (FreM).

I have also audited the information in the Directors' Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Northern Ireland Community Relation Council's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my certificate.

My staff and I are independent of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

The going concern basis of accounting for the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer and Directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

Other Information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements, the parts of the Directors' Report described in that report as having been audited, and my audit certificate and report. The Accounting Officer and Directors are responsible for the other information included in the annual report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion:

- the parts of the Directors' Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with Government Financial Reporting Manual; and
- the information given in the Strategic Report and Directors' Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

- the Strategic Report and Directors' Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Strategic Report and Directors' Report.

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Directors' Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by the Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer and Directors for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's and Directors' Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer and Directors are responsible for:

- preparing the Annual Report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report, in accordance with the Companies Act 2006;
- the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- ensuring such internal controls are in place as deemed necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; and
- assessing the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulation, including fraud.

My procedures included:

- obtaining an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council through discussion with management and application of extensive public sector accountability knowledge. The key laws and regulations I considered included governing legislation and any other relevant laws and regulations;
- making enquires of management and those charged with governance on the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's compliance with laws and regulations;
- making enquiries of internal audit, management and those charged with governance as to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's susceptibility to irregularity and fraud, their assessment of the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and irregularity, and their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud and irregularity;
- completing risk assessment procedures to assess the susceptibility of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur. This included, but was not limited to, an engagement director led engagement team discussion on fraud to identify particular areas, transaction streams and business practices that may be susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the posting of unusual journals;
- engagement director oversight to ensure the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework throughout the audit;
- documenting and evaluating the design and implementation of internal controls in place to mitigate risk of material misstatement due to fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- designing audit procedures to address specific laws and regulations which the engagement team considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements in terms of misstatement and irregularity, including fraud. These audit procedures included, but were not limited to, reading board and committee minutes, and agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation and approvals as appropriate, testing of journal entries, discussing regularity with management and reading internal audit reports;
- addressing the risk of fraud as a result of management override of controls by:
 - performing analytical procedures to identify unusual or unexpected relationships or movements;
 - testing journal entries to identify potential anomalies, and inappropriate or unauthorised adjustments;
 - assessing whether judgements and other assumptions made in determining accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and
 - investigating significant or unusual transactions made outside of the normal course of business.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.



Dorinnia Carville
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
BELFAST
BT7 1EU

26th November 2024

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Statement of Financial Activities (Including Income & Expenditure Account) for Year Ended 31 March 2024

		All Restricted and Unrestricted Funds 2023-24 £	All Restricted and Unrestricted Funds 2022-23 £
	Note		
Income and endowments from:			
Donations and Legacies	2	3,384,000	3,268,494
Secondments		46,570	42,505
		-----	-----
Total		3,430,570	3,310,999
		-----	-----
Expenditure on:			
Charitable activities	4	3,110,854	3,579,963
		-----	-----
Net income/(expenditure) before tax for the reporting period		319,716	(268,964)
Other recognised gains/(losses):			
Actuarial gain /(loss) on defined benefit pension scheme	16	(195,000)	2,769,000
		-----	-----
Net movement in funds		124,716	2,500,036
		-----	-----
Reconciliation of funds:			
Fund balances brought forward at 1 April		(366,449)	(2,866,485)
		-----	-----
Net movement in funds		124,716	2,500,036
		-----	-----
Fund balances carried forward at 31st March	14	(241,733)	(366,449)
		=====	=====

All of the activities of the company are classed as continuing, and all recognised gains and losses have been included in the results for the year as set out above.

The notes on pages 67 to 87 form part of these Accounts

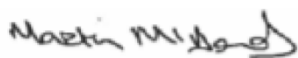
The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2024

		2023-24 £	2022-23 £
	Note		
Fixed assets			
Tangible fixed assets	7	145,323	185,252
Intangible fixed assets	8	10,486	7,688
		-----	-----
		155,809	192,940
Current assets			
Debtors and prepayments	9	24,741	8,086
Cash at bank and in hand	10	137,108	101,136
		-----	-----
		161,849	109,222
Liabilities			
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	(441,828)	(695,454)
Finance Leases	11	(50,067)	(49,594)
		-----	-----
Net current assets or (liabilities)		(330,046)	(635,826)
Total assets less current liabilities		(174,237)	(442,886)
Non - Current Liabilities - Finance Leases	11	(67,496)	(117,563)
Defined benefit pension asset/(liability)	16	-	194,000
		-----	-----
Total net assets/liabilities		(241,733)	(366,449)
		=====	=====
The funds of the charity			
Restricted Income Funds	14	(241,733)	(560,449)
Restricted Pension Reserve	14	-	194,000
		-----	-----
Total charity funds		(241,733)	(366,449)
		=====	=====

In the view of the Board an exemption from the audit requirements of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006 is available under section 482 of that Act, since the company meets the Department of Finance's definition of a non-profit making company and is subject to a public sector audit under the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Northern Ireland Order 2013, being an order issued under Article 5(3) of the Audit and Accountability (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. The Council therefore claims this exemption.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 14th November 2024 and signed on its behalf by:



.....
M McDonald – Chairperson



.....
J Irwin – Accounting Officer

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

The notes on pages 67 to 87 form part of these Accounts

Cash Flow Statement for Year Ended 31st March 2024

		2023-24	2022-23
	Note	£	£
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash (used in) / provided by operating activities	12	62,912	(9,929)
		-----	-----
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	7	(17,598)	(4,464)
Purchase of intangible fixed assets	8	(9,342)	-
		-----	-----
Net cash (used in) investing activities		(26,940)	(4,464)
		-----	-----
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		35,972	(14,393)
Opening cash and cash equivalents at 1st April	10	101,136	115,529
		-----	-----
Closing cash and cash equivalents at 31st March	10	137,108	101,136
		=====	=====

The notes on pages 67 to 87 form part of these Accounts

Notes to the Accounts for Year Ended 31st March 2024

1. Accounting policies

These Accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 2006, along with selected disclosures as recommended in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) (FRS 102). The particular policies adopted by the Community Relations Council for the year ended 31st March 2024 are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

The principal accounting policies are as follows:

Accounting convention

The Accounts are prepared under the historical cost convention. The directors do not consider the current costs of any of the year's transactions or closing balances to be materially different from the historical cost. The financial statements are presented in sterling, rounded to the nearest pound.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Basis of accounting

Grant Income is recognised in accordance with the performance model set out in FRS 102. Expenditure is treated on the accruals basis of accounting. Without limiting the information given, as the Community Relations Council is a charity that is a public benefit entity, the Accounts are prepared to meet the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities SORP (FRS 102), Accounting Standards issued or adopted by the Accounting Standards Board and accounting and disclosure requirements issued by the Department of Finance. Income from grants, including Grant in Aid, is recognised when there is evidence of entitlement, receipt is probable, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Going Concern

The Executive Office wrote to the Community Relations Council confirming that funding had been secured for the 2024-25 financial year. The Board is satisfied that the Community Relations Council is a going concern on the basis that it has a reasonable expectation that the Community Relations Council will continue to operate for the foreseeable future. In January 2021 the Community Relations Council received Ministerial approval for the 2020-24 Strategic Plan from The Executive Office. The 2024-25 business plan has been drafted and is with The Executive Office officials pending Ministerial approval. The budgets for 2024-25 have been agreed across the NICS. The financial statements are therefore prepared on the going concern basis.

Income

Income comprises all funding provided to the company for its own purposes. Grant income is recognised as follows:

- A grant that does not impose specified future performance-related conditions on the recipient is recognised in income when the grant proceeds are received or receivable.
- A grant that imposes specified future performance-related conditions on the recipient is recognised in income only when the performance-related conditions are met.
- Grants received before the revenue recognition criteria are satisfied are recognised as a liability.

Taxation

The Company is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from Income and Capital taxes, but not Value Added Tax (VAT).

The majority of the Community Relations Council incoming resources is through grant funding which is outside the scope of VAT. Accordingly the Community Relations Council is not VAT registered and amounts in these accounts are inclusive of VAT where charged.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Provisions

The Company makes provisions for liabilities and charges where, at the balance sheet date, a legal or constructive liability exists (i.e. a present obligation from past events exists), where the transfer of economic benefits is probable, and a reasonable estimate can be made. Where the time value of money is material, the Community Relations Council discounts the provision to its present value using a standard Government discount rate.

Fixed assets

Fixed assets are stated on the balance sheet at cost and depreciated in order to write off the original cost of the assets over their expected useful lives on a straight-line basis over the following number of years:

Fixtures and fittings	5 years
Computer equipment	5 years

Indexation is not applied due to the short life nature of these assets i.e. less than 5 years. The minimum level of capitalisation of tangible fixed assets is £500.

Intangible fixed assets

Software licences for internal recording and reporting systems and other software such as the Grants Management System are capitalised as intangible assets. All intangible assets are amortised over their useful life i.e. 5 years, or the length of the licence. Indexation is not applied due to the short life nature of these assets i.e. less than 5 years. The minimum level of capitalisation of an intangible asset is £500.

Debtors

Debtors are measured on initial recognition at the amount receivable and subsequently at the cash amount expected to be received.

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash is cash in hand and deposits with any financial institution repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are investments that mature within 3 months or less from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

Creditors

Creditors are measured on initial recognition at the amount payable and subsequently at the cash amount expected to be paid.

Grants payable

Grant expenditure is recorded in the period in which the recipient carries out the activity which created the entitlement. Unpaid and unclaimed grants may represent obligations to be recognised as liabilities where there is evidence of entitlement. Where the amount of the claim is not known at the Balance Sheet date, an estimate will be made. Overpayments of grants are shown as receivables at the Balance Sheet date.

Financial Instruments

The Council has limited powers to borrow or invest surplus funds and financial assets and liabilities are generated by day-to-day operational activities rather than being held to

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

change the risks facing the Council in undertaking activities. Therefore, the Council is exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

Currency risk: The Company is principally a domestic organisation with the great majority of transactions, assets and liabilities being in the UK and Sterling based. The Company has no overseas operations. The Company therefore has low exposure to currency rate fluctuations.

Interest rate risk: The Company has limited powers to borrow or invest and therefore has low exposure to interest rate fluctuations.

Credit risk: Because the Company's income comprises all funding provided to it for its own purposes, the Company has low exposure to credit risk.

Liquidity risk: Since the Company receives the majority of its funding from The Executive Office, it is therefore not exposed to significant liquidity risks.

Employee Benefits

Staff costs must be recorded as an expense as soon as an organisation is obliged to pay them. This includes the cost of any untaken leave at the year end. This cost has been calculated using the untaken leave per staff member and applying this to their annual salary to calculate the leave balance as at 31st March 2024.

Redundancy and termination benefits

The exit costs associated with Voluntary Exit packages as funded by the Public Sector Transformation Fund, a facility provided through the 2014 Stormont House Agreement, are accounted for in full in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year departure is agreed.

Pension

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) Scheme.

The pension costs are assessed in accordance with the advice of independent qualified actuaries using the market led approach. The latest actuarial valuations of the scheme were at 31st March 2019.

Pension scheme assets are measured using market value. Pension scheme liabilities are measured using the projected unit method and discounted at the current rate of return on a high quality corporate bond of equivalent term to the liability.

The increase in the present value of the liabilities of the Community Relations Council's defined benefit pension scheme arising from employee service in the period is charged to the SOFA so as to recognise the cost of pensions over the employees' working lives.

The Community Relations Council is no longer required to recognise an expected return on assets item in the SOFA. This is now replaced with a net financing charge which is based on the discount rate assumption.

Actuarial gains and losses are recognised in the SOFA.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Expenditure

Support costs include all expenditure directly relating to the objectives of the company.

Support costs, detailed on page 75 comprises the costs involved in complying with constitutional and statutory requirements and any other costs which cannot be treated as direct charitable expenditure.

Costs incurred for meetings, seminars and other specific expenditure relating to the individual programmes are classified as programme costs, detailed on page 92.

Funds

The company has two types of funds for which it is responsible, and which require separate disclosure. These are as follows:

Restricted funds

Grant in aid received which is earmarked by the funder for specific purposes and within the overall aims of the company.

Pension Fund

The Charities SORP (FRS 102) requires the valuation of the net defined benefit liability to be included within the accounts.

Changes in Accounting Policy and Disclosure

Management has reviewed new accounting standards, the outcome being the adoption of in these accounts.

Charities SORP (FRS 102) Charitable Activities

Expenditure on charitable activities is reported as a functional analysis of the work undertaken by the Community Relations Council in note 5 on pages 76. The key activities of the Community Relations Council being grant making, policy, communication, cultural diversity, district council development and production of the Peace Monitoring Report. Under these headings are included grants payable and costs of activities performed directly by the charity, together with associated support costs.

Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute directly to more than one activity are apportioned between those activities on a per capita basis. Support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are also apportioned between the activities being supported on a per capita basis.

Leases

IFRS 16 Leases replaced IAS 17 Leases and is effective with EU adoption from 1 January 2019. In line with the requirements of FReM, IFRS 16 has implemented, as interpreted and adapted for the public sector, with effect from 1st April 2022. The interest element of any lease classified as a finance lease payment is charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure over the period of the lease at a constant rate in relation to the balance outstanding.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

2. Income from donations and legacies and charitable activities

	Restricted Funds 2023-24 £	Total Funds 2023-24 £	Total Funds 2022-23 £
<u>Donations and legacies</u>			
Grant in Aid from The Executive Office	3,384,000	3,384,000	3,268,494
	----- 3,384,000 -----	----- 3,384,000 -----	----- 3,268,494 -----

3. Analysis of Staff Costs

	Permanent Staff £	Others £	Board £	2023-24 Total £	2022-23 Total £
Wages and Salaries	561,587	186,359	10,659	758,605	621,525
Social security costs	52,626	-	-	52,626	57,185
Employers pension cost					
<u>Analysed as:</u>					
Current service cost	108,636	-	-	108,636	230,273
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total Staff Cost	722,849	186,359	10,659	919,867	908,983
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

The difference between the current service cost in the staff costs note (subject to audit) and the amount included in the pension scheme note (note 16) is due to the difference between the estimated employer pension contributions notified to the actuary for valuation purposes and the actual amount incurred.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Average number of persons employed

The average number (subject to audit) of whole-time equivalent persons employed during the period was as follows:

	Permanent Staff	Others	Chair	2023-24 Total	2022-23 Total
Total	17	-	1	18	18

On a headcount basis there were 17 (2022-23 16) full time members of staff employed during the period (16 at year end). One (2022-23:1) member of staff was employed part time. On average two members of staff were engaged via a recruitment agency (2022-23: 2).

Exit Packages

There were none in 2023-24 or 2022-23.

Redundancy and other departure costs are paid in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Service Compensation Scheme, a statutory scheme made under the Superannuation Act 1972. The table above shows the total cost of exit packages agreed and accounted for in 2023-4 (2022-23: £0). £0 exit costs were paid in 2023-24 (2022-23: 0). No persons retired early on ill-health grounds in 2023-24 (2022-23: None)

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Remuneration of key management

As reported in the Remuneration Report on pages 51 to 54, one member of staff received a salary within the band £70k - £75k.

4. Analysis of Expenditure on Charitable Activities

Key Activities	Activities Undertaken Directly	Grant Funding Activities	Support Cost	Total 2023-24
	£	£	£	£
Funding and Development	267,281	1,910,934	330,062	2,508,277
Community Engagement	292,263	-	310,314	602,577
Total	559,544	1,910,934	640,376	3,110,854

Key Activities	Activities Undertaken Directly	Grant Funding Activities	Support Cost	Total 2022-23
	£	£	£	£
Funding and Development	286,774	2,323,278	329,015	2,939,067
Community Engagement	311,881	-	329,015	640,896
Total	598,655	2,323,278	658,030	3,579,963

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Analysis of Support Costs

2023-24 Support Costs	Funding and Development £	Community Engagement £	Basis of Allocation
Facilities	47,036	40,531	Per Capita
HR	42,269	39,347	Per Capita
IT	64,645	57,308	Per Capita
Finance	94,605	94,605	Per Capita
Governance	81,507	78,523	Per Capita
	-----	-----	
Function Total	330,062	310,314	
	-----	-----	

2022-23 Support Costs	Funding and Development £	Community Engagement £	Basis of Allocation
Facilities	43,597	43,597	Per Capita
HR	41,054	41,054	Per Capita
IT	57,849	57,849	Per Capita
Finance	52,332	52,332	Per Capita
Governance	134,183	134,183	Per Capita
	-----	-----	
Function Total	329,015	329,015	
	-----	-----	

The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) performs the annual statutory audit of the Community Relations Council at a cost of £21,900 (2022-23: £24,900). There was no fee paid for National Fraud Initiative during 2023-24 (2022-23: £1,319). This is included in the Governance costs above.

Staff travelling and subsistence costs totalled £3,777 in 2023-24 (2022-23: £2,675) This is included in the Governance costs above.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

5. Grant expenditure

	Grants payable £	Support costs £	2023-24 Total £
Grants schemes			
Small grants schemes	163,679	139,990	303,669
Publications and Media	-	-	-
Core Funding	1,168,831	165,936	1,334,767
Pathfinder	-	-	-
North Belfast Strategic Fund	578,424	24,136	602,560
	1,910,934	330,062	2,240,996
	Grants payable £	Support costs £	2022-23 Total £
Grants schemes			
Small Grants Scheme	199,590	127,219	326,809
Publications and Media	47,869	9,870	57,739
Core Funding	1,348,781	150,799	1,499,580
Pathfinder	141,371	2,742	144,113
North Belfast Strategic Fund	585,667	38,385	624,052
	2,323,278	329,015	2,652,293

A statement of grant making policies in the Directors' Report provides further information on these grant schemes. Of the grants that have been paid, none of the grants have been made to individuals (2022-23: None).

6. Statement of Net (Expenditure)/Income by Operating Segment:

IFRS 8 “Operating Segments” requires disclosure of financial information about an organisation's reportable segments based on the internal reporting arrangements as reviewed by the “Chief Operating Decision Maker” (CODM). The CODM for the Community Relations Council is deemed to be the Board Members since they have the authority for directing the main activities throughout the year. The Board approves the annual budget and at each Board meeting reviews management accounts.

The Board considers financial information that supports delivery of the Community Relations Council's T:BUC objectives as a whole rather than discrete financial information for each internal function. On this basis the Community Relations Council does not have the basis for segmental reporting.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

7. Tangible fixed assets Year End 31st March 2024

	Computer Equipment	Fixtures and Fittings	Buildings Right of Use	Total
Cost:	£	£	£	£
Balance at 1st April 2023	62,234	72,134	216,253	350,621
Additions	14,738	2,860	-	17,598
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2024	76,972	74,994	216,253	368,219
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Accumulated depreciation:				
Balance at 1st April 2023	48,029	67,435	49,905	165,369
Charge for year	5,763	1,859	49,905	57,527
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2024	53,792	69,294	99,810	222,896
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Net book value:				
At 31st March 2024	23,180	5,700	116,443	145,323
	=====	=====	=====	=====
At 1st April 2023	14,205	4,699	166,348	185,252
	=====	=====	=====	=====
Asset Financing				
Owned	23,180	5,700	-	28,880
Finance Lease	-	-	116,443	116,443
Net Book Value at 31st March 2024	23,180	5,700	116,443	145,323
	=====	=====	=====	=====

Year End 31st March 2023

	Computer Equipment	Fixtures and Fittings	Buildings Rights of use	Total
Cost:	£	£	£	£
Balance at 1st April 2022	58,672	71,232	-	129,904
Additions	3,562	902	-	5,042
IFRS16 Op Balance Adjustment	-	-	216,253	216,253
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2023	62,234	72,134	216,253	350,621
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Accumulated depreciation:				
Balance at 1st April 2022	42,654	65,586	-	108,240
Charge for year	5,375	1,849	49,905	57,129
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2023	48,029	67,435	49,905	165,369
Net book value:				
At 31st March 2023	14,205	4,699	166,348	185,252
	=====	=====	=====	=====
At 1st April 2022	16,018	5,646	-	21,664
	=====	=====	=====	=====
Asset Financing				

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Owned	14,205	4,699	-	18,904
Finance Lease			166,348	166,348
Net Book Value at 31st March 2023	14,205	4,699	166,348	185,252
	=====	=====	=====	=====

8. Intangible fixed assets

Year End 31st March 2024

	Software Licences	Total
Cost:	£	£
Balance at 1st April 2023	34,664	34,664
Additions	9,342	9,342
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2024	44,006	44,006
	-----	-----
Accumulated amortisation:		
Balance at 1st April 2023	26,976	26,976
Charge for year	6,544	6,544
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2024	33,520	33,520
	-----	-----
Net book value:		
At 31st March 2024	10,486	10,486
	=====	=====
At 1st April 2023	7,688	7,688
	=====	=====

Year End 31st March 2023

	Software Licences	Total
Cost:	£	£
Balance at 1st April 2022	34,664	34,664
Additions	-	-
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2023	34,664	34,664
	-----	-----
Accumulated amortisation:		
Balance at 1st April 2022	20,168	20,168
Charge for year	6,808	6,808
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2023	26,976	26,976
	-----	-----
Net book value:		
At 31st March 2023	7,688	7,688
	=====	=====
At 1st April 2022	14,496	14,496
	=====	=====

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9. Debtors: amounts due in less than one year	2023-24 £	2022-23 £
Prepayments	24,741	8,086
	----- 24,741	----- 8,086
	=====	=====

10. Cash and cash equivalents	2023-24 £	2022-23 £
Balance at 1st April	101,136	115,529
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	35,972	(14,393)
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March	137,108	101,136
	=====	=====

Cash and cash equivalents are comprised entirely of cash on hand and are held in commercial banks. The Community Relations Council does not have any demand deposits or any short-term, highly liquid investments.

11. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	2023-24 £	2022-23 £
Grants payable	224,409	563,338
Other creditors	18,667	11,168
Accruals	164,052	91,598
	-----	-----
	407,128	666,104
	=====	=====

Creditors: Finance Leases	2023-24 £	2022-23 £
Amounts falling due within one year	50,067	49,594
Amounts falling due after one year	67,496	117,563
	-----	-----
	117,563	167,157
	=====	=====

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Deferred Income	2023-24	2022-23
	£	£
Amount deferred in year	34,700	29,350
	-----	-----
	34,700	29,350
	=====	=====
Opening Balance - £29,350		
Receipts - £20,000		
Payments - <u>£(14,650)</u>		
Closing Balance - £34,700		

12. Notes to the cash flow statement		2023-24	2022-23
		£	£
Net incoming resources	Note	319,715	(268,964)
Adjustments for:			
Depreciation/amortisation charge	7&8	64,071	63,937
Decrease/(increase) in debtors	9	(16,655)	24,128
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	11	(253,626)	31,066
Building Rent Payment	15	(50,885)	(50,855)
Interest Charge		1,291	1,759
Current and past service cost	16	108,000	230,000
Less: Employer pension contributions	16	(98,000)	(104,000)
Interest on net defined benefit liability	16	(11,000)	63,000
		-----	-----
Net cash provided by / (used in) operating activities		62,911	(9,929)
		=====	=====

13. Net income is stated after charging	2023-24	2022-23
	£	£
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	57,527	7,224
Amortisation of intangible fixed assets	6,544	6,808
Auditors' remuneration	21,900	24,900
National Fraud Initiative fee	-	1,319
	=====	=====

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The cost incurred in respect of Statutory Audit fees during the year ended 31st March 2024 was £21,900 (2022-23: £24,900).

14. Fund balances - Outline summary of fund movements

Fund name	Fund balances brought forward £	Income £	Expenditure £	Gains and Losses £	Fund Balance Carried forward £
Restricted Fund	(560,449)	3,430,570	(3,311,854)	-	(241,733)
Pension Reserve	194,000	-	1,000	(195,000)	-
Total Funds	(366,449) =====	3,430,570 =====	(3,110,854) =====	(195,000) =====	(241,733) =====

Any funds above must be spent on direct charitable expenditure and associated administration and overhead costs.

With effect from 1st April 2021, The Executive Office has put in place a guarantee in respect of the pension liabilities of the Community Relations Council.

15.1 Quantitative disclosures around right-of-use asset

Buildings	Total 2023-24	Total 2022-23
	£	£
Right-of-use assets		
Opening Balance	166,348	216,253
Depreciation expense	<u>(49,905)</u>	<u>(49,905)</u>
Closing Balance	116,443	166,348

15.2 Quantitative disclosures around lease liabilities

	2023-24	2022-23
	£	£
Obligations under finance leases for the following periods comprise:		
Buildings		
Later than one year and not later than five years	50,885	50,885
Less than five years	67,847	118,732

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Less Interest element	(1,169)	(2,460)
Present Value of obligations	117,563	167,157

Other

Current portion	50,067	49,594
Non-current portion	67,496	117,563

15.3 Quantitative disclosures around cash outflow for leases

	2023-24 £	2022-23 £
Total cash outflow for leases	50,885	50,855

The Community Relations Council signed a Memorandum of Temporary Occupation (MOTO) agreement for premises at Equality House on the 1st April 2016. The MOTO expired on 31st July 2021 and has been further extended to 31st July 2026 subject to review. The commitments of IFRS 16 Leases under this MOTO are noted.

16. Commitments under Defined Benefit Pension Scheme

The assets of the pension scheme are held separately from those of the Community Relations Council and are administered by NILGOSC. The pension cost is determined on the advice of independent qualified actuaries. The latest actuarial valuation of the Community Relations Council's liabilities took place at 31st March 2019.

Pension surpluses are not recognised (and are therefore restricted to nil). This reflects the standard approach (following IFRIC14) to determining the level of surplus to recognise.

The scheme is funded, and the employer contributions were 19.5% for the year ended 31st March 2024 (2022-23: 19.5%). From 1st April 2022 employer contributions remain at 19.5% of pensionable pay. Employer contributions to the Fund for the accounting period ended 31st March 2024 totalled £98,000 (31st March 2023: £104,000). The employees' contributions vary between 6.5% and 8.5% of pensionable pay. As required by The Charities SORP (FRS 102), the defined benefit liabilities have been measured using the projected unit credit method. The tables below state the actuarial assumptions upon which the valuation of the scheme was based.

Key Assumptions	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22
Discount rate	4.8%	4.7%	2.7%
CPI Inflation	2.6%	2.7%	3%
Pension increases	2.6%	2.7%	3%
Pension accounts revaluation rate	2.6%	2.7%	3%
Salary increases	4.1%	4.2%	4.5%
Asset Allocation	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22

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	%	%	%
Equities	39.7%	41.3%	40.6%
Property	9.3%	10.5%	10.9%
Government bonds	15.0%	20.5%	24.1%
Multi Asset Credit	13.0%	13.1%	12.9%
Corporate bonds	4.6%	2.7%	1.8%
Cash	12.4%	5.9%	6.2%
Other	6.0%	6.0%	3.5%
	-----	-----	-----
Total	100%	100%	100%
	-----	-----	-----

Mortality Assumptions

The mortality assumptions are based on the recent actual mortality experience of members within the Fund and allow for expected future mortality improvements. Sample life expectancies at age 65 resulting from these mortality assumptions are shown below

	2023-24	2022-23
	Years	Years
Males		
Member aged 65 at accounting date	21.7	22.2
Member aged 45 at accounting date	22.7	23.2
Females		
Member aged 65 at accounting date	24.6	25.0
Member aged 45 at accounting date	25.6	26.0

Reconciliation of funded status to Balance Sheet

	2023-24	2022-23
	£	£
Fair value of assets	8,743,000	8,026,000
Present value of funded defined benefit obligation	(7,831,000)	(7,832,000)
	-----	-----
Funded status	912,000	194,000
Unrecognised asset	(912,000)	-
	-----	-----
Asset/(liability) recognised on the balance sheet	-	194,000
	-----	-----

Amounts recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities

2023-24	2022-23
£	

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	£	
Operating Cost		
Current service cost	108,000	230,000
Financing Cost		
Interest on net defined benefit liability	(11,000)	63,000
	-----	-----
Pension expenses recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities	97,000	293,000
 Amounts recognised in other comprehensive income		
Assets gains/(losses) arising during the period	393,000	(841,000)
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in financial assumptions	296,000	4,515,000
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in demographic assumptions	117,000	(32,000)
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to liability experience	(89,000)	(873,000)
Actuarial gain/(loss) due to restriction of surplus	(912,000)	
	-----	-----
Total amount recognised in other comprehensive income	(195,000)	2,769,000
	2023-24	2022-23
	£	£
Opening defined benefit obligation	7,832,000	11,046,000
	-----	-----
Current service cost	108,000	230,000
Interest expense on defined benefit obligation	365,000	297,000
Contributions by participants	40,000	42,000
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in Financial Assumptions	(296,000)	(4,515,000)
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in Demographic Assumptions	(117,000)	32,000
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to Liability Experience	89,000	873,000
Actuarial losses/(gains) on liabilities	-	-
Net benefits paid out	(190,000)	(173,000)
	-----	-----
Closing defined benefit obligation	7,831,000	7,832,000
	=====	=====
 Changes to the fair value of assets during the period	2023-24	2022-23
	£	£
Opening fair value of assets	8,026,000	8,660,000
	-----	-----
Interest income on assets	376,000	234,000
Remeasurement (losses)/gains on assets	393,000	(841,000)
Contributions by the employer	98,000	104,000
Contributions by participants	40,000	42,000
Net benefits paid out	(190,000)	(173,000)

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	2023-24 £	2022-23 £
Movement in Deficit during the year		
Net defined benefit pension liability at the beginning of the year	194,000	(2,386,000)
	-----	-----
Current service cost	(108,000)	(230,000)
Employer contributions	98,000	104,000
Interest on the net defined benefit liability	11,000	(63,000)
Actuarial (losses)/gains	(195,000)	2,769,000
	-----	-----
Net defined benefit pension asset/(liability)at the end of the year	-	194,000
	=====	=====
	-----	-----
Closing fair value of assets	8,743,000	8,026,000
	=====	=====
	-----	-----
Actual return on assets	2023-24 £	2022-23 £
Interest income on assets	376,000	234,000
Gain/(loss) on assets	393,000	(841,000)
	-----	-----
Actual return on assets	769,000	(607,000)
	=====	=====

The split of the defined benefit obligation at the last valuation date between the various categories of members was as follows:

Active members	33%
Deferred Pensioners	32%
Pensioners	35%

17. Related party transactions

	2023-24 £	2022-23 £
The Executive Office	3,384,000	3,268,494

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During the year, the Community Relations Council has had various material transactions with the Good Relations and Governance Branch of the Executive Office which is regarded as a related party. The Community Relations Council received a total of £3,384,000 (2022-23: £3,268,494) in Grant in Aid from The Executive Office during 2023-24.

	2023-24 £	2023-23 £
ECNI	131,251	126,948

ECNI is regarded as a related party since it is an Arm's Length Body of The Executive Office. The Community Relations Council relocated premises to Equality House on 23rd March 2016. The amount paid to ECNI during the 2023-24 financial year totalled £131,251 (2022-23: £126,948).

Directors:

Some Directors of the Company may also carry out various roles within organisations which receive financial assistance from the Community Relations Council. The Directors disclose these interests on an annual basis by submitting 'Declaration of Interests' returns. Relevant interests are also declared during the normal business and procedures of the Board and its Committees. During the year, the following payments were made to organisations related to Directors:

- Nisha Tandon is Executive Director of ArtsEkta, which was in receipt of a single grant (two payments of £2,500) under the CRCD programme totalling £5,000 (2022-23: £7,400).

18. Financial Regularity

No cases of financial irregularity that required investigation by the Community Relations Council occurred in the 2023-24 financial year.

19. Contingent Liabilities

No contingent liabilities are known to have existed at the 31st March 2024.

20. Events after the reporting date

There have been no significant events since the balance sheet date that would affect these accounts or require disclosure.

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Date of authorisation for issue

The Accounting Officer authorised these Accounts for issue on 26th November 2024

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Appendix 1

Additional Disclosures to comply with FReM

This additional disclosure has been prepared in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM). FReM is a technical guide for the preparation of financial statements of public bodies. The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Community Relations Council for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected.

FReM requires Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB) to regard grant in aid received as contributions from controlling parties giving rise to a financial interest in the residual interest of the body, and hence accounted for as financing, i.e. by crediting them to the income and expenditure reserve. Grants are recognised as financing in the year which they are received.

On 1st April 2012, the Community Relations Council was designated as an Executive NDPB and as a result cannot recognise Grant in Aid as income. If the Community Relations Council were to comply with FReM, the following statements would be the effect of this compliance.

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure

		2023-24 £	2022-23 £
Income	Note	46,570	42,505
Total Operating Income		46,570	42,505
Expenditure			
Staff costs	3	919,867	908,983
Grant expenditure	4	1,910,934	2,323,278
Purchase of goods and services	App 1	219,617	215,052
Depreciation and impairment charges	App 1	64,071	63,937
Other Operating Expenditure	App 1	(3,635)	68,713
Total Operating Expenditure		3,110,854	3,579,963
Net Expenditure for the year		(3,064,284)	(3,537,458)
Other Comprehensive Expenditure			
Actuarial gain/(loss) on defined benefit pension scheme	16	(195,000)	2,769,000
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year		(3,259,284)	(768,458)
		=====	=====

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Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2024

		2023-24 £	2022-23 £
	Note		
Non-current assets			
Tangible Fixed assets	7	145,323	185,252
Intangible assets	8	10,486	7,688
Defined benefit pension asset	16	-	194,000
		-----	-----
Total non-current assets		155,809	386,940
Current assets			
Trade and other receivables	9	24,741	8,086
Cash and cash equivalents	10	137,108	101,136
		-----	-----
Total current assets		161,849	109,222
		-----	-----
Total assets		317,658	496,162
		-----	-----
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	11	(441,828)	(695,454)
Finance Lease		(50,067)	(49,594)
		-----	-----
Total current liabilities		(491,895)	(745,048)
		-----	-----
Total assets less current liabilities		(174,237)	(248,886)
Non-current liabilities			
Finance Lease	11	(67,496)	(117,563)
		-----	-----
Total assets less total liabilities		(241,733)	(366,449)
		=====	=====
Taxpayers' equity and other reserves			
General fund	14	(241,733)	(366,449)
		-----	-----
Total Equity	14	(241,733)	(366,449)
		=====	=====

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Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31st March 2024

		2023-24 £	2022-23 £
Cash flows from operating activities	Note		
Net Operating Cost		(3,110,854)	(3,579,963)
Adjustments for:			
Depreciation/amortisation charge	7/8	64,071	63,937
(Increase)/Decrease in debtors	9	(16,655)	24,128
(Decrease)/Increase in creditors	11	(253,626)	31,066
 Building Rent Payment	 15	 (50,885)	 (50,855)
Interest Charge		1,291	1,759
 <i>Movement in pension scheme deficit:</i>			
- Current service cost	16	108,000	230,000
- Employer pension contributions	16	(98,000)	(104,000)
- Interest on net defined benefit liability	16	(11,000)	63,000
		-----	-----
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(3,367,658)	(3,320,928)
		-----	-----
 Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	7	(17,598)	(4,464)
Purchase of intangible fixed assets	8	(9,342)	-
		-----	-----
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from investing activities		(26,940)	(4,464)
		-----	-----
 Cash flows from financing activities			
Grants from sponsoring department	2	3,384,000	3,268,494
Secondment Income		46,570	42,505
		-----	-----
Net financing		3,430,570	3,310,999
		-----	-----
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents in the period		35,972	(14,393)
		-----	-----
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period		101,136	115,529
		-----	-----
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period		137,108	101,136
		=====	=====

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Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year ended 31st March 2024

		General Fund £	Taxpayers' Equity £
Balance at 31st March 2022		(2,866,485)	(2,866,485)
Grant-in-aid from The Executive Office	2	3,268,494	3,268,494
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year	App. 1	(3,537,458)	(3,537,458)
Actuarial Gain/(Loss) for year	16	2,769,000	2,769,000
		-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2023		(366,449)	(366,449)
Grant-in-aid from The Executive Office	2	3,384,000	3,384,000
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year	App. 1	(3,064,284)	(3,064,284)
Actuarial Gain/(Loss) for year	16	(195,000)	717,000
		-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2024		(241,733)	670,267
		=====	=====

Other Operating Costs

Purchase of goods and services	Note	2023-24 £	2022-23 £
Programme costs		62,843	60,082
Postage, stationery and photocopier costs		4,582	720
Telephone		2,770	3,549
Rentals under operating leases		51,564	40,919
Repairs and maintenance		51,188	46,760
Professional fees		5,752	16,383
Sundry expenses		-	1,580
HR costs		13,160	13,414
External audit services		21,900	24,900
Internal audit services		5,785	6,675
Bank charges		73	70
		-----	-----
		219,617	215,052
		-----	-----

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Depreciation and impairment charges

Depreciation	7	57,527	57,129
Amortisation	8	6,544	6,808
		-----	-----
		64,071	63,937
		-----	-----

Other Operating Expenditure

		2023-24	2022-23
		£	£
Staff travel and subsistence		3,777	2,675
Members and Committee expenses		2,297	1,279
Interest - Right of Use of Assets		1,291	1,759
Interest on net defined pension liability	16	(11,000)	63,000
		-----	-----
		(3,635)	68,713
		-----	-----

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Appendix 2: Grants Paid in 2023-24

Core Grant Scheme Awards 2023 – 2024

Please Note:

Multiple Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 2 – 4 District Council areas

Regional Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 5 – 11 District Council areas

Reference	Name	Short Description	Amount (£)
Antrim and Newtownabbey			
CF23/50015	Community Relations Forum	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	38,364.30
Total for Antrim and Newtownabbey			38,364.30
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon			
CF23/50060	Shankill Parish Caring Association	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	28,670.40
Total for Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon			28,670.40
Belfast			
CF23/50018	Forthspring Inter Community Group	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	31,712.40
CF23/50030	Donegall Pass Community Enterprises	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	19,712.70
CF23/50035	East Belfast Mission	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	46,616.40
CF23/50041	Intercomm	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	27,386.10
CFC23/51006	North Belfast Interface Network	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	27,817.34
CFC23/51009	Falls Community Council	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	32,584.99
Total for Belfast			185,829.93
Causeway Coast and Glens			
CF23/50024	Building Communities Resource Centre	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	45,529.20
Total for Causeway Coast and Glens			45,529.20
Derry and Strabane			
CF23/50033	An Gaeláras Limited	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	29,638.80
CF23/50068	The Churches Trust Limited	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	47,679.30
CFC23/51010	Londonderry Bands Forum	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	41,357.92
CFC23/51012	North West Play Resource Centre	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	33,387.03
CFC23/51019	The Junction/Holywell Trust Core Funding Partnership	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	72,176.40
Total for Derry and Strabane			224,239.45
Mid Ulster			

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CF23/50011	Rural Community Network	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	65,800.80
Total for Mid-Ulster			65,800.80
Multiple			
CF23/50038	Springboard Opportunities Limited	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	33,886.80
CFC23/51018	Community Relations in Schools (CRIS)	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	71,994.83
CFC23/51020	Partisan Productions	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	29,862.94
Total for Multiple			135,744.57
Newry, Mourne and Down			
CF23/50045	Harmony Community Trust	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	21,078.90
CFC23/51014	Tobar Mhuire	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	26,591.49
Total for Newry, Mourne and Down			47,670.39
Regional			
CF23/50016	Youth Initiatives NI	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	29,186.81
CF23/50023	The Corrymeela Community	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	50,571.90
CF23/50036	TIDES Training and Consultancy	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	45,007.20
CFC23/51007	Ulster GAA	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	38,866.27
CFC23/51008	Trademark	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	56,126.29
CFC23/51011	PeacePlayers International - Northern Ireland	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	49,776.21
CFC23/51013	Nerve Centre	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	24,225.98
CFC23/51015	Youth Link	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	50,124.84
CFC23/51016	Irish FA Foundation	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	26,619.30
CFC23/51017	Irish School of Ecumenics	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	26,997.48
CFC23/51021	Early Years Organisation for young children	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	67,524.54
Total for Regional			465,026.82
Overall Total			1,236,875.86

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Community Relations Cultural Diversity Grant Scheme 2023 – 2024

Please Note:

Multiple Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 2 – 4 District Council areas

Regional Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 5 – 11 District Council areas

Reference	Name	Short Project Description	Amount (£)
Antrim and Newtownabbey			
CRCD23/52206	The Breen Centre	Building positive cross-border relations following a rise in Brexit-related violence by building the capacity for constructive dialogue that explores difference and explores shared future building.	2,485.50
CRCD23/52223	All About Us – ASD Teens	Diverse Threads is a project that aims to promote diversity, inclusion, and mutual respect by bringing together individuals from different religious backgrounds.	2,480.00
Total for Antrim and Newtownabbey			4,965.50
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon			
CRCD23/52007	1825 Project Ltd	To hold a two week summer camp to provide additional training and team work activities for young people aged 18 - 25 in Brownlow/Craigavon.	1,923.00
CRCD23/52019	NI Hyatt Ltd	Through the learning of the language, Al Taaleem aims to promote integration and relations between communities with different backgrounds, celebrate diversity and build social connections.	1,396.00
CRCD23/52030	The John Hewitt Society	The John Hewitt International Summer School is a celebrated week-long Festival of Literature, Politics and the Arts at the Market Place Theatre, Armagh.	2,570.00
CRCD23/52277	all set project	Talks, Workshops & Performances examining diverse musical traditions including a St Patrick's event plus a music session celebrating pipe band and traditional music.	1,390.49
Total for Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon			7,279.49
Belfast			
CRCD23/52039	Family Comfort NI	An annual dual event that creates the space for the-community to showcase/celebrate indigenous culture, heritage, art, delicacies with outcomes on social inclusion and building sustainable relationships.	1,860.00
CRCD23/52102	EPIC	The British Irish Association Conference offers a unique opportunity to access a wide range of policy influencers from both the political and community sectors.	561.00
CRCD23/52106	Coiste na nIarchimí	To interact with prominent and policy making people to promote the reconciliation work of political ex prisoners along with Tom Roberts of E.P.I.C.	616.02

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CRC23/52144	Multi-Ethnic Sports And Cultures Northern Ireland (MSCNI)	The group plans to use this medium to bring youths of various community backgrounds together with a sports festival in using various sports and Cultural activities.	2,146.43
CRC23/52231	Youth Initiatives NI	Crosslinks Good Relations Arts showcase - an original theatre production written/designed by 14-20yrs participants who have been participating in a GR program for 6 months.	2,500.00
CRC23/52238	Terra Nova Productions	Creating a Minority Ethnic led project with three objectives that deliver reductions of racism, mistrust and isolation through minority ethnic artistic outputs for Multicultural audiences.	1,410.00
CRC23/52253	JoinHer Network CIC	It focuses on diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging, providing a safe space for all to come together and learn about each other's differences and culture.	1,260.00
CRC23/52044	Fighting Words Northern Ireland	Five days of cross-community creative writing workshops in East Belfast for 16 young people to explore cultural diversity through scriptwriting.	2,685.05
CRC23/52083	Green Shoot Productions	This project is a Community Engagement Programme centred around the legacy of David Ervine, to take place in the PUL areas of East Belfast.	4,652.96
CRC23/52210	East Belfast GAA	East Belfast GAA want to hold a Hamely Tongue evening to celebrate Ulster Scots week	464.40
CRC23/52054	Community Relations in Schools (CRIS)	This project will enable primary-aged children from Shankill & Ardoyne to build trust & foster friendships by participating in Buddy Up! peacebuilding educational programmes.	6,135.54
CRC23/52060	Community Relations in Schools (CRIS)	Our project aims to build sustainable meaningful relationships between the Shankill and Ardoyne areas of North Belfast by engaging parents and training key school stakeholders.	3,365.00
CRC23/52186	Centre for Democracy and Peace Building	Facilitated Conflict Textiles workshop and story-telling session with participants from NI and Colombia with a focus on slavery, displacement and recovery.	1,492.00
CRC23/52222	TAMHI	The group will deliver a Shared Education and Shared Space Football Programme in Girdwood Community Hub.	1,263.60
CRC23/52243	Green Shoot Productions	To provide cross-community skills workshops on creative writing, theatre and cultural diversity themes, and associated performance resources.	2,840.00
CRC23/52047	Mornington Community Project	Women Together: Creating Cross Community Connections promotes reconciliation through creating a group of dedicated cross-community champions to lead a family project focused on good relations.	3,000.00
CRC23/52073	British Youth Music Theatre	The project celebrates/acknowledges the important role of peace builders, promoting awareness amongst young people through outreach + 6 days of devising, rehearsal & performance.	2,240.00
CRC23/52196	Street Soccer NI	A 4-week Good Relations project working with women from disadvantaged backgrounds including the homeless, refugees, asylum	3,284.30

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		seekers. It will include 4 workshops and a residential.	
CRCD23/52009	Highspring Residents Group	To provide a diversionary festival/funday during the annual Whiterock band parade, to arrange 2 shared history site visits.	1,676.00
CRCD23/52032	Community Arts Partnership	Breathe: A livestreamed demonstration project for more inclusive, shared creative space with Forthspring Inter-community Centre; two international festivals, US peacebuilder JP Lederach, best-practice methodologies.	1,873.36
CRCD23/52269	Ark Housing	The Ark Intercultural Exchange will enable families living in Ark's Hostels to come together and learn about cultural diversity in an entertaining and memorable way.	2,475.00
Total for Belfast			47,800.66
Causeway Coast and Glens			
CRCD23/52197	The Junction	Two Re-Imagining Relationships programmes of facilitated community learning addressing sexism-sectarianism-racism in the Causeway Coast area: i) West Bann Development, Coleraine and ii) rural (Dervock Band/Orange Order).	1,413.50
Total for Causeway Coast and Glens			1,413.50
Derry and Strabane			
CRCD23/52031	Lincoln Courts Youth and Community Association	It will focus on developing a greater understanding, forging stronger links and focus on breaking down sectarian barriers between young people from greater Waterside area.	3,390.00
CRCD23/52035	REACH Across	HERO Project will target associate youth/community workers & teachers for an accredited course in Good Relations, followed by education visits to historical & political landmarks	2,452.00
CRCD23/52109	An Gaeláras Limited	A series of events, exhibitions and activities that increase access to the Irish Language for those who have not had opportunities to engage with it.	3,902.50
CRCD23/52123	Kerala Association	Bringing people from all the communities together through art, culture and education thus building good relations between them.	1,385.00
CRCD23/52151	The Churches Trust	Three events showcasing our good relations work throughout the year: Women and War (Workshop), St. Columba Trail/Walk and Unveiling Wall Mural completed by Children/Young People.	1,557.18
CRCD23/52168	North West Play Resource Centre (The Playhouse)	Theatre of Witness is a form of testimonial performance performed by people sharing their personal and collective stories of suffering, transformation and peace.	3,245.00
CRCD23/52239	Verbal	Celebrating World Book & World Storytelling Days, Verbal will run two AI Art workshops and an exhibition working with young people to celebrate our differences.	695.00
CRCD23/52298	The Churches Trust	A group of young people are completing our 'Community of Homes' Programme. An unexpected outcome is they wish to complete an OCN accredited programme.	185.64
Total for Derry and Strabane			16,812.32

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Fermanagh and Omagh			
CRCD23/52048	Core Smart Fit Community Interest Company	A 3 day project for 50 young people of good relations workshops delivered through recreational activities e.g. a trip to Gortin Glens and performing arts.	2,753.80
CRCD23/52075	Dromore Childcare Centre	Dromore Childcare aim to run a MIFC programme to encourage greater acceptance of and respect for cultural diversity for young people, alongside requesting essential resources.	1,405.00
CRCD23/52207	Together in Music	We will enable our Black and Asian Communities to explore their own culture and beliefs to increase their trust with the mainstream communities	2,560.00
CRCD23/52212	The Golden Apples Players	Building Harmony, a 6-week program at Strule Arts Centre, unites communities through drama, music, and dance. It explores shared spaces, interfaith dialogue, and multicultural collaboration.	2,430.00
Total for Fermanagh and Omagh			9,148.80
Lisburn and Castlereagh			
CRCD23/52147	Dromara Local History Group	The History Group often receives requests from USA folk trying to trace their ancestors. The group feel this visit will explain emigration.	740.00
CRCD23/52233	R-Space Gallery	The project will foster a sense of community belonging and celebrate cultural diversity through workshops focused on developing artistic skills, creative expression, and collaboration.	1,643.08
Total for Lisburn and Castlereagh			2,383.08
Mid and East Antrim			
CRCD23/52057	Cairncastle Ulster-Scots Cultural Group	A Cross Community Festival of music & dance with a diverse range of participants from both indigenous communities and Ethnic Minority Communities	2,450.00
Total for Mid and East Antrim			2,450.00
Multiple			
CRCD23/52012	TADA Rural Support Network	A multi-cultural Networking event to bring together a diverse range of cultures to promote understanding, respect and engagement with all sections of the community.	3,300.00
CRCD23/52015	EMSONI - Ethnic Minority Sports Organisation NI	Confederation festival is an intercultural multi-sports festival, engaging more than twenty communities from 30th April 2023 to 5th August 2023 to promote connectivity, intercultural dialogue.	5,000.00
CRCD23/52022	The Maiden City Festival	The Maiden City Festival is an 8-day festival created in conjunction the annual Relief of Londonderry parade intended to promote good community relations around it.	3,450.00
CRCD23/52046	Rathfriland Traditions and Arts Society	We aim to facilitate safe cultural expression around the Rathfriland 11th night beacon. This project will support efforts to organise an inclusive/educational series of events.	1,910.00
CRCD23/52068	Kerygma Choir	Choral musical performance promoting reconciliation between citizens, faiths & organisations throughout Ireland, particularly	918.95

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		relevant in this 25th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement.	
CRC23/52161	All Nations Ministries	During CR week organising two events - Wednesday 20th Sept a bus tour, and on Saturday 23rd Sept an Intercultural Workshop for newcomers to NI.	1,031.40
CRC23/52169	Falls Women's Centre	50 women will come together at a cross-community film/discussion night, focusing on women's shared experiences and creative response to the legacy of the past.	1,350.00
CRC23/52281	International School for Peace Studies	Through a series of 6 Holocaust Awareness Workshops/Presentations & Final Event ISPS will deliver to 3 groups of adults from communities in the Northwest area	2,415.00
Total for Multiple			19,375.35
Newry, Mourne and Down			
CRC23/52014	Killyleagh Community Association	This project will provide a safe space in which people from all backgrounds can come together and express themselves through shared music making.	1,800.00
CRC23/52074	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Limited	This project will improve community relations during the Kilkeel 11th July celebrations by organising a family-friendly Festival, while celebrating 25 years of the Schomberg Society.	2,575.00
CRC23/52094	Iur Cinn Fleadh	2023 Dancing On The Greens 6 community associations. Increase of 3 community associations A Polish night Derrymore Men's shed cross community music project	1,000.00
CRC23/52225	Drumaness Cross community Playgroup	The Community connections programme will engage 20 women from rurally isolated communities across County Down in a Good Relations Programme	2,220.00
Total for Newry Mourne and Down			7,595.00
Regional			
CRC23/52020	Reclaim The Enlightenment	Considering the history of education the group wish to promote an education system which is non-segregated by ability (selection at eleven) or on sectarian lines.	1,410.00
CRC23/52026	PeacePlayers International - Northern Ireland	The CDP will equip a new generation of young people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to build peace and reconciliation.	3,775.00
CRC23/52027	Youth Initiatives	STEP UP STEP OUT a good relations volunteer leadership training & development programme for participants aged 15-25 from 6 Northern Ireland YI youth community hubs.	3,700.00
CRC23/52076	County Armagh Super Cup NI Association	A Summer for Change is a three-week programme for 36 young people across Northern Ireland involving football opportunities, good-relations workshops, and a residential to finish.	3,902.00
CRC23/52077	Arts Ekta	This proposal will deliver the 17th edition of the multi award winning Belfast Mela, Northern Ireland's largest and leading celebration of cultural diversity.	5,000.00

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CRC23/52082	Thrive Ireland	To produce an 8 episode podcast using in depth interviews and exploration with inspiring global and local peacemakers.	4,119.51
CRC23/52085	Irish School of Ecumenics	Bi-annual CONNECT conferences bring together representatives of Church Fora to share experiences and learnings promoting reconciliation, an end to sectarianism. Newsletter disseminates learnings more widely.	1,439.50
CRC23/52086	Parallel Histories	The group will bring together young people from Protestant and Catholic communities to discuss contentious historical topics in a conference at Stormont.	4,440.11
CRC23/52098	Success Dragon and Lion Dance Association	A multi-cultural Chinese New Year event, which will be entertaining, educational and inclusive. We aim to raise the profile of Chinese Community and other cultures	1,800.00
CRC23/52107	JoinHer Network CIC	Creating a diverse space for women of minority backgrounds to network on issues of equitably and inclusion, building new working partnerships in Northern Ireland.	1,200.00
CRC23/52124	Spanner in the Works Theatre Company	Develop true stories with offenders (legacy of peace). Addressing issues and backgrounds on how people ended up in jail.	4,655.00
CRC23/52131	Avila Media	Build capacity in various grassroots communities to empower people to take up vocations and hobbies in the digital media/film/journalism industries & learn about other cultures.	5,000.00
CRC23/52203	Shared Future News	Knowledge exchange seminar and local TV programmes to share learning and experiences of the vocation of peacebuilding.	2,067.70
CRC23/52218	Victim Support NI	Victim Support NI & it's partners will facilitate the 'We Stand Together' anti-hate crime campaign to increase awareness about hate crime & available support/advocacy	2,156.59
CRC23/52250	Imagine Belfast Ltd	The project will involve over 20,000 people in at least 100 events examining issues of diversity, culture and politics during 18-24 March 2024.	4,150.00
Total for Regional			48,815.41
Overall Total			168,039.11

North Belfast 2023 – 2024

Reference	Name	Short Description	Amount (£)
Belfast			
NBF23/53001	Ardoyne Youth Enterprises	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	72,311.00
NBF23/53002	Ashton Centre	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	90,000.00
NBF23/53003	Ballysillan Community Forum	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	48,600.00
NBF23/53004	Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	97,200.00

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NBF23/53005	Greater Whitewell Community Surgery	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	42,451.00
NBF23/53006	Intercomm	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	76,500.00
NBF23/53007	Ligoniel Improvement Association	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	54,996.00
NBF23/53008	Mount Vernon Community Development Fund	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	27,000.00
NBF23/53009	Shankill Women's Centre (SWC)	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	81,000.00
NBF23/53010	The Vine Centre	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	11,970.00
Overall Total			602,028.00

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107530

Annual report

DIRECTORS' REPORT

A) Corporate Governance Report

i) Trustee's and Directors' Report

Structure, Governance and Management

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council is a company limited by guarantee, with no share capital, and is registered as a charity by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 2006, along with selected disclosures as recommended in the 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard FRS 102 (effective 2nd October 2019)'.

The Directors have complied with guidance published by the Charities Commission.

Organisational Structure

The Community Relations Council is governed by the Members of the Council. Where the Articles of Association refer to the Council, it can also be read as the Company, which shall mean the Members of the Council can also be read as the Directors of the Company.

The Council has capacity to register 24 members and there was a total of nine members in post during the year. The Council aims to meet every six weeks, holding at least six meetings during any 12-month period. A scheme of delegation is in place and day-to-day responsibility for provision of services rests with the Chief Executive, Jacqueline Irwin, supported by the Senior Management Team. The Senior Management Team consists of the Director of Funding and Development, Director of Community Engagement and Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel.

The Chief Executive, with the assistance of the Senior Management Team, manages the day-to-day activities of the Council and reports directly to the Chairperson. The Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team also provide progress reports to all Council meetings.

Directors

The directors of the company at 31st March 2024 were as follows:

Mr. Martin McDonald (Chair)	Mr. Michael McDonnell
Mr. Rory Campbell	Ms. Claire Harris
Ms. Audrey Simpson	Mr. John McCallister
Dr. Máire Braniff	Ms. Nisha Tandon
Ms Sheila McClelland	

Board members, including the Chair, are appointed by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service following a recruitment exercise led by The Executive Office in a manner intended to comply fully with guidance from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Northern Ireland (OCPANI). All current members took up their positions on 1st June 2019 and were appointed for three years. In the absence of Ministers to take decisions during the larger part of 2023-24. The Executive Office extended the term of office of all members effective from 1st June 2024.

Following appointment, all directors receive 'On Board' training conducted by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), Equality and Recruitment training, conducted by ECNI, induction into the role by The Executive Office as its Arm's Length Body and a full induction into the work of the Community Relations Council conducted by Community Relations Council staff. Induction training for new members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the Community Relations Council is also provided into the work of those committees.

Statement of Grant Making Policies

The Community Relations Council provides grant aid and advice to voluntary and community groups in support of projects which have a community relations purpose or value. The Council has a variety of funding schemes each tailored to promote certain aspects of community relations:

- The Community Relations and Cultural Diversity Small Grant Scheme is intended to help community/voluntary groups in Northern Ireland develop their capacity to engage in community relations work and to enhance the community relations potential of projects they undertake. The maximum award payable for this grant is £10,000.
- The Core Funding Grant Scheme is designed to support voluntary and community organisations to develop community relations work in a strategic manner, on a regional basis. Support is specifically targeted at work to combat sectarianism in Northern Ireland on a strategic long-term basis. The amount awarded normally ranges between £20,000 and £85,000.

- The Publications Grant Scheme aims to encourage the production and dissemination of publications that will contribute to greater understanding and better community relations in Northern Ireland. The maximum award payable for this grant is £5,000. This grant scheme did not operate during 2023-24 due to cuts in the budget received from The Executive Office.
- The Media Grant Scheme aims to assist with the dissemination of community relations priorities via print, broadcast or other widely accessible media. This grant scheme did not operate during 2023-24 due to cuts in the budget received from The Executive Office.
- The Pathfinder Scheme contributes towards the salary and running costs of organisations or projects which are considered of strategic importance in promoting community relations work in Northern Ireland. The Pathfinder Scheme is not an open scheme to which groups can apply; discussion with the Director of the Funding and Development Programme will precede any proposal made to this scheme. This scheme also supports emergency intervention funding through small project grants. This grant scheme did not operate during 2023-24 due to cuts in the budget received from The Executive Office.
- The North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme (NBSGRP) is a funding scheme administered by the Community Relations Council on behalf of The Executive Office. It is a Ministerial scheme, and its overall strategy remains with The Executive Office. The key aim of the Programme is to develop relations within and between communities in North Belfast. Responsibility for the administrative aspects of the Programme were transferred to the Community Relations Council during 2016-17. The programme made awards up to £100,000 during the 2023-24 financial year.

Details of the grants awarded during the 2023-24 financial year are shown on pages 93-101.

Community Engagement

The Community Relations Council seeks to promote learning, best practice and good communication between all relevant sectors and government to assist effective implementation of the Programme for Government and T:BUC strategy by:

- providing development support and engagement opportunities as a hub for the exchange of learning and best practice among our funded groups and wider networks. The relationship between policy, practice and reflective evaluation remains at the heart of the work of the Community Relations Council, well-crafted public policy and effective service delivery depends on it;
- leading on the coordination and delivery of the T:BUC Engagement Forum events that bring together good relations practitioners, voluntary & community sector and government to assist effective implementation of the Programme for Government and T:BUC strategy;
- co-ordinating the annual Good Relations Week which takes place annually in September. The week is designed to showcase good practice and encourage wide engagement;
- co-ordinating the Good Relations Awards to highlight exceptional achievement in promoting community relations, intercultural work and peacebuilding in Northern Ireland; and
- promoting the work and the activities of the Community Relations Council and others within the sector through monthly email newsletters, its website and social media channels.

Future plans

As an Arm's Length Body of The Executive Office our strategic direction, confirmed by Ministers, is to be a key delivery agent for departmental good relations policy, including the implementation of the aims and objectives of the T:BUC strategy and an outcome based approach to delivery. This includes promoting policy through positive engagement with relevant stakeholders in the community and establishing and implementing best practice.

- The Community Relations Council will finalise work on its next Strategic Plan, carry out a public consultation and seek approval of the final draft from The Executive Office ministers. Subject to the timing of their publication, the plan will align with the new Programme for Government and the revised T:BUC strategy. The Strategic Plan will build on the Community Relations Council's role as a trusted and critical link between government and all sections of society, continuing to promote good practice in building peace and good relations.
- The organisation will continue to take a co-ordinated approach to grant funding focused on T:BUC priorities and objectives. The organisation will continue to review the distribution of its grants and put in place any necessary mitigations to achieve the goals set out in the new Strategic Plan.

- The organisation will continue to develop its suite of key performance indicators and targets to enhance strategic decision making and better demonstrate the impact of the work undertaken by the Community Relations Council. The organisation will continue to emphasise an outcomes-based approach and incorporate the good relations indicators emerging from the revised T:BUC Strategy as the basis of its performance monitoring framework. The organisation will also explore the value of other evaluation methods that align with the overall objectives of the strategy.
- The organisation will continue to deliver a programme of engagement and shared learning. It will also contribute to any new architecture and thematic groups emerging from the revised T:BUC strategy.
- During 2024-25 the Community Relations Council will continue to implement the '*Partnership Agreement*' with The Executive Office (which replaced the previous Management Statement/Financial Memorandum).
- The organisation will continue to operate agile working methods in a manner that is consistent with public sector guidance.

Employee and Board involvement

The Board of the Community Relations Council is responsible for establishing the overall strategic direction of the Community Relations Council. In doing so it will approve the triennial strategic plan, the annual business plan, corporate policies and provide assurance to The Executive Office that appropriate action is being taken on strategic, financial, legal and governance matters. Employees are responsible for implementing the Board's decisions, including reporting and providing assurance to the Board on the Community Relations Council's performance in implementing the Board decisions. Staff involvement includes attendance at Board meetings, joint planning sessions with Board members, monthly staff meetings, the use of project teams and performance management tailored to support the achievement of strategic objectives.

Personal data related incidents

The Community Relations Council is required to report on personal data related incidents and accordingly have a control system to meet these responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The control system has been established to ensure the appropriate handling of personal data and information used for operational and reporting purposes through the development of appropriate strategy and policy.

There were no breaches of personal data during 2023-24.

Freedom of Information

During 2023-24 year the Community Relations Council received one (2022-23: two) Freedom of Information (FOI) request. The request was responded to in a timely way and in a manner consistent with the Community Relations Council's publication scheme.

Pensions

The Community Relations Council participates in a defined benefit pension scheme administered by the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) for all permanent staff. Further details are set out in the Remuneration Report on pages 51 to 55, the accounting policies on pages 67 to 71 and commitments under Defined Benefit Pension Scheme in Note 16 on pages 83 to 86.

Reporting of Complaints

The Community Relations Council received no complaints during 2023-24.

The Community Relations Council's Complaints Policy can be accessed via the [website \(https://www.community-relations.org.uk/contact-us\)](https://www.community-relations.org.uk/contact-us).

Prompt Payment Policy

The Community Relations Council is committed to the prompt payment of bills for goods and services received in accordance with the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998. Unless otherwise stated in the contract, payment is due within 30 days of the receipt of the goods or services, or presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand, whichever is later. Regular reviews conducted during the year to measure how promptly the Community Relations Council paid its bills found that 93% (2022-23: 95%) of bills were paid within this standard. It was also noted that 67% (2022-23: 82%) of bills were paid within 10 days.

Related Parties

Details of the company's related parties are set out in note 17 to the Accounts.

Register of interests

The Chair, Board of Directors, Chief Executive and Senior Management Team are required to register all interests, direct or indirect, which members of the public might reasonably think could influence their judgment. The register of interests is available on the Community Relations Council website or for public inspection by contacting the Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel, Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast. BT2 7DP.

Corporate Governance

The Governance Statement is set out on pages 37 to 50.

Auditors

The Comptroller and Auditor General has the statutory responsibility for the audit of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council under the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107530

Annual return

Draft Report to those charged with Governance

Community Relations Council
2023-24

7 November 2024

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We have prepared this report for the Community Relation Council's sole use. You must not disclose it to any third party, quote or refer to it, without our written consent and we assume no responsibility to any other person.

1. Key Messages

This report summarises the key matters from our audit of the 2023-24 Community Relations Council's financial statements which we must report to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, as those charged with governance. We would like to thank the finance team for their assistance during the audit process.

Proposed Audit Opinion

It is proposed that the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) will certify the 2023-24 financial statements with an unqualified audit opinion, without modification.

The proposed Audit Certificate is included at [Appendix Two](#).

Misstatements and Irregular Expenditure

Financial Statement Adjustments

The net effect of adjustments on the Statement of Financial Activities and Balance Sheet was to decrease the net movement in funds and decrease net assets by £912,000.

Uncorrected misstatements

Uncorrected misstatements would decrease the net movement in funds and increase net assets by a further £42,126.

Irregular expenditure

As disclosed in the Governance Statement, there was irregular expenditure of £14,560 in 2023-24. This was not considered to be material and therefore the audit opinion has not been qualified. Further information is provided in the Findings section.

C&AG's Report

No report on the account was required.

Audit Findings

During the audit we reviewed internal controls; accounting systems; and procedures to the extent considered necessary for the effective performance of the audit. We identified 1 priority one recommendation in relation to regularity¹ and the internal control environment.

Full details of findings are included at [Findings from the Audit](#).

Status of the Audit

Audit fieldwork is now complete. The Accounting Officer will sign the annual report and accounts together with a letter of representation, which is included at [Appendix One](#).

The total audit fee charged is in line with that set out in our Audit Strategy.

Independence

We consider that we comply with the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) Ethical Standard and that, in our professional judgment, we are independent and our objectivity is not compromised.

¹ Regularity - expenditure and income have been applied to the purposes intended by the Northern Ireland Assembly and that the transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

Management of information and personal data

The Community Relations Council is required to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) in the handling and storage of personal data. Those Charged with Governance should ensure they have made sufficient enquiries of management to form a view on whether there were any significant specific data incidents which should be disclosed in the Governance Statement. We are unaware of any data handling incidents during the year and confirmation to this effect has been sought within the letter of representation included at [Appendix One](#).

During the course of our audit we have access to personal data to support our audit testing. We have established processes to hold this data securely within encrypted files and to destroy it where relevant at the conclusion of our audit. We can confirm that we have discharged those responsibilities communicated to you in accordance with the requirements of General Data protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.

Actions for the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee should:

- Review the findings set out in this report, including the draft letter of representation and audit certificate at Appendices One and Two respectively; and
- Consider whether the uncorrected misstatements set out at [Misstatement and Irregular Expenditure](#) should be corrected. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee minutes should provide written endorsement of management's reasons for not correcting these misstatements.

2. Audit Scope

We have completed our audit of the 2023-24 financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs) issued by the Financial Reporting Council; with Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements of Public Sector Entities in the United Kingdom'; and with the Audit Strategy presented to the Audit Committee in February 2024.

There are no new matters to communicate concerning the planned scope of the audit. Certification of the accounts was delayed due to the need to consider the defined benefit pension asset and the Community Relations Council having to obtain a revised actuarial valuation.

3. Significant Risks

The significant risk identified in our Audit Strategy has been addressed as follows:

Significant Risk 1

Management override of controls

Under ISA (UK) 240, there is a presumed significant risk of material misstatement due to fraud through management override of controls.

Audit Response

As required by ISA (UK) 240, we:

- Tested the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements;
 - Reviewed accounting estimates for biases and evaluated whether the circumstances producing the bias, if any, represent a risk of material misstatement due to fraud; and
 - Considered significant transactions that are outside the normal course of business for the entity, or that otherwise appear to be unusual.
-

Outcome

During the course of the audit no significant items have come to our attention which indicate an override of the control systems in place.

No additional significant risks were identified during our audit fieldwork.

4. Findings from the Audit

Financial Reporting

As part of our audit, we evaluate the qualitative aspects of accounting practices and financial reporting. In this section we draw to your attention any significant changes or issues in respect of accounting policies; accounting estimates; and financial statement disclosures.

The Community Relations Council has adequate processes in place for the production of the accounts and continue to produce good quality supporting working papers. Officers dealt with audit queries efficiently and effectively.

Accounting Policies

Accounting policies applied by Community Relations Council are considered to be appropriate.

Accounting Estimates

Judgements made with regards to accounting estimates were considered appropriate.

Financial Statement Disclosures

We have made a number of suggestions to improve narrative disclosures and to ensure completeness of the disclosures required under the Financial Reporting Manual, Statement of Recommended Practice and other relevant guidance.

Going Concern

No events or conditions were identified from our audit work that cast significant doubt about Community Relations Council's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting.

Annual Report

The Annual Report was considered to be consistent with our understanding of the business and was in line with the other information provided in the financial statements.

Remuneration Report

The parts of the Remuneration Report to be audited were considered to be properly prepared in accordance with Department of Finance's guidance.

Accountability Report

The parts of the Accountability Report to be audited were considered to be properly prepared in accordance with the Department of Finance's directions issued under the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM).

Governance Statement

The Governance Statement was considered to reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Regularity, Propriety and Losses

There is an ongoing issue in respect of salary adjustments for historical differences in the level of employee contributions to pension schemes, which has resulted in irregular expenditure of £14,560 in 2023-24. The amount is not considered to be material and therefore the audit opinion has not been qualified.

Internal Control

No material weaknesses in the design and implementation of internal control have come to our attention during the audit.

Related Parties

No significant matters were arising during the audit in connection with the Community Relations Council's related parties.

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Audit Recommendations

This section outlines the findings arising from our audit, as well as management's response and target date for implementation. Our findings are defined as:

- **Priority 1** – significant issues for the attention of senior management which may have the potential to result in material weakness in internal control.
 - **Priority 2** – important issues to be addressed by management in their areas of responsibility.
 - **Priority 3** – issues of a more minor nature which represent best practice.
-

Finding 1

Employee Superannuation Contributions

The Community Relations Council continues to 'gross up' the basic salaries of some employees by 6% to make a contribution to the cost of employees' superannuation contributions to the NILGOSC pension scheme. This was to ensure that staff were not disadvantaged as a result of paying what were historically higher contributions to the NILGOSC pension scheme compared to the PCSPSNI. We note that from 2014-15, the 6% grossing up is not applied to new members of staff.

The Community Relations Council calculated that, for 2023-24, staff were better off in their net pay as a result of this 6% uplift by £14,560 (2022-23: £15,302).

In our opinion, as this is contrary to guidance letter FD(DFP) 05/16 Pay Remit Approval Process, it is considered to be irregular. The Community Relations Council have obtained legal advice that the additional 6% must continue to be paid.

We note that the Community Relations Council, as required by the Department of Finance, are actively trying to obtain a resolution to the issue.

CRC advised that since October 2023, TEO has commenced more regular meetings with CRC to discuss the content and timetable for approval of an updated business case. A range of options have been agreed with TEO in principle and a meeting has taken place with the Union.

We note that although an updated business case was approved by CRC Pension Sub-group in December 2023 and submitted to TEO in January 2024, the business case and timetable for resolution of this issue have yet to be finalised.

Priority Rating

1

Recommendation

The Community Relations Council should finalise the business case as soon as possible and prepare a timeline for resolution of this longstanding issue.

It is important that this matter is brought to a conclusion at the earliest opportunity.

Management Response (including target date)

Ongoing. Since October 2023 TEO has commenced more regular meetings with CRC to discuss the content and timetable for approval of an updated business case (previously provided by CRC to TEO in 2020).

The updated Business Case was drafted and approved by CRC Pension Subgroup in December 2023 before submission to TEO on 2nd Jan 2024.

CRC met with TEO on 16th January 2024 and CRC responded to queries on the draft following a meeting of its Pension Subgroup. A range of options were agreed in principle with TEO, subject to union negotiations.

A meeting with the union took place on 26th March 2024 to discuss the options. The union subsequently sent a list of technical queries advising that they were seeking information but not in negotiation at this stage. Following agreement on the responses at the Finance and General Purposes meeting on 4th July 2024, CRC responded to the union queries on 5th July 2024.

The Director of Finance, Admin and Personnel who had drafted the updated business case left CRC to take up a new post in April 2024. Since then CRC has been unsuccessful in its attempts to fill the post.

TEO has suggested CRC procure the assistance of an external consultant to finalise the draft business case. The Board and Finance Committee will explore this suggestion at an upcoming meeting.

CRC will continue to work closely with TEO to resolve this matter.

Finding 2

Finance Team

Following the departure of the DFAP Director in April 2024, Community Relations Council has again been very reliant on a Finance Manager recruited on an agency basis. This, and the vacant DFAP Director position, could cause adverse implications for CRC if this officer were to leave the organisation.

The DFAP Director's departure also led to a lack of segregation of duties within critical finance activities such as authorisation of manual journal postings.

Priority Rating

2

Recommendation

The Community Relations Council should actively seek to recruit a permanent Finance Manager (and a DFAP Director) to ensure appropriate succession planning.

CRC should also ensure that at all times there is appropriate segregation of duties and appropriate approval processes within key aspects of the finance function.

Management Response (including target date)

The CRC finance team is currently made up of two members of staff, one employed full time and the other from an agency. There is strict segregation of duties across all areas. Journals were being approved by the DFAP Director when that post was filled. These are now being approved by the CEO (Accounting Office), in the absence of a DFAP Director.

CRC is very keen to permanently fill its two finance posts but has struggled to do so in a very competitive employment market. The Finance Manager role advertised again in September 2024, with no applications meeting the required criteria. CRC's Finance and General Purposes Committee is due to discuss next steps at an upcoming meeting.

As a precaution and due to the continued difficulty in filling the DFAP Director post, another member of staff will be trained to prepare and post journals, which the FM can then approve.

In addition, CRC's Finance and General Purposes Committee and Audit Committee has Board membership with strong finance, audit, and legal background who provide CRC with assistance when needed.

Finding 3

Pension Asset

The accounts submitted for audit included a defined benefit pension asset of £912,000 at 31 March 2024 compared with asset of £194,000 at 31 March 2023. The value of the asset was provided the CRC's actuary.

NIAO appreciates that the actuary is employed to provide the valuation as CRC does not have the in-house expertise. However, CRC did not question why the material change in the valuation occurred between years when the valuation was received.

Following audit queries, it was established that CRC had mistakenly changed the basis on which the valuation was sought from its actuary. As a result, a new valuation had to be obtained and the value of the pension asset at 31 March 2024 was reduced to nil.

Priority Rating

2

Recommendation

CRC should review reports received from its experts, checking information when it can, and ask questions when it does not understand why there has been a material change between years.

Management Response (including target date)

This was human error in relation to an ambiguous, detailed template, using confusing dropdown menus received from NILGOSC and completed in March for the first time by the current Interim Finance Manager and approved by the then DFAP Director before forwarding on to NILGOSC. We have since been advised by NILGOSC that it was not the first time that this sort of incident has occurred for other bodies in relation to this form.

Albeit that this is the first time it has occurred in CRC; to mitigate risk in future years in relation to the completion of this form, we have made a note on our audit file.

A review of management's implementation of priority one recommendations made in our prior year Report to those charged with Governance is set out at Appendix Three.

5. Misstatements and Irregular Expenditure

Adjusted misstatements

During the audit process we identified the following misstatements above our clearly trivial threshold of £3,111. These misstatements have been adjusted and the net effect on the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet was £912,000.

ISSUE	AREA	SoCNE DEBIT / (CREDIT) £'000	SoFP DEBIT / (CREDIT) £'000
To derecognise pension asset	Other recognised gains/(losses)	912	
	Defined benefit pension asset		(912)
TOTAL		912	(912)

Uncorrected misstatements

The table below lists unadjusted misstatements which exceed our clearly trivial threshold of £3,111. Uncorrected misstatements would decrease expenditure and increase net assets by a further £42,126.

ISSUE	AREA	SoCNE DEBIT / (CREDIT) £'000	SoFP DEBIT / (CREDIT) £'000
To correct grant accruals which have been decommitted post year end	Grant Payables		42
	Grant Expenditure	(42)	
TOTAL		(42)	42

We recommend that uncorrected misstatements, other than projected errors, be corrected by the Community Relations Council.

Irregular Expenditure

The following irregular expenditure was identified during the course of our audit.

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT £'000
Employee Superannuation Contributions	14,560

The amount is not considered to be material and therefore the audit opinion has not been qualified. Please refer to Finding 1 for more details.

Appendix One – Letter of Representation

[Client Letterhead]

The Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
BELFAST
BT 7 1EU

Letter of Representation: The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council 2023-24

As Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council I have fulfilled my responsibility for preparing accounts that give a true and fair view of the state of affairs, net movement in funds and cash flows; and the related notes of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council for the year ended 31 March 2024.

In preparing the accounts, I was required to:

- observe the accounts direction issued by The Executive Office, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements and apply appropriate accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis; and
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed and disclosed and explain any material departures in the accounts; and
- make an assessment that the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council is a going concern and will continue to be in operation throughout the next year; and ensure that this has been appropriately disclosed in the financial statements.

I confirm that for the financial year ended 31 March 2024:

- neither I nor my staff authorised a course of action, the financial impact of which is that transactions infringe the requirements of regularity as set out in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland;
- having considered and enquired as to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's compliance with law and regulations, I am not aware of any actual or potential non-compliance that could have a material effect on the ability of the

Northern Ireland Community Relations Council to conduct its business or on the results and financial position disclosed in the accounts.

- all accounting records have been provided to you for the purpose of your audit and all transactions undertaken by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council have been properly recorded and reflected in the accounting records. All other records and related information, including minutes of all management meetings which you have requested have been supplied to you; and
- the information provided regarding the identification of related parties is complete; and the related party disclosures in the financial statements are adequate.

All material accounting policies as adopted are detailed in note 1 to the accounts.

Internal Control

I have fulfilled my responsibility as Chief Executive for the design and implementation of internal controls to prevent and detect error and I have disclosed to you the results of my assessment of the risk that the financial statements could be materially misstated.

I confirm that I have reviewed the effectiveness of the system of internal control and that the disclosures I have made are in accordance with the Department of Finance guidance on the Governance Statement.

Fraud

I have fulfilled my responsibility as Chief Executive for the design and implementation of internal controls to prevent and detect fraud and I have disclosed to you the results of my assessment of the risk that the financial statements could be materially misstated as a result of fraud.

I am not aware of any fraud or suspected fraud affecting the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and no allegations of fraud or suspected fraud affecting the financial statements has been communicated to me by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

Assets

GENERAL

All assets included in the Balance sheet were in existence at the reporting period date and owned by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and free from any lien, encumbrance or charge, except as disclosed in the accounts. The Balance Sheet includes all tangible assets owned by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council.

NON CURRENT ASSETS

All assets over £500 are capitalised. They are not revalued annually and instead are held at depreciated cost. Depreciation is calculated to reduce the net book amount of each asset to its estimated residual value by the end of its estimated useful life in the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's operations.

OTHER CURRENT ASSETS

On realisation in the ordinary course of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's operations the other current assets in the Balance Sheet are expected to produce at least the amounts at which they are stated. Adequate provision has been made against all amounts owing to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council which are known, or may be expected, to be irrecoverable.

PENSION ASSETS

I have considered the IAS 19 report produced by the NILGOSC actuary and I am satisfied that the pension asset ceiling is £nil and has been appropriately reflected in the financial statements. It is based upon the best information available at the time.

Liabilities

GENERAL

All liabilities have been recorded in the Balance Sheet.

There were no significant losses in the year and no provisions for losses were required at the year end.

All litigation and claims have been disclosed to you and correctly accounted for.

PROVISIONS

There are no provisions in the financial statements, and I confirm that I am not aware of any provisions that should be made.

CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

I am not aware of any pending litigation which may result in significant loss to Northern Ireland Community Relations Council.

Other Disclosures

RESULTS

Except as disclosed in the accounts, the results for the year were not materially affected by transactions of a sort not usually undertaken by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, or circumstances of an exceptional or non-recurring nature.

UNCORRECTED MISSTATEMENTS

The following uncorrected misstatement has been brought to my attention:

ISSUE	AREA	SoCNE DEBIT / (CREDIT) £'000	SoEP DEBIT / (CREDIT) £'000
To correct grant accruals which have been decommitted post year end	Grant Payables		42
	Grant Expenditure	(42)	
TOTAL		(42)	42

I consider the effect of this uncorrected misstatement to be immaterial to the financial statements taken as a whole.

EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

Except as disclosed in the accounts, there have been no material changes since the reporting period date affecting liabilities and commitments, and no events or transactions have occurred which, though properly excluded from the accounts, are of such importance that they should have been brought to notice.

ACCOUNTING ESTIMATES

The methods, significant assumptions and the data used in making the accounting estimates and the related disclosures are appropriate to achieve recognition, measurement or disclosure that is in accordance with the financial reporting framework.

MANAGEMENT OF PERSONAL DATA

Except as disclosed in the Directors' Report, there have been no personal data related incidents in 2023-24 which are required to be reported.

Jacqueline Irwin
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Date

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Appendix Two – Audit Certificate

NORTHERN IRELAND COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council for the year ended 31 March 2024 under the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013. The financial statements comprise: the Statement of Financial Activities; Balance Sheet; Cash Flow Statement; and the related notes, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the Government Financial Report Manual (FReM).

I have also audited the information in the Directors' Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described

in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my certificate.

My staff and I are independent of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

The going concern basis of accounting for the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer and Directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

Other Information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements, the parts of the Directors' Report described in that report as having been audited, and my audit certificate and report. The Accounting Officer and Directors are responsible for the other information included in the annual report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information

and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion:

- the parts of the Directors' Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with Government Financial Reporting Manual; and
- the information given in the Strategic Report and Directors' Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Strategic Report and Directors' Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Strategic Report and Directors' Report.

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Directors' Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by the Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer and Directors for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's and Directors' Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer and Directors are responsible for:

- preparing the Annual Report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report, in accordance with the Companies Act 2006;
- the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- ensuring such internal controls are in place as deemed necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; and
- assessing the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulation, including fraud.

My procedures included:

- obtaining an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council through discussion with management and application of extensive public sector accountability knowledge. The key laws and regulations I considered included governing legislation and any other relevant laws and regulations;
- making enquires of management and those charged with governance on the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's compliance with laws and regulations;
- making enquiries of internal audit, management and those charged with governance as to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's susceptibility to irregularity and fraud, their assessment of the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and irregularity, and their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud and irregularity;
- completing risk assessment procedures to assess the susceptibility of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur. This included, but was not limited to, an engagement director led engagement team discussion on fraud to identify particular areas, transaction streams and business practices that may be susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the posting of unusual journals;
- engagement director oversight to ensure the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework throughout the audit;
- documenting and evaluating the design and implementation of internal controls in place to mitigate risk of material misstatement due to fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- designing audit procedures to address specific laws and regulations which the engagement team considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements in terms of misstatement and irregularity, including fraud. These audit procedures included, but were not limited to, reading board and committee minutes, and agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation and approvals as appropriate, testing of journal entries, discussing regularity with management and reading internal audit reports;
- addressing the risk of fraud as a result of management override of controls by:

- performing analytical procedures to identify unusual or unexpected relationships or movements;
- testing journal entries to identify potential anomalies, and inappropriate or unauthorised adjustments;
- assessing whether judgements and other assumptions made in determining accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and
- investigating significant or unusual transactions made outside of the normal course of business.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.

Dorinna Carville
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
BELFAST
BT7 1EU

Date

Appendix Three – Implementation of Prior Year Priority One Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Employee Superannuation Contributions

The Community Relations Council should continue to engage with TEO on this matter and agree a plan and timeline for resolution of this longstanding issue. It is important that this matter is brought to a conclusion at the earliest opportunity.

Status

Not cleared

This remains an ongoing issue – see Finding 1.

Accounts

Company Registration No. NI24026

Charity No. 107530

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council
Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31st March 2023

Presented to The Northern Ireland Assembly by the Community Relations Council on 23rd
November 2023

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

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The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

General Information

Chair	M McDonald
Registered office	Equality House Shaftesbury Square Belfast BT2 7DP
Auditors	Comptroller and Auditor General Northern Ireland Audit Office 106 University Street Belfast BT7 1EU
Solicitors	Lewis Silkin 220 Ormeau Road Belfast BT7 2FY
Principal bankers	Bank of Ireland Donegal Place Belfast
Charity number	107530
Company registration number	NI24026
Website:	https://www.community-relations.org.uk/

Chair's Foreword

As we end the 2022-23 financial year it is appropriate to reflect back upon another successful year for the Community Relations Council (CRC) in its efforts to continue peacebuilding and social cohesion across our society as part of Government's T:BUC (Together: Building a United Community) Strategy delivered through The NI Executive Office (TEO). The Chief Executive, Jacqueline Irwin has covered the advances made in her annual report and I would like to take this opportunity to thank her and all our staff for their collective input into enabling CRC to meet its targets over the last year.

As we returned to meetings in person as well as online this year it was good to engage with our client base and partners on the ground. The resilience shown by community peace builders right across N Ireland has been remarkable to witness and signifies a very strong infrastructure for continued peace building and reconciliation.

CRC Board has completed its first 3-year term and has developed into a very cohesive group of Directors providing strategic direction to TEO staff as they navigate the implementation of our Strategy and Corporate Plan. At this point in time and in the absence of Ministers and an Executive, TEO have been unable to appoint members to a second term within CRC. However, I am pleased to note that our directors and I have agreed with TEO to have their first term extended on a 6 monthly basis to ensure business continuity in the short-term.

I would like to take this opportunity as we approach the end of another year to remember two people who have been intricately involved with CRC and a lot of other organisations on our journey to educate our children, remember the past and learn lessons for the future.

It was with great sadness that we learnt about the death of Baroness May Blood, a great champion of community relations. May devoted a significant part of her life to community relations and education. She was a remarkable woman and the first from Northern Ireland to be given a life peerage. May's tireless work with the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) has been an inspiration to us all.

The Community Relations Council was honoured to have awarded May the Good Relations Award 2021 for her selfless work and for being a champion of community relations in Northern Ireland. Her comments on receipt of that award are worthy of attention and remembrance:

"My passion for the past 20 years has been integrated education. The work that the community relations people are doing, and the work that the people in integrated education are doing – is the vital work. We are building a foundation for a better Northern Ireland. We want to change Northern Ireland and integrated education is certainly moving in that direction."

Dr Éamon Phoenix, winner of the Good Relations Award in 2022 unfortunately also died suddenly leaving not only an enormous personal gap for his family but a big professional gap for his colleagues.

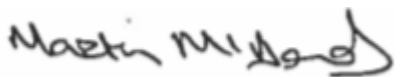
Éamon was a political historian and broadcaster, and an Irish News columnist. He was a member of and sole northern person on the Taoiseach's Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations and a noted author on modern Irish history. His knowledge and understanding of Irish history and particularly the home rule crisis in its widest context was considered encyclopedic by his peers.

Previously he was Head of Lifelong Learning at Stranmillis College. During this time, he pioneered combining modern Irish history and adult learning by collaborating with people from diverse backgrounds, guiding, challenging, and supporting participants through site visits in Belfast and Dublin to broaden their understanding of the island. Éamon worked tirelessly during his lifetime to build a public understanding of Irish History and to communicate this through for example, engaging lectures, TV programmes, radio and podcast interviews, and study trips and visits.

Éamon delivered the annual NI Assembly Speaker lecture on the Decade of Centenaries and also spoke at the events hosted jointly by the Speakers of the Dáil Eireann and the NI Assembly. He also designed public lecture series for Belfast City Council including The Somme, The Rising, the King's speech.

Éamon's approach combined a deep respect for his audience and their knowledge and understanding, while adding local context and stories to the major issues and events of the time of the broader context. As far afield as Armagh, Mid Ulster, Omagh and Lisburn and Castlereagh he was able to weave the local and the broad context together in a way that enables the audience to question and speak to one another in a safe space. May he rest in peace in the knowledge that his legacy will have a lasting impact upon us all.

I am delighted as Chair to present this year's Annual Report which gives detail on how we have managed our finances, governance, and risk matters in a comprehensive way in line with government requirements. Our performance indicators confirm how we have met our obligations, both to our sponsor Department and the local groups we fund. Can I conclude by thanking my fellow Board members for their support and co-operation over the last year. Our relationship with our sponsor department, TEO, continues to flourish and augurs well as we all collectively consider the review of the TBUC Strategy in the coming months.



Martin McDonald

Chair

Community Relations Council

Chief Executive's Comment

The last few weeks of the 2022-23 financial year were full of events to mark the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. There is always a balance to be struck between remembering the past, responding well to the present and planning for a better future. People differ on where that balance should be struck, as the feedback about the 25th anniversary showed. Our point of view is affected by how we individually experienced the time before the signing of the Agreement, what has happened to us since then, and how optimistic we are now about the future. There is no right or wrong perspective. The constant challenge lies in accepting that there are different views; that this will always be the case; and that we will always work better together when we take this into account: that was perhaps the most important lesson of the Agreement.

Although we reached a political agreement 25 years ago, the time since has shown that many aspects of our conflict remain to be resolved. Thankfully, the use of violence has been rejected by the vast majority in our society but sadly not yet everyone, as we saw again this year. The Agreement did not mark the end of peacebuilding, it did not even mark the beginning of it. The peace that was built before the Agreement was signed was an essential foundation to reaching the political accord (as was the weariness with the conflict). The peace-building work that has gone on since then has shown how long it takes to learn to live together well; how easy and often we slip; and how differently people experienced the past and the times we live in now. Peace processes are not linear, they are not guaranteed; they are not experienced in the same way, at the same time, by everyone.

Young people who did not live through the events leading up to and after the signing of the Agreement will view the discussions during the anniversary differently to those of us who did. For them it is largely someone else's story, mythologised by some (because we are all skilled at passing on our version of history) and ignored by others who are focused on the concerns of today and the future.

What will come next? With such a mixture of experiences, perspectives, and levels of engagement, the challenge is to identify and keep focused on the peace-building issues of now. To do so we must keep refreshing our approach to peace-building and good relations to ensure it is relevant to the times we live in. We must carry the lessons of our history into the future in a way that is appropriate and not bound by the past. As we face into the next challenging financial year, the Community Relations Council is in listening mode. As the impact of the budget cuts become evident across the region and projects that have been relied on by so many begin to disappear, we will need to bring our years of experience to bear in deciding on the most effective things to do now. The next chapter of peacebuilding is already being written. What do we want to be said about it in 25 years from now?

As an Arm's Length body of The Executive Office, the Community Relations Council is a key delivery partner responsible for funding programmes across the region that tackle sectarianism, racism, and to build good community relationships now and for the future. As this report demonstrates, in 2022-23 we continued to manage our resources well, accounting for them to the high standard required of public bodies and reported our

sponsoring department and others in a timely and transparent way. This year we welcomed the opportunity to safely meet again with colleagues in the community relations network as we incorporated the changes developed during the Covid-19 pandemic into our agile working method. We now routinely deliver our services on-line and in person.

We continue to be inspired by the energy and commitment shown by those we fund. They continue to develop practical ways to integrate their work on building cross-community relationships with the delivery of other services vital to local needs. This is not new; good community relationships have always been an important foundation to the most effective delivery of other services, but they will be even more essential as we face into 2023-24 and the current public sector funding crisis.

The search for common ground and shared humanity will continue in 2023-24. Many of the problems faced in 2022-23, including the ongoing collapse of the NI Executive, the impact of the war in Ukraine, and the rising environmental challenges will continue to be a feature of the work in 2023-24. The Community Relations Council is playing its part in the environmental challenge, learning how to deliver our services in a sustainable way and based on the knowledge we already apply to community relations work: small actions taken by a large number of people can bring about positive change.

In 2022-23 127 organisations and projects that received funding totalling £2,323,278 across our grant schemes: Community Relations and Cultural Diversity (CR/CD) Small Grant Scheme, the Core Funding Grant Scheme, the Pathfinder Scheme, the Publications and Media Scheme and The Executive Office's North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme. We continued to be a hub for the exchange of learning and best practice, providing online and in-person development and engagement opportunities to our funded groups, community practitioners, policymakers, academics, and wider networks. During the year we organised three meetings of the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Engagement Forum on behalf of The Executive Office. The complex weave of perspectives necessary to reflect the diversity of our community is represented in the themes and participation in the Forum which continues to be a platform for structured engagement between those involved in the design of the policy and the practitioners working on various aspects of delivery.

Good Relations Week 2022 incorporated 264 events and this year we were able to have delivered them in-person as well as online. The steering group included representatives from The Executive Office, the Department for Communities, the Department for Justice, the Education Authority, Nerve Centre, Libraries NI, Cathedral Quarter Trust, and T:BUC Young Ambassadors, NI Environment Link, The Rainbow Project, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, and Another World Belfast. As always, we are grateful to the steering group and everyone else who contributed to the week without them the week couldn't take place.

Our communication channels remained an important aspect of our work, and our website, twitter and e-news continued to be a valued source of information. Our website attracted 25,766 users and 67,819 page views. We had 2,345 subscribers to our monthly email newsletter, 7,813 followers on Twitter with post impressions of 348,400 and 3,900 followers on Facebook with a post reach of 308,800.

This year we concluded our work on the Decade of Centenaries project which has been run jointly with The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Details of the many useful resources developed during the project are now available on our website. This year sadly we also lost Dr. Eamon Phoenix. Eamon made an amazing contribution to the body of work undertaken during the decade project. Such was his personal contribution that the CRC was delighted to award him the Community Relations Award for exceptional achievement. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of our history and was called on by so many of us to help with our events during the project. Eamon always managed to pick out some moment in history that perfectly captured the complex, often contradictory nature of our story. I could not here begin to capture the enormous contribution Eamon made. We are forever in his debt, privileged to have worked with him, continuing to miss him at each and every gathering and honoured to have some small examples of his wonderful perspectives and oratory in our web archive.

This year we were also sorry to hear of the death of another previous Good Relations Award recipient, Baroness May Blood. The Community Relations Council was honoured to have awarded May the Good Relations Award 2021 for her selfless work and for being a champion of community relations in Northern Ireland. The Good Relations Award highlights exceptional achievement in promoting community relations, intercultural work, and peacebuilding – Baroness Blood was a shining example. May devoted a significant part of her life to community relations and education. She was a remarkable woman and the first from Northern Ireland to be given a life peerage. May's tireless work with the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) was an inspiration to us all.

The Community Relations Council is grateful to colleagues in The Executive Office, our work in 2022-23 could not have been done without their valued support. I am also grateful to our Chair, Martin McDonald, and the Board members for their support and guidance during the year. As always, I am also grateful to my fellow staff members for their continued commitment to building good community relations.



Jacqueline Irwin

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Strategic Report

i) Performance Overview

The directors are pleased to present their Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023. This overview section gives a summary on the creation of the Community Relations Council, its aims and objectives, the risks it currently faces and its achievements over the 2022-23 year.

Principal Activities

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council was established by government in 1990 as an independent charity and a company limited by guarantee.

The overall aim for the Community Relations Council, as set out in its Articles of Association, is the advancement of education and of other charitable purposes beneficial to the community in Northern Ireland (“the area of benefit”), and in particular, but not so as to limit the generality of the foregoing, the advancement of education in, and the understanding of, the different cultural traditions of the peoples of the area of benefit and the improvement of community relations in the area of benefit.

The Board of the Community Relations Council has nine members, meets every six weeks and is supported by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Community Relations Council is responsible for delivery of the organisation's strategy and is supported by three Directors: Director of Funding and Development, Director of Community Engagement and Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel. The staffing structure of the Community Relations Council is currently made up of 17 employees as presented in the organisation chart shown on page 13. The Community Relations Council encourages and develops employees to enhance the contribution they make to the Community Relations Council's work and the issues important to developing good community relations. Although this is a small team, the Community Relations Council routinely works in partnership across the region with other bodies that have good relations objectives.

Following the relaxation of the government's Covid-19 advice that people should work from home whenever possible, the Community Relations Council delivered its 2022-23 operational plan in an agile mix of on-line and in-person activities. This approach has enabled the organisation to deliver a more sustainable programme that will reduce our impact on the environment.

Review of activities

Strategic Plan 2020-24

The Community Relations Council takes its planning objectives from “Together: Building a United Community” (T:BUC) published by The Executive Office in 2013. Following public consultation, the 2020-23 strategic plan for the Community Relations Council was approved in January 2021. It sets out the strategic objectives of the Community Relations Council in the context of T:BUC and provides the strategic context for the work delivered by the Community Relations Council during 2022-23. With the agreement of The Executive Office CRC's 2020-23 Strategic Plan has been extended to 2024 to facilitate alignment with the outcome of the Department's review of Together: Building a United Community.

The Community Relations Council promotes good relations among the citizens and communities of Northern Ireland and supports the delivery of the Programme for Government (PfG) and the T:BUC strategy. To fulfil these aims the Community Relations Council focuses on the following areas of activity set out in our 2020-24 Strategic Plan:

- a) Distribution of funding, in collaboration with The Executive Office, to build and support good community relationships
- b) Promotion of learning, best practice and assist good communication between all relevant sectors and Government in the delivery of the T:BUC Strategy and good relations outcomes
- c) Ensuring the efficient and effective use of public resources allocated to it by operating to the highest standard of corporate governance in line with relevant guidance and best practice.

Business Plan 2022-23

The business model employed by the Community Relations Council to ensure delivery of its key priorities and achievement of its objectives is implemented through three key functional activities; Funding and Development; Community Engagement; and Finance, Administration and Personnel.

The Community Relations Council's 2022-23 Business Plan had the following three strategic objectives:

- a) Delivering funding that contributes to sustainable development, well-being and the common good by building and supporting good community relationships.
- b) Supporting effective delivery and learning between all sectors and government to assist implementation of the Programme for Government and T:BUC strategy.
- c) Ensuring the efficient and effective use of allocated resources and public expenditure by ensuring that CRC delivers a well governed, trusted and effective public service.

Risk and Uncertainty

The Community Relations Council, as a community relations development organisation with a funding role, must be prepared to deal with opportunities and risks associated with the nature of its work. The Community Relations Council's appetite for risk is determined by the belief that it is not possible to eliminate risk. There will always be a level of residual risk associated with the work that cannot be eliminated but may be mitigated to an acceptable level.

A series of risks related to delivery of the Community Relations Council's objectives were managed during the year. The Community Relations Council has identified the following as the principal risks and uncertainties facing the organisation at 31st March 2023:

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Mitigations</i>
Resources - Financial	In developing a business case to implement Department of Finance Pay Remit guidance it has become apparent that employees' pension schemes and pension contributions is a complicated and dynamic area, and as such the financial implications have significant inherent uncertainty.	The Community Relations Council will continue to work with The Executive Office and Department of Finance to achieve full compliance with Department of Finance guidance.
Resources - Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of staffing issues within CRC.	CRC's temporary Finance Manager began full time on Wednesday 8 th March 2023. CRC received a resignation from the Director of Funding and Development at the end of March 2023.
Resource – Financial	This risk considers the impact of the increase in External Audit Fee	The Chair raised this matter with TEO. TEO is now investigating whether this is a widespread issue across ALBs. Since then, the Audit Office has written to CRC outlining the costs for 2022-23 audit.
Resources – Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of recent correspondence relating to the NILGOSC Pension Scheme	CRC has received legal correspondence about the effects of changes made to pensions as a result of the enactment of the Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014. Legal advice has been taken. CRC's solicitors drafted a response to the correspondence. With the approval of the Chair, the submission was made to the Tribunal Service on Friday 25 th November 2022. This letter has been shared with Board members.
Resource – Financial	This risk considers the impact CRC faces in terms of the 2023/24 budget from The Executive Office. Resource budget confirmation - £2,998k confirmed on 28 th September 2023. GIA (Grant-In-Aid – Cash) £3,033k confirmed on 27 th September 2023	TEO announced that the Department would likely face a 10%-15% cut to their budget. CRC have incurred a 10% cut to Resource & Cash budgets in 2023-24

A more detailed explanation of the Community Relations Council's Internal Control and Risk Management process, including the Community Relations Council's principal risks and uncertainties, is included on pages 39 to 45.

The Community Relations Council monitors its performance by comparing actual performance to targeted performance as detailed in the 2022-23 business plan. Performance against business plan targets is reported through the management team to the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Board and The Executive Office. Where comparison between targeted and planned performance has indicated a risk that a business plan objective may not be achieved then mitigating action will be taken and if necessary, reported on the risk register.

Going Concern

The Executive Office wrote to the Community Relations Council confirming that funding had been secured for the 2023-24 financial year. The Board is satisfied that the Community Relations Council is a going concern on the basis that it has a reasonable expectation that the Community Relations Council will continue to operate for the foreseeable future. In January 2020-21 the Community Relations Council received Ministerial approval for the 2020-23 Strategic Plan from The Executive Office. The Executive Office has agreed that the Strategic Plan should be extended for 1 year to allow time for the alignment of the next strategic plan with the outcome of the review of Together: Building a United Community and the next Programme for Government. Based on this agreement, the 2023-24 business plan is at an advanced stage of preparation and is with The Executive Office officials pending Ministerial approval. The financial statements are therefore prepared on the going concern basis.

The Restricted Pension Reserve, which is the valuation of the company's pension scheme at 31st March 2023 shows a funding surplus of £194,000. The surplus represents the difference between the pension fund and the value of its underlying assets. With effect from 1st April 2019, The Executive Office has provided a guarantee to Northern Ireland Local Government Office Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) in respect of any deficit. In the event that the Community Relations Council becomes insolvent or enters into liquidation, The Executive Office will pay to NILGOSC any unpaid scheme liabilities. The guarantee mitigates the Community Relations Council's solvency and liquidity risk in respect of the Restricted Pension Reserve.

Summary Performance Appraisal

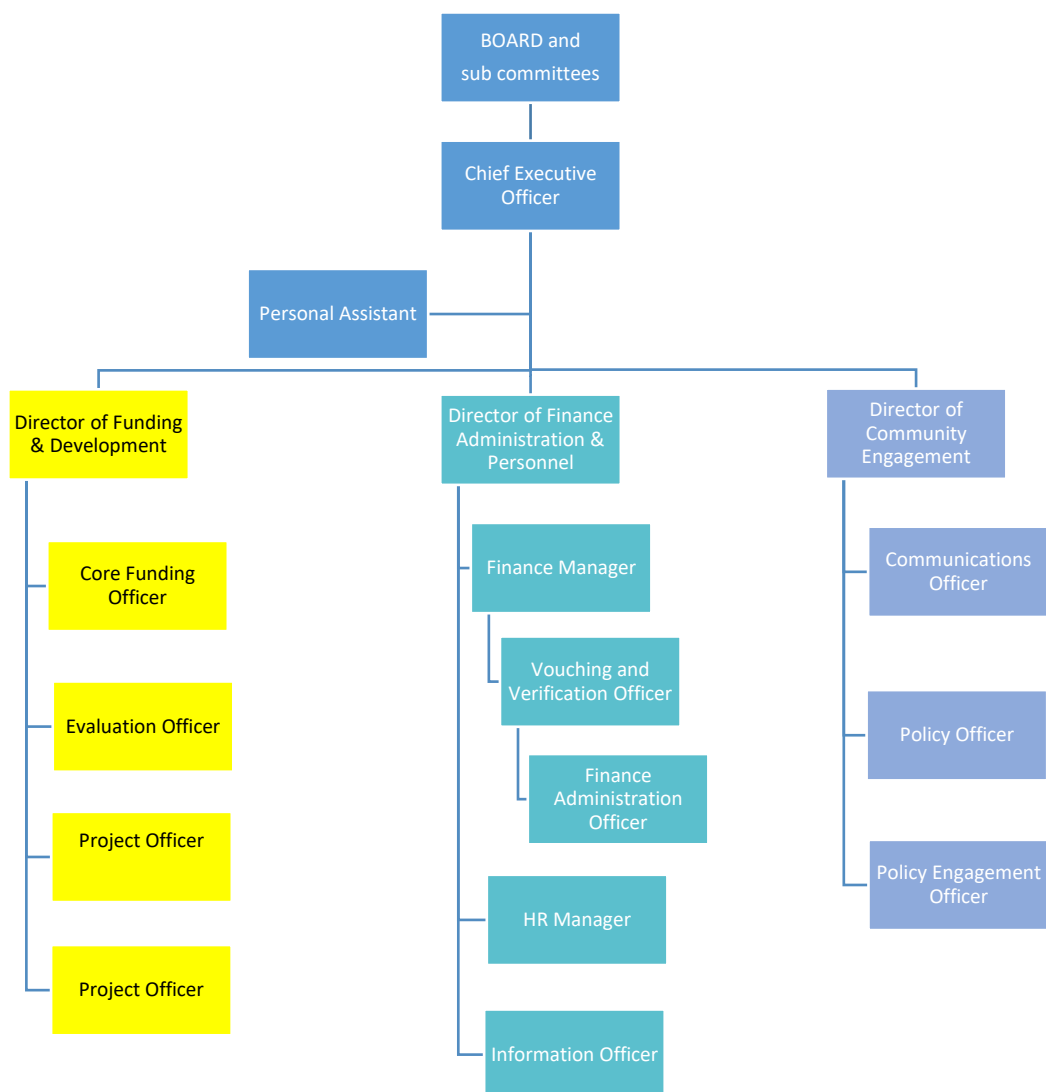
During the year the Community Relations Council achieved delivery of 19 key performance indicators (KPIs).

This included the following achievements:

- 100% of applications for 2023/24 Core Funding has been processed within the agreed timescale. A total of 31 awards have been made with a value of £1,381,520.
- A total of 74 CR/CD small grants, Media, and Publications grants applications awarded funding in 2022/23.
- Over the year 402 people attended the three Together: Building a United Community Engagement Forums, 19% new attendees, with 99% rating the Engagement Forum as good, very good or excellent.
- CRC's Good Relations Week 2022 took place from 20th to 26th September on the theme of UN Sustainability Goals. 264 registered events took place with 95% of attendees stating they would recommend Good Relations Week as a positive opportunity for groups and individuals.
- Two Shared Learning Events took place with CRC staff and The Executive Office colleagues on the topic of Good Relations work and Sustainability Goals.
- 44% of CRC Newsletter subscribers are highly engaged in and regularly open the monthly eNews.
- CRC's Internal Audits all received a 'satisfactory' assurance. These reports related to: Finance and Complaints Handling; Grant Administration; IT and Continuation Planning. Only priority three recommendations were received, and these have been followed up.
- 84.2% annual budget allocated to funding and engagement activities.

The continued downward pressures on public sector finance are always a risk to the Community Relations Council being able to deliver its full strategic ambition. Strained relationships and other pressures in the political arena also represent a risk to community relations. These risks are considered as part of the Community Relations Council's risk management process, with additional mitigating actions identified and reported to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Organisation Chart



ii) PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

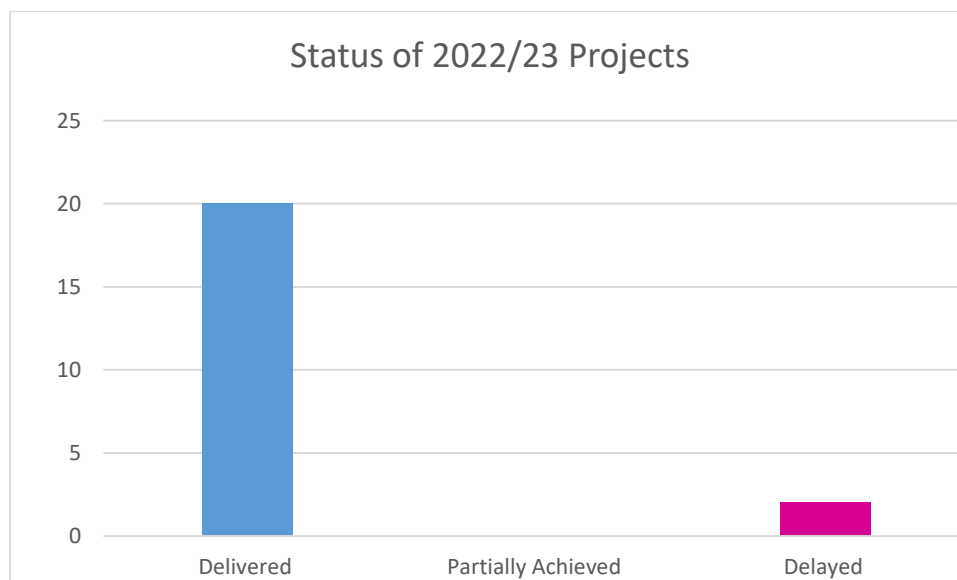
A) Summary

The key undertakings during 2022-23 to deliver on the Community Relations Council's priorities included:

1. the Executive Office funding provided to the Community Relations Council for 2022-23 was distributed to assist with achievement of the Programme for Government (PfG) and T:BUC strategic outcomes;
2. the Community Relations Council supported the implementation of the T:BUC Strategy and related PfG outcomes by providing policy feedback to TEO through a series of events including the T:BUC Engagement Forum, inputting to relevant T:BUC sub-groups and giving guidance on good relations best practice to relevant stakeholders;
3. the Community Relations Council delivered the annual Good Relations week with a mixture of online and in-person events in collaboration with The Executive Office, the Department for Communities, the Department of Justice, NI Environment Link, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, The Rainbow Project, Another World Belfast, and the Education Authority. The week successfully encouraged and celebrated good relations;
4. the Community Relations Council co-ordinated the Decade of Commemoration project and hosted the interagency roundtable that ensured information was shared across stakeholders;
5. project resources continue to be disseminated to share learning and best practice within and between relevant public bodies and the voluntary and community sector;
6. the Community Relations Council delivered its work with a commitment to a public service ethos – transparency, accountability, equality, efficiency including managing ongoing financial pressures in 2022-23;
7. the Community Relations Council implemented changes to its Assurance and Accountability processes, including updates to its risk management strategy, defining its risk appetite, revising the risk register and the introduction of assurance statements and delivery reports at the Directorate Level;
8. the Community Relations Council, with the approval of the Board, agreed a paper setting out CRC's commitment to sustainability and making a number of pledges related to the environment, health, and our shared earth.
9. following consultation with its employees the Community Relations Council completed a series of projects to enhance its employee engagement framework.

The 2022-23 business plan was laid out in the three strategic areas, Funding; T:BUC Engagement; and Delivery and Trusted and Effective Public Service and Good Governance.

The performance of the Community Relations Council is set out in the chart below which summarises stages of completion of each of the projects undertaken during 2022-23. Further detail for each project is given on pages 16 to 25.



Long Term Expenditure Trend

Long term Expenditure Analysis	<u>2019-20</u>	<u>2020-21</u>	<u>2021-22</u>	<u>2022/23</u>	<u>2023/24 Projections</u>
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Grants	2,115	2,103	2,252	2,323	1,931
Programme Costs	79	54	76	60	24
Salaries	841	892	979	909	798
Overheads	263	242	296	288	216
Total Expenditure	3,299	3,291	3,603	3,580	2,969

Since 2016-17 the Community Relations Council has been allocated £670K for NBSGRP grant awards without receiving additional resource to administer the scheme.

During this extended period of financial constraint, the Community Relations Council continues to protect, as far as possible, resources being allocated to funded groups by minimising cuts to grants and programme costs. The Community Relations Council awarded £2,337k in grants (cash awards) during the 2022-23 financial year being 3.7% more than prior year.

B) Detailed Performance Analysis

The directors are pleased to present Detailed Performance Analysis for the year ended 31st March 2023. This analysis section provides detail on the performance of the Community Relations Council by its key functions and objectives during the 2022-23 year.

Key Performance Indicators

The Community Relations Council Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are included in the annual business plan. Performance against those indicators is reported to the Board and to The Executive Office each quarter. The risk management process is designed to ensure that sufficient internal control is in place to manage uncertainty in achieving the Community Relations Council's KPIs and to identify additional action where necessary.

Programme for Government

The Community Relations Council's KPIs have an outcome focus that aims to ensure that work undertaken by the organisation leads to a real difference to society. Peace-building and improving community relations contribute to the conditions in which all of the Programme for Government (PfG) indicators and outcome are more likely to be achieved. There are, however, a number of draft PfG indicators and outcomes to which the work of the Community Relations Council is particularly relevant:

Indicators		Outcomes
1. Reduce crime (relevant to CRC, crime motivated by sectarianism or racism)	30. Improve our attractiveness as a destination	7. We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other
26. Increase respect for each other	31. Increase shared space	9. We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity
27. Improve cultural participation	35. Increase reconciliation	10. We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest
28. Increase the confidence and capability of people and communities	40. Improve our international reputation	

The Community Relations Council's annual business plan contributes towards the delivery of the Together: Building a United Community strategy's priorities and associated outcomes. The strategy outlines how Government, community and individuals will work together to build a united community and achieve change.

Funding and Development

In 2022-23 the Community Relations Council delivered the Community Relations and Cultural Diversity Small Grant Scheme, the Core Funding Grant Scheme, the Pathfinder Scheme, the

Publications and Media Scheme and, on behalf of The Executive Office, the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme (NBSGRP). In total, 127 organisations and projects received funding offers of £2,323,000.

Thirty-one organisations received grants awards of £1,371,185 from the Core Fund and ten organisations received grant awards totalling £674,300 from NBSGRP. In addition to the Core Fund and NBSGRP schemes, the Community Relations Council awarded £173,551 in funding to 74 projects from 104 applications received under the CRCDD funding programme dealing with the legacy of the conflict, peace-building, tackling sectarianism and racism, and building good relations in our diverse community.

Since 1st April 2018, in collaboration with The Executive Office, the Community Relations Council is operating the Code of Practice for Reducing Bureaucracy. During the 2021-22 business year the Community Relations Council moved all of its processes online and in 2022-23 adopted procedures that introduce a risk-based approach to verification of expenditure.

Grant Expenditure to date – District Council Areas 2022 - 2023

	Core	CRCD	Media	North Belfast	Pathfinder	Publications	Total
Multiple	332,792.78	39,748.00			46,568.52		419,109.30
Regional	702,198.97	46,250.23				8,881.00	757,330.20
Antrim and Newtownabbey	37,437.56	860.00					38,297.56
Ards and North Down							
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	34,323.25	5,519.98					39,843.23
Belfast	161,025.14	54,143.85	10,000.00	674,300.00	29,819.00		929,287.99
Causeway Coast and Glens	40,529.88						40,529.88
Derry City and Strabane	62,877.13	16,649.69	4,954.37		18,040.00		102,521.19
Fermanagh and Omagh		5,474.00					5,474.00
Lisburn and Castlereagh City							
Mid and East Antrim							
Mid Ulster							
Newry Mourne and Down		4,905.25					4,905.25
Total	1,371,184.71	173,551.00	14,954.37	674,300.00	94,427.52	8,881.00	2,337,298.60

NB: **Multiple Councils** – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 2 – 4 District Council areas

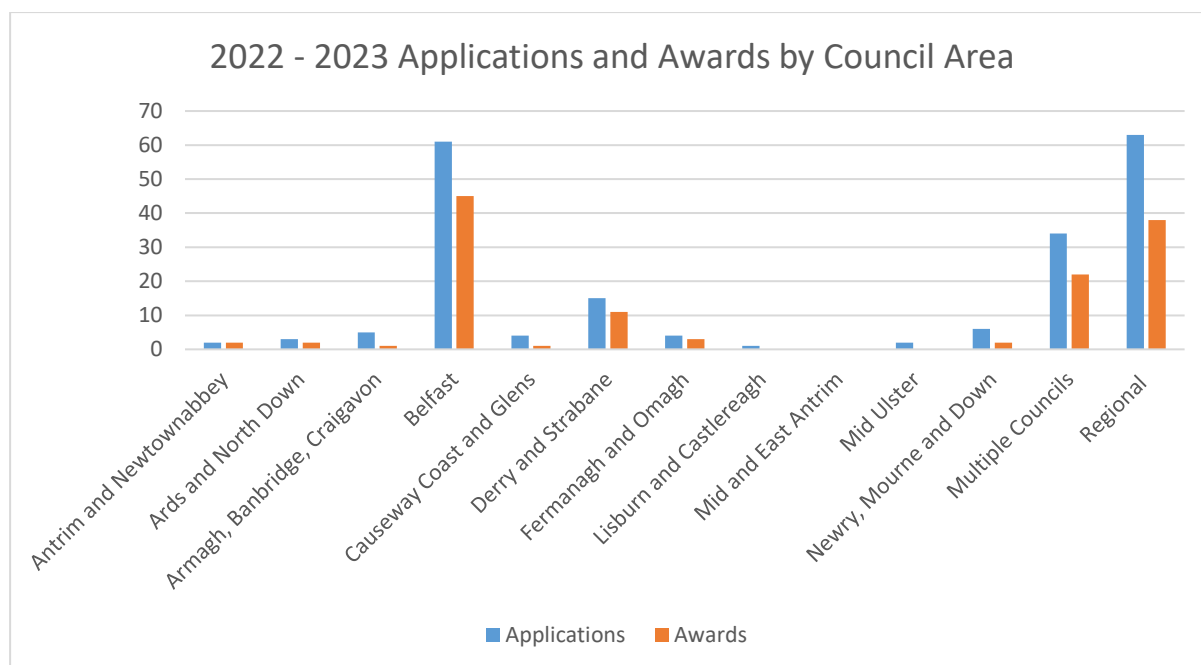
Regional Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 5 – 11 District Council areas

Where there are areas of low grant application the Community Relations Council has put in place welcoming statements to encourage community relations activity.

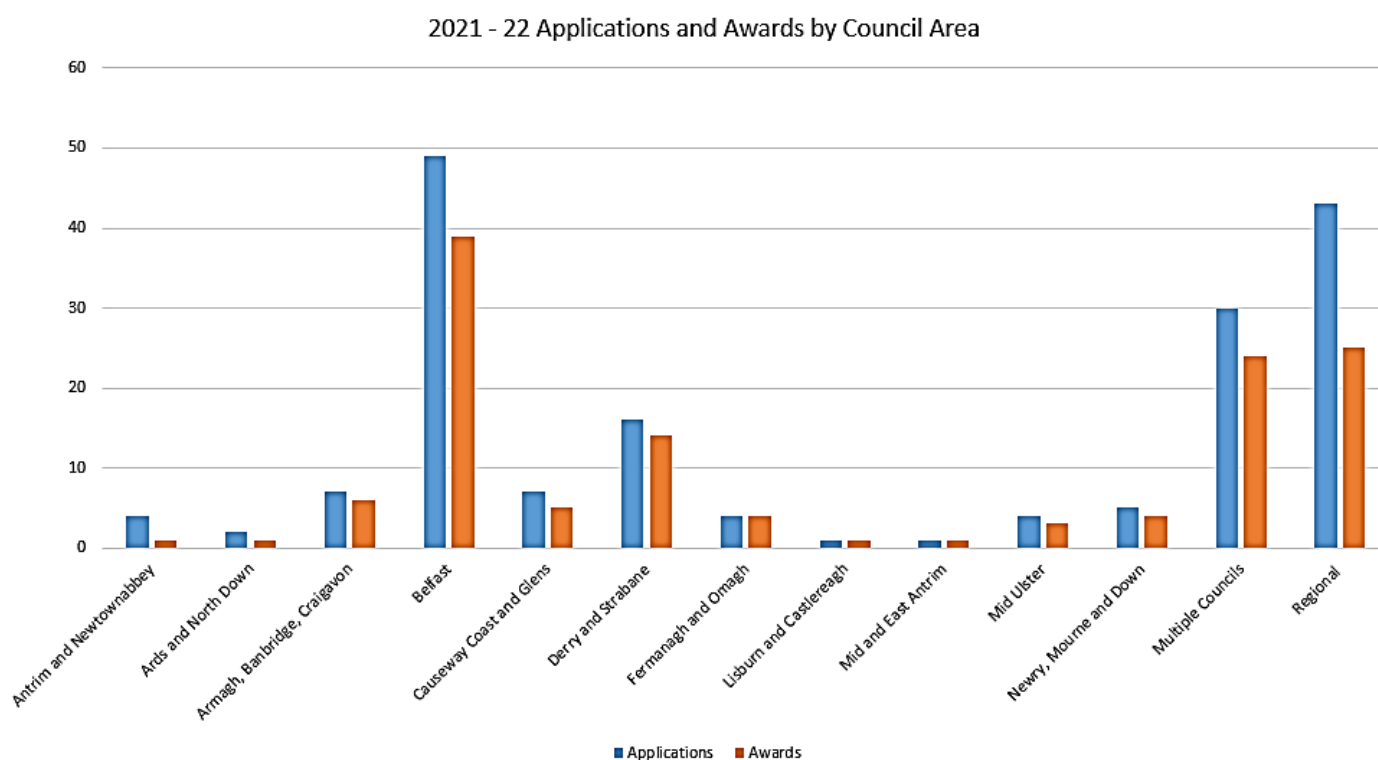
These numbers are detailed on pages 86-101 (Grants paid in 2022-2023). These are 'cash' accounting numbers versus 'resource' accounting numbers reported on page 70

FUNDING – Applications and Awards by Council Area

2022/23 Applications and Awards by Council Area



For comparison: 2021/22 Applications and Awards by Council Area



Performance Highlights

FUNDING - Performance Highlights			
Scheme	Applications Processed as planned		Total Funding
	Target	Performance	
Core Funding	48	48	£1,371,185
CRC	104	104	£173,551
NBSGRP	10	10	£674,300
Media	16	16	£14,954
Pathfinder	10	10	£94,428
Publications	12	12	£8,881
TOTAL	200	200	£2,337,299

Community Engagement

The Community Relations Council provides development support and engagement opportunities as a hub for the exchange of learning and best practice among our funded groups and wider networks. The relationship between policy, practice and reflective evaluation remains at the heart of the work of the Community Relations Council, well-crafted public policy and effective service delivery depends on it.

During the year the Community Relations Council coordinated and delivered three Engagement Forum events.

- 18th June 2022 online event was titled "Good Relations and the Business Sector."
- 20th September 2022 a hybrid T:BUC Engagement Forum was held, titled "Good Relations and the UN Sustainable Development Goals."
- 7th March 2023 in person T:BUC Engagement Forum on the theme of "T:BUC Plus Ten."

CRC's September T:BUC Engagement Forum was a hybrid event, hosted online and at the Stormont Hotel in Belfast. The event took place during Good Relations Week 2022 and considered how the UN Sustainable Development Goals and good relations work are interconnected.

CRC were delighted to have the co-author of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, David Donoghue speaking at the event. There was also input from Northern Ireland Environment Link, St Columb's Park House, Belfast City Council's Forth Meadow Greenway Initiative and The Cornfield Project.

The Engagement Forum provides a platform for formalised and structured engagement to influence positive outcomes from the T:BUC strategy through co-design, co-working and a shared learning approach. The diversity of those attending the meetings provides a broad and inclusive perspective that can assist with the achievement of the vision and aims of the T:BUC Strategy. The Community Relations Council continues to encourage a wide participation in the T:BUC Engagement Forum to reflect our community.

We also organise and facilitate a series of Shared Learning Forums for funded groups to meet and learn from each other's practice.

The annual Good Relations Week, co-ordinated by the Community Relations Council took place from 19th to 25th September 2022 with the theme of "Change Starts With Us". The Week is designed to showcase good practice and encourage wide engagement. The Community Relations Council was joined on the steering group by The Executive Office, the Department for Communities, the Department for Justice, the Education Authority, Libraries NI, The Cathedral Quarter Trust, The Nerve Centre. This year new members joined the steering group from NI Environment Link, The Rainbow Project, The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, and Another World Belfast. The launch of the week was also supported by every Council many of whom organised a local launch in their areas. The launch and the week of activities attracted extensive media coverage as well as coverage in the regional press.

The 2023 Good Relations Awards expanded to include five categories bringing in new partners with additional expertise to the assessment of the Award nominations. Panels met on 30th January 2023 and 2nd February 2023 to assess a total of 53 nominations received across all the categories. The Award recipients were announced at a special presentation event in Belfast Harbour Commissioners Office on 7th March 2023.

The email newsletter, eNews, has been issued every month during the year. The eNews covers CRC and T:BUC funding opportunities, as well as sharing stories of community-based groups and organisations who are working hard to build united communities at the local level.

Social media was also used to communicate our messages. The Community Relations Council has grown its Twitter and Facebook followers to 7,813 followers on Twitter and 3,900 followers on Facebook. Our website continues to grow as it provides a valuable resource for information, as well as keeping people up to date with news from the sector. During the year, the CRC website attracted 25,766 users and had 67,819 page views.

Our collaboration with National Lottery Heritage Fund on the “Decade of Centenaries” project came to an end after ten years.

To mark the achievements over the ten years CRC and Heritage Fund launched a new website titled www.principlesforremembering.com. This website is devoted to developing a continuing conversation around the issues of remembering in public space. It holds numerous case studies, videos and digital resources collected over the ten years of the project’s existence.

The Community Relations Council this year continued its engagement with minority ethnic and faith communities particularly in relation to the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership.

T:BUC Engagement and Delivery

Objective	Output	Highlights
In conjunction with TEO deliver the T:BUC Engagement Forum.	Three meetings of Engagement Forum were delivered on 18th June 2022, 20th September 2022 and 7th March 2023. Produced a summary report and production of key messages/evaluation document for each event.	Summary and key messages and evaluation documents were completed. Events were well attended with over 100 people taking part in each event. Attendees and participants included TEO staff, community practitioners, policy makers and academics amongst others. Over the year 458 people attended the 3 Engagement Forums. 19% of attendees at the three T:BUC Engagement Forums were new. 99% of attendees at the T:BUC EF rated the events as good, very good or excellent
Influence good relations policy outcomes by inputting to relevant PfG and T:BUC subgroups and providing information and feedback to relevant stakeholders.	Participating in the T:BUC Structures. Provided advice and shared learning opportunities. Guidance on funding requirements to funded groups. Collate and disseminate resources. Delivered four funding fairs. Delivered four online Shared Learning Events for core funded and North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme groups.	Throughout the year CRC provided support to funded groups including delivery of events online and face to face, online grant procedures, regular website updates, social media posts and the monthly eNews. A programme of 4 Shared Learning events was delivered. This year we were able to move these events into a hybrid format with in-person and online participation. 95% of participants rate the Shared Learning Events as very good, very good or excellent overall Funding fairs were delivered across the region focussing on areas of low grant uptake. We ere pleased to work alongside Councils and community partners in delivering these events.

Objective	Output	Highlights
Promote Good Relations work through the delivery of Good Relations Week, the Good Relations Award and other activities.	Good Relations Week delivered in a hybrid format during September 2022. The week saw the delivery of a programme of engagement events, lessons learned and best practice with other groups and organisations within and connected to the community relations sector. An evaluation report was produced. 2023 Good Relations Award presentation event took place on 7th March 2022.	264 event listings covering every council area across a range of themes during Good Relations Week 2022. 213 print, online and broadcast media articles about the week. Positive feedback received in the event evaluation. 15 people recognised for their peacebuilding efforts and contribution through the 2023 Good Relations Awards. There was one winner and two runners up for each Award.
Co-ordinate and lead on the Decade of Commemorations Project (in collaboration with Heritage Lottery Fund).	Delivered an event to reflect on the Decade of Centenaries work and highlight the successful Principles for Remembering In Public Space. Project resources continue to be disseminated to share learning and best practice within and between relevant public bodies and the voluntary and community sector.	The Community Relations Council led the coordination of the project interagency round-table that ensured information was shared across stakeholders. The project was closed this year and the principles of remembering website was developed as a closing resource.
Engagement and communication with the sector via relevant media platforms.	Regularly update various social media platforms. News information produced and circulated widely. 12 Monthly eNews produced and distributed. New website developed New video content created.	Twitter Followers: 7,813. Facebook Followers: 3,900. Website Page Views: 67,819. Users 25,766 Email marketing subscribers: 2,345 Visit www.principlesforremembering.com New videos on CRC website and YouTube channel covering for example GR Award winners and CR/CD funded work.

Peace Monitoring Report

The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust has provided the Community Relations Council a grant award to fund two further editions of the Peace Monitoring Report. Production commenced during the 2021-22 business year when the authors were appointed following an open tender process. The authors have continued work on the report and plan to present a final draft in 2023. £29,350 of the funds received from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust have been treated as deferred income and are included within Accruals & Deferred Income on the Balance Sheet in the 2022-23 financial year.

Financial Summary

The Statement of Financial Activities on page 59 indicates that the company had incoming resources of £3,310,999 (2021-22 - £3,239,861) in the year. Note 2 on page 66 shows The Executive Office as being the sponsor of 98.7% (2021-22 99.5%) of this income. In line with the “Charities SORP FRS 102” the Community Relations Council recognises income as it is received and expenditure as it is incurred. As a result, income was exceeded by outgoing resources of £3,579,963 by £268,964 (2021-22 – income exceeded outgoing resources of £3,602,728 by £362,867)

The Community Relations Council was allocated a resource budget of £3,348,000 for the year to 31st March 2023 by The Executive Office. This budget funded net resource expenditure of £3,348,000 (excluding actuarial movements on the pension liability) which represented 100% of total funding allocated to The Community Relations Council by The Executive Office. The Community Relations Council was also allocated a capital budget of £10,000 for the year to 31st March 2023 by The Executive Office. This budget funded capital expenditure of £4,000.

The Balance Sheet on page 60 shows that the company had a fund deficit of £(366,449) at 31st March 2023 (2021-22 – deficit of £2,866,485). The organisation’s Restricted Reserve at 31st March 2023 was a deficit of £366,449 (2021-22 – deficit of £2,866,485) of which £560,449 was a deficit in the income reserve (2021-22 – a deficit of £480,485). The valuation of the company’s pension scheme as at 31st March 2023, for the purposes of IAS19, showed a funding surplus of £194,000 (2021-22 - deficit of £2,386,000).

This surplus represents the difference between the liabilities of the pension fund and the value of its underlying assets.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The Community Relations Council is committed to complying with all its Human Rights and Equality obligations and best practice. The Community Relations Council applies its equal opportunities policy to prevent any instances of direct and indirect discrimination. The Community Relations Council applies its Equality Scheme which has been approved by ECNI. The scheme is developed in compliance with practice recommended by ECNI to promote equality and good relations as envisaged in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Community Relations Council applies its Disability Action Plan, which has been reviewed by ECNI.

The Community Relations Council monitors and applies its Fraud policy and procedures, including anti-bribery procedures, and subsequently provided training to all Community Relations Council employees. In addition to the Fraud policy, the Community Relations Council apply a suite of policies and procedures to ensure appropriate anti-corruption measures are taken including its Financial Manual, Procurement procedures and Whistleblowing procedures.

iii) Other matters – Sustainability report

The Community Relations Council is committed to the Northern Ireland Executive's Sustainable Development Strategy and has introduced policies and practices to encourage efficiency in the use of resources. These include the 100% use of recycled paper and the introduction of multifunction printing/copying/scanning devices which are set to duplex printing. The Community Relations Council is located in Equality House, a modern office building in Belfast that houses other Arm's Length Bodies. In doing so the Community Relations Council makes a contribution to Government targets for better use of its overall estate. The Community Relations Council participates in the Equality House facilities committee with the other Arm's Length Bodies. The Community Relations Council has undertaken a number of projects to move its services online and away from paper-based processes. The realisation of the full benefits of these projects was hastened by the move to remote working due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The lack of travel and the use of online conferencing for events has also assisted our contribution to the sustainable development strategy.

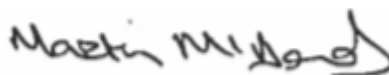
Through its earlier work in preparation for its Strategic Plan 2020-23 the Community Relations Council has noted a substantial and growing interest in wider environmental issues, including concerns around climate change, global warming, sustainable development and recycling. In its strategic plan the Community Relations Council notes that the concepts of well-being and the common good provide a link between good relations and a wide range of other issues, including environmental issues. The Community Relations Council appointed an Environmental Champion who aims to improve and monitor the sustainability and environmental goals of the organisation. Since then, the Board has received and approved a paper setting out a strategy to improve CRC's environmental impact by: introducing a 'Digital First' policy to publications; eliminating the purchase or single use plastic; continue to implement a paperless office; explore the option of becoming a 'FairTrade' office; add criteria to the procurement policy relating to sustainability and environmental standards. The organisation has put in place a Hybrid Working Policy. This has been blended with office-based working in a manner that has a positive environmental impact. The Community Relations Council will continue to explore the interconnection between good relations and environmental issues.



.....
J Irwin - Accounting Officer

14th November 2023

.....
Date



.....
M McDonald - Chairperson

14th November 2023

.....
Date

DIRECTORS' REPORT

A) Corporate Governance Report

i) Trustee's and Directors' Report

Structure, Governance and Management

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council is a company limited by guarantee, with no share capital, and is registered as a charity by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 2006, along with selected disclosures as recommended in the 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard FRS 102 (effective 2nd October 2019)'.

The Directors have complied with guidance published by the Charities Commission.

Organisational Structure

The Community Relations Council is governed by the Members of the Council. Where the Articles of Association refer to the Council, it can also be read as the Company, which shall mean the Members of the Council can also be read as the Directors of the Company.

The Council has capacity to register 24 members and there was a total of nine members in post during the year. The Council aims to meet every six weeks, holding at least six meetings during any 12-month period. A scheme of delegation is in place and day-to-day responsibility for provision of services rests with the Chief Executive, Jacqueline Irwin, supported by the Senior Management Team. The Senior Management Team consists of the Director of Funding and Development, Director of Community Engagement and Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel.

The Chief Executive, with the assistance of the Senior Management Team, manages the day-to-day activities of the Council and reports directly to the Chairperson. The Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team also provide progress reports to all Council meetings.

Directors

The directors of the company at 31st March 2023 were as follows:

Mr. Martin McDonald (Chair)	Mr. Michael McDonnell
Mr. Rory Campbell	Ms. Claire Harris
Ms. Audrey Simpson	Mr. John McCallister
Dr. Máire Braniff	Ms. Nisha Tandon
Ms Sheila McClelland	

Board members, including the Chair, are appointed by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service following a recruitment exercise led by The Executive Office in a manner intended to comply fully with guidance from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Northern Ireland (OCPANI). All current members took up their positions on 1st June 2019 and were appointed for three years. In the absence of Ministers to take decisions during 2022-23, The Executive Office has extended the term of office of all members to June 2024.

Following appointment, all directors receive ‘On Board’ training conducted by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), Equality and Recruitment training, conducted by ECNI, induction into the role by The Executive Office as it’s Arm's Length Body and a full induction into the work of the Community Relations Council conducted by Community Relations Council staff. Induction training for new members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the Community Relations Council is also provided into the work of those committees.

Statement of Grant Making Policies

The Community Relations Council provides grant aid and advice to voluntary and community groups in support of projects which have a community relations purpose or value. The Council has a variety of funding schemes each tailored to promote certain aspects of community relations:

- The Community Relations and Cultural Diversity Small Grant Scheme is intended to help community/voluntary groups in Northern Ireland develop their capacity to engage in community relations work and to enhance the community relations potential of projects they undertake. The maximum award payable for this grant is £10,000.
- The Core Funding Grant Scheme is designed to support voluntary and community organisations to develop community relations work in a strategic manner, on a regional basis. Support is specifically targeted at work to combat sectarianism in Northern Ireland on a strategic long-term basis. The amount awarded normally ranges between £20,000 and £85,000.
- The Publications Grant Scheme aims to encourage the production and dissemination of publications that will contribute to greater understanding and better community relations in Northern Ireland. The maximum award payable for this grant is £5,000.

- The Media Grant Scheme aims to assist with the dissemination of community relations priorities via print, broadcast or other widely accessible media. Three projects were supported this year.
- The Pathfinder Scheme contributes towards the salary and running costs of organisations or projects which are considered of strategic importance in promoting community relations work in Northern Ireland. The Pathfinder Scheme is not an open scheme to which groups can apply; discussion with the Director of the Funding and Development Programme will precede any proposal made to this scheme. This scheme also supports emergency intervention funding through small project grants.
- The North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme (NBSGRP) is a funding scheme administered by the Community Relations Council on behalf of The Executive Office. It is a Ministerial scheme, and its overall strategy remains with The Executive Office. The key aim of the Programme is to develop relations within and between communities in North Belfast. Responsibility for the administrative aspects of the Programme were transferred to the Community Relations Council during 2016-17. The programme made awards up to £108,000 during the 2022-23 financial year.

Details of the grants awarded during the 2022-23 financial year are shown on page 86.

Community Engagement

The Community Relations Council seeks to promote learning, best practice and good communication between all relevant sectors and government to assist effective implementation of the Programme for Government and T:BUC strategy by:

- providing development support and engagement opportunities as a hub for the exchange of learning and best practice among our funded groups and wider networks. The relationship between policy, practice and reflective evaluation remains at the heart of the work of the Community Relations Council, well-crafted public policy and effective service delivery depends on it;
- leading on the coordination and delivery of the T:BUC Engagement Forum events that bring together good relations practitioners, voluntary & community sector and government to assist effective implementation of the Programme for Government and T:BUC strategy;
- co-ordinating the annual Good Relations Week which takes place annually in September. The week is designed to showcase good practice and encourage wide engagement and this year, due to the pandemic, the week was moved the week online;
- co-ordinating the Good Relations Awards to highlight exceptional achievement in promoting community relations, intercultural work and peacebuilding in Northern Ireland; and

- promoting the work and the activities of the Community Relations Council and others within the sector through monthly email newsletters, its website and social media channels.

Future plans

As an Arm's Length Body of The Executive Office our strategic direction, confirmed by Ministers, is to be a key delivery agent for departmental good relations policy, including the implementation of the aims and objectives of the T:BUC strategy and an outcome based approach to delivery. This includes promoting policy through positive engagement with relevant stakeholders in the community and establishing and implementing best practice.

- The Community Relations Council will continue implementation of the 2020-23 Strategic Plan, which has been approved by The Executive Office ministers and extended by one year with the approval of officials to align with the review of the T:BUC strategy. The 2020-23 Strategic Plan builds on the Community Relations Council's role as a trusted and critical link between government and all sections of society, continuing to promote good practice in building peace and good relations. The organisation will draft its new Strategic Plan this year.
- The organisation will continue to take a co-ordinated approach to grant funding focused on T:BUC priorities and objectives. The organisation will continue to review the distribution of its grants and put in place any necessary mitigations to achieve the goals set out in its Strategic Plan 2020-24.
- The organisation will continue to emphasise an outcomes-based approach to delivery and use the revised good relations indicators as the basis of its performance monitoring framework.
- The organisation will continue to deliver a programme of engagement and shared learning. It will also contribute to the T:BUC architecture and thematic groups.
- The Community Relations Council will implement the *'Partnership Agreement'* with The Executive Office during 2023-24. The *'Partnership Agreement'* replaced the previous Management Statement/Financial Memorandum.
- The organisation will continue to operate agile working methods in a manner that is consistent with public sector guidance.
- The organisation will continue to develop its suite of key performance indicators and targets to enhance strategic decision making and better demonstrate the impact of the work undertaken by the Community Relations Council.

Employee and Board involvement

The Board of the Community Relations Council is responsible for establishing the overall strategic direction of the Community Relations Council. In doing so it will approve the triennial strategic plan, the annual business plan, corporate policies and provide assurance to The Executive Office that appropriate action is being taken on strategic, financial, legal and governance matters. Employees are responsible for implementing the Board's decisions,

including reporting and providing assurance to the Board on the Community Relations Council's performance in implementing the Board decisions. Staff involvement includes attendance at Board meetings, joint planning sessions with Board members, monthly staff meetings, the use of project teams and performance management tailored to support the achievement of strategic objectives.

Personal data related incidents

The Community Relations Council is required to report on personal data related incidents and accordingly have a control system to meet these responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The control system has been established to ensure the appropriate handling of personal data and information used for operational and reporting purposes through the development of appropriate strategy and policy.

There were no breaches of personal data during the year.

Freedom of Information

During 2022-23 year the Community Relations Council received two Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. All requests were responded to in a timely way and in a manner consistent with the Community Relations Council's publication scheme.

Pensions

The Community Relations Council participates in a defined benefit pension scheme administered by the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) for all permanent staff. Further details are set out in the Remuneration Report on pages 45 to 49 the accounting policies on pages 61 to 65 and commitments under Defined Benefit Pension Scheme in Note 16 on pages 76 to 80.

Reporting of Complaints

The Community Relations Council received no complaints during 2022-23.

The Community Relations Council's Complaints Policy can be accessed via the [website \(https://www.community-relations.org.uk/contact-us\)](https://www.community-relations.org.uk/contact-us).

Prompt Payment Policy

The Community Relations Council is committed to the prompt payment of bills for goods and services received in accordance with the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998. Unless otherwise stated in the contract, payment is due within 30 days of the receipt of the goods or services, or presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand, whichever is later. Regular reviews conducted during the year to measure how promptly the Community Relations Council paid its bills found that 95% (2021-22: 96%) of bills were paid within this standard. It was also noted that 82% (2021-22: 92%) of bills were paid within 10 days.

Related Parties

Details of the company's related parties are set out in note 17 to the Accounts.

Register of interests

The Chair, Board of Directors, Chief Executive and Senior Management Team are required to register all interests, direct or indirect, which members of the public might reasonably think could influence their judgment. The register of interests is available on the Community Relations Council website or for public inspection by contacting the Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel, Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast. BT2 7DP.

Corporate Governance

The Governance Statement is set out on pages 32 to 45.

Auditors

The Comptroller and Auditor General has the statutory responsibility for the audit of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council under the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013.

ii) Statement of Accounting Officer's and Directors' Responsibilities

Under the Companies Act 2006, the Directors are required to prepare for each financial year, a statement of accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for Charities. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Community Relations Council and of its income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer and Directors are required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) and in particular to:

- observe the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the FReM have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the Accounts;
- prepare the Accounts on a going concern basis; and
- confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Accounting Officer of The Executive Office has appointed the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public

finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's assets, are set out in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

As required by the Companies Act 2006, the Accounting Officer and Directors are also responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the accounts comply with the Companies Act 2006. The Accounting Officer and Directors have a general responsibility taking steps as are reasonably available to safeguard the assets of the company and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

Statement of disclosure of information to the auditors

The Accounting Officer and Directors confirm that the annual report and accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and the Accounting Officer takes personal responsibility for the annual report and accounts and the judgments required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Accounting Officer and Directors confirm that, for all directors in office at the date of this report:

- So far as the Accounting Officer and each director is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditors are unaware.
- The Accounting Officer and each director has taken all the steps that he/she ought to have taken in his/her duty as a director in order to make himself/herself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditors are aware of that information.
- The Trustees have complied with their duty in Section 11 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to guidance published by the Charity Commission.

iii) Governance Statement

1. Introduction

This statement is given in respect of the Community Relations Council for the year ended 31st March 2023. It outlines the Community Relations Council's governance framework for directing and controlling its functions and how assurance is provided to support me in my role as Accounting Officer for the Community Relations Council.

The Community Relations Council's governance structures are developed in line with Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI), Departmental and other requirements and guidance. The Board of the Community Relations Council has corporate responsibility for ensuring that the organisation fulfils the responsibilities, aims and objectives set by the Board and agreed with The Executive Office and Ministers including promoting the efficient, economic and effective use of staff and other resources. As Accounting Officer, I have a duty to satisfy myself that the Community Relations Council has adequate governance systems and

procedures in place to promote the effective, efficient conduct of its business and to safeguard financial propriety and regularity.

The Community Relations Council is an Arm's Length Body of The Executive Office and a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. It has been formally governed as an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) since April 2012.

The Community Relations Council operates in accordance with a Partnership Agreement with The Executive Office as laid out in NI Code of Good Practice. This sets out the relationship between the two organisations and defines the financial and administrative framework of the Community Relations Council. The Community Relations Council's primary source of income is grant-in-aid provided by its sponsoring Department, The Executive Office. The Partnership Agreement sets out the conditions on which grant-in-aid is paid and the related financial delegations of the Community Relations Council. The Partnership Agreement replaced the Management Statement Financial Memorandum previously approved by the Board and The Executive Office.

Within this overall framework, it is the role of the Community Relations Council to determine its policies and activities.

2. Compliance with Corporate Governance Code

The Community Relations Council applies the principles of the Department of Finance's *Corporate governance in central government departments: Code of good practice (2013)* where applicable and any other relevant guidance received from government as it continues to strengthen its governance arrangements.

At the 31st March 2023 the Community Relations Council is compliant with the Code.

3. Governance Framework

The Community Relations Council has developed key organisational structures and relationships which support the delivery of corporate governance and which are:

- The Executive Office Ministers;
- The Executive Office Departmental Accounting Officer;
- the Board;
- the Accounting Officer;
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee;
- the Finance and General Purposes Committee;
- internal Audit function; and
- external Audit function (NIAO).

These key structures and relationships along with their responsibilities and performance are explained in detail in the relevant sections below.

4. Governance Responsibilities and Performance

Ministers

Relationships between the Community Relations Council and the Ministers are governed by the arm's length principle, wherein the primary role of Ministers is to set the Community Relations Council's strategic and financial framework including the structure of its funding and governance.

These responsibilities are discharged on a day-to-day basis on the Ministers' behalf and in their absence, by the Sponsoring Body. Within this framework, it is the role of this organisation to determine its policies and activities in keeping with the objectives of Government policy and guidance.

Board and Sub – Committees

Board members have individual and collective responsibility for ensuring that the Community Relations Council fulfils its functions in accordance with its remit and that its activities ensure value for money within a framework of best practice, regularity and propriety.

The Community Relations Council has capacity for 24 members and there was a total of nine members in post during the year. The Community Relations Council aims to meet every six weeks, holding at least six meetings during any 12-month period. A scheme of delegation is in place and day-to-day responsibility for provision of services rests with the Chief Executive, Jacqueline Irwin, supported by the Senior Management Team.

The Board supports the delivery of effective corporate governance and operates within best practice guidelines set out in the Department of Finance's Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice (2013). The Board takes an objective long-term view of the business of the Community Relations Council, leading its strategic planning process and assisting me as Accounting Officer in meeting the corporate governance responsibilities for the Community Relations Council.

In addition, the Memorandum and Articles of Association set out the Board's responsibility to establish and oversee corporate governance arrangements. Notwithstanding this, all tiers of management have commensurate responsibilities for ensuring that good governance practices are followed at an organisational/business level.

The key aspects of the Board's role include:

- setting the strategic direction for the Community Relations Council, including its vision, values and strategic objectives, and overseeing the implementation of the strategic and business plans, performance against its commitments to The Executive Office, and budget;

- developing, promoting and overseeing the implementation of policies and programmes in line with the Community Relations Council's strategic direction;
- leading and overseeing the process of change and encouraging innovation, to enhance the Community Relations Council's capability to deliver;
- monitoring performance via the Community Relations Council's corporate plans, budgets and targets, and assessing and managing the strategic risk to delivery;
- overseeing the strategic management of the Community Relations Council's staff, finance, information and physical resources, including setting training and health and safety priorities;
- establishing and overseeing the implementation of the Community Relations Council's corporate governance arrangements, including risk management; and
- overseeing and monitoring progress against all of the Community Relations Council's equality of opportunity, good relations and human rights obligations.

In line with best practice, the operational procedures of the Board are kept under continuous review. The Chair has reviewed the number of meetings of the Board and its committees as they relate to the completion of the business plan for the year. He has also reviewed attendance, chairing of committees and the findings of this year's audit reports and is satisfied with performance for the year. During 2020/21 an Internal Audit report concluded that controls designed to mitigate risks associated with board effectiveness and corporate governance provided a satisfactory level of assurance.

During the year the Board received reports during each meeting on the delivery of business plan objectives; financial management and budget monitoring; HR and other resource priorities; and reports from the ARAC in relation to resilience of security and information assurance, contingency planning and business continuity planning.

The Board keeps under review the format and content of Board papers in line with good practice in relation to corporate governance and considers the information provided to be sufficient to allow it to discharge its strategic planning and corporate governance responsibilities.

The Board held eight meetings during 2022-23 in April, June, August, September, October, December, and two in February. The attendance at the meetings of directors in post at 31st March 2023 during the year is detailed in the table below:

Name	No of Meetings Attended	Total Possible Attendance
Mr. Martin McDonald (Chair)	8	8
Mr. Michael McDonnell	5	7
Ms. Claire Harris	5	8
Mr. John McCallister	8	8
Ms. Nisha Tandon	6	8
Ms. Audrey Simpson	6	8
Dr. Máire Braniff	4	7
Mr. Rory Campbell	7	8
Ms Sheila McClelland	5	8

Dr. Máire Braniff and Mr. Michael McDonnell volunteered to sit on the Core Funding Appeals Panel. This resulted in both Dr. Máire Braniff and Mr. Michael McDonnell being prevented from attending the Board meeting that considered applications for Core Funding. As a result, maximum possible attendance for these members was reduced to seven meetings.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

The purpose of the ARAC is to support the Accounting Officer in monitoring risk, control and governance systems (including financial reporting) in the Community Relations Council. Additionally, the Committee advises me, as the Accounting Officer on the adequacy of internal and external audit arrangements to ensure adequate levels of assurance.

The Chair of the ARAC provides an update report at each board meeting. Typical issues that are reported by the Chair of the ARAC include risk management, fraud investigations, audit reports, update on implementation of audit recommendations and service continuity planning.

The ARAC met seven times during the financial year. Membership of the ARAC in 2022-23 comprised a Chairperson and two Members, all of whom are Board Members.

The members of the ARAC during 2022-23 and their attendance at the meetings during 2022-23 is detailed in the table below:

Name	No of Meetings Attended	Total Possible Attendance
Mr. John McCallister (Chairperson)	7	7
Mr. Michael McDonnell	6	7
Mr. Rory Campbell	7	7

Assessment of the ARAC was conducted by the Chair of the ARAC at the end of the 2022/23 financial year. The Chair noted that during that year the Committee reviewed the Risk Register at every meeting; received the NIAO Report to Those Charged with Governance; oversaw the implementation of a number of audit recommendations; received 'satisfactory' rated reports from the internal auditors on their review of 'IT and Continuity Planning', 'Grant Administration', and 'Finance and Complaints Handling'. The Chair of the ARAC concluded that he was satisfied with their performance.

During the financial year the ARAC considered and advised senior management on the key strategic risks, audit strategy and audit reports. The programme of work completed during the financial year included:

- review of the corporate risk register;
- scrutiny of the Annual Report and Accounts;
- consideration of internal audit strategy;
- consideration of NIAO audit strategy;
- review of internal and external audit findings;
- monitoring of residual audit recommendations;
- consideration of potential audit issues arising from grant awards.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee

The role of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is to advise the Board on operations, policies and strategies related to financial management, financial reporting, procurement, facilities, information technology, human resources, information governance, equality matters and other corporate services. The Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee provides an update report at each board meeting on these issues.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee met three times during the financial year. Membership of the Committee in 2022-23 comprised a Chairperson and three Members, all of whom are Board Members.

The members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee during 2022-23 and their attendance at the meetings detailed in the table below:

Name	No of Meetings Attended	Total Possible Attendance
Mr. Martin McDonald (Chair)	3	3
Mr. Michael McDonnell	2	3
Ms. Nisha Tandon	3	3
Ms. Audrey Simpson	3	3

Assessment of the Finance and General Purposes Committee was conducted by the Chair of the Committee at the end of the financial year. The Chair noted that during the year, the Committee: reviewed CRC's performance against the Business Plan, quarterly; reviewed and approved a number of policies; and received and approved the 2021/22 Annual Report and Accounts. The Chair was satisfied with the performance of the Committee.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee considered and advised senior management on key financial and other operational matters. The programme of work completed during the financial year considered:

- 2022-23 Business Plan delivery
- Financial Management

- Vouching and Verification
- Procurement
- Pay and Reward
- Staff Engagement
- Equality and Disability Action Plan Updates
- Premises and Facilities Management, including Health and Safety.

Accounting Officer

In my role as Accounting Officer, I function with the support of the Board keeping them informed of specific business implications or risks and, where appropriate, the measures that could be employed to manage them.

As Accounting Officer, I have ensured the organisation's progress in implementing an appropriate and proportionate system of internal control in accordance with all Government guidance.

The Community Relations Council's Annual Report and Accounts are prepared in a form directed by The Executive Office with that form having been approved by the Department of Finance.

5. Quality of Data Provided to the Board

The Board is satisfied as to the quality of data and information provided which is always thoroughly reviewed. At present the Board receives standing information for each meeting on key areas such as delivery, performance, finance and human resources. Briefing papers on other material issues are provided as they arise. All papers are issued a week in advance of any Board meeting to allow members to review and, where appropriate, to raise questions in advance. The relevant business area attends Board meetings to support discussions or is asked to produce more detailed information in advance of the meeting. All statistical and financial information is provided by professionally qualified accountants. All reports/papers conform to a standard layout to ensure the appropriate focus on key issues. Financial and performance data is extracted from the accounting and operational systems and is therefore subject to regular, planned internal quality assurance checks and independent audits.

6. Board Effectiveness

Assessment of the Board and Board members was conducted by the Chair. Examples of the areas considered by the review include: attendance, contribution to strategic direction, adherence to the code of conduct, relationships and training. The Chair concluded that he was satisfied with Board performance. The Chair met with TEO on 7th June 2023 to provide an update on the work of the Community Relations Council and complete an appraisal of his performance as Chair.

7. Internal Control and Risk Management

The Community Relations Council has procedures in place to ensure that it identifies its strategic and operational risks and determines a control strategy. As Accounting Officer, I have overall responsibility for the Community Relations Council's corporate business and for ensuring the effective management of the associated risks. All relevant internal control considerations, including any issues of risk, are taken into account with regard to the achievement of the Community Relations Council's policies, aims and objectives, and where necessary, are brought to the attention of the sponsoring department, The Executive Office. An important element of the system of internal control is provision of assurance to The Executive Office by way of the Quarterly Assurance Statement. The Community Relation Council's internal control accords with best practice and applicable guidance.

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives, it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to:

- identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of policies, aims and objectives;
- evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised; and
- manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The system of internal control has been in place in the Community Relations Council for the year ended March 2023 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Report and Accounts, and accords with Department of Finance guidance.

To assist in the risk management process, the consideration of risks is mapped out in the Community Relations Council's corporate Risk Register which is scrutinised and updated at each ARAC meeting and annually at the Board Meeting. The Register:

- identifies the Community Relations Council's risks; and
- analyses the risks related to the current Business Plan, including provision for the mitigation and control of risks.

All new business activities are assessed for key risks and controls are put in place.

During 2022-23 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee reviewed the risk strategy and register. The risk strategy and register are aligned with the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) publication "Good Practice in Risk Management", with the key risks being reviewed by the management team in advance of being presented to and considered at each meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The Community Relations Council assessed the residual resource risk related to implementation of the Department of Finance Pay Remit guidance as red due to associated issues being uncertain and developing, and therefore implicating on the future financial resources available.

The table below summarises the key risks which have been assessed as red and amber residual risks and were reported at the last meeting of the ARAC during the 2022-23 financial year.

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Mitigations</i>
Resources - Financial	In developing a business case to implement Department of Finance Pay Remit guidance it has become apparent that employees' pension schemes and pension contributions is a complicated and dynamic area, and as such the financial implications have significant inherent uncertainty.	The Community Relations Council will continue to work with The Executive Office and Department of Finance to achieve full compliance with Department of Finance guidance.
Resources - Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of staffing issues within CRC.	CRC's temporary Finance Manager began full time on Wednesday 8 th March 2023. CRC received a resignation from the Director of Funding and Development at the end of March 2023.
Resource – Financial	This risk considers the impact of the increase in External Audit Fee	The Chair raised this matter with TEO. TEO is now investigating whether this is a widespread issue across ALBs. Since then, the Audit Office has written to CRC outlining the costs for 2022-23 audit
Resources – Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of recent correspondence relating to the NILGOSC Pension Scheme	CRC has received legal correspondence about the effects of changes made to pensions as a result of the enactment of the Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014. Legal advice has been taken. CRC's solicitors drafted a response to the correspondence. With the approval of the Chair, the submission was made to the Tribunal Service on Friday 25 th November. This letter has been shared with Board members.
Resource – Financial	This risk considers the impact CRC faces in terms of the 2023/24 budget from The Executive Office. Resource budget confirmation - £2,998k confirmed on 28 th September 2023. GIA (Grant-In-Aid – Cash) £3,033k confirmed on 27 th September 2023	TEO announced that the Department would likely face a 10%-15% cut to their budget. CRC have incurred a 10% cut to Resource & Cash budgets in 2023-24

There are also a number of other processes which contribute to the management of risks and corporate governance in the organisation:

- The Corporate and Business Planning Process:
The Community Relations Council's Strategic Plan was approved by Ministers in January 2021. The Strategic Plan is supported by annual Business Plans.
- The Performance Management System:
Performance is monitored throughout the year, reviewed annually by the Board and reported to The Executive Office quarterly during Accountability and Liaison Meetings.
- HR Policies:
HR policies are designed to ensure that the Community Relations Council has the appropriate numbers of staff with suitable skills to meet its objectives; a system is in place for managing attendance at work and levels of absence are reviewed regularly by the Board and reported to The Executive Office; independent HR guidance supports the organisation in ensuring that it operates in compliance with employment law.
- Budgets and Priorities Setting Including In-year Monitoring Processes:
Budgets & priorities setting are in place and reviewed quarterly in association with The Executive Office. Ongoing downward pressure on government budgets continues to be a risk for the Community Relations Council but this is reviewed regularly by the Board.
- The Community Relations Council's Fraud Policy and Response Plan, Incorporating Arrangements for Whistle Blowing:
The fraud policy and response plan details responsibilities regarding the prevention of fraud and the procedures to be followed in the event of a fraud being detected or suspected. The Annual Report highlights cases of suspected fraud or irregularity and how the Community Relations Council is responding to those claims. Note 18 on page 81 Financial Regularity provides further information.

No 'Raising Concerns' incidents occurred at CRC in 2022-23. Each was processed and reported as set out in the procedures. No fraud was detected in these cases, and they were closed down, in agreement with The Executive Office.

- Gifts and Hospitality:
In line with recommended practice, the Community Relations Council has arrangements in place for the management of gifts and hospitality and all are included on a Gifts and Hospitality Register.
- Third Party Organisations:
Related party transactions are reported in the Accounts.
- Service Continuity Plan:
The Community Relations Council reviewed and updated its Business Continuity Plan in March 2022. The Business Continuity Plan was tested in May 2022 and November 2022. An internal audit of CRC's Business Continuity Plan was conducted in February 2023. The review concluded that Continuity Planning was 'satisfactory' and no priority one or two recommendations were made.
- Management of Information Risks:

Safeguarding information and its subsequent effective use, is a key element supporting the Community Relations Council in the delivery of its objectives. Central to achieving this is the effective management of information risk. As part of an ongoing process to identify and control risks to information, the Community Relations Council takes assurance on its information arrangements and practices from all internal and external audits. During 2022-23 the Community Relations Council maintained and operated its Information Governance policies and procedures, including Data Protection, Information Security, Records Management and Document Retention.

Review of Effectiveness

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors, the ARAC, which oversees the work of the internal auditor, the executive managers within the Community Relations Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, and comments made by the external auditors in their Report to Those Charged with Governance and other reports. The Board, and the ARAC have advised me on the implications of my review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and plans to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the control environment are in place.

8. Sources of Independent Assurance

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit function is independent of the organisation and is provided under contract by ASM. Internal Audit has no executive powers. It provides assurance by giving an independent and objective opinion, to the Accounting Officer and the ARAC, on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Community Relations Council's systems of internal control and risk management.

Internal Audit operates in accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). The primary role of Internal Audit is to provide the Accounting Officer and the Board with an independent and objective opinion on risk management, control and governance, by measuring and evaluating their effectiveness in achieving the agreed objectives.

Internal Audit has played a crucial role in the review of the effectiveness of risk management, controls and governance in the Community Relations Council by:

- focusing audit activity on the key business risks;
- being available to guide managers and staff through improvements in internal controls;
- auditing the application of risk management and control as part of Internal Audit reviews of key systems and processes; and
- providing advice to management on internal governance implications of proposed and emerging changes.

For the year to 31st March 2023, the internal auditors have conducted reviews in line with their Annual Audit Plan covering:

Function	Date of final report	Assurance rating
IT and Business Continuity Planning	14th March 2023	Satisfactory
Grants Administration and Distribution,	20th March 2023	Satisfactory
Finance and Complaints Handling	16th March 2023	Satisfactory

Internal Audit's Annual Assurance Statement issued an overall satisfactory rating with regard to the Community Relations Council's risk management, control and governance arrangements operating effectively and providing a satisfactory assurance in relation to the effective and efficient achievement of the Community Relations Council's objectives.

All audit recommendations are implemented on a timely basis and progress is reported during each meeting of the ARAC. Internal Audit completed a progress review of previous Internal Audit recommendations and found all recommendations have been implemented as agreed.

External Audit

The Community Relations Council is subject to independent scrutiny from its external auditor, the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO). NIAO is independent of the organisation and Government and is tasked by the Assembly to hold public bodies to account for their use of public money. The Comptroller and Auditor General works closely with the Assembly's Public Accounts Committee which can require Accounting Officers to account for their actions in relation to the management of public funds.

A representative from the NIAO is invited to attend all the meetings of the ARAC at which corporate governance and risk management matters are routinely considered.

The NIAO audits, certifies and reports on the Accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Northern Ireland Order 2013, along with selected disclosures as recommended in the 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice' applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard FRS 102 (effective 1 January 2019)' and the 2022-23 HM Treasury Financial Reporting Manual.

Data Losses

There were no data losses during the year.

Significant Issues

Current Department of Finance guidance FD (DFP) 09/18 sets out that a review should be conducted annually to ensure that staff salary maintains the principle of ‘no better off, no worse off’ as a result of their employees’ pension contributions. Presently the Community Relations Council increases the basic salaries for all but six employees (whose contracts began after the guidance was issued) by making an additional contribution of 6% on gross earnings to compensate employees for superannuation contributions payable to NILGOSC pension scheme. Of this cost to the Community Relations Council there is uncertainty concerning the regularity of a portion of this 6% totalling £15,302. This arrangement was originally put in place to ensure that employees were not disadvantaged as a result of what were historically higher contributions to the NILGOSC pension scheme compared to the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) (NI).

During the 2019-20 financial year the Department of Finance wrote to The Executive Office stating that it is imperative that a business case for full implementation of Department of Finance Pay Remit guidance is prioritised and that options for a longer-term solution are considered before the submission of the 2018-19 Pay Remit to the Department of Finance. The Executive Office then met the Community Relations Council's Board to inform them that they wished to have received the CRC business case before the close of the 2019-20 financial year. The Board established a sub group to consider the issues, to develop a business case and identify a preferred option to resolve the issues. Following meetings of the sub group a business case with a recommended preferred option was submitted to The Executive Office in March 2020 and then updated on 8th July 2020 following The Executive Office review. Queries and comments were received from The Executive Office during December 2020 and reviewed by the sub group. The Chair met with The Executive Office Accounting Officer, in February 2021, and subsequently wrote to him on 24th February, to seek an agreed and safe way forward on all outstanding matters.

The Community Relations Council received notice in March 2022 of the approval of all outstanding Pay Remits. The 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22 Pay Remits were all processed and paid to all affected staff (current and previous) on 24th March 2022.

No further communication has been received from The Executive Office in relation to resolving the implementation of Department of Finance guidance FD (DFP) 09/18.

Significant Internal Control Problems

There were no significant internal control problems noted in the year to 31st March 2023.

9. Conclusion in relation to Risk Management Status

The Community Relations Council has a system of accountability on which I rely, as Accounting Officer, to form an opinion on the probity and use of public funds, as detailed in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

Having considered the accountability framework, and in conjunction with assurances given to me by the ARAC, I am satisfied that the controls in place to manage risks are appropriate and sound. Any significant internal control issues are reported to the ARAC, the Board and The Executive Office. These controls provide reasonable assurance that risks will not occur or if a risk does occur that it will be detected and corrected in sufficient time to reduce the impact of the risk to tolerable or negligible levels.

B) Remuneration and Staff Report

Remuneration Policy

The appointment and value of remuneration of the Chair is the responsibility of The Executive Office and is carried out in line with the OCPANI guidance on public appointments. The Chair's performance is reviewed by The Executive Office.

Appointment of senior staff is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The remuneration of staff aligns with the Northern Ireland Civil Service pay scales and includes a pension allowance uplift for those employed prior to guidance from Department of Finance during 2013. The performance of the Chief Executive is reviewed by the Chair. The notice period for all senior staff members of the Community Relations Council does not exceed six months.

Appointment of all other staff is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The remuneration of staff aligns with the Northern Ireland Civil Service pay scales and includes a pension allowance uplift for those employed prior to guidance from the Department of Finance during 2013. Performance is appraised by line managers in respect of achievement of agreed objectives.

The arrangements for early termination of senior staff are made in accordance with the employment contract of the relevant individual. All current members took up their positions on 1st June 2019 and were appointed for three years. The Chair took up position on 1st June 2019 following appointment by The Executive Office. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in the individual receiving compensation. During the year, no early termination payments were paid. In the absence of Ministers The Executive Office has extended the term of office of all members to June 2024.

The Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association of the Community Relations Council makes provision for the Chair and other members to be remunerated. In October 2017 the Community Relations Council received approval from the Charity Commission NI to remunerate the Board and the Chair. On 16th April 2019 the Board approved amendments to the Articles of Association to allow The Executive Office to make appointments to the Board.

Remuneration (including salary) and Pension Entitlements (audited)

The following directors, who were in post at 31st March 2023, and senior staff received emoluments directly from the Community Relations Council during the year.

	2022-23 Salary/ Fee	2022-23 Pension Benefits * to nearest £'000	2022-23 Total £'000	2021-22 Salary/ Fee £'000	2021-22 Pension Benefits * to nearest £'000	2021-22 Total £'000
J Irwin CEO	70-75	36	105-115	75-80	36	110-115
M McDonald (Chairperson)	5 - 10	-	5 - 10	5 - 10	-	5 - 10
C Harris	0 - 5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
J McCallister	0 - 5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
N Tandon	0 - 5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
A Simpson	0 - 5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
M Braniff	0 - 5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5

**The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus (the real increase in any lump sum) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases exclude increases due to inflation or any increase or decrease due to a transfer of pension rights. The figures presented are provided to the Community Relations Council on request by NILGOSC.*

Mr. M McDonnell, Mr. R Campbell and Ms. S McClelland did not claim an attendance allowance during the financial year.

Salary

Salaries consist of gross salary to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation and any ex-gratia payments.

Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the employer and treated by the HM Revenue & Customs as taxable emoluments.

Neither bonus nor benefits in kind were paid to the Chair, the Chief Executive or any other directors during either period. The Community Relations Council offers its employees gym membership up to the maximum value per annum of £200.

No Community Relations Council employee received a benefit in kind greater than £200 during the financial year.

Ratio of Median Remuneration to Highest Paid Director (audited)

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid director in their organisation and the median remuneration of the organisation's workforce.

	2022-23	2021-22
Band of Highest Paid Director's Total Remuneration (£)	72,500	77,500
75th Percentile Total Remuneration (£)	35,595	37,963
Median Total Remuneration (£)	31,753	32,733
25th Percentile Total Remuneration (£)	29,007	30,107
Ratio (75th percentile)	2.04	2.04
Ratio (midpoint)	2.28	2.37
Ratio (25th percentile)	2.50	2.57
Change of highest paid Director (%)	-6.18%	14.81%
Change of whole entity (%)	-6.45%	15.77%

The banded total remuneration of the highest-paid director in the Community Relations Council in the financial year 2022-23 was £70k-£75k (2021-22: £75k- £80k). The median remuneration of the workforce, for 2022-23 was £31,753 (2021-22 £32,733). Salaries for employees at the Community Relations Council range from £25k-£30k to £70k- £75k (2021-22: £25k-£30k to £75k-£80k).

Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance related pay, and benefits-in-kind. It does not include severance payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

Pension Benefits (audited)

	Accrued Pension at pension age as at 31/03/2023 & related lump sum £	Real increase (decrease) in pension & related lump sum £	CETV at 31/03/2023 £	CETV at 31/03/2022 £	Real increase in CETV £
J Irwin					
Chief Executive Officer	37,665	(1,411)	746	716	(30)

CRC are required to follow annual guidance on reporting requirements promulgated by HM Treasury through Public Expenditure System (PES) papers.

Compensation for loss of office (audited)

No members of staff received compensation for loss of office or exit packages during the year ended 31st March 2023.

Pensions

Introduction

The Community Relations Council participates in a defined benefit pension scheme administered by NILGOSC for all permanent staff. The employer makes a contribution of 19.5% (2021-22: 23%) of basic salary to the NILGOSC pension scheme. The employee does not have to join this scheme. Further details can be found on www.nilgosc.org.uk.

The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach pension age or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the Scheme if they are at or over pension age. The NILGOSC pension age is 65.

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is a funded defined benefit plan with benefits earned up to 31st March 2015 being linked to final salary. Benefits after 31st March 2015 are based on a Career Average Revalued Earnings (CARE) scheme. Details of the benefits earned over the period covered by this disclosure are set out in 'The Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014' (as amended) and 'The Local Government Pension Scheme (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (as amended)'.

Funding / Governance Arrangements of the LGPS

The funded nature of the LGPS requires participating employers and their employees to pay contributions into the Fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension liabilities with investment assets. Information on the framework for calculating contributions to be paid is set out in the LGPS Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 and the Fund's Funding Strategy Statement. The last actuarial valuation was at 31st March 2019 and the contributions to be paid until 31st March 2023 resulting from that valuation are set out in the Fund's, Rates and Adjustments Certificate. The Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (The Committee) is responsible for the governance of the Fund.

Assets

The assets allocated to the Employer in the Fund are notional and are assumed to be invested in line with the investments of the Fund for the purposes of calculating the return over the accounting period. The Fund holds a significant proportion of its assets in liquid investments. As a consequence, there will be no significant restriction on realising assets if a large payment is required to be paid from the Fund in relation to an employer's liabilities. The assets are invested in a diversified spread of investments and the approximate split of assets for the Fund as a whole (based on data supplied by the Committee) is shown in the disclosures.

The Committee may invest a small proportion of the Fund's investments in the assets of some of the employers participating in the Fund if it forms part of their balanced investment strategy.

Asset Volatility

The liabilities used for accounting purposes are calculated using a discount rate set with reference to corporate bond yields at the accounting date. If assets underperform this yield this will create a deficit in the accounts. The Fund holds a significant proportion of growth assets which, while expected to outperform corporate bonds in the long term, creates volatility and risk in the short term in relation to the accounting figures.

Changes in Bond Yield

A decrease in corporate bond yields will increase the value placed on the liabilities for accounting purposes although this will be marginally offset by the increase in the assets as a result (to the extent the Fund invests in corporate bonds).

Inflation Risk

The majority of the pension liabilities are linked to either pay or price inflation. Higher inflation expectations will lead to a higher liability value. The assets are not perfectly correlated with inflation meaning that an increase in inflation will increase the deficit.

Life Expectancy

The majority of the Fund's obligations are to provide benefits for the life of the member following retirement, so increases in life expectancy will result in an increase in the liabilities.

Exiting Employers

Employers which leave the Fund (or their guarantor) may have to make an exit payment to meet any shortfall in assets against their pension liabilities. If the Employer (or guarantor) is not able to meet this exit payment the liability may in certain circumstances fall on other employers in the Fund. Further the assets at exit in respect of 'orphan liabilities' may, in retrospect, not be sufficient to meet the liabilities. This risk may fall on other employers. 'Orphan liabilities' are currently a small proportion of the overall liabilities in the Fund.

The Real Increase in the Value of the CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV effectively funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

Staff Report

Analysis of Staff Costs

	Permanent Staff	Others	Board	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£	£	Total £	Total £
Wages and Salaries	538,272	70,410	12,843	621,525	610,528
Social security costs	57,185	-	-	57,185	66,673
Employers pension cost					
<u>Analysed as:</u>					
Current service cost	230,273	-	-	230,273	301,663
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total Staff Cost	825,730	70,410	12,843	908,983	978,864
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Note: Subject to Audit

Average number of persons employed

The average number (subject to audit) of whole-time equivalent persons employed during the period was as follows:

	Permanent Staff	Others	Chair	2022-23	2021-22
				Total	Total
Total	17	-	1	18	17

On a headcount basis there were 16 (2021-22 17) full time members of staff employed during the period (15 at year end). One (2021-22: 1) member of staff was employed part time. On average two members of staff was engaged via a recruitment agency (2021-22: 0).

Note: Subject to Audit

Sickness Absence Data

The total number of working days lost through sickness during the period by the Community Relations Council staff was 124 days. This represented 2.9% of available working days for the Community Relations Council employees, of which 2.5% was due to long-term sickness absence. Sickness absence during the previous financial year was 164 days, representing 3.9% of available working days.

Staff Composition

At the end of the financial year the gender split amongst Board Members and employees was as follows:

	Male No.	Female No.
Council Members	4	5
Employees:		
Grade 6	-	1
DP	2	1
SO	2	2
EO	2	4
AO	1	1
	-----	-----
Total	7	9
	-----	-----

An analysis of staff costs for 2022-23 (£908,983) (2021-22: £978,864) is provided in Note 3 on page 66 and 67.

Staff Turnover

At the end of this financial year, Community Relations Council had 6.3% full-time permanent vacancy.

Consultancy

The Community Relations Council did not incur expenditure related to consultancy during the 2022-23 financial year.

Employees Matters

The Community Relations Council provides equal opportunities to its employees and are committed to the principle of equality for all Section 75 groups. This includes only having regard to the aptitudes and abilities of persons and in doing so apply employment policies that are fair, equitable and consistent with the needs of the business. The Community Relations Council's equal opportunities policy aim is to ensure no job applicant, employee or worker is discriminated against either directly or indirectly. The recruitment and selection of staff for the Community Relations Council is designed to ensure that applicants are treated in a fair and consistent manner, that the best person is appointed and to provide a reasonable adjustment for suitable persons whenever requested.

The Community Relations Council have appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure that disability duties are complied with and effectively implemented. The Community Relations Council reviews its policies, procedures and practices to identify any amendments or actions needed to meet its disability duties on a regular basis. During the year the Community Relations Council has applied its Disability Action Plan.

There were no significant Health and Safety issues during the year that were directly related to the operations of the Community Relations Council and all minor issues are recorded and are available for inspection. The Community Relations Council operated its business continuity

arrangements throughout the year to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the health and safety of its employees. During the year a Fire Risk Assessment was completed for Equality House Equality House. All fire equipment was serviced and replaced where necessary.

The Community Relations Council operate a performance management system intended to align employee activities to its objectives. The process identifies training requirements and career development opportunities to meet both the Community Relations Council's and the employee's needs.

All employees have the option to join a Trade Union. The Community Relations Council currently operate a procedural agreement with Unite the Union.

Off-Payroll Engagements

The Community Relations Council had no off-payroll engagements during the 2022-23 financial year (2021-22: £nil).



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J Irwin – Accounting Officer

14th November 2023

.....
Date

C Assembly Accountability and Audit Report

Overview

Regularity of Expenditure (audited)

The Community Relations Council ensures the regularity of its expenditure by application of the requirements contained within Managing Public Money Northern Ireland and its Management Statement.

As described on page 45, the Community Relations Council is working with The Executive Office and the Department of Finance to resolve uncertainty concerning the regularity of an additional contribution of 6% on gross earnings for employee's superannuation contributions payable to the NILGOSC pension scheme totalling £15,302.

Fees and Charges (audited)

The Community Relations Council did not earn an income through fees or charges during the 2022-23 financial year.

Remote Contingent Liabilities (audited)

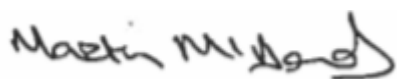
No remote contingent liabilities are known to have existed at the 31st March 2023.

Losses and Special Payments (audited)

	2022-23	2021-22
Total Number of Losses	-	-
Value of Losses	£-	£-

There were no losses or special payments made during the year.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Directors.



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M McDonald – Chairperson

14th November 2023

.....
Date



.....
J Irwin – Accounting Officer

14th November 2023

.....
Date

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

NORTHERN IRELAND COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council for the year ended 31 March 2023 under the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013. The financial statements comprise: the Statement of Financial Activities; Balance Sheet; Statement of Cash Flows; and the related notes, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

I have also audited the information in the Directors' Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs as at 31 March 2023 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of this certificate.

My staff and I are independent of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue. The going concern basis of accounting for the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it is anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer and Directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other Information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements, the parts of the Directors' report described in that report as having been audited, and my audit certificate and report. The Accounting Officer and Directors are responsible for the other information included in the annual report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my report I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Directors' Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual; and
- the information given in the Strategic Report and Directors' Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Strategic Report and Directors' Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Strategic Report and Directors' Report. I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Directors' Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by the Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer and Directors for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's and Directors' Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer and Directors are responsible for:

- preparing the Annual Report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report, in accordance with the Companies Act 2006;
- the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- such internal controls as management determines are necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; and
- assessing the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council will not be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulation, including fraud.

My procedures included:

- obtaining an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council through discussion with management and application of extensive public sector accountability knowledge. The key laws and regulations I considered included governing legislation and any other relevant laws and regulations;
- making enquires of management and those charged with governance on the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's compliance with laws and regulations;
- making enquiries of internal audit, management and those charged with governance as to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's susceptibility to irregularity and fraud, their assessment of the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and irregularity, and their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud and irregularity;
- completing risk assessment procedures to assess the susceptibility of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur. This included, but was not limited to, an engagement director led engagement team discussion on fraud to identify particular areas, transaction streams and business practices that may be susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the posting of unusual journals;
- engagement director oversight to ensure the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework throughout the audit;
- documenting and evaluating the design and implementation of internal controls in place to mitigate risk of material misstatement due to fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- designing audit procedures to address specific laws and regulations which the engagement team considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements in terms of misstatement and irregularity, including fraud. These audit procedures included, but were not limited to, reading board and committee minutes, and agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation and approvals as appropriate, testing of journal entries and reviewing internal audit reports; and
- addressing the risk of fraud as a result of management override of controls by:
 - performing analytical procedures to identify unusual or unexpected relationships or movements;
 - testing journal entries to identify potential anomalies, and inappropriate or unauthorised adjustments;
 - assessing whether judgements and other assumptions made in determining accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

- investigating significant or unusual transactions made outside of the normal course of business.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.



Dorinnia Carville
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
BELFAST
BT7 1EU

22nd November 2023

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Statement of Financial Activities (Including Income & Expenditure Account) for Year Ended 31 March 2023

		All Restricted and Unrestricted Funds 2022-23 £	All Restricted and Unrestricted Funds 2021-22 £
	Note		
Income and endowments from:			
Donations and Legacies	2	3,268,494	3,224,987
Secondments		42,505	14,874
		-----	-----
Total		3,310,999	3,239,861
		-----	-----
Expenditure on:			
Charitable activities	4	3,579,963	3,602,728
		-----	-----
Net income/(expenditure) before tax for the reporting period		(268,964)	(362,867)
Other recognised gains/(losses):			
Actuarial gain /(loss) on defined benefit pension scheme	16	2,769,000	1,069,000
		-----	-----
Net movement in funds		2,500,036	706,133
		-----	-----
Reconciliation of funds:			
Fund balances brought forward at 1 April		(2,866,485)	(3,572,618)
		-----	-----
Net movement in funds		2,500,036	706,133
		-----	-----
Fund balances carried forward at 31st March	14	(366,449)	(2,866,485)
		=====	=====

All of the activities of the company are classed as continuing, and all recognised gains and losses have been included in the results for the year as set out above.

The notes on pages 61 to 81 form part of these Accounts

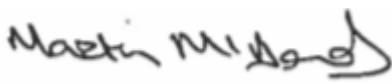
The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2023

		2022-23 £	2021-22 £
	Note		
Fixed assets			
Tangible fixed assets	7	185,252	21,664
Intangible fixed assets	8	7,688	14,496
		-----	-----
		192,940	36,160
Current assets			
Debtors and prepayments	9	8,086	32,214
Cash at bank and in hand	10	101,136	115,529
		-----	-----
		109,222	147,743
Liabilities			
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	(695,454)	(664,388)
Finance Leases	11	(49,594)	-
		-----	-----
Net current assets or (liabilities)		(635,826)	(516,645)
Total assets less current liabilities		(442,886)	(480,485)
Non - Current Liabilities - Finance Leases	11	(117,563)	-
Defined benefit pension asset/(liability)	16	194,000	(2,386,000)
		-----	-----
Total net liabilities		(366,449)	(2,866,485)
		=====	=====
The funds of the charity			
Restricted Income Funds	14	(560,449)	(480,485)
Restricted Pension Reserve	14	194,000	(2,386,000)
		-----	-----
Total charity funds		(366,449)	(2,866,485)
		=====	=====

In the view of the Board an exemption from the audit requirements of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006 is available under section 482 of that Act, since the company meets the Department of Finance's definition of a non-profit making company and is subject to a public sector audit under the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Northern Ireland Order 2013, being an order issued under Article 5(3) of the Audit and Accountability (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. The Council therefore claims this exemption.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 14th November 2023 and signed on its behalf by:



 M McDonald – Chairperson



 J Irwin – Accounting Officer

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

The notes on pages 61 to 81 form part of these Accounts

Cash Flow Statement for Year Ended 31st March 2023

		2022-23	2021-22
	Note	£	£
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash (used in) / provided by operating activities	12	9,929	89,561
		-----	-----
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	7	(4,464)	(5,042)
Purchase of intangible fixed assets	8	-	(1,500)
		-----	-----
Net cash (used in) investing activities		(4,464)	(6,542)
		-----	-----
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		(14,393)	83,020
Opening cash and cash equivalents at 1st April	10	115,529	32,509
		-----	-----
Closing cash and cash equivalents at 31st March	10	101,136	115,529
		=====	=====

The notes on pages 61 to 81 form part of these Accounts

Notes to the Accounts for Year Ended 31st March 2023

1. Accounting policies

These Accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 2006, along with selected disclosures as recommended in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) (FRS 102). The particular policies adopted by the Community Relations Council for the year ended 31st March 2023 are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

The principal accounting policies are as follows:

Accounting convention

The Accounts are prepared under the historical cost convention. The directors do not consider the current costs of any of the year's transactions or closing balances to be materially different from the historical cost. The financial statements are presented in sterling, rounded to the nearest pound.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Basis of accounting

Grant Income is recognised in accordance with the performance model set out in FRS 102. Expenditure is treated on the accruals basis of accounting. Without limiting the information given, as the Community Relations Council is a charity that is a public benefit entity, the Accounts are prepared to meet the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities SORP (FRS 102), Accounting Standards issued or adopted by the Accounting Standards Board and accounting and disclosure requirements issued by the Department of Finance. Income from grants, including Grant in Aid, is recognised when there is evidence of entitlement, receipt is probable, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Going Concern

In June 2023 The Executive Office wrote to the Community Relations Council confirming that funding had been secured for the 2023-24 financial year. The Board is satisfied that the Community Relations Council is a going concern on the basis that it has a reasonable expectation that the Community Relations Council will continue to operate for the foreseeable future. In January 2021 the Community Relations Council received Ministerial approval for the 2020-24 Strategic Plan from The Executive Office. The 2023-24 business plan has been drafted and is with The Executive Office officials pending Ministerial approval. The financial statements are therefore prepared on the going concern basis.

Income

Income comprises all funding provided to the company for its own purposes. Grant income is recognised as follows:

- A grant that does not impose specified future performance-related conditions on the recipient is recognised in income when the grant proceeds are received or receivable.
- A grant that imposes specified future performance-related conditions on the recipient is recognised in income only when the performance-related conditions are met.
- Grants received before the revenue recognition criteria are satisfied are recognised as a liability.

Taxation

The Company is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from Income and Capital taxes, but not Value Added Tax (VAT).

The majority of the Community Relations Council incoming resources is through grant funding which is outside the scope of VAT. Accordingly the Community Relations Council is not VAT registered and amounts in these accounts are inclusive of VAT where charged.

Provisions

The Company makes provisions for liabilities and charges where, at the balance sheet date, a legal or constructive liability exists (i.e. a present obligation from past events exists), where the transfer of economic benefits is probable, and a reasonable estimate can be made.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Where the time value of money is material, the Community Relations Council discounts the provision to its present value using a standard Government discount rate.

Fixed assets

Fixed assets are stated on the balance sheet at cost and depreciated in order to write off the original cost of the assets over their expected useful lives on a straight-line basis over the following number of years:

Fixtures and fittings	5 years
Computer equipment	5 years

Indexation is not applied due to the short life nature of these assets i.e. less than 5 years. The minimum level of capitalisation of tangible fixed assets is £500.

Intangible fixed assets

Software licences for internal recording and reporting systems and other software such as the Grants Management System are capitalised as intangible assets. All intangible assets are amortised over their useful life i.e. 5 years, or the length of the licence. Indexation is not applied due to the short life nature of these assets i.e. less than 5 years. The minimum level of capitalisation of an intangible asset is £500.

Debtors

Debtors are measured on initial recognition at the amount receivable and subsequently at the cash amount expected to be received.

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash is cash in hand and deposits with any financial institution repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are investments that mature within 3 months or less from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

Creditors

Creditors are measured on initial recognition at the amount payable and subsequently at the cash amount expected to be paid.

Grants payable

Grant expenditure is recorded in the period in which the recipient carries out the activity which created the entitlement. Unpaid and unclaimed grants may represent obligations to be recognised as liabilities where there is evidence of entitlement. Where the amount of the claim is not known at the Balance Sheet date, an estimate will be made. Overpayments of grants are shown as receivables at the Balance Sheet date.

Financial Instruments

The Council has limited powers to borrow or invest surplus funds and financial assets and liabilities are generated by day-to-day operational activities rather than being held to change the risks facing the Council in undertaking activities. Therefore, the Council is exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Currency risk: The Company is principally a domestic organisation with the great majority of transactions, assets and liabilities being in the UK and Sterling based. The Company has no overseas operations. The Company therefore has low exposure to currency rate fluctuations.

Interest rate risk: The Company has limited powers to borrow or invest and therefore has low exposure to interest rate fluctuations.

Credit risk: Because the Company's income comprises all funding provided to it for its own purposes, the Company has low exposure to credit risk.

Liquidity risk: Since the Company receives the majority of its funding from The Executive Office, it is therefore not exposed to significant liquidity risks.

Employee Benefits

Staff costs must be recorded as an expense as soon as an organisation is obliged to pay them. This includes the cost of any untaken leave at the year end. This cost has been calculated using the untaken leave per staff member and applying this to their annual salary to calculate the leave balance as at 31st March 2023.

Redundancy and termination benefits

The exit costs associated with Voluntary Exit packages as funded by the Public Sector Transformation Fund, a facility provided through the 2014 Stormont House Agreement, are accounted for in full in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year departure is agreed.

Pension

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) Scheme.

The pension costs are assessed in accordance with the advice of independent qualified actuaries using the market led approach. The latest actuarial valuations of the scheme were at 31st March 2019.

Pension scheme assets are measured using market value. Pension scheme liabilities are measured using the projected unit method and discounted at the current rate of return on a high quality corporate bond of equivalent term to the liability.

The increase in the present value of the liabilities of the Community Relations Council's defined benefit pension scheme arising from employee service in the period is charged to the SOFA so as to recognise the cost of pensions over the employees' working lives.

The Community Relations Council is no longer required to recognise an expected return on assets item in the SOFA. This is now replaced with a net financing charge which is based on the discount rate assumption.

Actuarial gains and losses are recognised in the SOFA.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Expenditure

Support costs include all expenditure directly relating to the objectives of the company.

Administration and Management costs, detailed on page 68 comprises the costs involved in complying with constitutional and statutory requirements and any other costs which cannot be treated as direct charitable expenditure.

Costs incurred for meetings, seminars and other specific expenditure relating to the individual programmes are classified as programme costs, detailed on page 84.

Funds

The company has two types of funds for which it is responsible, and which require separate disclosure. These are as follows:

Restricted funds

Grant in aid received which is earmarked by the funder for specific purposes and within the overall aims of the company.

Pension Fund

The Charities SORP (FRS 102) requires the valuation of the net defined benefit liability to be included within the accounts.

Changes in Accounting Policy and Disclosure

Management has reviewed new accounting standards, the outcome being the adoption of in these accounts.

Charities SORP (FRS 102) Charitable Activities

Expenditure on charitable activities is reported as a functional analysis of the work undertaken by the Community Relations Council in note 5 on pages 69. The key activities of the Community Relations Council being grant making, policy, communication, cultural diversity, district council development and production of the Peace Monitoring Report. Under these headings are included grants payable and costs of activities performed directly by the charity, together with associated support costs.

Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute directly to more than one activity are apportioned between those activities on a per capita basis. Support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are also apportioned between the activities being supported on a per capita basis.

Leases

IFRS 16 Leases replaced IAS 17 Leases and is effective with EU adoption from 1 January 2019. In line with the requirements of FReM, IFRS 16 has implemented, as interpreted and adapted for the public sector, with effect from 1st April 2022. The interest element of any lease classified as a finance lease payment is charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure over the period of the lease at a constant rate in relation to the balance outstanding.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

2. Income from donations and legacies and charitable activities

	Restricted Funds 2022-23 £	Total Funds 2022-23 £	Total Funds 2021-22 £
<u>Donations and legacies</u>			
Grant in Aid from The Executive Office	3,268,494	3,268,494	3,224,987
	----- 3,268,494 -----	----- 3,268,494 -----	----- 3,224,987 -----

3. Analysis of Staff Costs

	Permanent Staff £	Others £	Board £	2022-23 Total £	2021-22 Total £
Wages and Salaries	538,272	70,410	12,843	621,525	610,528
Social security costs	57,185	-	-	57,185	66,673
Employers pension cost					
<u>Analysed as:</u>					
Current service cost	230,273	-	-	230,273	301,663
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total Staff Cost	825,730	70,410	12,843	908,983	978,864
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

The difference between the current service cost in the staff costs note (subject to audit) and the amount included in the pension scheme note (note 16) is due to the difference between the estimated employer pension contributions notified to the actuary for valuation purposes and the actual amount incurred.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Average number of persons employed

The average number (subject to audit) of whole-time equivalent persons employed during the period was as follows:

	Permanent Staff	Others	Chair	2022-23 Total	2021-22 Total
Total	17	-	1	18	17

On a headcount basis there were 16 (2021-22 17) full time members of staff employed during the period (15 at year end). One (2021-22: 1) member of staff was employed part time. On average two members of staff was engaged via a recruitment agency (2021-22: 0).

Exit Packages						
Exit Package Cost Band	Number of compulsory redundancies	Number of other departures agreed	Total number of exit packages by cost band	Number of compulsory redundancies	Number of other departures agreed	Total number of exit packages by cost band
	2022-23	2022-23	2021-22	2021-22	2021-22	2021-22
£0-25,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
£25,001-50,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
£50,001- 100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
£100,001-150,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
£150,000+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total number of exit packages by type	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total resource cost/ £	-	-	-	-	-	-
Actuarial Movement in Pension Net Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-

Redundancy and other departure costs have been paid in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Service Compensation Scheme, a statutory scheme made under the Superannuation Act 1972. The table above shows the total cost of exit packages agreed and accounted for in 2022-3 (2021-22: £0). £0 exit costs were paid in 2022-23 (2021-22: 0). No persons retired early on ill-health grounds in 2022-23 (2021-22: None)

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Remuneration of key management

As reported in the Remuneration Report on pages 45 to 49, one member of staff received a salary within the band £70k - £75k.

4. Analysis of Expenditure on Charitable Activities

Key Activities	Activities Undertaken Directly	Grant Funding Activities	Support Cost	Total 2022-23
	£	£	£	£
Funding and Development	286,774	2,323,278	329,015	2,939,067
Community Engagement	311,881	-	329,015	640,896
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total	598,655	2,323,278	658,030	3,579,963
	-----	-----	-----	-----

Key Activities	Activities Undertaken Directly	Grant Funding Activities	Support Cost	Total 2021-22
	£	£	£	£
Funding and Development	332,240	2,251,975	423,321	3,007,536
Community Engagement	284,024	-	311,168	595,192
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total	616,264	2,251,975	734,489	3,602,728
	-----	-----	-----	-----

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Analysis of Support Costs

2022-23 Support Costs	Funding and Development £	Community Engagement £	Basis of Allocation
Facilities	43,597	43,597	Per Capita
HR	41,054	41,054	Per Capita
IT	57,849	57,849	Per Capita
Finance	52,332	52,332	Per Capita
Governance	134,183	134,183	Per Capita
	-----	-----	
Function Total	329,015	329,015	
	-----	-----	

2021-22 Support Costs	Funding and Development £	Community Engagement £	Basis of Allocation
Facilities	25,941	19,424	Per Capita
HR	60,187	44,632	Per Capita
IT	75,614	58,166	Per Capita
Finance	92,769	61,846	Per Capita
Governance	168,810	127,101	Per Capita
	-----	-----	
Function Total	423,321	311,169	
	-----	-----	

The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) performs the annual statutory audit of the Community Relations Council at a cost of £24,900 (2021-22: £23,000). There was a fee of £1,319 paid to National Fraud Initiative at the 31st March 2023 (2021-22: £Nil). This is included in the Governance costs above.

Staff travelling and subsistence costs totalled £2,675 in 2022-23 (2021-22: £45) This is included in the Governance costs above.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

5. Grant expenditure

	Grants payable £	Support costs £	2022-23 Total £
Grants schemes			
Small grants schemes	199,590	127,219	326,809
Publications and Media	47,869	9,870	57,739
Core Funding	1,348,781	150,799	1,499,580
Pathfinder	141,371	2,742	144,113
North Belfast Strategic Fund	585,667	38,385	624,052
	-----	-----	-----
	2,323,278	329,015	2,652,293
	-----	-----	-----
	Grants payable £	Support costs £	2021-22 Total £
Grants schemes			
Small Grants Scheme	688,558	163,684	852,242
Publications and Media	9,900	12,700	22,600
Core Funding	1,188,301	194,022	1,382,323
Pathfinder	29,290	3,528	32,818
North Belfast Strategic Fund	335,927	49,387	385,314
	-----	-----	-----
	2,251,976	423,321	2,675,297
	-----	-----	-----

A statement of grant making policies in the Directors' Report provides further information on these grant schemes. Of the grants that have been paid, none of the grants have been made to individuals (2021-22: None).

6. Statement of Net (Expenditure)/Income by Operating Segment:

IFRS 8 "Operating Segments" requires disclosure of financial information about an organisation's reportable segments based on the internal reporting arrangements as reviewed by the "Chief Operating Decision Maker" (CODM). The CODM for the Council is deemed to be the Council Members since they have the authority for directing the main activities of the Council throughout the year. The Council approves the annual budget and, at each Council meeting, reviews management accounts and corresponding segmental financial information.

The Board considers financial information that supports delivery of the Community Relations Council's T:BUC objectives as a whole rather than discrete financial information for each internal function. On this basis the Community Relations Council does not have the basis for segmental reporting.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

7. Tangible fixed assets Year End 31st March 2023

	Computer Equipment £	Fixtures and Fittings £	Buildings Right of Use £	Total £
Cost:				
Balance at 1st April 2022	58,672	71,232	-	129,904
Additions	3,562	902		4,464
IFRS16 Opening Balance Adjustment	-	-	216,253	216,253
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2023	62,234	72,134	216,253	350,621
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Accumulated depreciation:				
Balance at 1st April 2022	42,654	65,586	-	108,240
Charge for year	5,375	1,849	49,905	57,129
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2023	48,029	67,435	49,905	165,369
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Net book value:				
At 31st March 2023	14,205	4,699	166,348	185,252
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
At 1st April 2022	16,018	5,646	-	21,664
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
Asset Financing				
Owned	14,205	4,699	-	18,904
Finance Lease			166,348	166,348
Net Book Value at 31st March 2023	14,205	4,699	166,348	185,252
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

Year End 31st March 2022

	Computer Equipment £	Fixtures and Fittings £	Buildings Right of use £	Total £
Cost:				
Balance at 1st April 2021	57,544	67,318	-	124,862
Additions	1,128	3,914	-	5,042
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2022	58,672	71,232	-	129,904
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Accumulated depreciation:				
Balance at 1st April 2021	37,258	63,161	-	100,419
Charge for year	5,396	2,425	-	7,821
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2022	42,654	65,586	-	108,240
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Net book value:				
At 31st March 2022	16,018	5,646	-	21,664
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
At 1st April 2021	20,286	4,157	-	24,443
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

8. Intangible fixed assets

Year End 31st March 2023

	Software Licences	Total
Cost:	£	£
Balance at 1st April 2022	34,664	34,664
Additions	-	-
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2023	34,664	34,664
	-----	-----
Accumulated amortisation:		
Balance at 1st April 2022	20,168	20,168
Charge for year	6,808	6,808
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2023	26,976	26,976
	-----	-----
Net book value:		
At 31st March 2023	7,688	7,688
	=====	=====
At 1st April 2022	14,496	14,496
	=====	=====

Year End 31st March 2022

	Software Licences	Total
Cost:	£	£
Balance at 1st April 2021	33,164	33,164
Additions	1,500	1,500
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2022	34,664	34,664
	-----	-----
Accumulated amortisation:		
Balance at 1st April 2021	13,235	13,235
Charge for year	6,933	6,933
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2022	20,168	20,168
	-----	-----
Net book value:		
At 31st March 2022	14,496	14,496
	=====	=====
At 1st April 2021	19,929	19,929
	=====	=====

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

9. Debtors: amounts due in less than one year	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Grant claw backs	-	6,898
Prepayments	8,086	25,316
	-----	-----
	8,086	32,214
	=====	=====

10. Cash and cash equivalents	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Balance at 1st April	115,529	32,509
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	(14,393)	83,020
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March	101,136	115,529
	=====	=====

Cash and cash equivalents are comprised entirely of cash on hand and are held in commercial banks. The Community Relations Council does not have any demand deposits or any short-term, highly liquid investments.

11. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Grants payable	563,338	519,037
Other creditors	11,168	46,154
Accruals	91,598	79,197
	-----	-----
	666,104	644,388
	=====	=====

Creditors: Finance Leases	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Amounts falling due within one year	49,594	-
Amounts falling due after one year	117,563	-
	-----	-----
	167,157	-
	=====	=====

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Deferred Income	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Amount deferred in year	29,350	20,000
	-----	-----
	29,350	20,000
	=====	=====

Opening Balance - £20,000
 Receipts - £24,000
 Payments - £(14,650)
Closing Balance - £29,350

12. Notes to the cash flow statement		2022-23	2021-22
		£	£
Net incoming resources	Note	(268,964)	(362,868)
Adjustments for:			
Depreciation/amortisation charge	7&8	63,937	14,754
Decrease in debtors	9	24,128	1,832
Increase in creditors	11	31,066	193,843
Building Rent Payment	15	(50,855)	-
Interest Charge		1,759	-
Current and past service cost	16	230,000	286,000
Less: Employer pension contributions	16	(104,000)	(111,000)
Interest on net defined benefit liability	16	63,000	67,000
		-----	-----
Net cash provided by / (used in) operating activities		(9,929)	89,561
		=====	=====

13. Net income is stated after charging	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	7,224	7,821
Amortisation of intangible fixed assets	6,808	6,933
Auditors' remuneration	24,900	23,000
National Fraud Initiative fee	1,319	-
	=====	=====

The cost incurred in respect of Statutory Audit fees during the year ended 31st March 2023 was £24,900 (2021-22: £23,000).

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

14. Fund balances - Outline summary of fund movements

Fund name	Fund balances brought forward £	Income £	Expenditure £	Gains and Losses £	Fund Balance Carried forward £
Restricted					
Fund	(480,485)	3,310,999	(3,390,963)	-	(560,449)
Pension					
Reserve	(2,386,000)	-	(189,000)	2,769,000	194,000
Total Funds	(2,866,485) =====	3,310,999 =====	(3,579,963) =====	2,769,000 =====	(366,449) =====

Any funds above must be spent on direct charitable expenditure and associated administration and overhead costs.

With effect from 1st April 2021, The Executive Office has put in place a guarantee in respect of the pension liabilities of the Community Relations Council.

15.1 Quantitative disclosures around right-of-use assets

	Buildings	Total 2022/23
	£	£
Right-of-use assets		
IFRS16 Op. Balance Adj.	216,253	216,253
Depreciation expense	(49,905)	(49,905)
At 31st March 2023	166,348	166,348

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

15.2 Quantitative disclosures around lease liabilities

2022/23
£

Obligations under finance leases for the following periods comprise:

Buildings	
Later than one year and not later than five years	50,885
Less than five years	118,732
Less Interest element	(2,460)
Present Value of obligations	167,157
 Other	
Current portion	49,594
Non-current portion	117,563

15.3 Quantitative disclosures around cash outflow for leases

£
2022/23

Total cash outflow for leases	50,855

The Community Relations Council signed a Memorandum of Temporary Occupation (MOTO) agreement for premises at Equality House on the 1st April 2016. The MOTO expired on 31st July 2021 and has been further extended to 31st July 2026 subject to review. The commitments of IFRS 16 Leases under this MOTO is noted.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

16. Commitments under Defined Benefit Pension Scheme

The assets of the pension scheme are held separately from those of the Community Relations Council and are administered by NILGOSC. The pension cost is determined on the advice of independent qualified actuaries. The latest actuarial valuation of the Community Relations Council's liabilities took place at 31st March 2019.

The scheme is funded and the employer contributions were 19.5% for the year ended 31st March 2023 (2021-22: 19.5%). From 1st April 2022 employer contributions remain at 19.5% of pensionable pay and the employer expects to pay regular contributions to the Fund for the accounting period ended 31st March 2023 totalling £104,000 (31st March 2022: £111,000). The employees' contributions vary between 6.5% and 8.5% of pensionable pay. As required by The Charities SORP (FRS 102), the defined benefit liabilities have been measured using the projected unit credit method. The tables below state the actuarial assumptions upon which the valuation of the scheme was based.

Key Assumptions	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21
Discount rate	4.7%	2.7%	2.1%
CPI Inflation	2.7%	3%	3%
Pension increases	2.7%	3%	3%
Pension accounts revaluation rate	2.7%	3%	3%
Salary increases	4.2%	4.5%	4%
Asset Allocation	2022-23	2021-22	
	%	%	
Equities	41.3%	40.6%	
Property	10.5%	10.9%	
Government bonds	20.5%	24.1%	
Multi Asset Credit	13.1%	12.9%	
Corporate bonds	2.7%	1.8%	
Cash	5.9%	6.2%	
Other	6.0%	3.5%	
	-----	-----	
Total	100%	100%	
	-----	-----	

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Mortality Assumptions

The mortality assumptions are based on the recent actual mortality experience of members within the Fund and allow for expected future mortality improvements. Sample life expectancies at age 65 resulting from these mortality assumptions are shown below

	2022-23	2021-22
Males	Years	Years
Member aged 65 at accounting date	22.2	21.8
Member aged 45 at accounting date	23.2	23.2
Females		
Member aged 65 at accounting date	25.0	25.0
Member aged 45 at accounting date	26.0	26.4

Reconciliation of funded status to Balance Sheet

	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Fair value of assets	8,026,000	8,660,000
Present value of funded defined benefit obligation	(7,832,000)	(11,046,000)
Funded status	194,000	(2,386,000)
Unrecognised asset	-	-
Asset/(liability) recognised on the balance sheet	194,000	(2,386,000)

Amounts recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities

	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Operating Cost		
Current service cost	230,000	286,000
Financing Cost		
Interest on net defined benefit liability	63,000	67,000
Pension expense recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities	293,000	353,000

Amounts recognised in other comprehensive income

Assets gains/(losses) arising during the period	(841,000)	161,000
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in financial assumptions	4,515,000	-
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in demographic assumptions	(32,000)	-
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to liability experience	(873,000)	-
Adjustment in respect of paragraph 28.22	-	
Liability gains/(losses) arising during the period	-	908,000
Total amount recognised in other comprehensive income	2,769,000	1,069,000

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Movement in Deficit during the year	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Net defined benefit pension liability at the beginning of the year	(2,386,000)	(3,213,000)
Current service cost	(230,000)	(286,000)
Employer contributions	104,000	111,000
Interest on the net defined benefit liability	(63,000)	(67,000)
Actuarial (losses)/gains	2,769,000	1,069,000
Net defined benefit pension asset/(liability) at the end of the year	194,000	(2,386,000)

Changes to the present value of the defined benefit obligation during the period

	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Opening defined benefit obligation	11,046,000	11,583,000
Current service cost	230,000	286,000
Interest expense on defined benefit obligation	297,000	242,000
Contributions by participants	42,000	44,000
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in Financial Assumptions	(4,515,000)	-
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in Demographic Assumptions	32,000	-
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to Liability Experience	873,000	-
Actuarial losses/(gains) on liabilities	-	(908,000)
Net benefits paid out	(173,000)	(201,000)
Closing defined benefit obligation	7,832,000	11,046,000

Changes to the fair value of assets during the period

	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Opening fair value of assets	8,660,000	8,370,000
Interest income on assets	234,000	175,000
Remeasurement (losses)/gains on assets	(841,000)	161,000
Contributions by the employer	104,000	111,000
Contributions by participants	42,000	44,000
Net benefits paid out	(173,000)	(201,000)
Closing fair value of assets	8,026,000	8,660,000

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Actual return on assets	2022-23 £	2021-22 £
Interest income on assets	234,000	175,000
Gain/(loss) on assets	(841,000)	161,000
	-----	-----
Actual return on assets	(607,000)	336,000
	=====	=====

The split of the defined benefit obligation at the last valuation date between the various categories of members was as follows:

Active members	33%
Deferred Pensioners	32%
Pensioners	35%

17. Related party transactions

	2022-23 £'s	2021-22 £'s
The Executive Office	3,268,494	3,224,987

During the year, the Community Relations Council has had various material transactions with the Good Relations and Governance Branch of the Executive Office which is regarded as a related party. The Community Relations Council received a total of £3,268,494 (2021-22: £3,224,987) in Grant in Aid from The Executive Office during 2022-23.

	2022-23 £'s	2021-22 £'s
ECNI	126,948	120,597

ECNI is regarded as a related party since it is an Arm's Length Body of The Executive Office. The Community Relations Council relocated premises to Equality House on 23rd March 2016. The amount paid to ECNI during the 2022-23 financial year totalled £126,948 (2021-22: £120,597).

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Directors:

Some Directors of the Company may also carry out various roles within organisations which receive financial assistance from The Community Relations Council. The Directors disclose these interests on an annual basis by submitting 'Declaration of Interests' returns. Relevant interests are also declared during the normal business and procedures of the Board and its Committee. During the year, the following payments were made to organisations related to Directors:

- Nisha Tandon is Executive Director of ArtsEkta, which was in receipt of two grant under the CRCD programme totalling £7,400 (2021-22: £9,084.24).

18. Financial Regularity

No cases of financial irregularity that required investigation by the Community Relations Council occurred in the 2022-23 financial year.

19. Events after the reporting date

There have been no significant events since the balance sheet date that would affect these accounts or require disclosure.

20. Contingent Liabilities

No contingent liabilities are known to have existed at the 31st March 2023.

Date of authorisation for issue

The Accounting Officer authorised these Accounts for issue on 22nd November 2023

Appendix 1

Additional Disclosures to comply with FReM

This additional disclosure has been prepared in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM). FReM is a technical guide for the preparation of financial statements of public bodies. The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Community Relations Council for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected.

FReM requires Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB) to regard grant in aid received as contributions from controlling parties giving rise to a financial interest in the residual interest of the body, and hence accounted for as financing, i.e. by crediting them to the income and expenditure reserve. Grants are recognised as financing in the year which they are received.

On 1st April 2012, the Community Relations Council was designated as an Executive NDPB and as a result cannot recognise Grant in Aid as income. If the Community Relations Council were to comply with FReM, the following statements would be the effect of this compliance.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure

		2022-23 £	2021-22 £
Income	Note	42,505	14,874
Total Operating Income		42,505	14,874
Expenditure			
Staff costs	3	908,983	978,864
Grant expenditure	4	2,323,278	2,251,976
Purchase of goods and services	App 1	215,052	289,968
Depreciation and impairment charges	App 1	63,937	14,754
Other Operating Expenditure	App 1	68,713	67,166
Total Operating Expenditure		3,579,963	3,602,728
Net Expenditure for the year		(3,537,458)	(3,587,854)
Other Comprehensive Expenditure			
Actuarial gain/(loss) on defined benefit pension scheme	16	2,769,000	1,069,000
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year		(768,458)	(2,518,854)
		=====	=====

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2023

		2022-23 £	2021-22 £
	Note		
Non-current assets			
Tangible Fixed assets	7	185,252	21,664
Intangible assets	8	7,688	14,496
Total non-current assets		192,940	36,160
Current assets			
Trade and other receivables	9	8,086	32,214
Cash and cash equivalents	10	101,136	115,529
Total current assets		109,222	147,743
Total assets		302,162	183,903
		=====	=====

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Current liabilities

Trade and other payables	11	(695,454)	(664,388)
Finance Lease		(49,594)	-

Total current liabilities

(745,048) (664,388)

Total assets less current liabilities

(442,886) (480,485)

Non-current liabilities

Non- Current Liabilities - Finance Lease	11	(117,563)	-
Defined benefit pension liability	16	194,000	(2,386,000)

Total assets less total liabilities

(366,449) (2,866,485)

Taxpayers' equity and other reserves

General fund	14	(366,449)	(2,866,485)

Total Equity

14 (366,449) (2,866,485)

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31st March 2023

		2022-23 £	2021-22 £
Cash flows from operating activities	Note		
Net Operating Cost		(3,579,963)	(3,602,729)
Adjustments for:			
Depreciation/amortisation charge	7/8	63,937	14,754
(Increase)/Decrease in debtors	9	24,128	1,832
(Decrease)/Increase in creditors	11	31,066	193,843
 Building Rent Payment	 15	 (50,855)	 -
Interest Charge		1,759	-
 <i>Movement in pension scheme deficit:</i>			
- Current service cost	16	230,000	286,000
- Employer pension contributions	16	(104,000)	(111,000)
- Interest on net defined benefit liability	16	63,000	67,000
 Net cash outflow from operating activities		 (3,320,928)	 (3,150,301)

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Cash flows from investing activities

Purchase of tangible fixed assets	7	(4,464)	(5,042)
Purchase of intangible fixed assets	8	-	(1,500)

Net cash inflow/(outflow) from investing activities		(4,464)	(6,542)

Cash flows from financing activities

Grants from sponsoring department	2	3,268,494	3,224,987
Secondment Income		42,505	14,874

Net financing		3,310,999	3,239,861

Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents in the period		(14,393)	83,019

Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period		115,529	32,509

Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period		101,136	115,529

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year ended 31st March 2023

		General Fund £	Taxpayers' Equity £
Balance at 31st March 2021		(3,572,618)	(3,572,618)
Grant-in-aid from The Executive Office	2	3,224,987	3,224,987
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year	App. 1	(3,587,854)	(3,587,854)
Actuarial Gain/(Loss) for year	16	1,069,000	1,069,000
Balance at 31st March 2022		(2,866,485)	(2,866,485)
Grant-in-aid from The Executive Office	2	3,268,494	3,268,494
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year	App. 1	(3,537,458)	(3,537,458)
Actuarial Gain/(Loss) for year	16	2,769,000	2,769,000
Balance at 31st March 2023		(366,449)	(366,449)

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Other Operating Costs

Purchase of goods and services	Note	2022-23 £	2021-22 £
Programme costs		60,082	76,230
Postage, stationery and photocopier costs		720	614
Telephone		3,549	3,385
Rentals under operating leases		40,919	88,466
Repairs and maintenance		46,760	45,493
Professional fees		16,383	24,348
Sundry expenses		1,580	234
HR costs		13,414	19,991
External audit services		24,900	23,000
Internal audit services		6,675	8,207
Bank charges		70	-
		-----	-----
		215,052	289,968
		-----	-----
Depreciation and impairment charges			
Depreciation	7	57,129	7,821
Amortisation	8	6,808	6,933
		-----	-----
		63,937	14,754
		-----	-----
Other Operating Expenditure		2022-23 £	2021-22 £
Staff travel and subsistence		2,675	45
Members and Committee expenses		1,279	121
Interest - Right of Use of Assets		1,759	-
Interest on net defined pension liability	16	63,000	67,000
		-----	-----
		68,713	67,166
		-----	-----

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Appendix 2: Grants Paid in 2022-23

Core Grant Scheme Awards 2022 – 2023

Please Note:

Multiple Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 2 – 4 District Council areas

Regional Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 5 – 11 District Council areas

Reference	Name	Short Description	Amount (£)
Antrim and Newtownabbey			
CFC22/41007	Community Relations Forum	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	37,437.56
Total for Antrim and Newtownabbey			37,437.56
Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon			
CFC22/41024	Shankill Parish Caring Association	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	34,323.25
Total for Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon			34,323.25
Belfast			
CFC22/41040	East Belfast Mission	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	51,606.38
CF22/40010	Falls Women's Centre	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	28,160.26
CF22/40060	North Belfast Interface Network	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	29,476.12
CFC22/41014	Springboard Opportunities Limited	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	51,782.38
Total for Belfast			161,025.14
Causeway Coast and Glens			
CFC22/41018	BCRC	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	40,529.88
Total for Causeway Coast and Glens			40,529.88
Derry and Strabane			
CFC22/41036	The Churches Trust Ltd	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	62,877.13
Total for Derry and Strabane			62,877.13
Multiple			
CF22/40017	Belfast YMCA Limited	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	38,702.64
CF22/40045	Community Relations in Schools (CRIS)	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	79,994.26
CF22/40040	Early Years-the organisation for Young children	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	75,027.27
CF22/40023	Falls Community Council	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	36,205.54
CFC22/41008	Intercomm	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	28,206.42
CF22/40038	PeacePlayers International - Northern Ireland	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	55,306.90
CF22/40041	Tobar Mhuire Retreat Centre	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	19,349.75
Total for Multiple			332,792.78

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Regional			
CFC22/41010	An Gaeláras Limited	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	28,283.63
CF22/40009	Beyond Skin	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	18,673.00
CF22/40048	Irish FA Foundation	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	29,237.30
CF22/40030	Irish School of Ecumenics Belfast	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	29,306.12
CF22/40016	Londonderry Bands Forum	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	45,953.24
CFC22/41038	Nerve Centre	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	26,917.74
CFC22/41033	North West Play Resource Centre	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	37,096.68
CFC22/41028	Partisan Productions	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	33,181.00
CFC22/41023	Rural Community Network	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	59,120.26
CFC22/41022	The Corrymeela Community	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	68,177.75
CFC22/41019	The Junction/Holywell Trust Core Funding Partnership	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	80,195.04
CFC22/41016	TIDES Training	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	56,017.00
CF22/40025	Trademark	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	62,362.54
CF22/40014	Ulster GAA	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	43,184.74
CFC22/41035	Youth Initiatives NI	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	28,798.66
CF22/40026	Youth Link	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	55,694.27
Total for Regional			702,198.97
Overall Total			1,371,184.71

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Community Relations Cultural Diversity Grant Scheme 2022 – 2023

Please Note:

Multiple Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 2 – 4 District Council areas

Regional Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 5 – 11 District Council areas

Reference	Name	Short Project Description	Amount (£)
Antrim and Newtownabbey			
CRCDD22/42131	Falls Women's Centre	50 women will meet at a cross-community social event to hear a talk on drumming traditions, followed by discussion and a buffet supper.	860.00
Total for Antrim and Newtownabbey			860.00
Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon			
CRCDD22/42013	The John Hewitt Society	The John Hewitt International Summer School is a celebrated week-long Festival of Literature and the Arts. The festival provides platforms for debate and discussion to explore the key political and cultural issues of the day, empowering audiences to think critically about their own communities and the world around them.	4,270.00
CRCDD22/42214	Rathfriland and District Regeneration Company Ltd	A cultural fusion project celebrating Burns Night and St Patrick using music, dance and poetry to break down perceptions and bring people together in Rathfriland.	1,249.98
Total for Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon			5,519.98
Belfast			
CRCDD22/42017	Highspring Residents Group	The group are providing a single identity diversionary festival in the Highfield area for the local community during the annual Whiterock band parade. The group look to maintain the good relationships built between both communities in the area by providing an alternative and keeping local youth away from the trouble hotspot of the Springfield Road.	1,150.00

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

CRC22/42022	Lagan Village Youth and Community Group	The group is delivering a 6 week programme of cultural diversity awareness, understanding to a group of 20 young people where they will learn about music, language, dance and other cultural aspects of the different cultures that not only live in the local community but also in the Belfast area.	2,340.00
CRC22/42028	Community Relations in Schools (CRIS)	The group have planned a 3 pronged approach to re-engage both the parents/carers of children that have been part of the Buddy Up programme over the years and also new parents associated with the 6 feeder primary schools across North Belfast.	3,134.00
CRC22/42029	Prime Cut Productions	In My Own Words is a creative writing project designed to result in an Anthology of New Writing from women across Belfast and a Digitised Performance. It is aimed at people whose lives have been adversely and negatively impacted by the legacy of the Northern Irish conflict in order to give a platform and opportunity for expression to the many under-represented citizens of Belfast.	4,250.00
CRC22/42036	All Nations Ministries	All Nations Ministries is planning to host "Global Fun Day". In order to promote social inclusion of immigrant minority communities in NI; provide an opportunity for ethnic minority community members to share their experiences and culture with local NI communities - to enable the building of trust and understanding. .	1,364.37
CRC22/42049	Conway Education Centre	Welcoming our new neighbours. This project aims to improve relations and reduce barriers between local residents and refugee & asylum seeking families who have been housed in west Belfast. The project joins English language learning, key to communication and integration, with learning about Belfast society	810.38

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CRCDD22/42056	British Youth Music Theatre	The project celebrates and acknowledges the important role of peace builders, promoting awareness amongst young cast members, as well as through performances at the Lyric.	2,499.88
CRCDD22/42062	Fighting Words Northern Ireland	Deliver 4 cross community creative writing workshops in East Belfast for young people to explore cultural diversity culminating in a showcase.	3,378.37
CRCDD22/42066	Family Comfort NI	The project will create a diverse range of activities that would bring people from different cultures with different beliefs together to encourage and build community unity.	1,600.00
CRCDD22/42080	Belfast Won't Always Be Like This	The group are planning a full feature documentary tackling the separation walls from a community perspective, and how to end segregation in Belfast	2,000.00
CRCDD22/42081	Refuge Language	This project will see the creation of a Conversation Club for NI's Ukrainian population, many of whom are new in the country.	4,636.38
CRCDD22/42097	Belfast Exposed	This women's cross-community creative project takes inspiration from the Belfast Exposed archive, explores the legacy of internment and empowers women to harness leadership within communities.	4,898.70
CRCDD22/42105	BHST	Information stalls, speeches, performances, talks, lived experiences - all an opportunity to learn and explore how to sustain good mental health with good relations.	1,000.00
CRCDD22/42107	Coiste na nIarchimí	To assure community leaders of the grassroots work Coiste and EPIC do for reconciliation within and between communities	400.00
CRCDD22/42110	EPIC	The British Irish Association Conference offers a unique opportunity to access a wide range of policy influencers from both the political and community sectors.	400.00

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CRCDD22/42111	Northern Ireland Interfaith Forum	An evening event with a wide range of culturally diverse musicians/artists/speakers to celebrate International Peace Day hosted in a neutral Belfast venue.	1,430.00
CRCDD22/42113	East Belfast Enterprise	To engage communities from either side of a peace line to work together on a mural art-work, reflecting their experiences and future aspirations.	2,500.00
CRCDD22/42126	Multi-Ethnic Sports And Cultures Northern Ireland(MSCNI)	We plan to use this medium to bring youths of various community backgrounds together with a sports festival using various sports and Cultural activities.	1,855.20
CRCDD22/42130	All Nations Ministries	Hosting 2 multicultural celebration events for marginalised refugee/asylum seeker women and young people in N. Belfast.	1,280.57
CRCDD22/42140	Belfast South Community Resources	Event where members of the community will enjoy an evening of learning and participating in Indian cultural traditions to celebrate Diwali.	1,500.00
CRCDD22/42142	Imagine Belfast	The project is taking place 20-26 March 2023 with at least 80 events involving over 8,000 people in discussion on diversity & good relations issues.	3,750.00
CRCDD22/42147	174 Trust	'Faith Together for the Common Good' - a 1/2 day Conference	450.00
CRCDD22/42172	Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum	Provide shared trauma training to local people and young people across a North Belfast interface as they deal with people facing trauma and poverty	1,649.00
CRCDD22/42185	EastSide Arts	Creating Space will promote integration and cultural diversity by supporting Hosford's Women's Group to explore their creativity and share their stories through trauma-informed arts practice.	1,352.00
CRCDD22/42201	ArtsEkta	ArtsEkta hope to present a large outdoor procession and experience centered around the stories of Goddesses and Gods of Global Mythology using visual arts.	2,400.00

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CRC22/42226	DU Dance NI	Bringing together women from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds all of whom live in West Belfast to connect, create, share and celebrate through dance.	1,440.00
CRC22/42241	Museum of the Troubles Initiative	We would like to reflect the result of the women's work, that is the design of their exhibit of their experiences during the Troubles, digitally.	675.00
Total for Belfast			54,143.85
Derry and Strabane			
CRC22/42024	The Churches Trust Ltd	Art Exhibition and showcase of creative outputs of the Uniting Opportunities, Community of Homes project, a personal development Good Relations themed project where young people build positive relationship and together address barriers to community participation.	2,484.00
CRC22/42026	Rural Housing Association	A series of Pop-up Global Cafes in rural communities, will celebrate diversity and cultures from across the globe using art, cookery and interactive workshops	4,800.69
CRC22/42040	Kerala Association	Bringing people from all the communities together through art, culture and education thus building good relations between them.	1,500.00
CRC22/42067	An Gaeláras Limited	Providing language classes in a venue accessible to people from communities where learning Irish is not viewed as traditional, e.g. communities described as broadly Unionist.	3,895.00
CRC22/42101	Londonderry Bands Forum	Deliver cross border workshops and a concert in St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin in the build up to St Patrick's Day in a shared Island performance.	1,500.00

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CRCDD22/42171	Newbuildings Cricket Club	The project will bring young people from the Newbuilding's and surrounding areas together in a programme of activities designed to provide inclusivity and remove stereotypes.	1,100.00
CRCDD22/42176	Lincoln Courts Youth and Community Association	It will focus on developing a greater understanding, forging stronger links and focus on breaking down sectarian barriers between young people from greater waterside area.	1,370.00
Total for Derry and Strabane			16,649.69
Fermanagh and Omagh			
CRCDD22/42058	Dylan Quinn Dance Theatre	A programme of 160 hours of creative dance workshops for young people living in and around Omagh and Enniskillen. Exploring diversity and celebration of community.	2,500.00
CRCDD22/42118	Erne East Community Partnership (Ltd)	To extend knowledge/understanding through shared cross community Men's Shed heritage and environmental greenwood/upcycled woodcraft activities delivered in shared spaces/services which are accessible to all.	1,770.00
CRCDD22/42129	George Elliott BKYL Academy	Good relations football and educational programme which will encourage greater levels of respect, learning, tolerance and understanding amongst young people in the Fermanagh/Omagh area.	1,204.00
Total for Fermanagh and Omagh			5,474.00
Multiple			
CRCDD22/42007	EMSONI - Ethnic Minority Sports Organisation NI	Confederation festival is designed as a multicultural day to celebrate shared space, community cohesion, cultural diversity and the cultures of the 20 participating communities that will come together for 11 weeks of intercommunity football activities.	4,800.00

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CRC22/42019	Belfast YMCA Limited	This exciting new project is about young people getting to experience what life is like for others in their community. Participants will not just talk about cultural diversity, they will experience it first-hand through a week long programme of visits to places of worship, dialogue sessions in which young people will share their reflections and learning in a mixed group.	1,161.00
CRC22/42042	Castle Juniors FC	This project will offer young people an opportunity to combine a residential football festival with teams across Europe and an educational programme focusing on diversity. Community Relations elements will address sectarianism and racism while engaging with other young people from different cultures.	2,320.00
CRC22/42050	Sole Purpose Productions	Sole Purpose is planning to work with PsycheDelight Theatre Company to bring their play 'Mohand and Peter' to Derry and Belfast for Community Relations Week.	4,285.00
CRC22/42054	Together in Music	A series of 6 Cross Community work shops for musicians who represent Ulster Scots and Irish Traditional cultures. The Workshops will concentrate on the common roots that underpin both these traditions and how these traditions have been used as weapons in the Constitutional issues still very much alive today. We will discuss the New Decade New Approach document and how it feeds into Cultural Identity	4,000.00
CRC22/42057	TADA Rural Support Network	A multi-cultural networking event to bring together a diverse range of cultures to promote understanding, respect and engagement with all sections of the community.	3,700.00

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CRCDD22/42060	Artsawonder	This project is an evening event with panels including members of the religious, political sphere, representatives of civil society punctuated with arts performances.	4,187.00
CRCDD22/42079	Kabosh	Kabosh present a regional tour of the award-winning 'Green & Blue' to coincide with Good Relations Week 2022. Accompanied by workshops and post-show discussions.	5,000.00
CRCDD22/42090	Two Castles Community Development Association	Soapbox Derby, with novelty races for both children & adults. Funday with traditional cultural activities and entertainment showcasing all sections of the community.	2,385.00
CRCDD22/42094	Beyond Skin	A culturally diverse festival celebrating the planting of 'the 100 Book' through performances, talks, workshops and a local artisan market.	4,090.00
CRCDD22/42122	Drumalis	The programme comprising 15 seminars and attracting diverse participants engages with TBUC Key Priority 4 with its emphasis on community belonging and cultural diversity.	1,490.00
CRCDD22/42190	Mandarin Speakers Association Derry	Chinese New Year Gala, Chinese class, art project, Chinese decoration to teach local people about Chinese culture and to reinforce Chinese culture with Chinese people	2,330.00
Total for Multiple			39,748.00
Newry, Mourne and Down			
CRCDD22/42045	Iur Cinn Fleadh	Dancing on the Green, 3 local housing estates, dancing, singing and music, Irish, Polish, Belfast choir. Bring fleadh out to communities, reach people of various cultures	1,630.25
CRCDD22/42059	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Limited	This project will improve community relations during the 11th July celebrations in Kilkeel by organising a major family-friendly Festival, which everyone feels safe to attend.	3,275.00
Total for Newry, Mourne and Down			4,905.25

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Regional			
CRCDD22/42009	The Corrymeela Community	Faith in Each Other - a semi-annual residential programme that explores how religious identity in Northern Ireland affects one's sense of belonging	2,415.00
CRCDD22/42014	Success Dragon & Lion Dance Association	To provide a multi-cultural Chinese New Year event, which will be entertaining, educational and inclusive. We aim to raise the profile of Chinese Community, other ethnic minorities and their culture, reduce stereotyping and develop ongoing partnerships	2,500.00
CRCDD22/42018	Arts Ekta	This project will deliver the 16th edition of the multi award winning Belfast Mela, Northern Ireland's largest and leading celebration of cultural diversity. Belfast Mela (meaning to meet) is a major citizen-led cultural festival celebrating NI's diverse communities through many forms of music, dance, food, language and art.	5,000.00
CRCDD22/42031	Spanner in the works theatre company	The Buttercup play spans over the last 4 decades of life in Northern Ireland. The play opens up an honest and difficult debate about how it's past has affected future generations. Suicide rates in Northern Ireland over the last few years have risen steeply, has our troubled past played a part in this?	4,550.00
CRCDD22/42035	Northern Ireland Environment Link	NIEL wishes to employ a consultant or researcher to review the nature of engagement of ethnic minorities in environmental issues, projects, and activities.	5,000.00
CRCDD22/42047	Irish School of Ecumenics	Church Fora bi-annual CONNECT conferences bring together representatives of Church Fora to learn more about significant societal issues (June conference: Faith and Democracy) to share experiences and learnings from their work programmes which aim to promote reconciliation, an end to sectarianism and racism, and a shared community.	1,182.00

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CRCDD22/42048	The de Borda Institute	The Northern Ireland problem, based as it is on a belief in majoritarianism, may best be overcome by a more pluralist approach to decision-making.	475.00
CRCDD22/42051	Foundation for Forgiveness and Reconciliation	A new podcast series profiling peacemakers, activists and artists from both sides of the conflict here in N.I. The series will include 2 live events	4,650.00
CRCDD22/42053	Youth Initiatives	OUTBOUND is good relations volunteer leadership training & development programme for participants aged 15-25 from the 6 Northern Ireland YI youth community hubs.	3,470.23
CRCDD22/42078	Integrated Education Fund	The programme goal is to create better understanding of Integrated Education amongst faith groups by bringing together key figures at a series of interactive events.	470.00
CRCDD22/42103	Trademark	Education and dialogue workshops focused on issues of history, identity and cultural expression, concluding with a residential focused on the present and future of NI.	1,200.00
CRCDD22/42104	PeacePlayers International - Northern Ireland	The CDP will equip a new generation of young people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to build peace and reconciliation.	2,290.00
CRCDD22/42121	Community Dialogue	Community Dialogue and partners will meet to assess the state of the Agreement on its 25th anniversary and agree strategic responses to outstanding challenges.	2,438.00
CRCDD22/42136	Spanner in the works theatre company	6 performances / workshops of play what's if across Northern Ireland The story of one mother's loss. The Shankill Road, Belfast 1993	3,090.00
CRCDD22/42152	APAC	Exhibitions, a zine, and talk will be presented at Parliament Buildings Belfast. They will showcase APAC's cross community project that reflects diversity and culture.	1,620.00
CRCDD22/42163	Shared Future News	A launch event with interviews of participants in What Northern Ireland Means to Me book.	800.00

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CRC22/42195	The Fostering Network	This project would support kinship fostering families to nurture hope through connecting with, understanding and celebrating each other, themselves, their cultures and diverse narratives.	1,700.00
CRC22/42203	Terra Nova Productions	Terra-Nova will bring 12+ diverse groups together to participate in 3 programmes exploring racial and cross-community issues through art, challenging misconceptions around our shared history.	1,270.00
CRC22/42219	JoinHer Network CIC	Celebration of women's achievements, successes and experiences that impact our diverse communities.	2,130.00
Total for Regional			46,250.23
Overall Total			173,551.00

North Belfast Scheme 2022

Reference	Name	Short Description	Amount (£)
Belfast			
NBF22/46001	Ardoyne Youth Enterprises	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	79,999.00
NBF22/46002	Ashton Centre	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	100,000.00
NBF22/46003	Ballysillan Community Forum	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	54,000.00
NBF22/46004	Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	108,000.00
NBF22/46005	Greater Whitewell Community Surgery	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	47,167.00
NBF22/46006	Intercomm	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	88,000.00
NBF22/46007	Ligoniel Improvement Association	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	60,000.00
NBF22/46008	Mount Vernon Community Development Fund	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	33,000.00
NBF22/46009	Shankill Women's Centre (SWC)	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	90,000.00
NBF22/46010	The Vine Centre	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	14,134.00
Overall Total			674,300.00

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Pathfinder Grant Scheme 2022 – 2023

Please Note:

Multiple Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 2 – 4 District Council areas

Reference	Name	Short Project Description	Amount (£)
Belfast			
PF22/43004	Forthspring Inter Community Group	The planned activities across 3 distinct cross community projects will focus on raising awareness of the key drivers of sectarianism, segregation and interface violence. Forthspring's message is about finding commonality, building positive community relations and promoting non-violence as a methodology for social action. They will also focus on good relations activity in an increasingly Multi-Cultural community, promoting and celebrating diversity.	22,319.00
PF22/43025	Blackmountain Shared Space Project	The programme is directly linked to the ongoing political/contentious discussions between residents, in particularly men in the Upper Springfield/Upper Shankill areas	7,500.00
Total for Belfast			29,819.00
Derry and Strabane			
PF22/43018	Cathedral Youth Club	Creative activities for young people which will impact on their physical and mental health as well as improving their understanding and knowledge of other cultures.	3,375.00
PF22/43023	Bloody Sunday Trust	This project will fund a PT community relations coordinator for the Bloody Sunday Trust putting a targeted resource into community relations work across the city.	14,665.00
Total for Derry and Strabane			18,040.00
Multiple			
PF22/43008	Shankill Women's Centre (SWC)	The group intends to provide a variety of project activities on a shared community (PUL/CNR) basis with GR/CD themes that will help create a more cohesive, peaceful society through: GR/CD Training/Courses, Dialogue, Personal Development, Residential, Conferences etc.	24,832.00
PF22/43010	St. Columb's Park House	St Columb's Park Reconciliation Trust is at the forefront of innovative peacebuilding within the Waterside area of the City. The organisation will deliver a series of community based good relations projects that meets the current needs of the communities with which they work. Their programming includes working and mediating at one of the City's most 'active' interface areas, engaging young people at a flashpoint between the peace bridge and a predominantly PUL community.	21,736.52
Total for Multiple			46,568.52
Overall Total			94,427.52

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Publications Grant Scheme 2022- 2023

Please Note:

Regional Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 5 – 11 District Council areas

Reference	Name	Book Title	Amount (£)
Regional			
Pubs22/44013	North West Cultural Partnership	Division, Partition, and Political Change in Ireland 1920-1925	1,470.00
Pubs22/44014	Irish School of Ecumenics	Is There A Common Good? An Educational Resource	4,700.00
Pubs22/44034	Trademark	The Double Transition: 25 Years Since the Good Friday Agreement	2,711.00
Overall Total			8,881.00

Media Grant Scheme 2022 – 2023

Reference	Name	Short Description of Project	Amount (£)
Belfast			
Media22/45012	Northern Visions	An engagement process with community groups involved in community relations work and peace building to deliver a series of four discussion programmes around predetermined themes and four location based news features, highlighting their work and best practice for broadcast on NVTv, Belfast's local public service channel.	5000.00
Media22/45030	Richard Willis	"Disagreeing Well" will blend a powerful and bespoke piece of spoken word poetry (performed by Fighting Word's Benji Wallis), with striking animated visuals. The overarching message of the piece will challenge how young people engage and communicate with those that they do not agree with.	5,000.00
Total for Belfast			10,000.00
Derry and Strabane			
Media22/45022	Holywell Trust	Following the success of the Forward Together Podcast, we will continue and deepen the conversations that have been started through the reimagined Holywell Trust Conversations podcast series. For this	4,954.37

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		series we will carry out 18 new interviews with linked articles on Slugger O'Toole.	
Total for Derry and Strabane			4,954.37
Overall Total			14,954.37

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107530

Annual report

Company Registration No. NI24026

Charity No. 107530

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council
Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31st March 2023

Presented to The Northern Ireland Assembly by the Community Relations Council on 23rd
November 2023

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

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General Information

Chair	M McDonald
Registered office	Equality House Shaftesbury Square Belfast BT2 7DP
Auditors	Comptroller and Auditor General Northern Ireland Audit Office 106 University Street Belfast BT7 1EU
Solicitors	Lewis Silkin 220 Ormeau Road Belfast BT7 2FY
Principal bankers	Bank of Ireland Donegal Place Belfast
Charity number	107530
Company registration number	NI24026
Website:	https://www.community-relations.org.uk/

Chair's Foreword

As we end the 2022-23 financial year it is appropriate to reflect back upon another successful year for the Community Relations Council (CRC) in its efforts to continue peacebuilding and social cohesion across our society as part of Government's T:BUC (Together: Building a United Community) Strategy delivered through The NI Executive Office (TEO). The Chief Executive, Jacqueline Irwin has covered the advances made in her annual report and I would like to take this opportunity to thank her and all our staff for their collective input into enabling CRC to meet its targets over the last year.

As we returned to meetings in person as well as online this year it was good to engage with our client base and partners on the ground. The resilience shown by community peace builders right across N Ireland has been remarkable to witness and signifies a very strong infrastructure for continued peace building and reconciliation.

CRC Board has completed its first 3-year term and has developed into a very cohesive group of Directors providing strategic direction to TEO staff as they navigate the implementation of our Strategy and Corporate Plan. At this point in time and in the absence of Ministers and an Executive, TEO have been unable to appoint members to a second term within CRC. However, I am pleased to note that our directors and I have agreed with TEO to have their first term extended on a 6 monthly basis to ensure business continuity in the short-term.

I would like to take this opportunity as we approach the end of another year to remember two people who have been intricately involved with CRC and a lot of other organisations on our journey to educate our children, remember the past and learn lessons for the future.

It was with great sadness that we learnt about the death of Baroness May Blood, a great champion of community relations. May devoted a significant part of her life to community relations and education. She was a remarkable woman and the first from Northern Ireland to be given a life peerage. May's tireless work with the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) has been an inspiration to us all.

The Community Relations Council was honoured to have awarded May the Good Relations Award 2021 for her selfless work and for being a champion of community relations in Northern Ireland. Her comments on receipt of that award are worthy of attention and remembrance:

"My passion for the past 20 years has been integrated education. The work that the community relations people are doing, and the work that the people in integrated education are doing – is the vital work. We are building a foundation for a better Northern Ireland. We want to change Northern Ireland and integrated education is certainly moving in that direction."

Dr Éamon Phoenix, winner of the Good Relations Award in 2022 unfortunately also died suddenly leaving not only an enormous personal gap for his family but a big professional gap for his colleagues.

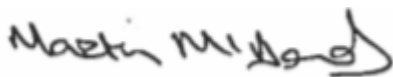
Éamon was a political historian and broadcaster, and an Irish News columnist. He was a member of and sole northern person on the Taoiseach's Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations and a noted author on modern Irish history. His knowledge and understanding of Irish history and particularly the home rule crisis in its widest context was considered encyclopedic by his peers.

Previously he was Head of Lifelong Learning at Stranmillis College. During this time, he pioneered combining modern Irish history and adult learning by collaborating with people from diverse backgrounds, guiding, challenging, and supporting participants through site visits in Belfast and Dublin to broaden their understanding of the island. Éamon worked tirelessly during his lifetime to build a public understanding of Irish History and to communicate this through for example, engaging lectures, TV programmes, radio and podcast interviews, and study trips and visits.

Éamon delivered the annual NI Assembly Speaker lecture on the Decade of Centenaries and also spoke at the events hosted jointly by the Speakers of the Dáil Eireann and the NI Assembly. He also designed public lecture series for Belfast City Council including The Somme, The Rising, the King's speech.

Éamon's approach combined a deep respect for his audience and their knowledge and understanding, while adding local context and stories to the major issues and events of the time of the broader context. As far afield as Armagh, Mid Ulster, Omagh and Lisburn and Castlereagh he was able to weave the local and the broad context together in a way that enables the audience to question and speak to one another in a safe space. May he rest in peace in the knowledge that his legacy will have a lasting impact upon us all.

I am delighted as Chair to present this year's Annual Report which gives detail on how we have managed our finances, governance, and risk matters in a comprehensive way in line with government requirements. Our performance indicators confirm how we have met our obligations, both to our sponsor Department and the local groups we fund. Can I conclude by thanking my fellow Board members for their support and co-operation over the last year. Our relationship with our sponsor department, TEO, continues to flourish and augurs well as we all collectively consider the review of the TBUC Strategy in the coming months.



Martin McDonald

Chair

Community Relations Council

Chief Executive's Comment

The last few weeks of the 2022-23 financial year were full of events to mark the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. There is always a balance to be struck between remembering the past, responding well to the present and planning for a better future. People differ on where that balance should be struck, as the feedback about the 25th anniversary showed. Our point of view is affected by how we individually experienced the time before the signing of the Agreement, what has happened to us since then, and how optimistic we are now about the future. There is no right or wrong perspective. The constant challenge lies in accepting that there are different views; that this will always be the case; and that we will always work better together when we take this into account: that was perhaps the most important lesson of the Agreement.

Although we reached a political agreement 25 years ago, the time since has shown that many aspects of our conflict remain to be resolved. Thankfully, the use of violence has been rejected by the vast majority in our society but sadly not yet everyone, as we saw again this year. The Agreement did not mark the end of peacebuilding, it did not even mark the beginning of it. The peace that was built before the Agreement was signed was an essential foundation to reaching the political accord (as was the weariness with the conflict). The peace-building work that has gone on since then has shown how long it takes to learn to live together well; how easy and often we slip; and how differently people experienced the past and the times we live in now. Peace processes are not linear, they are not guaranteed; they are not experienced in the same way, at the same time, by everyone.

Young people who did not live through the events leading up to and after the signing of the Agreement will view the discussions during the anniversary differently to those of us who did. For them it is largely someone else's story, mythologised by some (because we are all skilled at passing on our version of history) and ignored by others who are focused on the concerns of today and the future.

What will come next? With such a mixture of experiences, perspectives, and levels of engagement, the challenge is to identify and keep focused on the peace-building issues of now. To do so we must keep refreshing our approach to peace-building and good relations to ensure it is relevant to the times we live in. We must carry the lessons of our history into the future in a way that is appropriate and not bound by the past. As we face into the next challenging financial year, the Community Relations Council is in listening mode. As the impact of the budget cuts become evident across the region and projects that have been relied on by so many begin to disappear, we will need to bring our years of experience to bear in deciding on the most effective things to do now. The next chapter of peacebuilding is already being written. What do we want to be said about it in 25 years from now?

As an Arm's Length body of The Executive Office, the Community Relations Council is a key delivery partner responsible for funding programmes across the region that tackle sectarianism, racism, and to build good community relationships now and for the future. As this report demonstrates, in 2022-23 we continued to manage our resources well, accounting for them to the high standard required of public bodies and reported our

sponsoring department and others in a timely and transparent way. This year we welcomed the opportunity to safely meet again with colleagues in the community relations network as we incorporated the changes developed during the Covid-19 pandemic into our agile working method. We now routinely deliver our services on-line and in person.

We continue to be inspired by the energy and commitment shown by those we fund. They continue to develop practical ways to integrate their work on building cross-community relationships with the delivery of other services vital to local needs. This is not new; good community relationships have always been an important foundation to the most effective delivery of other services, but they will be even more essential as we face into 2023-24 and the current public sector funding crisis.

The search for common ground and shared humanity will continue in 2023-24. Many of the problems faced in 2022-23, including the ongoing collapse of the NI Executive, the impact of the war in Ukraine, and the rising environmental challenges will continue to be a feature of the work in 2023-24. The Community Relations Council is playing its part in the environmental challenge, learning how to deliver our services in a sustainable way and based on the knowledge we already apply to community relations work: small actions taken by a large number of people can bring about positive change.

In 2022-23 127 organisations and projects that received funding totalling £2,323,278 across our grant schemes: Community Relations and Cultural Diversity (CR/CD) Small Grant Scheme, the Core Funding Grant Scheme, the Pathfinder Scheme, the Publications and Media Scheme and The Executive Office's North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme. We continued to be a hub for the exchange of learning and best practice, providing online and in-person development and engagement opportunities to our funded groups, community practitioners, policymakers, academics, and wider networks. During the year we organised three meetings of the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Engagement Forum on behalf of The Executive Office. The complex weave of perspectives necessary to reflect the diversity of our community is represented in the themes and participation in the Forum which continues to be a platform for structured engagement between those involved in the design of the policy and the practitioners working on various aspects of delivery.

Good Relations Week 2022 incorporated 264 events and this year we were able to have delivered them in-person as well as online. The steering group included representatives from The Executive Office, the Department for Communities, the Department for Justice, the Education Authority, Nerve Centre, Libraries NI, Cathedral Quarter Trust, and T:BUC Young Ambassadors, NI Environment Link, The Rainbow Project, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, and Another World Belfast. As always, we are grateful to the steering group and everyone else who contributed to the week without them the week couldn't take place.

Our communication channels remained an important aspect of our work, and our website, twitter and e-news continued to be a valued source of information. Our website attracted 25,766 users and 67,819 page views. We had 2,345 subscribers to our monthly email newsletter, 7,813 followers on Twitter with post impressions of 348,400 and 3,900 followers on Facebook with a post reach of 308,800.

This year we concluded our work on the Decade of Centenaries project which has been run jointly with The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Details of the many useful resources developed during the project are now available on our website. This year sadly we also lost Dr. Eamon Phoenix. Eamon made an amazing contribution to the body of work undertaken during the decade project. Such was his personal contribution that the CRC was delighted to award him the Community Relations Award for exceptional achievement. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of our history and was called on by so many of us to help with our events during the project. Eamon always managed to pick out some moment in history that perfectly captured the complex, often contradictory nature of our story. I could not here begin to capture the enormous contribution Eamon made. We are forever in his debt, privileged to have worked with him, continuing to miss him at each and every gathering and honoured to have some small examples of his wonderful perspectives and oratory in our web archive.

This year we were also sorry to hear of the death of another previous Good Relations Award recipient, Baroness May Blood. The Community Relations Council was honoured to have awarded May the Good Relations Award 2021 for her selfless work and for being a champion of community relations in Northern Ireland. The Good Relations Award highlights exceptional achievement in promoting community relations, intercultural work, and peacebuilding – Baroness Blood was a shining example. May devoted a significant part of her life to community relations and education. She was a remarkable woman and the first from Northern Ireland to be given a life peerage. May's tireless work with the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) was an inspiration to us all.

The Community Relations Council is grateful to colleagues in The Executive Office, our work in 2022-23 could not have been done without their valued support. I am also grateful to our Chair, Martin McDonald, and the Board members for their support and guidance during the year. As always, I am also grateful to my fellow staff members for their continued commitment to building good community relations.



Jacqueline Irwin

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Strategic Report

i) Performance Overview

The directors are pleased to present their Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023. This overview section gives a summary on the creation of the Community Relations Council, its aims and objectives, the risks it currently faces and its achievements over the 2022-23 year.

Principal Activities

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council was established by government in 1990 as an independent charity and a company limited by guarantee.

The overall aim for the Community Relations Council, as set out in its Articles of Association, is the advancement of education and of other charitable purposes beneficial to the community in Northern Ireland (“the area of benefit”), and in particular, but not so as to limit the generality of the foregoing, the advancement of education in, and the understanding of, the different cultural traditions of the peoples of the area of benefit and the improvement of community relations in the area of benefit.

The Board of the Community Relations Council has nine members, meets every six weeks and is supported by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Community Relations Council is responsible for delivery of the organisation's strategy and is supported by three Directors: Director of Funding and Development, Director of Community Engagement and Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel. The staffing structure of the Community Relations Council is currently made up of 17 employees as presented in the organisation chart shown on page 13. The Community Relations Council encourages and develops employees to enhance the contribution they make to the Community Relations Council's work and the issues important to developing good community relations. Although this is a small team, the Community Relations Council routinely works in partnership across the region with other bodies that have good relations objectives.

Following the relaxation of the government's Covid-19 advice that people should work from home whenever possible, the Community Relations Council delivered its 2022-23 operational plan in an agile mix of on-line and in-person activities. This approach has enabled the organisation to deliver a more sustainable programme that will reduce our impact on the environment.

Review of activities

Strategic Plan 2020-24

The Community Relations Council takes its planning objectives from “Together: Building a United Community” (T:BUC) published by The Executive Office in 2013. Following public consultation, the 2020-23 strategic plan for the Community Relations Council was approved in January 2021. It sets out the strategic objectives of the Community Relations Council in the context of T:BUC and provides the strategic context for the work delivered by the Community Relations Council during 2022-23. With the agreement of The Executive Office CRC's 2020-23 Strategic Plan has been extended to 2024 to facilitate alignment with the outcome of the Department's review of Together: Building a United Community.

The Community Relations Council promotes good relations among the citizens and communities of Northern Ireland and supports the delivery of the Programme for Government (PfG) and the T:BUC strategy. To fulfil these aims the Community Relations Council focuses on the following areas of activity set out in our 2020-24 Strategic Plan:

- a) Distribution of funding, in collaboration with The Executive Office, to build and support good community relationships
- b) Promotion of learning, best practice and assist good communication between all relevant sectors and Government in the delivery of the T:BUC Strategy and good relations outcomes
- c) Ensuring the efficient and effective use of public resources allocated to it by operating to the highest standard of corporate governance in line with relevant guidance and best practice.

Business Plan 2022-23

The business model employed by the Community Relations Council to ensure delivery of its key priorities and achievement of its objectives is implemented through three key functional activities; Funding and Development; Community Engagement; and Finance, Administration and Personnel.

The Community Relations Council's 2022-23 Business Plan had the following three strategic objectives:

- a) Delivering funding that contributes to sustainable development, well-being and the common good by building and supporting good community relationships.
- b) Supporting effective delivery and learning between all sectors and government to assist implementation of the Programme for Government and T:BUC strategy.
- c) Ensuring the efficient and effective use of allocated resources and public expenditure by ensuring that CRC delivers a well governed, trusted and effective public service.

Risk and Uncertainty

The Community Relations Council, as a community relations development organisation with a funding role, must be prepared to deal with opportunities and risks associated with the nature of its work. The Community Relations Council's appetite for risk is determined by the belief that it is not possible to eliminate risk. There will always be a level of residual risk associated with the work that cannot be eliminated but may be mitigated to an acceptable level.

A series of risks related to delivery of the Community Relations Council's objectives were managed during the year. The Community Relations Council has identified the following as the principal risks and uncertainties facing the organisation at 31st March 2023:

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Mitigations</i>
Resources - Financial	In developing a business case to implement Department of Finance Pay Remit guidance it has become apparent that employees' pension schemes and pension contributions is a complicated and dynamic area, and as such the financial implications have significant inherent uncertainty.	The Community Relations Council will continue to work with The Executive Office and Department of Finance to achieve full compliance with Department of Finance guidance.
Resources - Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of staffing issues within CRC.	CRC's temporary Finance Manager began full time on Wednesday 8 th March 2023. CRC received a resignation from the Director of Funding and Development at the end of March 2023.
Resource – Financial	This risk considers the impact of the increase in External Audit Fee	The Chair raised this matter with TEO. TEO is now investigating whether this is a widespread issue across ALBs. Since then, the Audit Office has written to CRC outlining the costs for 2022-23 audit.
Resources – Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of recent correspondence relating to the NILGOSC Pension Scheme	CRC has received legal correspondence about the effects of changes made to pensions as a result of the enactment of the Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014. Legal advice has been taken. CRC's solicitors drafted a response to the correspondence. With the approval of the Chair, the submission was made to the Tribunal Service on Friday 25 th November 2022. This letter has been shared with Board members.
Resource – Financial	This risk considers the impact CRC faces in terms of the 2023/24 budget from The Executive Office. Resource budget confirmation - £2,998k confirmed on 28 th September 2023. GIA (Grant-In-Aid – Cash) £3,033k confirmed on 27 th September 2023	TEO announced that the Department would likely face a 10%-15% cut to their budget. CRC have incurred a 10% cut to Resource & Cash budgets in 2023-24

A more detailed explanation of the Community Relations Council's Internal Control and Risk Management process, including the Community Relations Council's principal risks and uncertainties, is included on pages 39 to 45.

The Community Relations Council monitors its performance by comparing actual performance to targeted performance as detailed in the 2022-23 business plan. Performance against business plan targets is reported through the management team to the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Board and The Executive Office. Where comparison between targeted and planned performance has indicated a risk that a business plan objective may not be achieved then mitigating action will be taken and if necessary, reported on the risk register.

Going Concern

The Executive Office wrote to the Community Relations Council confirming that funding had been secured for the 2023-24 financial year. The Board is satisfied that the Community Relations Council is a going concern on the basis that it has a reasonable expectation that the Community Relations Council will continue to operate for the foreseeable future. In January 2020-21 the Community Relations Council received Ministerial approval for the 2020-23 Strategic Plan from The Executive Office. The Executive Office has agreed that the Strategic Plan should be extended for 1 year to allow time for the alignment of the next strategic plan with the outcome of the review of Together: Building a United Community and the next Programme for Government. Based on this agreement, the 2023-24 business plan is at an advanced stage of preparation and is with The Executive Office officials pending Ministerial approval. The financial statements are therefore prepared on the going concern basis.

The Restricted Pension Reserve, which is the valuation of the company's pension scheme at 31st March 2023 shows a funding surplus of £194,000. The surplus represents the difference between the pension fund and the value of its underlying assets. With effect from 1st April 2019, The Executive Office has provided a guarantee to Northern Ireland Local Government Office Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) in respect of any deficit. In the event that the Community Relations Council becomes insolvent or enters into liquidation, The Executive Office will pay to NILGOSC any unpaid scheme liabilities. The guarantee mitigates the Community Relations Council's solvency and liquidity risk in respect of the Restricted Pension Reserve.

Summary Performance Appraisal

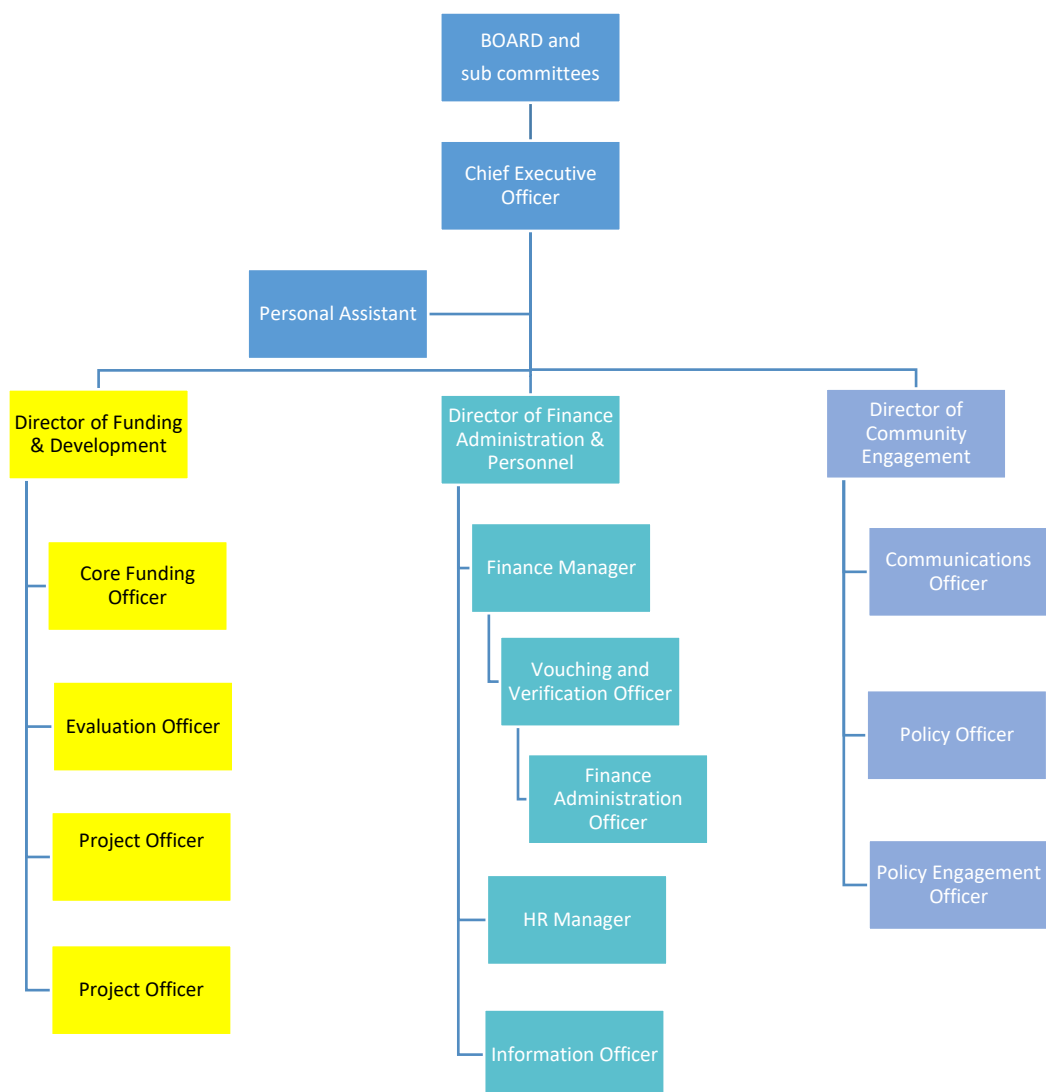
During the year the Community Relations Council achieved delivery of 19 key performance indicators (KPIs).

This included the following achievements:

- 100% of applications for 2023/24 Core Funding has been processed within the agreed timescale. A total of 31 awards have been made with a value of £1,381,520.
- A total of 74 CR/CD small grants, Media, and Publications grants applications awarded funding in 2022/23.
- Over the year 402 people attended the three Together: Building a United Community Engagement Forums, 19% new attendees, with 99% rating the Engagement Forum as good, very good or excellent.
- CRC's Good Relations Week 2022 took place from 20th to 26th September on the theme of UN Sustainability Goals. 264 registered events took place with 95% of attendees stating they would recommend Good Relations Week as a positive opportunity for groups and individuals.
- Two Shared Learning Events took place with CRC staff and The Executive Office colleagues on the topic of Good Relations work and Sustainability Goals.
- 44% of CRC Newsletter subscribers are highly engaged in and regularly open the monthly eNews.
- CRC's Internal Audits all received a 'satisfactory' assurance. These reports related to: Finance and Complaints Handling; Grant Administration; IT and Continuation Planning. Only priority three recommendations were received, and these have been followed up.
- 84.2% annual budget allocated to funding and engagement activities.

The continued downward pressures on public sector finance are always a risk to the Community Relations Council being able to deliver its full strategic ambition. Strained relationships and other pressures in the political arena also represent a risk to community relations. These risks are considered as part of the Community Relations Council's risk management process, with additional mitigating actions identified and reported to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Organisation Chart



ii) PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

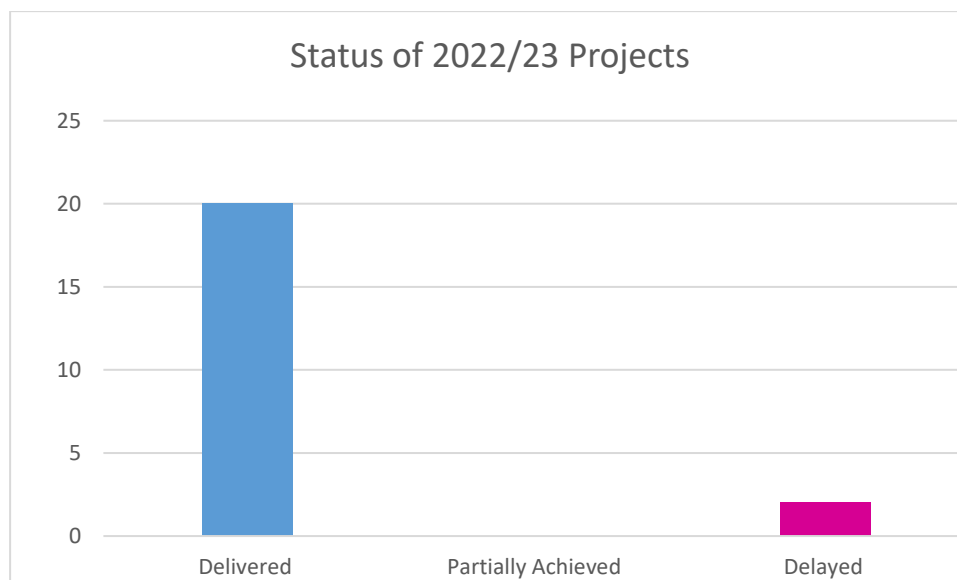
A) Summary

The key undertakings during 2022-23 to deliver on the Community Relations Council's priorities included:

1. the Executive Office funding provided to the Community Relations Council for 2022-23 was distributed to assist with achievement of the Programme for Government (PfG) and T:BUC strategic outcomes;
2. the Community Relations Council supported the implementation of the T:BUC Strategy and related PfG outcomes by providing policy feedback to TEO through a series of events including the T:BUC Engagement Forum, inputting to relevant T:BUC sub-groups and giving guidance on good relations best practice to relevant stakeholders;
3. the Community Relations Council delivered the annual Good Relations week with a mixture of online and in-person events in collaboration with The Executive Office, the Department for Communities, the Department of Justice, NI Environment Link, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, The Rainbow Project, Another World Belfast, and the Education Authority. The week successfully encouraged and celebrated good relations;
4. the Community Relations Council co-ordinated the Decade of Commemoration project and hosted the interagency roundtable that ensured information was shared across stakeholders;
5. project resources continue to be disseminated to share learning and best practice within and between relevant public bodies and the voluntary and community sector;
6. the Community Relations Council delivered its work with a commitment to a public service ethos – transparency, accountability, equality, efficiency including managing ongoing financial pressures in 2022-23;
7. the Community Relations Council implemented changes to its Assurance and Accountability processes, including updates to its risk management strategy, defining its risk appetite, revising the risk register and the introduction of assurance statements and delivery reports at the Directorate Level;
8. the Community Relations Council, with the approval of the Board, agreed a paper setting out CRC's commitment to sustainability and making a number of pledges related to the environment, health, and our shared earth.
9. following consultation with its employees the Community Relations Council completed a series of projects to enhance its employee engagement framework.

The 2022-23 business plan was laid out in the three strategic areas, Funding; T:BUC Engagement; and Delivery and Trusted and Effective Public Service and Good Governance.

The performance of the Community Relations Council is set out in the chart below which summarises stages of completion of each of the projects undertaken during 2022-23. Further detail for each project is given on pages 16 to 25.



Long Term Expenditure Trend

Long term Expenditure Analysis	<u>2019-20</u>	<u>2020-21</u>	<u>2021-22</u>	<u>2022/23</u>	<u>2023/24 Projections</u>
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Grants	2,115	2,103	2,252	2,323	1,931
Programme Costs	79	54	76	60	24
Salaries	841	892	979	909	798
Overheads	263	242	296	288	216
Total Expenditure	3,299	3,291	3,603	3,580	2,969

Since 2016-17 the Community Relations Council has been allocated £670K for NBSGRP grant awards without receiving additional resource to administer the scheme.

During this extended period of financial constraint, the Community Relations Council continues to protect, as far as possible, resources being allocated to funded groups by minimising cuts to grants and programme costs. The Community Relations Council awarded £2,337k in grants (cash awards) during the 2022-23 financial year being 3.7% more than prior year.

B) Detailed Performance Analysis

The directors are pleased to present Detailed Performance Analysis for the year ended 31st March 2023. This analysis section provides detail on the performance of the Community Relations Council by its key functions and objectives during the 2022-23 year.

Key Performance Indicators

The Community Relations Council Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are included in the annual business plan. Performance against those indicators is reported to the Board and to The Executive Office each quarter. The risk management process is designed to ensure that sufficient internal control is in place to manage uncertainty in achieving the Community Relations Council's KPIs and to identify additional action where necessary.

Programme for Government

The Community Relations Council's KPIs have an outcome focus that aims to ensure that work undertaken by the organisation leads to a real difference to society. Peace-building and improving community relations contribute to the conditions in which all of the Programme for Government (PfG) indicators and outcome are more likely to be achieved. There are, however, a number of draft PfG indicators and outcomes to which the work of the Community Relations Council is particularly relevant:

Indicators		Outcomes
1. Reduce crime (relevant to CRC, crime motivated by sectarianism or racism)	30. Improve our attractiveness as a destination	7. We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other
26. Increase respect for each other	31. Increase shared space	9. We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity
27. Improve cultural participation	35. Increase reconciliation	10. We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest
28. Increase the confidence and capability of people and communities	40. Improve our international reputation	

The Community Relations Council's annual business plan contributes towards the delivery of the Together: Building a United Community strategy's priorities and associated outcomes. The strategy outlines how Government, community and individuals will work together to build a united community and achieve change.

Funding and Development

In 2022-23 the Community Relations Council delivered the Community Relations and Cultural Diversity Small Grant Scheme, the Core Funding Grant Scheme, the Pathfinder Scheme, the

Publications and Media Scheme and, on behalf of The Executive Office, the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme (NBSGRP). In total, 127 organisations and projects received funding offers of £2,323,000.

Thirty-one organisations received grants awards of £1,371,185 from the Core Fund and ten organisations received grant awards totalling £674,300 from NBSGRP. In addition to the Core Fund and NBSGRP schemes, the Community Relations Council awarded £173,551 in funding to 74 projects from 104 applications received under the CRCDD funding programme dealing with the legacy of the conflict, peace-building, tackling sectarianism and racism, and building good relations in our diverse community.

Since 1st April 2018, in collaboration with The Executive Office, the Community Relations Council is operating the Code of Practice for Reducing Bureaucracy. During the 2021-22 business year the Community Relations Council moved all of its processes online and in 2022-23 adopted procedures that introduce a risk-based approach to verification of expenditure.

Grant Expenditure to date – District Council Areas 2022 - 2023

	Core	CRCD	Media	North Belfast	Pathfinder	Publications	Total
Multiple	332,792.78	39,748.00			46,568.52		419,109.30
Regional	702,198.97	46,250.23				8,881.00	757,330.20
Antrim and Newtownabbey	37,437.56	860.00					38,297.56
Ards and North Down							
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	34,323.25	5,519.98					39,843.23
Belfast	161,025.14	54,143.85	10,000.00	674,300.00	29,819.00		929,287.99
Causeway Coast and Glens	40,529.88						40,529.88
Derry City and Strabane	62,877.13	16,649.69	4,954.37		18,040.00		102,521.19
Fermanagh and Omagh		5,474.00					5,474.00
Lisburn and Castlereagh City							
Mid and East Antrim							
Mid Ulster							
Newry Mourne and Down		4,905.25					4,905.25
Total	1,371,184.71	173,551.00	14,954.37	674,300.00	94,427.52	8,881.00	2,337,298.60

NB: **Multiple Councils** – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 2 – 4 District Council areas

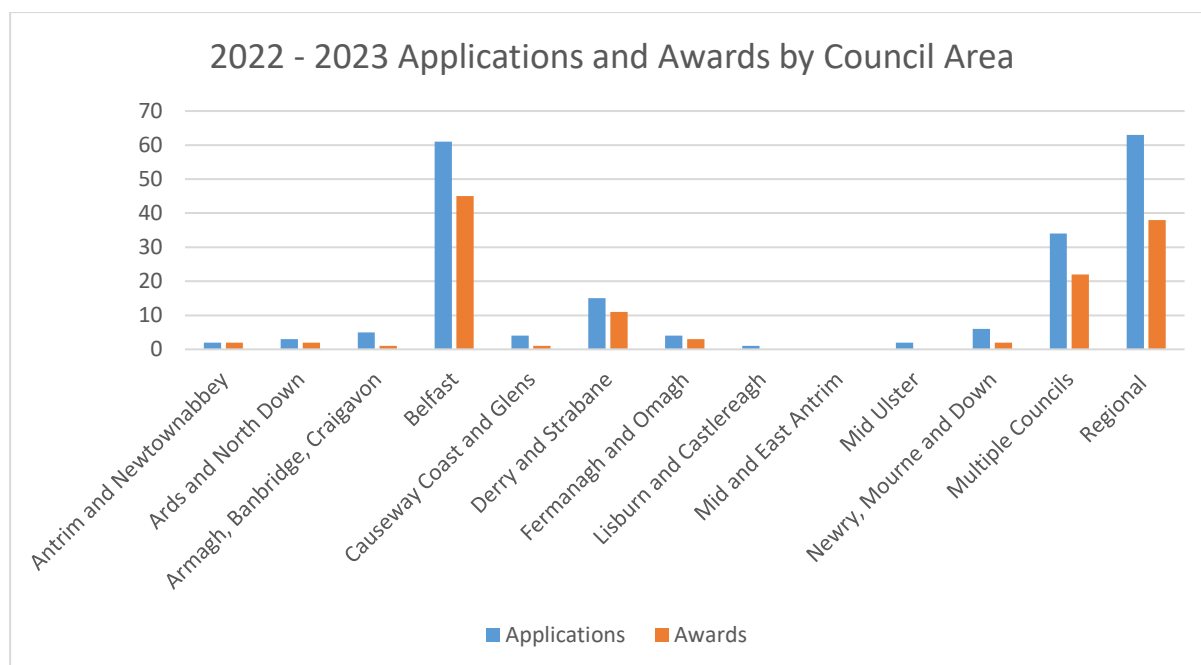
Regional Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 5 – 11 District Council areas

Where there are areas of low grant application the Community Relations Council has put in place welcoming statements to encourage community relations activity.

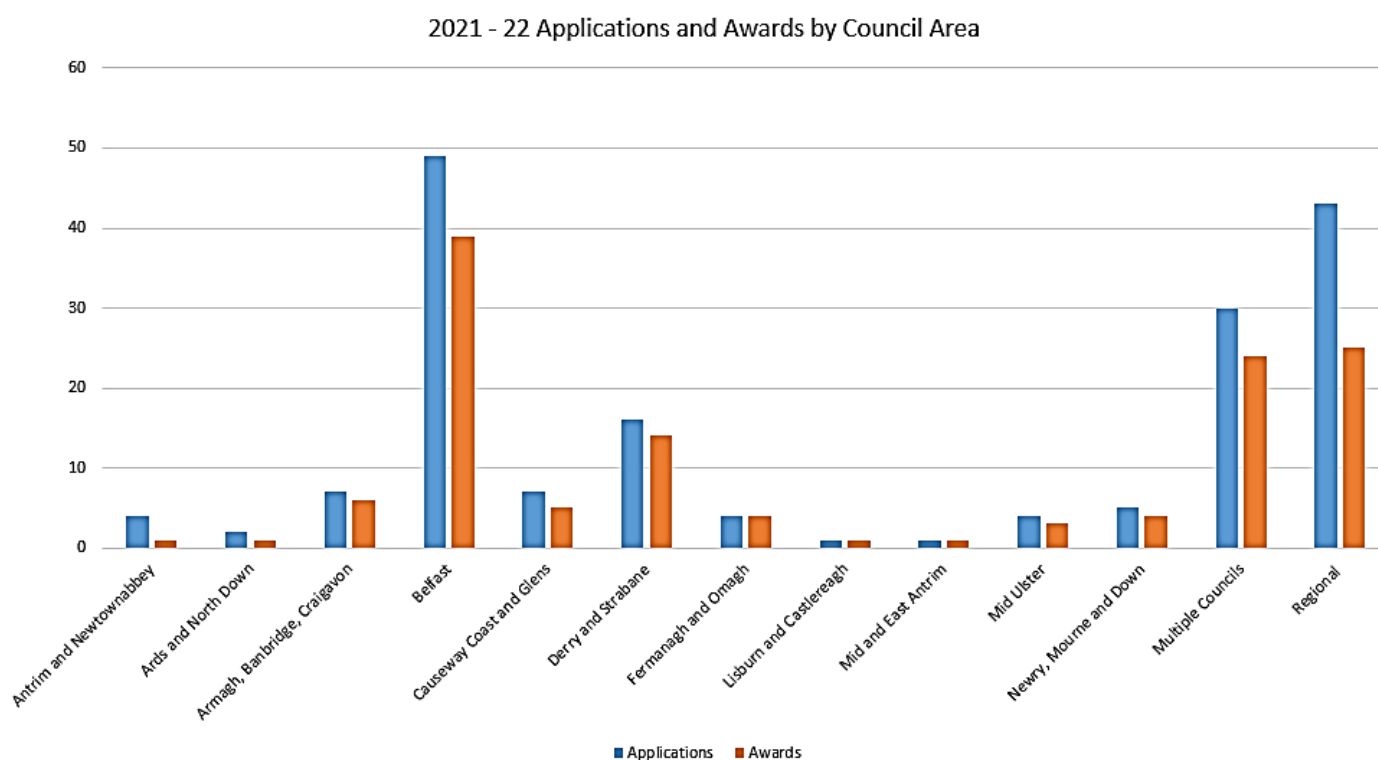
These numbers are detailed on pages 86-101 (Grants paid in 2022-2023). These are 'cash' accounting numbers versus 'resource' accounting numbers reported on page 70

FUNDING – Applications and Awards by Council Area

2022/23 Applications and Awards by Council Area



For comparison: 2021/22 Applications and Awards by Council Area



Performance Highlights

FUNDING - Performance Highlights			
Scheme	Applications Processed as planned		Total Funding
	Target	Performance	
Core Funding	48	48	£1,371,185
CRC	104	104	£173,551
NBSGRP	10	10	£674,300
Media	16	16	£14,954
Pathfinder	10	10	£94,428
Publications	12	12	£8,881
TOTAL	200	200	£2,337,299

Community Engagement

The Community Relations Council provides development support and engagement opportunities as a hub for the exchange of learning and best practice among our funded groups and wider networks. The relationship between policy, practice and reflective evaluation remains at the heart of the work of the Community Relations Council, well-crafted public policy and effective service delivery depends on it.

During the year the Community Relations Council coordinated and delivered three Engagement Forum events.

- 18th June 2022 online event was titled "Good Relations and the Business Sector."
- 20th September 2022 a hybrid T:BUC Engagement Forum was held, titled "Good Relations and the UN Sustainable Development Goals."
- 7th March 2023 in person T:BUC Engagement Forum on the theme of "T:BUC Plus Ten."

CRC's September T:BUC Engagement Forum was a hybrid event, hosted online and at the Stormont Hotel in Belfast. The event took place during Good Relations Week 2022 and considered how the UN Sustainable Development Goals and good relations work are interconnected.

CRC were delighted to have the co-author of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, David Donoghue speaking at the event. There was also input from Northern Ireland Environment Link, St Columb's Park House, Belfast City Council's Forth Meadow Greenway Initiative and The Cornfield Project.

The Engagement Forum provides a platform for formalised and structured engagement to influence positive outcomes from the T:BUC strategy through co-design, co-working and a shared learning approach. The diversity of those attending the meetings provides a broad and inclusive perspective that can assist with the achievement of the vision and aims of the T:BUC Strategy. The Community Relations Council continues to encourage a wide participation in the T:BUC Engagement Forum to reflect our community.

We also organise and facilitate a series of Shared Learning Forums for funded groups to meet and learn from each other's practice.

The annual Good Relations Week, co-ordinated by the Community Relations Council took place from 19th to 25th September 2022 with the theme of "Change Starts With Us". The Week is designed to showcase good practice and encourage wide engagement. The Community Relations Council was joined on the steering group by The Executive Office, the Department for Communities, the Department for Justice, the Education Authority, Libraries NI, The Cathedral Quarter Trust, The Nerve Centre. This year new members joined the steering group from NI Environment Link, The Rainbow Project, The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, and Another World Belfast. The launch of the week was also supported by every Council many of whom organised a local launch in their areas. The launch and the week of activities attracted extensive media coverage as well as coverage in the regional press.

The 2023 Good Relations Awards expanded to include five categories bringing in new partners with additional expertise to the assessment of the Award nominations. Panels met on 30th January 2023 and 2nd February 2023 to assess a total of 53 nominations received across all the categories. The Award recipients were announced at a special presentation event in Belfast Harbour Commissioners Office on 7th March 2023.

The email newsletter, eNews, has been issued every month during the year. The eNews covers CRC and T:BUC funding opportunities, as well as sharing stories of community-based groups and organisations who are working hard to build united communities at the local level.

Social media was also used to communicate our messages. The Community Relations Council has grown its Twitter and Facebook followers to 7,813 followers on Twitter and 3,900 followers on Facebook. Our website continues to grow as it provides a valuable resource for information, as well as keeping people up to date with news from the sector. During the year, the CRC website attracted 25,766 users and had 67,819 page views.

Our collaboration with National Lottery Heritage Fund on the “Decade of Centenaries” project came to an end after ten years.

To mark the achievements over the ten years CRC and Heritage Fund launched a new website titled www.principlesforremembering.com. This website is devoted to developing a continuing conversation around the issues of remembering in public space. It holds numerous case studies, videos and digital resources collected over the ten years of the project’s existence.

The Community Relations Council this year continued its engagement with minority ethnic and faith communities particularly in relation to the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership.

T:BUC Engagement and Delivery

Objective	Output	Highlights
In conjunction with TEO deliver the T:BUC Engagement Forum.	Three meetings of Engagement Forum were delivered on 18th June 2022, 20th September 2022 and 7th March 2023. Produced a summary report and production of key messages/evaluation document for each event.	Summary and key messages and evaluation documents were completed. Events were well attended with over 100 people taking part in each event. Attendees and participants included TEO staff, community practitioners, policy makers and academics amongst others. Over the year 458 people attended the 3 Engagement Forums. 19% of attendees at the three T:BUC Engagement Forums were new. 99% of attendees at the T:BUC EF rated the events as good, very good or excellent
Influence good relations policy outcomes by inputting to relevant PfG and T:BUC subgroups and providing information and feedback to relevant stakeholders.	Participating in the T:BUC Structures. Provided advice and shared learning opportunities. Guidance on funding requirements to funded groups. Collate and disseminate resources. Delivered four funding fairs. Delivered four online Shared Learning Events for core funded and North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme groups.	Throughout the year CRC provided support to funded groups including delivery of events online and face to face, online grant procedures, regular website updates, social media posts and the monthly eNews. A programme of 4 Shared Learning events was delivered. This year we were able to move these events into a hybrid format with in-person and online participation. 95% of participants rate the Shared Learning Events as very good, very good or excellent overall Funding fairs were delivered across the region focussing on areas of low grant uptake. We ere pleased to work alongside Councils and community partners in delivering these events.

Objective	Output	Highlights
Promote Good Relations work through the delivery of Good Relations Week, the Good Relations Award and other activities.	Good Relations Week delivered in a hybrid format during September 2022. The week saw the delivery of a programme of engagement events, lessons learned and best practice with other groups and organisations within and connected to the community relations sector. An evaluation report was produced. 2023 Good Relations Award presentation event took place on 7th March 2022.	264 event listings covering every council area across a range of themes during Good Relations Week 2022. 213 print, online and broadcast media articles about the week. Positive feedback received in the event evaluation. 15 people recognised for their peacebuilding efforts and contribution through the 2023 Good Relations Awards. There was one winner and two runners up for each Award.
Co-ordinate and lead on the Decade of Commemorations Project (in collaboration with Heritage Lottery Fund).	Delivered an event to reflect on the Decade of Centenaries work and highlight the successful Principles for Remembering In Public Space. Project resources continue to be disseminated to share learning and best practice within and between relevant public bodies and the voluntary and community sector.	The Community Relations Council led the coordination of the project interagency round-table that ensured information was shared across stakeholders. The project was closed this year and the principles of remembering website was developed as a closing resource.
Engagement and communication with the sector via relevant media platforms.	Regularly update various social media platforms. News information produced and circulated widely. 12 Monthly eNews produced and distributed. New website developed New video content created.	Twitter Followers: 7,813. Facebook Followers: 3,900. Website Page Views: 67,819. Users 25,766 Email marketing subscribers: 2,345 Visit www.principlesforremembering.com New videos on CRC website and YouTube channel covering for example GR Award winners and CR/CD funded work.

Peace Monitoring Report

The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust has provided the Community Relations Council a grant award to fund two further editions of the Peace Monitoring Report. Production commenced during the 2021-22 business year when the authors were appointed following an open tender process. The authors have continued work on the report and plan to present a final draft in 2023. £29,350 of the funds received from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust have been treated as deferred income and are included within Accruals & Deferred Income on the Balance Sheet in the 2022-23 financial year.

Financial Summary

The Statement of Financial Activities on page 59 indicates that the company had incoming resources of £3,310,999 (2021-22 - £3,239,861) in the year. Note 2 on page 66 shows The Executive Office as being the sponsor of 98.7% (2021-22 99.5%) of this income. In line with the “Charities SORP FRS 102” the Community Relations Council recognises income as it is received and expenditure as it is incurred. As a result, income was exceeded by outgoing resources of £3,579,963 by £268,964 (2021-22 – income exceeded outgoing resources of £3,602,728 by £362,867)

The Community Relations Council was allocated a resource budget of £3,348,000 for the year to 31st March 2023 by The Executive Office. This budget funded net resource expenditure of £3,348,000 (excluding actuarial movements on the pension liability) which represented 100% of total funding allocated to The Community Relations Council by The Executive Office. The Community Relations Council was also allocated a capital budget of £10,000 for the year to 31st March 2023 by The Executive Office. This budget funded capital expenditure of £4,000.

The Balance Sheet on page 60 shows that the company had a fund deficit of £(366,449) at 31st March 2023 (2021-22 – deficit of £2,866,485). The organisation’s Restricted Reserve at 31st March 2023 was a deficit of £366,449 (2021-22 – deficit of £2,866,485) of which £560,449 was a deficit in the income reserve (2021-22 – a deficit of £480,485). The valuation of the company’s pension scheme as at 31st March 2023, for the purposes of IAS19, showed a funding surplus of £194,000 (2021-22 - deficit of £2,386,000).

This surplus represents the difference between the liabilities of the pension fund and the value of its underlying assets.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The Community Relations Council is committed to complying with all its Human Rights and Equality obligations and best practice. The Community Relations Council applies its equal opportunities policy to prevent any instances of direct and indirect discrimination. The Community Relations Council applies its Equality Scheme which has been approved by ECNI. The scheme is developed in compliance with practice recommended by ECNI to promote equality and good relations as envisaged in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Community Relations Council applies its Disability Action Plan, which has been reviewed by ECNI.

The Community Relations Council monitors and applies its Fraud policy and procedures, including anti-bribery procedures, and subsequently provided training to all Community Relations Council employees. In addition to the Fraud policy, the Community Relations Council apply a suite of policies and procedures to ensure appropriate anti-corruption measures are taken including its Financial Manual, Procurement procedures and Whistleblowing procedures.

iii) Other matters – Sustainability report

The Community Relations Council is committed to the Northern Ireland Executive's Sustainable Development Strategy and has introduced policies and practices to encourage efficiency in the use of resources. These include the 100% use of recycled paper and the introduction of multifunction printing/copying/scanning devices which are set to duplex printing. The Community Relations Council is located in Equality House, a modern office building in Belfast that houses other Arm's Length Bodies. In doing so the Community Relations Council makes a contribution to Government targets for better use of its overall estate. The Community Relations Council participates in the Equality House facilities committee with the other Arm's Length Bodies. The Community Relations Council has undertaken a number of projects to move its services online and away from paper-based processes. The realisation of the full benefits of these projects was hastened by the move to remote working due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The lack of travel and the use of online conferencing for events has also assisted our contribution to the sustainable development strategy.

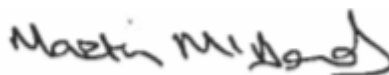
Through its earlier work in preparation for its Strategic Plan 2020-23 the Community Relations Council has noted a substantial and growing interest in wider environmental issues, including concerns around climate change, global warming, sustainable development and recycling. In its strategic plan the Community Relations Council notes that the concepts of well-being and the common good provide a link between good relations and a wide range of other issues, including environmental issues. The Community Relations Council appointed an Environmental Champion who aims to improve and monitor the sustainability and environmental goals of the organisation. Since then, the Board has received and approved a paper setting out a strategy to improve CRC's environmental impact by: introducing a 'Digital First' policy to publications; eliminating the purchase or single use plastic; continue to implement a paperless office; explore the option of becoming a 'FairTrade' office; add criteria to the procurement policy relating to sustainability and environmental standards. The organisation has put in place a Hybrid Working Policy. This has been blended with office-based working in a manner that has a positive environmental impact. The Community Relations Council will continue to explore the interconnection between good relations and environmental issues.



.....
J Irwin - Accounting Officer

14th November 2023

.....
Date



.....
M McDonald - Chairperson

14th November 2023

.....
Date

DIRECTORS' REPORT

A) Corporate Governance Report

i) Trustee's and Directors' Report

Structure, Governance and Management

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council is a company limited by guarantee, with no share capital, and is registered as a charity by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 2006, along with selected disclosures as recommended in the 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard FRS 102 (effective 2nd October 2019)'.

The Directors have complied with guidance published by the Charities Commission.

Organisational Structure

The Community Relations Council is governed by the Members of the Council. Where the Articles of Association refer to the Council, it can also be read as the Company, which shall mean the Members of the Council can also be read as the Directors of the Company.

The Council has capacity to register 24 members and there was a total of nine members in post during the year. The Council aims to meet every six weeks, holding at least six meetings during any 12-month period. A scheme of delegation is in place and day-to-day responsibility for provision of services rests with the Chief Executive, Jacqueline Irwin, supported by the Senior Management Team. The Senior Management Team consists of the Director of Funding and Development, Director of Community Engagement and Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel.

The Chief Executive, with the assistance of the Senior Management Team, manages the day-to-day activities of the Council and reports directly to the Chairperson. The Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team also provide progress reports to all Council meetings.

Directors

The directors of the company at 31st March 2023 were as follows:

Mr. Martin McDonald	(Chair)	Mr. Michael McDonnell
Mr. Rory Campbell		Ms. Claire Harris
Ms. Audrey Simpson		Mr. John McCallister
Dr. Máire Braniff		Ms. Nisha Tandon
Ms Sheila McClelland		

Board members, including the Chair, are appointed by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service following a recruitment exercise led by The Executive Office in a manner intended to comply fully with guidance from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Northern Ireland (OCPANI). All current members took up their positions on 1st June 2019 and were appointed for three years. In the absence of Ministers to take decisions during 2022-23, The Executive Office has extended the term of office of all members to June 2024.

Following appointment, all directors receive ‘On Board’ training conducted by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), Equality and Recruitment training, conducted by ECNI, induction into the role by The Executive Office as it’s Arm's Length Body and a full induction into the work of the Community Relations Council conducted by Community Relations Council staff. Induction training for new members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the Community Relations Council is also provided into the work of those committees.

Statement of Grant Making Policies

The Community Relations Council provides grant aid and advice to voluntary and community groups in support of projects which have a community relations purpose or value. The Council has a variety of funding schemes each tailored to promote certain aspects of community relations:

- The Community Relations and Cultural Diversity Small Grant Scheme is intended to help community/voluntary groups in Northern Ireland develop their capacity to engage in community relations work and to enhance the community relations potential of projects they undertake. The maximum award payable for this grant is £10,000.
- The Core Funding Grant Scheme is designed to support voluntary and community organisations to develop community relations work in a strategic manner, on a regional basis. Support is specifically targeted at work to combat sectarianism in Northern Ireland on a strategic long-term basis. The amount awarded normally ranges between £20,000 and £85,000.
- The Publications Grant Scheme aims to encourage the production and dissemination of publications that will contribute to greater understanding and better community relations in Northern Ireland. The maximum award payable for this grant is £5,000.

- The Media Grant Scheme aims to assist with the dissemination of community relations priorities via print, broadcast or other widely accessible media. Three projects were supported this year.
- The Pathfinder Scheme contributes towards the salary and running costs of organisations or projects which are considered of strategic importance in promoting community relations work in Northern Ireland. The Pathfinder Scheme is not an open scheme to which groups can apply; discussion with the Director of the Funding and Development Programme will precede any proposal made to this scheme. This scheme also supports emergency intervention funding through small project grants.
- The North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme (NBSGRP) is a funding scheme administered by the Community Relations Council on behalf of The Executive Office. It is a Ministerial scheme, and its overall strategy remains with The Executive Office. The key aim of the Programme is to develop relations within and between communities in North Belfast. Responsibility for the administrative aspects of the Programme were transferred to the Community Relations Council during 2016-17. The programme made awards up to £108,000 during the 2022-23 financial year.

Details of the grants awarded during the 2022-23 financial year are shown on page 86.

Community Engagement

The Community Relations Council seeks to promote learning, best practice and good communication between all relevant sectors and government to assist effective implementation of the Programme for Government and T:BUC strategy by:

- providing development support and engagement opportunities as a hub for the exchange of learning and best practice among our funded groups and wider networks. The relationship between policy, practice and reflective evaluation remains at the heart of the work of the Community Relations Council, well-crafted public policy and effective service delivery depends on it;
- leading on the coordination and delivery of the T:BUC Engagement Forum events that bring together good relations practitioners, voluntary & community sector and government to assist effective implementation of the Programme for Government and T:BUC strategy;
- co-ordinating the annual Good Relations Week which takes place annually in September. The week is designed to showcase good practice and encourage wide engagement and this year, due to the pandemic, the week was moved the week online;
- co-ordinating the Good Relations Awards to highlight exceptional achievement in promoting community relations, intercultural work and peacebuilding in Northern Ireland; and

- promoting the work and the activities of the Community Relations Council and others within the sector through monthly email newsletters, its website and social media channels.

Future plans

As an Arm's Length Body of The Executive Office our strategic direction, confirmed by Ministers, is to be a key delivery agent for departmental good relations policy, including the implementation of the aims and objectives of the T:BUC strategy and an outcome based approach to delivery. This includes promoting policy through positive engagement with relevant stakeholders in the community and establishing and implementing best practice.

- The Community Relations Council will continue implementation of the 2020-23 Strategic Plan, which has been approved by The Executive Office ministers and extended by one year with the approval of officials to align with the review of the T:BUC strategy. The 2020-23 Strategic Plan builds on the Community Relations Council's role as a trusted and critical link between government and all sections of society, continuing to promote good practice in building peace and good relations. The organisation will draft its new Strategic Plan this year.
- The organisation will continue to take a co-ordinated approach to grant funding focused on T:BUC priorities and objectives. The organisation will continue to review the distribution of its grants and put in place any necessary mitigations to achieve the goals set out in its Strategic Plan 2020-24.
- The organisation will continue to emphasise an outcomes-based approach to delivery and use the revised good relations indicators as the basis of its performance monitoring framework.
- The organisation will continue to deliver a programme of engagement and shared learning. It will also contribute to the T:BUC architecture and thematic groups.
- The Community Relations Council will implement the *'Partnership Agreement'* with The Executive Office during 2023-24. The *'Partnership Agreement'* replaced the previous Management Statement/Financial Memorandum.
- The organisation will continue to operate agile working methods in a manner that is consistent with public sector guidance.
- The organisation will continue to develop its suite of key performance indicators and targets to enhance strategic decision making and better demonstrate the impact of the work undertaken by the Community Relations Council.

Employee and Board involvement

The Board of the Community Relations Council is responsible for establishing the overall strategic direction of the Community Relations Council. In doing so it will approve the triennial strategic plan, the annual business plan, corporate policies and provide assurance to The Executive Office that appropriate action is being taken on strategic, financial, legal and governance matters. Employees are responsible for implementing the Board's decisions,

including reporting and providing assurance to the Board on the Community Relations Council's performance in implementing the Board decisions. Staff involvement includes attendance at Board meetings, joint planning sessions with Board members, monthly staff meetings, the use of project teams and performance management tailored to support the achievement of strategic objectives.

Personal data related incidents

The Community Relations Council is required to report on personal data related incidents and accordingly have a control system to meet these responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The control system has been established to ensure the appropriate handling of personal data and information used for operational and reporting purposes through the development of appropriate strategy and policy.

There were no breaches of personal data during the year.

Freedom of Information

During 2022-23 year the Community Relations Council received two Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. All requests were responded to in a timely way and in a manner consistent with the Community Relations Council's publication scheme.

Pensions

The Community Relations Council participates in a defined benefit pension scheme administered by the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) for all permanent staff. Further details are set out in the Remuneration Report on pages 45 to 49 the accounting policies on pages 61 to 65 and commitments under Defined Benefit Pension Scheme in Note 16 on pages 76 to 80.

Reporting of Complaints

The Community Relations Council received no complaints during 2022-23.

The Community Relations Council's Complaints Policy can be accessed via the [website \(https://www.community-relations.org.uk/contact-us\)](https://www.community-relations.org.uk/contact-us).

Prompt Payment Policy

The Community Relations Council is committed to the prompt payment of bills for goods and services received in accordance with the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998. Unless otherwise stated in the contract, payment is due within 30 days of the receipt of the goods or services, or presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand, whichever is later. Regular reviews conducted during the year to measure how promptly the Community Relations Council paid its bills found that 95% (2021-22: 96%) of bills were paid within this standard. It was also noted that 82% (2021-22: 92%) of bills were paid within 10 days.

Related Parties

Details of the company's related parties are set out in note 17 to the Accounts.

Register of interests

The Chair, Board of Directors, Chief Executive and Senior Management Team are required to register all interests, direct or indirect, which members of the public might reasonably think could influence their judgment. The register of interests is available on the Community Relations Council website or for public inspection by contacting the Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel, Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast. BT2 7DP.

Corporate Governance

The Governance Statement is set out on pages 32 to 45.

Auditors

The Comptroller and Auditor General has the statutory responsibility for the audit of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council under the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013.

ii) Statement of Accounting Officer's and Directors' Responsibilities

Under the Companies Act 2006, the Directors are required to prepare for each financial year, a statement of accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for Charities. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Community Relations Council and of its income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer and Directors are required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) and in particular to:

- observe the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the FReM have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the Accounts;
- prepare the Accounts on a going concern basis; and
- confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Accounting Officer of The Executive Office has appointed the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public

finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's assets, are set out in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

As required by the Companies Act 2006, the Accounting Officer and Directors are also responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the accounts comply with the Companies Act 2006. The Accounting Officer and Directors have a general responsibility taking steps as are reasonably available to safeguard the assets of the company and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

Statement of disclosure of information to the auditors

The Accounting Officer and Directors confirm that the annual report and accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and the Accounting Officer takes personal responsibility for the annual report and accounts and the judgments required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Accounting Officer and Directors confirm that, for all directors in office at the date of this report:

- So far as the Accounting Officer and each director is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditors are unaware.
- The Accounting Officer and each director has taken all the steps that he/she ought to have taken in his/her duty as a director in order to make himself/herself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditors are aware of that information.
- The Trustees have complied with their duty in Section 11 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to guidance published by the Charity Commission.

iii) Governance Statement

1. Introduction

This statement is given in respect of the Community Relations Council for the year ended 31st March 2023. It outlines the Community Relations Council's governance framework for directing and controlling its functions and how assurance is provided to support me in my role as Accounting Officer for the Community Relations Council.

The Community Relations Council's governance structures are developed in line with Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI), Departmental and other requirements and guidance. The Board of the Community Relations Council has corporate responsibility for ensuring that the organisation fulfils the responsibilities, aims and objectives set by the Board and agreed with The Executive Office and Ministers including promoting the efficient, economic and effective use of staff and other resources. As Accounting Officer, I have a duty to satisfy myself that the Community Relations Council has adequate governance systems and

procedures in place to promote the effective, efficient conduct of its business and to safeguard financial propriety and regularity.

The Community Relations Council is an Arm's Length Body of The Executive Office and a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. It has been formally governed as an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) since April 2012.

The Community Relations Council operates in accordance with a Partnership Agreement with The Executive Office as laid out in NI Code of Good Practice. This sets out the relationship between the two organisations and defines the financial and administrative framework of the Community Relations Council. The Community Relations Council's primary source of income is grant-in-aid provided by its sponsoring Department, The Executive Office. The Partnership Agreement sets out the conditions on which grant-in-aid is paid and the related financial delegations of the Community Relations Council. The Partnership Agreement replaced the Management Statement Financial Memorandum previously approved by the Board and The Executive Office.

Within this overall framework, it is the role of the Community Relations Council to determine its policies and activities.

2. Compliance with Corporate Governance Code

The Community Relations Council applies the principles of the Department of Finance's *Corporate governance in central government departments: Code of good practice (2013)* where applicable and any other relevant guidance received from government as it continues to strengthen its governance arrangements.

At the 31st March 2023 the Community Relations Council is compliant with the Code.

3. Governance Framework

The Community Relations Council has developed key organisational structures and relationships which support the delivery of corporate governance and which are:

- The Executive Office Ministers;
- The Executive Office Departmental Accounting Officer;
- the Board;
- the Accounting Officer;
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee;
- the Finance and General Purposes Committee;
- internal Audit function; and
- external Audit function (NIAO).

These key structures and relationships along with their responsibilities and performance are explained in detail in the relevant sections below.

4. Governance Responsibilities and Performance

Ministers

Relationships between the Community Relations Council and the Ministers are governed by the arm's length principle, wherein the primary role of Ministers is to set the Community Relations Council's strategic and financial framework including the structure of its funding and governance.

These responsibilities are discharged on a day-to-day basis on the Ministers' behalf and in their absence, by the Sponsoring Body. Within this framework, it is the role of this organisation to determine its policies and activities in keeping with the objectives of Government policy and guidance.

Board and Sub – Committees

Board members have individual and collective responsibility for ensuring that the Community Relations Council fulfils its functions in accordance with its remit and that its activities ensure value for money within a framework of best practice, regularity and propriety.

The Community Relations Council has capacity for 24 members and there was a total of nine members in post during the year. The Community Relations Council aims to meet every six weeks, holding at least six meetings during any 12-month period. A scheme of delegation is in place and day-to-day responsibility for provision of services rests with the Chief Executive, Jacqueline Irwin, supported by the Senior Management Team.

The Board supports the delivery of effective corporate governance and operates within best practice guidelines set out in the Department of Finance's Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice (2013). The Board takes an objective long-term view of the business of the Community Relations Council, leading its strategic planning process and assisting me as Accounting Officer in meeting the corporate governance responsibilities for the Community Relations Council.

In addition, the Memorandum and Articles of Association set out the Board's responsibility to establish and oversee corporate governance arrangements. Notwithstanding this, all tiers of management have commensurate responsibilities for ensuring that good governance practices are followed at an organisational/business level.

The key aspects of the Board's role include:

- setting the strategic direction for the Community Relations Council, including its vision, values and strategic objectives, and overseeing the implementation of the strategic and business plans, performance against its commitments to The Executive Office, and budget;

- developing, promoting and overseeing the implementation of policies and programmes in line with the Community Relations Council's strategic direction;
- leading and overseeing the process of change and encouraging innovation, to enhance the Community Relations Council's capability to deliver;
- monitoring performance via the Community Relations Council's corporate plans, budgets and targets, and assessing and managing the strategic risk to delivery;
- overseeing the strategic management of the Community Relations Council's staff, finance, information and physical resources, including setting training and health and safety priorities;
- establishing and overseeing the implementation of the Community Relations Council's corporate governance arrangements, including risk management; and
- overseeing and monitoring progress against all of the Community Relations Council's equality of opportunity, good relations and human rights obligations.

In line with best practice, the operational procedures of the Board are kept under continuous review. The Chair has reviewed the number of meetings of the Board and its committees as they relate to the completion of the business plan for the year. He has also reviewed attendance, chairing of committees and the findings of this year's audit reports and is satisfied with performance for the year. During 2020/21 an Internal Audit report concluded that controls designed to mitigate risks associated with board effectiveness and corporate governance provided a satisfactory level of assurance.

During the year the Board received reports during each meeting on the delivery of business plan objectives; financial management and budget monitoring; HR and other resource priorities; and reports from the ARAC in relation to resilience of security and information assurance, contingency planning and business continuity planning.

The Board keeps under review the format and content of Board papers in line with good practice in relation to corporate governance and considers the information provided to be sufficient to allow it to discharge its strategic planning and corporate governance responsibilities.

The Board held eight meetings during 2022-23 in April, June, August, September, October, December, and two in February. The attendance at the meetings of directors in post at 31st March 2023 during the year is detailed in the table below:

Name	No of Meetings Attended	Total Possible Attendance
Mr. Martin McDonald (Chair)	8	8
Mr. Michael McDonnell	5	7
Ms. Claire Harris	5	8
Mr. John McCallister	8	8
Ms. Nisha Tandon	6	8
Ms. Audrey Simpson	6	8
Dr. Máire Braniff	4	7
Mr. Rory Campbell	7	8
Ms Sheila McClelland	5	8

Dr. Máire Braniff and Mr. Michael McDonnell volunteered to sit on the Core Funding Appeals Panel. This resulted in both Dr. Máire Braniff and Mr. Michael McDonnell being prevented from attending the Board meeting that considered applications for Core Funding. As a result, maximum possible attendance for these members was reduced to seven meetings.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

The purpose of the ARAC is to support the Accounting Officer in monitoring risk, control and governance systems (including financial reporting) in the Community Relations Council. Additionally, the Committee advises me, as the Accounting Officer on the adequacy of internal and external audit arrangements to ensure adequate levels of assurance.

The Chair of the ARAC provides an update report at each board meeting. Typical issues that are reported by the Chair of the ARAC include risk management, fraud investigations, audit reports, update on implementation of audit recommendations and service continuity planning.

The ARAC met seven times during the financial year. Membership of the ARAC in 2022-23 comprised a Chairperson and two Members, all of whom are Board Members.

The members of the ARAC during 2022-23 and their attendance at the meetings during 2022-23 is detailed in the table below:

Name	No of Meetings Attended	Total Possible Attendance
Mr. John McCallister (Chairperson)	7	7
Mr. Michael McDonnell	6	7
Mr. Rory Campbell	7	7

Assessment of the ARAC was conducted by the Chair of the ARAC at the end of the 2022/23 financial year. The Chair noted that during that year the Committee reviewed the Risk Register at every meeting; received the NIAO Report to Those Charged with Governance; oversaw the implementation of a number of audit recommendations; received 'satisfactory' rated reports from the internal auditors on their review of 'IT and Continuity Planning', 'Grant Administration', and 'Finance and Complaints Handling'. The Chair of the ARAC concluded that he was satisfied with their performance.

During the financial year the ARAC considered and advised senior management on the key strategic risks, audit strategy and audit reports. The programme of work completed during the financial year included:

- review of the corporate risk register;
- scrutiny of the Annual Report and Accounts;
- consideration of internal audit strategy;
- consideration of NIAO audit strategy;
- review of internal and external audit findings;
- monitoring of residual audit recommendations;
- consideration of potential audit issues arising from grant awards.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee

The role of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is to advise the Board on operations, policies and strategies related to financial management, financial reporting, procurement, facilities, information technology, human resources, information governance, equality matters and other corporate services. The Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee provides an update report at each board meeting on these issues.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee met three times during the financial year. Membership of the Committee in 2022-23 comprised a Chairperson and three Members, all of whom are Board Members.

The members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee during 2022-23 and their attendance at the meetings detailed in the table below:

Name	No of Meetings Attended	Total Possible Attendance
Mr. Martin McDonald (Chair)	3	3
Mr. Michael McDonnell	2	3
Ms. Nisha Tandon	3	3
Ms. Audrey Simpson	3	3

Assessment of the Finance and General Purposes Committee was conducted by the Chair of the Committee at the end of the financial year. The Chair noted that during the year, the Committee: reviewed CRC's performance against the Business Plan, quarterly; reviewed and approved a number of policies; and received and approved the 2021/22 Annual Report and Accounts. The Chair was satisfied with the performance of the Committee.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee considered and advised senior management on key financial and other operational matters. The programme of work completed during the financial year considered:

- 2022-23 Business Plan delivery
- Financial Management

- Vouching and Verification
- Procurement
- Pay and Reward
- Staff Engagement
- Equality and Disability Action Plan Updates
- Premises and Facilities Management, including Health and Safety.

Accounting Officer

In my role as Accounting Officer, I function with the support of the Board keeping them informed of specific business implications or risks and, where appropriate, the measures that could be employed to manage them.

As Accounting Officer, I have ensured the organisation's progress in implementing an appropriate and proportionate system of internal control in accordance with all Government guidance.

The Community Relations Council's Annual Report and Accounts are prepared in a form directed by The Executive Office with that form having been approved by the Department of Finance.

5. Quality of Data Provided to the Board

The Board is satisfied as to the quality of data and information provided which is always thoroughly reviewed. At present the Board receives standing information for each meeting on key areas such as delivery, performance, finance and human resources. Briefing papers on other material issues are provided as they arise. All papers are issued a week in advance of any Board meeting to allow members to review and, where appropriate, to raise questions in advance. The relevant business area attends Board meetings to support discussions or is asked to produce more detailed information in advance of the meeting. All statistical and financial information is provided by professionally qualified accountants. All reports/papers conform to a standard layout to ensure the appropriate focus on key issues. Financial and performance data is extracted from the accounting and operational systems and is therefore subject to regular, planned internal quality assurance checks and independent audits.

6. Board Effectiveness

Assessment of the Board and Board members was conducted by the Chair. Examples of the areas considered by the review include: attendance, contribution to strategic direction, adherence to the code of conduct, relationships and training. The Chair concluded that he was satisfied with Board performance. The Chair met with TEO on 7th June 2023 to provide an update on the work of the Community Relations Council and complete an appraisal of his performance as Chair.

7. Internal Control and Risk Management

The Community Relations Council has procedures in place to ensure that it identifies its strategic and operational risks and determines a control strategy. As Accounting Officer, I have overall responsibility for the Community Relations Council's corporate business and for ensuring the effective management of the associated risks. All relevant internal control considerations, including any issues of risk, are taken into account with regard to the achievement of the Community Relations Council's policies, aims and objectives, and where necessary, are brought to the attention of the sponsoring department, The Executive Office. An important element of the system of internal control is provision of assurance to The Executive Office by way of the Quarterly Assurance Statement. The Community Relations Council's internal control accords with best practice and applicable guidance.

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives, it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to:

- identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of policies, aims and objectives;
- evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised; and
- manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The system of internal control has been in place in the Community Relations Council for the year ended March 2023 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Report and Accounts, and accords with Department of Finance guidance.

To assist in the risk management process, the consideration of risks is mapped out in the Community Relations Council's corporate Risk Register which is scrutinised and updated at each ARAC meeting and annually at the Board Meeting. The Register:

- identifies the Community Relations Council's risks; and
- analyses the risks related to the current Business Plan, including provision for the mitigation and control of risks.

All new business activities are assessed for key risks and controls are put in place.

During 2022-23 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee reviewed the risk strategy and register. The risk strategy and register are aligned with the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) publication "Good Practice in Risk Management", with the key risks being reviewed by the management team in advance of being presented to and considered at each meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The Community Relations Council assessed the residual resource risk related to implementation of the Department of Finance Pay Remit guidance as red due to associated issues being uncertain and developing, and therefore implicating on the future financial resources available.

The table below summarises the key risks which have been assessed as red and amber residual risks and were reported at the last meeting of the ARAC during the 2022-23 financial year.

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Mitigations</i>
Resources - Financial	In developing a business case to implement Department of Finance Pay Remit guidance it has become apparent that employees' pension schemes and pension contributions is a complicated and dynamic area, and as such the financial implications have significant inherent uncertainty.	The Community Relations Council will continue to work with The Executive Office and Department of Finance to achieve full compliance with Department of Finance guidance.
Resources - Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of staffing issues within CRC.	CRC's temporary Finance Manager began full time on Wednesday 8 th March 2023. CRC received a resignation from the Director of Funding and Development at the end of March 2023.
Resource – Financial	This risk considers the impact of the increase in External Audit Fee	The Chair raised this matter with TEO. TEO is now investigating whether this is a widespread issue across ALBs. Since then, the Audit Office has written to CRC outlining the costs for 2022-23 audit
Resources – Human Resource	This risk considers the impact of recent correspondence relating to the NILGOSC Pension Scheme	CRC has received legal correspondence about the effects of changes made to pensions as a result of the enactment of the Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014. Legal advice has been taken. CRC's solicitors drafted a response to the correspondence. With the approval of the Chair, the submission was made to the Tribunal Service on Friday 25 th November. This letter has been shared with Board members.
Resource – Financial	This risk considers the impact CRC faces in terms of the 2023/24 budget from The Executive Office. Resource budget confirmation - £2,998k confirmed on 28 th September 2023. GIA (Grant-In-Aid – Cash) £3,033k confirmed on 27 th September 2023	TEO announced that the Department would likely face a 10%-15% cut to their budget. CRC have incurred a 10% cut to Resource & Cash budgets in 2023-24

There are also a number of other processes which contribute to the management of risks and corporate governance in the organisation:

- The Corporate and Business Planning Process:
The Community Relations Council's Strategic Plan was approved by Ministers in January 2021. The Strategic Plan is supported by annual Business Plans.
- The Performance Management System:
Performance is monitored throughout the year, reviewed annually by the Board and reported to The Executive Office quarterly during Accountability and Liaison Meetings.
- HR Policies:
HR policies are designed to ensure that the Community Relations Council has the appropriate numbers of staff with suitable skills to meet its objectives; a system is in place for managing attendance at work and levels of absence are reviewed regularly by the Board and reported to The Executive Office; independent HR guidance supports the organisation in ensuring that it operates in compliance with employment law.
- Budgets and Priorities Setting Including In-year Monitoring Processes:
Budgets & priorities setting are in place and reviewed quarterly in association with The Executive Office. Ongoing downward pressure on government budgets continues to be a risk for the Community Relations Council but this is reviewed regularly by the Board.
- The Community Relations Council's Fraud Policy and Response Plan, Incorporating Arrangements for Whistle Blowing:
The fraud policy and response plan details responsibilities regarding the prevention of fraud and the procedures to be followed in the event of a fraud being detected or suspected. The Annual Report highlights cases of suspected fraud or irregularity and how the Community Relations Council is responding to those claims. Note 18 on page 81 Financial Regularity provides further information.

No 'Raising Concerns' incidents occurred at CRC in 2022-23. Each was processed and reported as set out in the procedures. No fraud was detected in these cases, and they were closed down, in agreement with The Executive Office.

- Gifts and Hospitality:
In line with recommended practice, the Community Relations Council has arrangements in place for the management of gifts and hospitality and all are included on a Gifts and Hospitality Register.
- Third Party Organisations:
Related party transactions are reported in the Accounts.
- Service Continuity Plan:
The Community Relations Council reviewed and updated its Business Continuity Plan in March 2022. The Business Continuity Plan was tested in May 2022 and November 2022. An internal audit of CRC's Business Continuity Plan was conducted in February 2023. The review concluded that Continuity Planning was 'satisfactory' and no priority one or two recommendations were made.
- Management of Information Risks:

Safeguarding information and its subsequent effective use, is a key element supporting the Community Relations Council in the delivery of its objectives. Central to achieving this is the effective management of information risk. As part of an ongoing process to identify and control risks to information, the Community Relations Council takes assurance on its information arrangements and practices from all internal and external audits. During 2022-23 the Community Relations Council maintained and operated its Information Governance policies and procedures, including Data Protection, Information Security, Records Management and Document Retention.

Review of Effectiveness

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors, the ARAC, which oversees the work of the internal auditor, the executive managers within the Community Relations Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, and comments made by the external auditors in their Report to Those Charged with Governance and other reports. The Board, and the ARAC have advised me on the implications of my review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and plans to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the control environment are in place.

8. Sources of Independent Assurance

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit function is independent of the organisation and is provided under contract by ASM. Internal Audit has no executive powers. It provides assurance by giving an independent and objective opinion, to the Accounting Officer and the ARAC, on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Community Relations Council's systems of internal control and risk management.

Internal Audit operates in accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). The primary role of Internal Audit is to provide the Accounting Officer and the Board with an independent and objective opinion on risk management, control and governance, by measuring and evaluating their effectiveness in achieving the agreed objectives.

Internal Audit has played a crucial role in the review of the effectiveness of risk management, controls and governance in the Community Relations Council by:

- focusing audit activity on the key business risks;
- being available to guide managers and staff through improvements in internal controls;
- auditing the application of risk management and control as part of Internal Audit reviews of key systems and processes; and
- providing advice to management on internal governance implications of proposed and emerging changes.

For the year to 31st March 2023, the internal auditors have conducted reviews in line with their Annual Audit Plan covering:

Function	Date of final report	Assurance rating
IT and Business Continuity Planning	14th March 2023	Satisfactory
Grants Administration and Distribution,	20th March 2023	Satisfactory
Finance and Complaints Handling	16th March 2023	Satisfactory

Internal Audit's Annual Assurance Statement issued an overall satisfactory rating with regard to the Community Relations Council's risk management, control and governance arrangements operating effectively and providing a satisfactory assurance in relation to the effective and efficient achievement of the Community Relations Council's objectives.

All audit recommendations are implemented on a timely basis and progress is reported during each meeting of the ARAC. Internal Audit completed a progress review of previous Internal Audit recommendations and found all recommendations have been implemented as agreed.

External Audit

The Community Relations Council is subject to independent scrutiny from its external auditor, the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO). NIAO is independent of the organisation and Government and is tasked by the Assembly to hold public bodies to account for their use of public money. The Comptroller and Auditor General works closely with the Assembly's Public Accounts Committee which can require Accounting Officers to account for their actions in relation to the management of public funds.

A representative from the NIAO is invited to attend all the meetings of the ARAC at which corporate governance and risk management matters are routinely considered.

The NIAO audits, certifies and reports on the Accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Northern Ireland Order 2013, along with selected disclosures as recommended in the 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice' applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard FRS 102 (effective 1 January 2019)' and the 2022-23 HM Treasury Financial Reporting Manual.

Data Losses

There were no data losses during the year.

Significant Issues

Current Department of Finance guidance FD (DFP) 09/18 sets out that a review should be conducted annually to ensure that staff salary maintains the principle of ‘no better off, no worse off’ as a result of their employees’ pension contributions. Presently the Community Relations Council increases the basic salaries for all but six employees (whose contracts began after the guidance was issued) by making an additional contribution of 6% on gross earnings to compensate employees for superannuation contributions payable to NILGOSC pension scheme. Of this cost to the Community Relations Council there is uncertainty concerning the regularity of a portion of this 6% totalling £15,302. This arrangement was originally put in place to ensure that employees were not disadvantaged as a result of what were historically higher contributions to the NILGOSC pension scheme compared to the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) (NI).

During the 2019-20 financial year the Department of Finance wrote to The Executive Office stating that it is imperative that a business case for full implementation of Department of Finance Pay Remit guidance is prioritised and that options for a longer-term solution are considered before the submission of the 2018-19 Pay Remit to the Department of Finance. The Executive Office then met the Community Relations Council's Board to inform them that they wished to have received the CRC business case before the close of the 2019-20 financial year. The Board established a sub group to consider the issues, to develop a business case and identify a preferred option to resolve the issues. Following meetings of the sub group a business case with a recommended preferred option was submitted to The Executive Office in March 2020 and then updated on 8th July 2020 following The Executive Office review. Queries and comments were received from The Executive Office during December 2020 and reviewed by the sub group. The Chair met with The Executive Office Accounting Officer, in February 2021, and subsequently wrote to him on 24th February, to seek an agreed and safe way forward on all outstanding matters.

The Community Relations Council received notice in March 2022 of the approval of all outstanding Pay Remits. The 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, and 2021/22 Pay Remits were all processed and paid to all affected staff (current and previous) on 24th March 2022.

No further communication has been received from The Executive Office in relation to resolving the implementation of Department of Finance guidance FD (DFP) 09/18.

Significant Internal Control Problems

There were no significant internal control problems noted in the year to 31st March 2023.

9. Conclusion in relation to Risk Management Status

The Community Relations Council has a system of accountability on which I rely, as Accounting Officer, to form an opinion on the probity and use of public funds, as detailed in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

Having considered the accountability framework, and in conjunction with assurances given to me by the ARAC, I am satisfied that the controls in place to manage risks are appropriate and sound. Any significant internal control issues are reported to the ARAC, the Board and The Executive Office. These controls provide reasonable assurance that risks will not occur or if a risk does occur that it will be detected and corrected in sufficient time to reduce the impact of the risk to tolerable or negligible levels.

B) Remuneration and Staff Report

Remuneration Policy

The appointment and value of remuneration of the Chair is the responsibility of The Executive Office and is carried out in line with the OCPANI guidance on public appointments. The Chair's performance is reviewed by The Executive Office.

Appointment of senior staff is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The remuneration of staff aligns with the Northern Ireland Civil Service pay scales and includes a pension allowance uplift for those employed prior to guidance from Department of Finance during 2013. The performance of the Chief Executive is reviewed by the Chair. The notice period for all senior staff members of the Community Relations Council does not exceed six months.

Appointment of all other staff is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The remuneration of staff aligns with the Northern Ireland Civil Service pay scales and includes a pension allowance uplift for those employed prior to guidance from the Department of Finance during 2013. Performance is appraised by line managers in respect of achievement of agreed objectives.

The arrangements for early termination of senior staff are made in accordance with the employment contract of the relevant individual. All current members took up their positions on 1st June 2019 and were appointed for three years. The Chair took up position on 1st June 2019 following appointment by The Executive Office. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in the individual receiving compensation. During the year, no early termination payments were paid. In the absence of Ministers The Executive Office has extended the term of office of all members to June 2024.

The Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association of the Community Relations Council makes provision for the Chair and other members to be remunerated. In October 2017 the Community Relations Council received approval from the Charity Commission NI to remunerate the Board and the Chair. On 16th April 2019 the Board approved amendments to the Articles of Association to allow The Executive Office to make appointments to the Board.

Remuneration (including salary) and Pension Entitlements (audited)

The following directors, who were in post at 31st March 2023, and senior staff received emoluments directly from the Community Relations Council during the year.

	2022-23 Salary/ Fee	2022-23 Pension Benefits * to nearest £'000	2022-23 Total £'000	2021-22 Salary/ Fee £'000	2021-22 Pension Benefits * to nearest £'000	2021-22 Total £'000
J Irwin CEO	70-75	36	105-115	75-80	36	110-115
M McDonald (Chairperson)	5 - 10	-	5 - 10	5 - 10	-	5 - 10
C Harris	0 - 5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
J McCallister	0 - 5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
N Tandon	0 - 5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
A Simpson	0 - 5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5
M Braniff	0 - 5	-	0 - 5	0 - 5	-	0 - 5

**The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus (the real increase in any lump sum) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases exclude increases due to inflation or any increase or decrease due to a transfer of pension rights. The figures presented are provided to the Community Relations Council on request by NILGOSC.*

Mr. M McDonnell, Mr. R Campbell and Ms. S McClelland did not claim an attendance allowance during the financial year.

Salary

Salaries consist of gross salary to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation and any ex-gratia payments.

Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the employer and treated by the HM Revenue & Customs as taxable emoluments.

Neither bonus nor benefits in kind were paid to the Chair, the Chief Executive or any other directors during either period. The Community Relations Council offers its employees gym membership up to the maximum value per annum of £200.

No Community Relations Council employee received a benefit in kind greater than £200 during the financial year.

Ratio of Median Remuneration to Highest Paid Director (audited)

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid director in their organisation and the median remuneration of the organisation's workforce.

	2022-23	2021-22
Band of Highest Paid Director's Total Remuneration (£)	72,500	77,500
75th Percentile Total Remuneration (£)	35,595	37,963
Median Total Remuneration (£)	31,753	32,733
25th Percentile Total Remuneration (£)	29,007	30,107
Ratio (75th percentile)	2.04	2.04
Ratio (midpoint)	2.28	2.37
Ratio (25th percentile)	2.50	2.57
Change of highest paid Director (%)	-6.18%	14.81%
Change of whole entity (%)	-6.45%	15.77%

The banded total remuneration of the highest-paid director in the Community Relations Council in the financial year 2022-23 was £70k-£75k (2021-22: £75k- £80k). The median remuneration of the workforce, for 2022-23 was £31,753 (2021-22 £32,733). Salaries for employees at the Community Relations Council range from £25k-£30k to £70k- £75k (2021-22: £25k-£30k to £75k-£80k).

Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance related pay, and benefits-in-kind. It does not include severance payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

Pension Benefits (audited)

	Accrued Pension at pension age as at 31/03/2023 & related lump sum £	Real increase (decrease) in pension & related lump sum £	CETV at 31/03/2023 £	CETV at 31/03/2022 £	Real increase in CETV £
J Irwin					
Chief Executive Officer	37,665	(1,411)	746	716	(30)

CRC are required to follow annual guidance on reporting requirements promulgated by HM Treasury through Public Expenditure System (PES) papers.

Compensation for loss of office (audited)

No members of staff received compensation for loss of office or exit packages during the year ended 31st March 2023.

Pensions

Introduction

The Community Relations Council participates in a defined benefit pension scheme administered by NILGOSC for all permanent staff. The employer makes a contribution of 19.5% (2021-22: 23%) of basic salary to the NILGOSC pension scheme. The employee does not have to join this scheme. Further details can be found on www.nilgosc.org.uk.

The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach pension age or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the Scheme if they are at or over pension age. The NILGOSC pension age is 65.

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is a funded defined benefit plan with benefits earned up to 31st March 2015 being linked to final salary. Benefits after 31st March 2015 are based on a Career Average Revalued Earnings (CARE) scheme. Details of the benefits earned over the period covered by this disclosure are set out in 'The Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014' (as amended) and 'The Local Government Pension Scheme (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (as amended)'.

Funding / Governance Arrangements of the LGPS

The funded nature of the LGPS requires participating employers and their employees to pay contributions into the Fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension liabilities with investment assets. Information on the framework for calculating contributions to be paid is set out in the LGPS Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 and the Fund's Funding Strategy Statement. The last actuarial valuation was at 31st March 2019 and the contributions to be paid until 31st March 2023 resulting from that valuation are set out in the Fund's, Rates and Adjustments Certificate. The Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (The Committee) is responsible for the governance of the Fund.

Assets

The assets allocated to the Employer in the Fund are notional and are assumed to be invested in line with the investments of the Fund for the purposes of calculating the return over the accounting period. The Fund holds a significant proportion of its assets in liquid investments. As a consequence, there will be no significant restriction on realising assets if a large payment is required to be paid from the Fund in relation to an employer's liabilities. The assets are invested in a diversified spread of investments and the approximate split of assets for the Fund as a whole (based on data supplied by the Committee) is shown in the disclosures.

The Committee may invest a small proportion of the Fund's investments in the assets of some of the employers participating in the Fund if it forms part of their balanced investment strategy.

Asset Volatility

The liabilities used for accounting purposes are calculated using a discount rate set with reference to corporate bond yields at the accounting date. If assets underperform this yield this will create a deficit in the accounts. The Fund holds a significant proportion of growth assets which, while expected to outperform corporate bonds in the long term, creates volatility and risk in the short term in relation to the accounting figures.

Changes in Bond Yield

A decrease in corporate bond yields will increase the value placed on the liabilities for accounting purposes although this will be marginally offset by the increase in the assets as a result (to the extent the Fund invests in corporate bonds).

Inflation Risk

The majority of the pension liabilities are linked to either pay or price inflation. Higher inflation expectations will lead to a higher liability value. The assets are not perfectly correlated with inflation meaning that an increase in inflation will increase the deficit.

Life Expectancy

The majority of the Fund's obligations are to provide benefits for the life of the member following retirement, so increases in life expectancy will result in an increase in the liabilities.

Exiting Employers

Employers which leave the Fund (or their guarantor) may have to make an exit payment to meet any shortfall in assets against their pension liabilities. If the Employer (or guarantor) is not able to meet this exit payment the liability may in certain circumstances fall on other employers in the Fund. Further the assets at exit in respect of 'orphan liabilities' may, in retrospect, not be sufficient to meet the liabilities. This risk may fall on other employers. 'Orphan liabilities' are currently a small proportion of the overall liabilities in the Fund.

The Real Increase in the Value of the CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV effectively funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

Staff Report

Analysis of Staff Costs

	Permanent Staff	Others	Board	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£	£	Total £	Total £
Wages and Salaries	538,272	70,410	12,843	621,525	610,528
Social security costs	57,185	-	-	57,185	66,673
Employers pension cost					
<u>Analysed as:</u>					
Current service cost	230,273	-	-	230,273	301,663
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total Staff Cost	825,730	70,410	12,843	908,983	978,864
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Note: Subject to Audit

Average number of persons employed

The average number (subject to audit) of whole-time equivalent persons employed during the period was as follows:

	Permanent Staff	Others	Chair	2022-23	2021-22
				Total	Total
Total	17	-	1	18	17

On a headcount basis there were 16 (2021-22 17) full time members of staff employed during the period (15 at year end). One (2021-22: 1) member of staff was employed part time. On average two members of staff was engaged via a recruitment agency (2021-22: 0).

Note: Subject to Audit

Sickness Absence Data

The total number of working days lost through sickness during the period by the Community Relations Council staff was 124 days. This represented 2.9% of available working days for the Community Relations Council employees, of which 2.5% was due to long-term sickness absence. Sickness absence during the previous financial year was 164 days, representing 3.9% of available working days.

Staff Composition

At the end of the financial year the gender split amongst Board Members and employees was as follows:

	Male No.	Female No.
Council Members	4	5
Employees:		
Grade 6	-	1
DP	2	1
SO	2	2
EO	2	4
AO	1	1
	-----	-----
Total	7	9
	-----	-----

An analysis of staff costs for 2022-23 (£908,983) (2021-22: £978,864) is provided in Note 3 on page 66 and 67.

Staff Turnover

At the end of this financial year, Community Relations Council had 6.3% full-time permanent vacancy.

Consultancy

The Community Relations Council did not incur expenditure related to consultancy during the 2022-23 financial year.

Employees Matters

The Community Relations Council provides equal opportunities to its employees and are committed to the principle of equality for all Section 75 groups. This includes only having regard to the aptitudes and abilities of persons and in doing so apply employment policies that are fair, equitable and consistent with the needs of the business. The Community Relations Council's equal opportunities policy aim is to ensure no job applicant, employee or worker is discriminated against either directly or indirectly. The recruitment and selection of staff for the Community Relations Council is designed to ensure that applicants are treated in a fair and consistent manner, that the best person is appointed and to provide a reasonable adjustment for suitable persons whenever requested.

The Community Relations Council have appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure that disability duties are complied with and effectively implemented. The Community Relations Council reviews its policies, procedures and practices to identify any amendments or actions needed to meet its disability duties on a regular basis. During the year the Community Relations Council has applied its Disability Action Plan.

There were no significant Health and Safety issues during the year that were directly related to the operations of the Community Relations Council and all minor issues are recorded and are available for inspection. The Community Relations Council operated its business continuity

arrangements throughout the year to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the health and safety of its employees. During the year a Fire Risk Assessment was completed for Equality House Equality House. All fire equipment was serviced and replaced where necessary.

The Community Relations Council operate a performance management system intended to align employee activities to its objectives. The process identifies training requirements and career development opportunities to meet both the Community Relations Council's and the employee's needs.

All employees have the option to join a Trade Union. The Community Relations Council currently operate a procedural agreement with Unite the Union.

Off-Payroll Engagements

The Community Relations Council had no off-payroll engagements during the 2022-23 financial year (2021-22: £nil).



.....
J Irwin – Accounting Officer

14th November 2023

.....
Date

C Assembly Accountability and Audit Report

Overview

Regularity of Expenditure (audited)

The Community Relations Council ensures the regularity of its expenditure by application of the requirements contained within Managing Public Money Northern Ireland and its Management Statement.

As described on page 45, the Community Relations Council is working with The Executive Office and the Department of Finance to resolve uncertainty concerning the regularity of an additional contribution of 6% on gross earnings for employee's superannuation contributions payable to the NILGOSC pension scheme totalling £15,302.

Fees and Charges (audited)

The Community Relations Council did not earn an income through fees or charges during the 2022-23 financial year.

Remote Contingent Liabilities (audited)

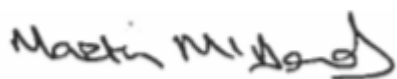
No remote contingent liabilities are known to have existed at the 31st March 2023.

Losses and Special Payments (audited)

	2022-23	2021-22
Total Number of Losses	-	-
Value of Losses	£-	£-

There were no losses or special payments made during the year.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Directors.



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M McDonald – Chairperson

14th November 2023

.....
Date



.....
J Irwin – Accounting Officer

14th November 2023

.....
Date

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

NORTHERN IRELAND COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council for the year ended 31 March 2023 under the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013. The financial statements comprise: the Statement of Financial Activities; Balance Sheet; Statement of Cash Flows; and the related notes, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

I have also audited the information in the Directors' Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs as at 31 March 2023 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of this certificate.

My staff and I are independent of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue. The going concern basis of accounting for the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it is anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer and Directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other Information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements, the parts of the Directors' report described in that report as having been audited, and my audit certificate and report. The Accounting Officer and Directors are responsible for the other information included in the annual report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my report I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Directors' Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual; and
- the information given in the Strategic Report and Directors' Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Strategic Report and Directors' Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Strategic Report and Directors' Report. I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Directors' Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by the Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer and Directors for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's and Directors' Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer and Directors are responsible for:

- preparing the Annual Report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report, in accordance with the Companies Act 2006;
- the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- such internal controls as management determines are necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; and
- assessing the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council will not be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulation, including fraud.

My procedures included:

- obtaining an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council through discussion with management and application of extensive public sector accountability knowledge. The key laws and regulations I considered included governing legislation and any other relevant laws and regulations;
- making enquires of management and those charged with governance on the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's compliance with laws and regulations;
- making enquiries of internal audit, management and those charged with governance as to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's susceptibility to irregularity and fraud, their assessment of the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and irregularity, and their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud and irregularity;
- completing risk assessment procedures to assess the susceptibility of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur. This included, but was not limited to, an engagement director led engagement team discussion on fraud to identify particular areas, transaction streams and business practices that may be susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the posting of unusual journals;
- engagement director oversight to ensure the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework throughout the audit;
- documenting and evaluating the design and implementation of internal controls in place to mitigate risk of material misstatement due to fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- designing audit procedures to address specific laws and regulations which the engagement team considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements in terms of misstatement and irregularity, including fraud. These audit procedures included, but were not limited to, reading board and committee minutes, and agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation and approvals as appropriate, testing of journal entries and reviewing internal audit reports; and
- addressing the risk of fraud as a result of management override of controls by:
 - performing analytical procedures to identify unusual or unexpected relationships or movements;
 - testing journal entries to identify potential anomalies, and inappropriate or unauthorised adjustments;
 - assessing whether judgements and other assumptions made in determining accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

- investigating significant or unusual transactions made outside of the normal course of business.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.



Dorinnia Carville
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
BELFAST
BT7 1EU

22nd November 2023

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Statement of Financial Activities (Including Income & Expenditure Account) for Year Ended 31 March 2023

		All Restricted and Unrestricted Funds 2022-23 £	All Restricted and Unrestricted Funds 2021-22 £
	Note		
Income and endowments from:			
Donations and Legacies	2	3,268,494	3,224,987
Secondments		42,505	14,874
		-----	-----
Total		3,310,999	3,239,861
		-----	-----
Expenditure on:			
Charitable activities	4	3,579,963	3,602,728
		-----	-----
Net income/(expenditure) before tax for the reporting period		(268,964)	(362,867)
Other recognised gains/(losses):			
Actuarial gain /(loss) on defined benefit pension scheme	16	2,769,000	1,069,000
		-----	-----
Net movement in funds		2,500,036	706,133
		-----	-----
Reconciliation of funds:			
Fund balances brought forward at 1 April		(2,866,485)	(3,572,618)
Net movement in funds		2,500,036	706,133
		-----	-----
Fund balances carried forward at 31st March	14	(366,449)	(2,866,485)
		=====	=====

All of the activities of the company are classed as continuing, and all recognised gains and losses have been included in the results for the year as set out above.

The notes on pages 61 to 81 form part of these Accounts

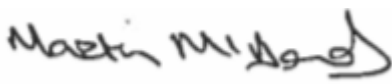
The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2023

		2022-23 £	2021-22 £
	Note		
Fixed assets			
Tangible fixed assets	7	185,252	21,664
Intangible fixed assets	8	7,688	14,496
		-----	-----
		192,940	36,160
Current assets			
Debtors and prepayments	9	8,086	32,214
Cash at bank and in hand	10	101,136	115,529
		-----	-----
		109,222	147,743
Liabilities			
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	(695,454)	(664,388)
Finance Leases	11	(49,594)	-
		-----	-----
Net current assets or (liabilities)		(635,826)	(516,645)
Total assets less current liabilities		(442,886)	(480,485)
Non - Current Liabilities - Finance Leases	11	(117,563)	-
Defined benefit pension asset/(liability)	16	194,000	(2,386,000)
		-----	-----
Total net liabilities		(366,449)	(2,866,485)
		=====	=====
The funds of the charity			
Restricted Income Funds	14	(560,449)	(480,485)
Restricted Pension Reserve	14	194,000	(2,386,000)
		-----	-----
Total charity funds		(366,449)	(2,866,485)
		=====	=====

In the view of the Board an exemption from the audit requirements of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006 is available under section 482 of that Act, since the company meets the Department of Finance's definition of a non-profit making company and is subject to a public sector audit under the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Northern Ireland Order 2013, being an order issued under Article 5(3) of the Audit and Accountability (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. The Council therefore claims this exemption.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 14th November 2023 and signed on its behalf by:



 M McDonald – Chairperson



 J Irwin – Accounting Officer

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

The notes on pages 61 to 81 form part of these Accounts

Cash Flow Statement for Year Ended 31st March 2023

		2022-23	2021-22
	Note	£	£
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash (used in) / provided by operating activities	12	9,929	89,561
		-----	-----
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	7	(4,464)	(5,042)
Purchase of intangible fixed assets	8	-	(1,500)
		-----	-----
Net cash (used in) investing activities		(4,464)	(6,542)
		-----	-----
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		(14,393)	83,020
Opening cash and cash equivalents at 1st April	10	115,529	32,509
		-----	-----
Closing cash and cash equivalents at 31st March	10	101,136	115,529
		=====	=====

The notes on pages 61 to 81 form part of these Accounts

Notes to the Accounts for Year Ended 31st March 2023

1. Accounting policies

These Accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 2006, along with selected disclosures as recommended in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) (FRS 102). The particular policies adopted by the Community Relations Council for the year ended 31st March 2023 are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

The principal accounting policies are as follows:

Accounting convention

The Accounts are prepared under the historical cost convention. The directors do not consider the current costs of any of the year's transactions or closing balances to be materially different from the historical cost. The financial statements are presented in sterling, rounded to the nearest pound.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Basis of accounting

Grant Income is recognised in accordance with the performance model set out in FRS 102. Expenditure is treated on the accruals basis of accounting. Without limiting the information given, as the Community Relations Council is a charity that is a public benefit entity, the Accounts are prepared to meet the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities SORP (FRS 102), Accounting Standards issued or adopted by the Accounting Standards Board and accounting and disclosure requirements issued by the Department of Finance. Income from grants, including Grant in Aid, is recognised when there is evidence of entitlement, receipt is probable, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Going Concern

In June 2023 The Executive Office wrote to the Community Relations Council confirming that funding had been secured for the 2023-24 financial year. The Board is satisfied that the Community Relations Council is a going concern on the basis that it has a reasonable expectation that the Community Relations Council will continue to operate for the foreseeable future. In January 2021 the Community Relations Council received Ministerial approval for the 2020-24 Strategic Plan from The Executive Office. The 2023-24 business plan has been drafted and is with The Executive Office officials pending Ministerial approval. The financial statements are therefore prepared on the going concern basis.

Income

Income comprises all funding provided to the company for its own purposes. Grant income is recognised as follows:

- A grant that does not impose specified future performance-related conditions on the recipient is recognised in income when the grant proceeds are received or receivable.
- A grant that imposes specified future performance-related conditions on the recipient is recognised in income only when the performance-related conditions are met.
- Grants received before the revenue recognition criteria are satisfied are recognised as a liability.

Taxation

The Company is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from Income and Capital taxes, but not Value Added Tax (VAT).

The majority of the Community Relations Council incoming resources is through grant funding which is outside the scope of VAT. Accordingly the Community Relations Council is not VAT registered and amounts in these accounts are inclusive of VAT where charged.

Provisions

The Company makes provisions for liabilities and charges where, at the balance sheet date, a legal or constructive liability exists (i.e. a present obligation from past events exists), where the transfer of economic benefits is probable, and a reasonable estimate can be made.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Where the time value of money is material, the Community Relations Council discounts the provision to its present value using a standard Government discount rate.

Fixed assets

Fixed assets are stated on the balance sheet at cost and depreciated in order to write off the original cost of the assets over their expected useful lives on a straight-line basis over the following number of years:

Fixtures and fittings	5 years
Computer equipment	5 years

Indexation is not applied due to the short life nature of these assets i.e. less than 5 years. The minimum level of capitalisation of tangible fixed assets is £500.

Intangible fixed assets

Software licences for internal recording and reporting systems and other software such as the Grants Management System are capitalised as intangible assets. All intangible assets are amortised over their useful life i.e. 5 years, or the length of the licence. Indexation is not applied due to the short life nature of these assets i.e. less than 5 years. The minimum level of capitalisation of an intangible asset is £500.

Debtors

Debtors are measured on initial recognition at the amount receivable and subsequently at the cash amount expected to be received.

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash is cash in hand and deposits with any financial institution repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are investments that mature within 3 months or less from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

Creditors

Creditors are measured on initial recognition at the amount payable and subsequently at the cash amount expected to be paid.

Grants payable

Grant expenditure is recorded in the period in which the recipient carries out the activity which created the entitlement. Unpaid and unclaimed grants may represent obligations to be recognised as liabilities where there is evidence of entitlement. Where the amount of the claim is not known at the Balance Sheet date, an estimate will be made. Overpayments of grants are shown as receivables at the Balance Sheet date.

Financial Instruments

The Council has limited powers to borrow or invest surplus funds and financial assets and liabilities are generated by day-to-day operational activities rather than being held to change the risks facing the Council in undertaking activities. Therefore, the Council is exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Currency risk: The Company is principally a domestic organisation with the great majority of transactions, assets and liabilities being in the UK and Sterling based. The Company has no overseas operations. The Company therefore has low exposure to currency rate fluctuations.

Interest rate risk: The Company has limited powers to borrow or invest and therefore has low exposure to interest rate fluctuations.

Credit risk: Because the Company's income comprises all funding provided to it for its own purposes, the Company has low exposure to credit risk.

Liquidity risk: Since the Company receives the majority of its funding from The Executive Office, it is therefore not exposed to significant liquidity risks.

Employee Benefits

Staff costs must be recorded as an expense as soon as an organisation is obliged to pay them. This includes the cost of any untaken leave at the year end. This cost has been calculated using the untaken leave per staff member and applying this to their annual salary to calculate the leave balance as at 31st March 2023.

Redundancy and termination benefits

The exit costs associated with Voluntary Exit packages as funded by the Public Sector Transformation Fund, a facility provided through the 2014 Stormont House Agreement, are accounted for in full in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year departure is agreed.

Pension

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) Scheme.

The pension costs are assessed in accordance with the advice of independent qualified actuaries using the market led approach. The latest actuarial valuations of the scheme were at 31st March 2019.

Pension scheme assets are measured using market value. Pension scheme liabilities are measured using the projected unit method and discounted at the current rate of return on a high quality corporate bond of equivalent term to the liability.

The increase in the present value of the liabilities of the Community Relations Council's defined benefit pension scheme arising from employee service in the period is charged to the SOFA so as to recognise the cost of pensions over the employees' working lives.

The Community Relations Council is no longer required to recognise an expected return on assets item in the SOFA. This is now replaced with a net financing charge which is based on the discount rate assumption.

Actuarial gains and losses are recognised in the SOFA.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Expenditure

Support costs include all expenditure directly relating to the objectives of the company.

Administration and Management costs, detailed on page 68 comprises the costs involved in complying with constitutional and statutory requirements and any other costs which cannot be treated as direct charitable expenditure.

Costs incurred for meetings, seminars and other specific expenditure relating to the individual programmes are classified as programme costs, detailed on page 84.

Funds

The company has two types of funds for which it is responsible, and which require separate disclosure. These are as follows:

Restricted funds

Grant in aid received which is earmarked by the funder for specific purposes and within the overall aims of the company.

Pension Fund

The Charities SORP (FRS 102) requires the valuation of the net defined benefit liability to be included within the accounts.

Changes in Accounting Policy and Disclosure

Management has reviewed new accounting standards, the outcome being the adoption of in these accounts.

Charities SORP (FRS 102) Charitable Activities

Expenditure on charitable activities is reported as a functional analysis of the work undertaken by the Community Relations Council in note 5 on pages 69. The key activities of the Community Relations Council being grant making, policy, communication, cultural diversity, district council development and production of the Peace Monitoring Report. Under these headings are included grants payable and costs of activities performed directly by the charity, together with associated support costs.

Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute directly to more than one activity are apportioned between those activities on a per capita basis. Support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are also apportioned between the activities being supported on a per capita basis.

Leases

IFRS 16 Leases replaced IAS 17 Leases and is effective with EU adoption from 1 January 2019. In line with the requirements of FReM, IFRS 16 has implemented, as interpreted and adapted for the public sector, with effect from 1st April 2022. The interest element of any lease classified as a finance lease payment is charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure over the period of the lease at a constant rate in relation to the balance outstanding.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

2. Income from donations and legacies and charitable activities

	Restricted Funds 2022-23 £	Total Funds 2022-23 £	Total Funds 2021-22 £
<u>Donations and legacies</u>			
Grant in Aid from The Executive Office	3,268,494	3,268,494	3,224,987
	----- 3,268,494 -----	----- 3,268,494 -----	----- 3,224,987 -----

3. Analysis of Staff Costs

	Permanent Staff £	Others £	Board £	2022-23 Total £	2021-22 Total £
Wages and Salaries	538,272	70,410	12,843	621,525	610,528
Social security costs	57,185	-	-	57,185	66,673
Employers pension cost					
<u>Analysed as:</u>					
Current service cost	230,273	-	-	230,273	301,663
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total Staff Cost	825,730	70,410	12,843	908,983	978,864
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

The difference between the current service cost in the staff costs note (subject to audit) and the amount included in the pension scheme note (note 16) is due to the difference between the estimated employer pension contributions notified to the actuary for valuation purposes and the actual amount incurred.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Average number of persons employed

The average number (subject to audit) of whole-time equivalent persons employed during the period was as follows:

	Permanent Staff	Others	Chair	2022-23 Total	2021-22 Total
Total	17	-	1	18	17

On a headcount basis there were 16 (2021-22 17) full time members of staff employed during the period (15 at year end). One (2021-22: 1) member of staff was employed part time. On average two members of staff was engaged via a recruitment agency (2021-22: 0).

Exit Packages						
Exit Package Cost Band	Number of compulsory redundancies	Number of other departures agreed	Total number of exit packages by cost band	Number of compulsory redundancies	Number of other departures agreed	Total number of exit packages by cost band
	2022-23	2022-23	2021-22	2021-22	2021-22	2021-22
£0-25,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
£25,001-50,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
£50,001- 100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
£100,001-150,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
£150,000+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total number of exit packages by type	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total resource cost/ £	-	-	-	-	-	-
Actuarial Movement in Pension Net Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-

Redundancy and other departure costs have been paid in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Service Compensation Scheme, a statutory scheme made under the Superannuation Act 1972. The table above shows the total cost of exit packages agreed and accounted for in 2022-3 (2021-22: £0). £0 exit costs were paid in 2022-23 (2021-22: 0). No persons retired early on ill-health grounds in 2022-23 (2021-22: None)

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Remuneration of key management

As reported in the Remuneration Report on pages 45 to 49, one member of staff received a salary within the band £70k - £75k.

4. Analysis of Expenditure on Charitable Activities

Key Activities	Activities Undertaken Directly	Grant Funding Activities	Support Cost	Total 2022-23
	£	£	£	£
Funding and Development	286,774	2,323,278	329,015	2,939,067
Community Engagement	311,881	-	329,015	640,896
Total	598,655	2,323,278	658,030	3,579,963

Key Activities	Activities Undertaken Directly	Grant Funding Activities	Support Cost	Total 2021-22
	£	£	£	£
Funding and Development	332,240	2,251,975	423,321	3,007,536
Community Engagement	284,024	-	311,168	595,192
Total	616,264	2,251,975	734,489	3,602,728

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Analysis of Support Costs

2022-23 Support Costs	Funding and Development £	Community Engagement £	Basis of Allocation
Facilities	43,597	43,597	Per Capita
HR	41,054	41,054	Per Capita
IT	57,849	57,849	Per Capita
Finance	52,332	52,332	Per Capita
Governance	134,183	134,183	Per Capita
	-----	-----	
Function Total	329,015	329,015	
	-----	-----	

2021-22 Support Costs	Funding and Development £	Community Engagement £	Basis of Allocation
Facilities	25,941	19,424	Per Capita
HR	60,187	44,632	Per Capita
IT	75,614	58,166	Per Capita
Finance	92,769	61,846	Per Capita
Governance	168,810	127,101	Per Capita
	-----	-----	
Function Total	423,321	311,169	
	-----	-----	

The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) performs the annual statutory audit of the Community Relations Council at a cost of £24,900 (2021-22: £23,000). There was a fee of £1,319 paid to National Fraud Initiative at the 31st March 2023 (2021-22: £Nil). This is included in the Governance costs above.

Staff travelling and subsistence costs totalled £2,675 in 2022-23 (2021-22: £45) This is included in the Governance costs above.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

5. Grant expenditure

	Grants payable £	Support costs £	2022-23 Total £
Grants schemes			
Small grants schemes	199,590	127,219	326,809
Publications and Media	47,869	9,870	57,739
Core Funding	1,348,781	150,799	1,499,580
Pathfinder	141,371	2,742	144,113
North Belfast Strategic Fund	585,667	38,385	624,052
	-----	-----	-----
	2,323,278	329,015	2,652,293
	-----	-----	-----
	Grants payable £	Support costs £	2021-22 Total £
Grants schemes			
Small Grants Scheme	688,558	163,684	852,242
Publications and Media	9,900	12,700	22,600
Core Funding	1,188,301	194,022	1,382,323
Pathfinder	29,290	3,528	32,818
North Belfast Strategic Fund	335,927	49,387	385,314
	-----	-----	-----
	2,251,976	423,321	2,675,297
	-----	-----	-----

A statement of grant making policies in the Directors' Report provides further information on these grant schemes. Of the grants that have been paid, none of the grants have been made to individuals (2021-22: None).

6. Statement of Net (Expenditure)/Income by Operating Segment:

IFRS 8 "Operating Segments" requires disclosure of financial information about an organisation's reportable segments based on the internal reporting arrangements as reviewed by the "Chief Operating Decision Maker" (CODM). The CODM for the Council is deemed to be the Council Members since they have the authority for directing the main activities of the Council throughout the year. The Council approves the annual budget and, at each Council meeting, reviews management accounts and corresponding segmental financial information.

The Board considers financial information that supports delivery of the Community Relations Council's T:BUC objectives as a whole rather than discrete financial information for each internal function. On this basis the Community Relations Council does not have the basis for segmental reporting.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

7. Tangible fixed assets Year End 31st March 2023

	Computer Equipment £	Fixtures and Fittings £	Buildings Right of Use £	Total £
Cost:				
Balance at 1st April 2022	58,672	71,232	-	129,904
Additions	3,562	902		4,464
IFRS16 Opening Balance Adjustment	-	-	216,253	216,253
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2023	62,234	72,134	216,253	350,621
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Accumulated depreciation:				
Balance at 1st April 2022	42,654	65,586	-	108,240
Charge for year	5,375	1,849	49,905	57,129
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2023	48,029	67,435	49,905	165,369
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Net book value:				
At 31st March 2023	14,205	4,699	166,348	185,252
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
At 1st April 2022	16,018	5,646	-	21,664
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
Asset Financing				
Owned	14,205	4,699	-	18,904
Finance Lease			166,348	166,348
Net Book Value at 31st March 2023	14,205	4,699	166,348	185,252
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

Year End 31st March 2022

	Computer Equipment £	Fixtures and Fittings £	Buildings Right of use £	Total £
Cost:				
Balance at 1st April 2021	57,544	67,318	-	124,862
Additions	1,128	3,914	-	5,042
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2022	58,672	71,232	-	129,904
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Accumulated depreciation:				
Balance at 1st April 2021	37,258	63,161	-	100,419
Charge for year	5,396	2,425	-	7,821
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2022	42,654	65,586	-	108,240
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Net book value:				
At 31st March 2022	16,018	5,646	-	21,664
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
At 1st April 2021	20,286	4,157	-	24,443
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

8. Intangible fixed assets

Year End 31st March 2023

	Software Licences	Total
Cost:	£	£
Balance at 1st April 2022	34,664	34,664
Additions	-	-
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2023	34,664	34,664
	-----	-----
Accumulated amortisation:		
Balance at 1st April 2022	20,168	20,168
Charge for year	6,808	6,808
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2023	26,976	26,976
	-----	-----
Net book value:		
At 31st March 2023	7,688	7,688
	=====	=====
At 1st April 2022	14,496	14,496
	=====	=====

Year End 31st March 2022

	Software Licences	Total
Cost:	£	£
Balance at 1st April 2021	33,164	33,164
Additions	1,500	1,500
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2022	34,664	34,664
	-----	-----
Accumulated amortisation:		
Balance at 1st April 2021	13,235	13,235
Charge for year	6,933	6,933
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March 2022	20,168	20,168
	-----	-----
Net book value:		
At 31st March 2022	14,496	14,496
	=====	=====
At 1st April 2021	19,929	19,929
	=====	=====

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

9. Debtors: amounts due in less than one year	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Grant claw backs	-	6,898
Prepayments	8,086	25,316
	-----	-----
	8,086	32,214
	=====	=====

10. Cash and cash equivalents	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Balance at 1st April	115,529	32,509
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	(14,393)	83,020
	-----	-----
Balance at 31st March	101,136	115,529
	=====	=====

Cash and cash equivalents are comprised entirely of cash on hand and are held in commercial banks. The Community Relations Council does not have any demand deposits or any short-term, highly liquid investments.

11. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Grants payable	563,338	519,037
Other creditors	11,168	46,154
Accruals	91,598	79,197
	-----	-----
	666,104	644,388
	=====	=====

Creditors: Finance Leases	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Amounts falling due within one year	49,594	-
Amounts falling due after one year	117,563	-
	-----	-----
	167,157	-
	=====	=====

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Deferred Income	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Amount deferred in year	29,350	20,000
	-----	-----
	29,350	20,000
	=====	=====

Opening Balance - £20,000
 Receipts - £24,000
 Payments - £(14,650)
Closing Balance - £29,350

12. Notes to the cash flow statement		2022-23	2021-22
		£	£
Net incoming resources	Note	(268,964)	(362,868)
Adjustments for:			
Depreciation/amortisation charge	7&8	63,937	14,754
Decrease in debtors	9	24,128	1,832
Increase in creditors	11	31,066	193,843
Building Rent Payment	15	(50,855)	-
Interest Charge		1,759	-
Current and past service cost	16	230,000	286,000
Less: Employer pension contributions	16	(104,000)	(111,000)
Interest on net defined benefit liability	16	63,000	67,000
		-----	-----
Net cash provided by / (used in) operating activities		(9,929)	89,561
		=====	=====

13. Net income is stated after charging	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	7,224	7,821
Amortisation of intangible fixed assets	6,808	6,933
Auditors' remuneration	24,900	23,000
National Fraud Initiative fee	1,319	-
	=====	=====

The cost incurred in respect of Statutory Audit fees during the year ended 31st March 2023 was £24,900 (2021-22: £23,000).

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

14. Fund balances - Outline summary of fund movements

Fund name	Fund balances brought forward £	Income £	Expenditure £	Gains and Losses £	Fund Balance Carried forward £
Restricted					
Fund	(480,485)	3,310,999	(3,390,963)	-	(560,449)
Pension					
Reserve	(2,386,000)	-	(189,000)	2,769,000	194,000
Total Funds	(2,866,485) =====	3,310,999 =====	(3,579,963) =====	2,769,000 =====	(366,449) =====

Any funds above must be spent on direct charitable expenditure and associated administration and overhead costs.

With effect from 1st April 2021, The Executive Office has put in place a guarantee in respect of the pension liabilities of the Community Relations Council.

15.1 Quantitative disclosures around right-of-use assets

	Buildings	Total 2022/23
	£	£
Right-of-use assets		
IFRS16 Op. Balance Adj.	216,253	216,253
Depreciation expense	(49,905)	(49,905)
At 31st March 2023	166,348	166,348

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

15.2 Quantitative disclosures around lease liabilities

2022/23
£

Obligations under finance leases for the following periods comprise:

Buildings	
Later than one year and not later than five years	50,885
Less than five years	118,732
Less Interest element	(2,460)
Present Value of obligations	167,157
Other	
Current portion	49,594
Non-current portion	117,563

15.3 Quantitative disclosures around cash outflow for leases

£
2022/23

Total cash outflow for leases	50,855

The Community Relations Council signed a Memorandum of Temporary Occupation (MOTO) agreement for premises at Equality House on the 1st April 2016. The MOTO expired on 31st July 2021 and has been further extended to 31st July 2026 subject to review. The commitments of IFRS 16 Leases under this MOTO is noted.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

16. Commitments under Defined Benefit Pension Scheme

The assets of the pension scheme are held separately from those of the Community Relations Council and are administered by NILGOSC. The pension cost is determined on the advice of independent qualified actuaries. The latest actuarial valuation of the Community Relations Council's liabilities took place at 31st March 2019.

The scheme is funded and the employer contributions were 19.5% for the year ended 31st March 2023 (2021-22: 19.5%). From 1st April 2022 employer contributions remain at 19.5% of pensionable pay and the employer expects to pay regular contributions to the Fund for the accounting period ended 31st March 2023 totalling £104,000 (31st March 2022: £111,000). The employees' contributions vary between 6.5% and 8.5% of pensionable pay. As required by The Charities SORP (FRS 102), the defined benefit liabilities have been measured using the projected unit credit method. The tables below state the actuarial assumptions upon which the valuation of the scheme was based.

Key Assumptions	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21
Discount rate	4.7%	2.7%	2.1%
CPI Inflation	2.7%	3%	3%
Pension increases	2.7%	3%	3%
Pension accounts revaluation rate	2.7%	3%	3%
Salary increases	4.2%	4.5%	4%
Asset Allocation	2022-23	2021-22	
	%	%	
Equities	41.3%	40.6%	
Property	10.5%	10.9%	
Government bonds	20.5%	24.1%	
Multi Asset Credit	13.1%	12.9%	
Corporate bonds	2.7%	1.8%	
Cash	5.9%	6.2%	
Other	6.0%	3.5%	
	-----	-----	
Total	100%	100%	
	-----	-----	

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Mortality Assumptions

The mortality assumptions are based on the recent actual mortality experience of members within the Fund and allow for expected future mortality improvements. Sample life expectancies at age 65 resulting from these mortality assumptions are shown below

	2022-23	2021-22
Males	Years	Years
Member aged 65 at accounting date	22.2	21.8
Member aged 45 at accounting date	23.2	23.2
Females		
Member aged 65 at accounting date	25.0	25.0
Member aged 45 at accounting date	26.0	26.4

Reconciliation of funded status to Balance Sheet

	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Fair value of assets	8,026,000	8,660,000
Present value of funded defined benefit obligation	(7,832,000)	(11,046,000)
Funded status	194,000	(2,386,000)
Unrecognised asset	-	-
Asset/(liability) recognised on the balance sheet	194,000	(2,386,000)

Amounts recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities

	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Operating Cost		
Current service cost	230,000	286,000
Financing Cost		
Interest on net defined benefit liability	63,000	67,000
Pension expense recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities	293,000	353,000

Amounts recognised in other comprehensive income

Assets gains/(losses) arising during the period	(841,000)	161,000
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in financial assumptions	4,515,000	-
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in demographic assumptions	(32,000)	-
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to liability experience	(873,000)	-
Adjustment in respect of paragraph 28.22	-	
Liability gains/(losses) arising during the period	-	908,000
Total amount recognised in other comprehensive income	2,769,000	1,069,000

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Movement in Deficit during the year	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Net defined benefit pension liability at the beginning of the year	(2,386,000)	(3,213,000)
Current service cost	(230,000)	(286,000)
Employer contributions	104,000	111,000
Interest on the net defined benefit liability	(63,000)	(67,000)
Actuarial (losses)/gains	2,769,000	1,069,000
Net defined benefit pension asset/(liability) at the end of the year	194,000	(2,386,000)

Changes to the present value of the defined benefit obligation during the period

	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Opening defined benefit obligation	11,046,000	11,583,000
Current service cost	230,000	286,000
Interest expense on defined benefit obligation	297,000	242,000
Contributions by participants	42,000	44,000
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in Financial Assumptions	(4,515,000)	-
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to changes in Demographic Assumptions	32,000	-
Actuarial gains/(losses) due to Liability Experience	873,000	-
Actuarial losses/(gains) on liabilities	-	(908,000)
Net benefits paid out	(173,000)	(201,000)
Closing defined benefit obligation	7,832,000	11,046,000

Changes to the fair value of assets during the period

	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Opening fair value of assets	8,660,000	8,370,000
Interest income on assets	234,000	175,000
Remeasurement (losses)/gains on assets	(841,000)	161,000
Contributions by the employer	104,000	111,000
Contributions by participants	42,000	44,000
Net benefits paid out	(173,000)	(201,000)
Closing fair value of assets	8,026,000	8,660,000

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Actual return on assets	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Interest income on assets	234,000	175,000
Gain/(loss) on assets	(841,000)	161,000
	-----	-----
Actual return on assets	(607,000)	336,000
	=====	=====

The split of the defined benefit obligation at the last valuation date between the various categories of members was as follows:

Active members	33%
Deferred Pensioners	32%
Pensioners	35%

17. Related party transactions

	2022-23	2021-22
	£'s	£'s
The Executive Office	3,268,494	3,224,987

During the year, the Community Relations Council has had various material transactions with the Good Relations and Governance Branch of the Executive Office which is regarded as a related party. The Community Relations Council received a total of £3,268,494 (2021-22: £3,224,987) in Grant in Aid from The Executive Office during 2022-23.

	2022-23	2021-22
	£'s	£'s
ECNI	126,948	120,597

ECNI is regarded as a related party since it is an Arm's Length Body of The Executive Office. The Community Relations Council relocated premises to Equality House on 23rd March 2016. The amount paid to ECNI during the 2022-23 financial year totalled £126,948 (2021-22: £120,597).

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Directors:

Some Directors of the Company may also carry out various roles within organisations which receive financial assistance from The Community Relations Council. The Directors disclose these interests on an annual basis by submitting 'Declaration of Interests' returns. Relevant interests are also declared during the normal business and procedures of the Board and its Committee. During the year, the following payments were made to organisations related to Directors:

- Nisha Tandon is Executive Director of ArtsEkta, which was in receipt of two grant under the CRCD programme totalling £7,400 (2021-22: £9,084.24).

18. Financial Regularity

No cases of financial irregularity that required investigation by the Community Relations Council occurred in the 2022-23 financial year.

19. Events after the reporting date

There have been no significant events since the balance sheet date that would affect these accounts or require disclosure.

20. Contingent Liabilities

No contingent liabilities are known to have existed at the 31st March 2023.

Date of authorisation for issue

The Accounting Officer authorised these Accounts for issue on 22nd November 2023

Appendix 1

Additional Disclosures to comply with FReM

This additional disclosure has been prepared in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM). FReM is a technical guide for the preparation of financial statements of public bodies. The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Community Relations Council for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected.

FReM requires Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB) to regard grant in aid received as contributions from controlling parties giving rise to a financial interest in the residual interest of the body, and hence accounted for as financing, i.e. by crediting them to the income and expenditure reserve. Grants are recognised as financing in the year which they are received.

On 1st April 2012, the Community Relations Council was designated as an Executive NDPB and as a result cannot recognise Grant in Aid as income. If the Community Relations Council were to comply with FReM, the following statements would be the effect of this compliance.

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure

		2022-23 £	2021-22 £
Income	Note	42,505	14,874
Total Operating Income		42,505	14,874
Expenditure			
Staff costs	3	908,983	978,864
Grant expenditure	4	2,323,278	2,251,976
Purchase of goods and services	App 1	215,052	289,968
Depreciation and impairment charges	App 1	63,937	14,754
Other Operating Expenditure	App 1	68,713	67,166
Total Operating Expenditure		3,579,963	3,602,728
Net Expenditure for the year		(3,537,458)	(3,587,854)
Other Comprehensive Expenditure			
Actuarial gain/(loss) on defined benefit pension scheme	16	2,769,000	1,069,000
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year		(768,458)	(2,518,854)
		=====	=====

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2023

		2022-23 £	2021-22 £
	Note		
Non-current assets			
Tangible Fixed assets	7	185,252	21,664
Intangible assets	8	7,688	14,496
Total non-current assets		192,940	36,160
Current assets			
Trade and other receivables	9	8,086	32,214
Cash and cash equivalents	10	101,136	115,529
Total current assets		109,222	147,743
Total assets		302,162	183,903
		=====	=====

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Current liabilities

Trade and other payables	11	(695,454)	(664,388)
Finance Lease		(49,594)	-

Total current liabilities

(745,048) (664,388)

Total assets less current liabilities

(442,886) (480,485)

Non-current liabilities

Non- Current Liabilities - Finance Lease	11	(117,563)	-
Defined benefit pension liability	16	194,000	(2,386,000)

Total assets less total liabilities

(366,449) (2,866,485)

Taxpayers' equity and other reserves

General fund	14	(366,449)	(2,866,485)

Total Equity

14 (366,449) (2,866,485)

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31st March 2023

		2022-23 £	2021-22 £
Cash flows from operating activities	Note		
Net Operating Cost		(3,579,963)	(3,602,729)
Adjustments for:			
Depreciation/amortisation charge	7/8	63,937	14,754
(Increase)/Decrease in debtors	9	24,128	1,832
(Decrease)/Increase in creditors	11	31,066	193,843
 Building Rent Payment	 15	 (50,855)	 -
Interest Charge		1,759	-
 <i>Movement in pension scheme deficit:</i>			
- Current service cost	16	230,000	286,000
- Employer pension contributions	16	(104,000)	(111,000)
- Interest on net defined benefit liability	16	63,000	67,000
 Net cash outflow from operating activities		 (3,320,928)	 (3,150,301)

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Cash flows from investing activities

Purchase of tangible fixed assets	7	(4,464)	(5,042)
Purchase of intangible fixed assets	8	-	(1,500)

Net cash inflow/(outflow) from investing activities		(4,464)	(6,542)

Cash flows from financing activities

Grants from sponsoring department	2	3,268,494	3,224,987
Secondment Income		42,505	14,874

Net financing		3,310,999	3,239,861

Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents in the period		(14,393)	83,019

Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period		115,529	32,509

Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period		101,136	115,529

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year ended 31st March 2023

		General Fund £	Taxpayers' Equity £
Balance at 31st March 2021		(3,572,618)	(3,572,618)
Grant-in-aid from The Executive Office	2	3,224,987	3,224,987
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year	App. 1	(3,587,854)	(3,587,854)
Actuarial Gain/(Loss) for year	16	1,069,000	1,069,000
Balance at 31st March 2022		(2,866,485)	(2,866,485)
Grant-in-aid from The Executive Office	2	3,268,494	3,268,494
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year	App. 1	(3,537,458)	(3,537,458)
Actuarial Gain/(Loss) for year	16	2,769,000	2,769,000
Balance at 31st March 2023		(366,449)	(366,449)

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Other Operating Costs

Purchase of goods and services	Note	2022-23 £	2021-22 £
Programme costs		60,082	76,230
Postage, stationery and photocopier costs		720	614
Telephone		3,549	3,385
Rentals under operating leases		40,919	88,466
Repairs and maintenance		46,760	45,493
Professional fees		16,383	24,348
Sundry expenses		1,580	234
HR costs		13,414	19,991
External audit services		24,900	23,000
Internal audit services		6,675	8,207
Bank charges		70	-
		-----	-----
		215,052	289,968
		-----	-----
Depreciation and impairment charges			
Depreciation	7	57,129	7,821
Amortisation	8	6,808	6,933
		-----	-----
		63,937	14,754
		-----	-----
Other Operating Expenditure		2022-23 £	2021-22 £
Staff travel and subsistence		2,675	45
Members and Committee expenses		1,279	121
Interest - Right of Use of Assets		1,759	-
Interest on net defined pension liability	16	63,000	67,000
		-----	-----
		68,713	67,166
		-----	-----

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Appendix 2: Grants Paid in 2022-23

Core Grant Scheme Awards 2022 – 2023

Please Note:

Multiple Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 2 – 4 District Council areas

Regional Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 5 – 11 District Council areas

Reference	Name	Short Description	Amount (£)
Antrim and Newtownabbey			
CFC22/41007	Community Relations Forum	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	37,437.56
Total for Antrim and Newtownabbey			37,437.56
Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon			
CFC22/41024	Shankill Parish Caring Association	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	34,323.25
Total for Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon			34,323.25
Belfast			
CFC22/41040	East Belfast Mission	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	51,606.38
CF22/40010	Falls Women's Centre	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	28,160.26
CF22/40060	North Belfast Interface Network	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	29,476.12
CFC22/41014	Springboard Opportunities Limited	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	51,782.38
Total for Belfast			161,025.14
Causeway Coast and Glens			
CFC22/41018	BCRC	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	40,529.88
Total for Causeway Coast and Glens			40,529.88
Derry and Strabane			
CFC22/41036	The Churches Trust Ltd	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	62,877.13
Total for Derry and Strabane			62,877.13
Multiple			
CF22/40017	Belfast YMCA Limited	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	38,702.64
CF22/40045	Community Relations in Schools (CRIS)	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	79,994.26
CF22/40040	Early Years-the organisation for Young children	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	75,027.27
CF22/40023	Falls Community Council	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	36,205.54
CFC22/41008	Intercomm	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	28,206.42
CF22/40038	PeacePlayers International - Northern Ireland	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	55,306.90
CF22/40041	Tobar Mhuire Retreat Centre	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	19,349.75
Total for Multiple			332,792.78

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Regional			
CFC22/41010	An Gaeláras Limited	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	28,283.63
CF22/40009	Beyond Skin	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	18,673.00
CF22/40048	Irish FA Foundation	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	29,237.30
CF22/40030	Irish School of Ecumenics Belfast	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	29,306.12
CF22/40016	Londonderry Bands Forum	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	45,953.24
CFC22/41038	Nerve Centre	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	26,917.74
CFC22/41033	North West Play Resource Centre	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	37,096.68
CFC22/41028	Partisan Productions	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	33,181.00
CFC22/41023	Rural Community Network	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	59,120.26
CFC22/41022	The Corrymeela Community	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	68,177.75
CFC22/41019	The Junction/Holywell Trust Core Funding Partnership	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	80,195.04
CFC22/41016	TIDES Training	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	56,017.00
CF22/40025	Trademark	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	62,362.54
CF22/40014	Ulster GAA	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	43,184.74
CFC22/41035	Youth Initiatives NI	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	28,798.66
CF22/40026	Youth Link	Grant for core funding costs to support community relations activity	55,694.27
Total for Regional			702,198.97
Overall Total			1,371,184.71

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Community Relations Cultural Diversity Grant Scheme 2022 – 2023

Please Note:

Multiple Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 2 – 4 District Council areas

Regional Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 5 – 11 District Council areas

Reference	Name	Short Project Description	Amount (£)
Antrim and Newtownabbey			
CRCDD22/42131	Falls Women's Centre	50 women will meet at a cross-community social event to hear a talk on drumming traditions, followed by discussion and a buffet supper.	860.00
Total for Antrim and Newtownabbey			860.00
Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon			
CRCDD22/42013	The John Hewitt Society	The John Hewitt International Summer School is a celebrated week-long Festival of Literature and the Arts. The festival provides platforms for debate and discussion to explore the key political and cultural issues of the day, empowering audiences to think critically about their own communities and the world around them.	4,270.00
CRCDD22/42214	Rathfriland and District Regeneration Company Ltd	A cultural fusion project celebrating Burns Night and St Patrick using music, dance and poetry to break down perceptions and bring people together in Rathfriland.	1,249.98
Total for Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon			5,519.98
Belfast			
CRCDD22/42017	Highspring Residents Group	The group are providing a single identity diversionary festival in the Highfield area for the local community during the annual Whiterock band parade. The group look to maintain the good relationships built between both communities in the area by providing an alternative and keeping local youth away from the trouble hotspot of the Springfield Road.	1,150.00

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CRC22/42022	Lagan Village Youth and Community Group	The group is delivering a 6 week programme of cultural diversity awareness, understanding to a group of 20 young people where they will learn about music, language, dance and other cultural aspects of the different cultures that not only live in the local community but also in the Belfast area.	2,340.00
CRC22/42028	Community Relations in Schools (CRIS)	The group have planned a 3 pronged approach to re-engage both the parents/carers of children that have been part of the Buddy Up programme over the years and also new parents associated with the 6 feeder primary schools across North Belfast.	3,134.00
CRC22/42029	Prime Cut Productions	In My Own Words is a creative writing project designed to result in an Anthology of New Writing from women across Belfast and a Digitised Performance. It is aimed at people whose lives have been adversely and negatively impacted by the legacy of the Northern Irish conflict in order to give a platform and opportunity for expression to the many under-represented citizens of Belfast.	4,250.00
CRC22/42036	All Nations Ministries	All Nations Ministries is planning to host "Global Fun Day". In order to promote social inclusion of immigrant minority communities in NI; provide an opportunity for ethnic minority community members to share their experiences and culture with local NI communities - to enable the building of trust and understanding. .	1,364.37
CRC22/42049	Conway Education Centre	Welcoming our new neighbours. This project aims to improve relations and reduce barriers between local residents and refugee & asylum seeking families who have been housed in west Belfast. The project joins English language learning, key to communication and integration, with learning about Belfast society	810.38

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

CRC22/42056	British Youth Music Theatre	The project celebrates and acknowledges the important role of peace builders, promoting awareness amongst young cast members, as well as through performances at the Lyric.	2,499.88
CRC22/42062	Fighting Words Northern Ireland	Deliver 4 cross community creative writing workshops in East Belfast for young people to explore cultural diversity culminating in a showcase.	3,378.37
CRC22/42066	Family Comfort NI	The project will create a diverse range of activities that would bring people from different cultures with different beliefs together to encourage and build community unity.	1,600.00
CRC22/42080	Belfast Won't Always Be Like This	The group are planning a full feature documentary tackling the separation walls from a community perspective, and how to end segregation in Belfast	2,000.00
CRC22/42081	Refuge Language	This project will see the creation of a Conversation Club for NI's Ukrainian population, many of whom are new in the country.	4,636.38
CRC22/42097	Belfast Exposed	This women's cross-community creative project takes inspiration from the Belfast Exposed archive, explores the legacy of internment and empowers women to harness leadership within communities.	4,898.70
CRC22/42105	BHCT	Information stalls, speeches, performances, talks, lived experiences - all an opportunity to learn and explore how to sustain good mental health with good relations.	1,000.00
CRC22/42107	Coiste na nIarchimí	To assure community leaders of the grassroots work Coiste and EPIC do for reconciliation within and between communities	400.00
CRC22/42110	EPIC	The British Irish Association Conference offers a unique opportunity to access a wide range of policy influencers from both the political and community sectors.	400.00

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

CRCDD22/42111	Northern Ireland Interfaith Forum	An evening event with a wide range of culturally diverse musicians/artists/speakers to celebrate International Peace Day hosted in a neutral Belfast venue.	1,430.00
CRCDD22/42113	East Belfast Enterprise	To engage communities from either side of a peace line to work together on a mural art-work, reflecting their experiences and future aspirations.	2,500.00
CRCDD22/42126	Multi-Ethnic Sports And Cultures Northern Ireland(MSCNI)	We plan to use this medium to bring youths of various community backgrounds together with a sports festival using various sports and Cultural activities.	1,855.20
CRCDD22/42130	All Nations Ministries	Hosting 2 multicultural celebration events for marginalised refugee/asylum seeker women and young people in N. Belfast.	1,280.57
CRCDD22/42140	Belfast South Community Resources	Event where members of the community will enjoy an evening of learning and participating in Indian cultural traditions to celebrate Diwali.	1,500.00
CRCDD22/42142	Imagine Belfast	The project is taking place 20-26 March 2023 with at least 80 events involving over 8,000 people in discussion on diversity & good relations issues.	3,750.00
CRCDD22/42147	174 Trust	'Faith Together for the Common Good' - a 1/2 day Conference	450.00
CRCDD22/42172	Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum	Provide shared trauma training to local people and young people across a North Belfast interface as they deal with people facing trauma and poverty	1,649.00
CRCDD22/42185	EastSide Arts	Creating Space will promote integration and cultural diversity by supporting Hosford's Women's Group to explore their creativity and share their stories through trauma-informed arts practice.	1,352.00
CRCDD22/42201	ArtsEkta	ArtsEkta hope to present a large outdoor procession and experience centered around the stories of Goddesses and Gods of Global Mythology using visual arts.	2,400.00

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CRC22/42226	DU Dance NI	Bringing together women from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds all of whom live in West Belfast to connect, create, share and celebrate through dance.	1,440.00
CRC22/42241	Museum of the Troubles Initiative	We would like to reflect the result of the women's work, that is the design of their exhibit of their experiences during the Troubles, digitally.	675.00
Total for Belfast			54,143.85
Derry and Strabane			
CRC22/42024	The Churches Trust Ltd	Art Exhibition and showcase of creative outputs of the Uniting Opportunities, Community of Homes project, a personal development Good Relations themed project where young people build positive relationship and together address barriers to community participation.	2,484.00
CRC22/42026	Rural Housing Association	A series of Pop-up Global Cafes in rural communities, will celebrate diversity and cultures from across the globe using art, cookery and interactive workshops	4,800.69
CRC22/42040	Kerala Association	Bringing people from all the communities together through art, culture and education thus building good relations between them.	1,500.00
CRC22/42067	An Gaeláras Limited	Providing language classes in a venue accessible to people from communities where learning Irish is not viewed as traditional, e.g. communities described as broadly Unionist.	3,895.00
CRC22/42101	Londonderry Bands Forum	Deliver cross border workshops and a concert in St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin in the build up to St Patrick's Day in a shared Island performance.	1,500.00

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CRCDD22/42171	Newbuildings Cricket Club	The project will bring young people from the Newbuilding's and surrounding areas together in a programme of activities designed to provide inclusivity and remove stereotypes.	1,100.00
CRCDD22/42176	Lincoln Courts Youth and Community Association	It will focus on developing a greater understanding, forging stronger links and focus on breaking down sectarian barriers between young people from greater waterside area.	1,370.00
Total for Derry and Strabane			16,649.69
Fermanagh and Omagh			
CRCDD22/42058	Dylan Quinn Dance Theatre	A programme of 160 hours of creative dance workshops for young people living in and around Omagh and Enniskillen. Exploring diversity and celebration of community.	2,500.00
CRCDD22/42118	Erne East Community Partnership (Ltd)	To extend knowledge/understanding through shared cross community Men's Shed heritage and environmental greenwood/upcycled woodcraft activities delivered in shared spaces/services which are accessible to all.	1,770.00
CRCDD22/42129	George Elliott BKYL Academy	Good relations football and educational programme which will encourage greater levels of respect, learning, tolerance and understanding amongst young people in the Fermanagh/Omagh area.	1,204.00
Total for Fermanagh and Omagh			5,474.00
Multiple			
CRCDD22/42007	EMSONI - Ethnic Minority Sports Organisation NI	Confederation festival is designed as a multicultural day to celebrate shared space, community cohesion, cultural diversity and the cultures of the 20 participating communities that will come together for 11 weeks of intercommunity football activities.	4,800.00

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CRC22/42019	Belfast YMCA Limited	This exciting new project is about young people getting to experience what life is like for others in their community. Participants will not just talk about cultural diversity, they will experience it first-hand through a week long programme of visits to places of worship, dialogue sessions in which young people will share their reflections and learning in a mixed group.	1,161.00
CRC22/42042	Castle Juniors FC	This project will offer young people an opportunity to combine a residential football festival with teams across Europe and an educational programme focusing on diversity. Community Relations elements will address sectarianism and racism while engaging with other young people from different cultures.	2,320.00
CRC22/42050	Sole Purpose Productions	Sole Purpose is planning to work with PsycheDelight Theatre Company to bring their play 'Mohand and Peter' to Derry and Belfast for Community Relations Week.	4,285.00
CRC22/42054	Together in Music	A series of 6 Cross Community work shops for musicians who represent Ulster Scots and Irish Traditional cultures. The Workshops will concentrate on the common roots that underpin both these traditions and how these traditions have been used as weapons in the Constitutional issues still very much alive today. We will discuss the New Decade New Approach document and how it feeds into Cultural Identity	4,000.00
CRC22/42057	TADA Rural Support Network	A multi-cultural networking event to bring together a diverse range of cultures to promote understanding, respect and engagement with all sections of the community.	3,700.00

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CRCDD22/42060	Artsawonder	This project is an evening event with panels including members of the religious, political sphere, representatives of civil society punctuated with arts performances.	4,187.00
CRCDD22/42079	Kabosh	Kabosh present a regional tour of the award-winning 'Green & Blue' to coincide with Good Relations Week 2022. Accompanied by workshops and post-show discussions.	5,000.00
CRCDD22/42090	Two Castles Community Development Association	Soapbox Derby, with novelty races for both children & adults. Funday with traditional cultural activities and entertainment showcasing all sections of the community.	2,385.00
CRCDD22/42094	Beyond Skin	A culturally diverse festival celebrating the planting of 'the 100 Book' through performances, talks, workshops and a local artisan market.	4,090.00
CRCDD22/42122	Drumalis	The programme comprising 15 seminars and attracting diverse participants engages with TBUC Key Priority 4 with its emphasis on community belonging and cultural diversity.	1,490.00
CRCDD22/42190	Mandarin Speakers Association Derry	Chinese New Year Gala, Chinese class, art project, Chinese decoration to teach local people about Chinese culture and to reinforce Chinese culture with Chinese people	2,330.00
Total for Multiple			39,748.00
Newry, Mourne and Down			
CRCDD22/42045	Iur Cinn Fleadh	Dancing on the Green, 3 local housing estates, dancing, singing and music, Irish, Polish, Belfast choir. Bring fleadh out to communities, reach people of various cultures	1,630.25
CRCDD22/42059	Schomberg Society Kilkeel Limited	This project will improve community relations during the 11th July celebrations in Kilkeel by organising a major family-friendly Festival, which everyone feels safe to attend.	3,275.00
Total for Newry, Mourne and Down			4,905.25

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Regional			
CRCDD22/42009	The Corrymeela Community	Faith in Each Other - a semi-annual residential programme that explores how religious identity in Northern Ireland affects one's sense of belonging	2,415.00
CRCDD22/42014	Success Dragon & Lion Dance Association	To provide a multi-cultural Chinese New Year event, which will be entertaining, educational and inclusive. We aim to raise the profile of Chinese Community, other ethnic minorities and their culture, reduce stereotyping and develop ongoing partnerships	2,500.00
CRCDD22/42018	Arts Ekta	This project will deliver the 16th edition of the multi award winning Belfast Mela, Northern Ireland's largest and leading celebration of cultural diversity. Belfast Mela (meaning to meet) is a major citizen-led cultural festival celebrating NI's diverse communities through many forms of music, dance, food, language and art.	5,000.00
CRCDD22/42031	Spanner in the works theatre company	The Buttercup play spans over the last 4 decades of life in Northern Ireland. The play opens up an honest and difficult debate about how it's past has affected future generations. Suicide rates in Northern Ireland over the last few years have risen steeply, has our troubled past played a part in this?	4,550.00
CRCDD22/42035	Northern Ireland Environment Link	NIEL wishes to employ a consultant or researcher to review the nature of engagement of ethnic minorities in environmental issues, projects, and activities.	5,000.00
CRCDD22/42047	Irish School of Ecumenics	Church Fora bi-annual CONNECT conferences bring together representatives of Church Fora to learn more about significant societal issues (June conference: Faith and Democracy) to share experiences and learnings from their work programmes which aim to promote reconciliation, an end to sectarianism and racism, and a shared community.	1,182.00

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CRCDD22/42048	The de Borda Institute	The Northern Ireland problem, based as it is on a belief in majoritarianism, may best be overcome by a more pluralist approach to decision-making.	475.00
CRCDD22/42051	Foundation for Forgiveness and Reconciliation	A new podcast series profiling peacemakers, activists and artists from both sides of the conflict here in N.I. The series will include 2 live events	4,650.00
CRCDD22/42053	Youth Initiatives	OUTBOUND is good relations volunteer leadership training & development programme for participants aged 15-25 from the 6 Northern Ireland YI youth community hubs.	3,470.23
CRCDD22/42078	Integrated Education Fund	The programme goal is to create better understanding of Integrated Education amongst faith groups by bringing together key figures at a series of interactive events.	470.00
CRCDD22/42103	Trademark	Education and dialogue workshops focused on issues of history, identity and cultural expression, concluding with a residential focused on the present and future of NI.	1,200.00
CRCDD22/42104	PeacePlayers International - Northern Ireland	The CDP will equip a new generation of young people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to build peace and reconciliation.	2,290.00
CRCDD22/42121	Community Dialogue	Community Dialogue and partners will meet to assess the state of the Agreement on its 25th anniversary and agree strategic responses to outstanding challenges.	2,438.00
CRCDD22/42136	Spanner in the works theatre company	6 performances / workshops of play what's if across Northern Ireland The story of one mother's loss. The Shankill Road, Belfast 1993	3,090.00
CRCDD22/42152	APAC	Exhibitions, a zine, and talk will be presented at Parliament Buildings Belfast. They will showcase APAC's cross community project that reflects diversity and culture.	1,620.00
CRCDD22/42163	Shared Future News	A launch event with interviews of participants in What Northern Ireland Means to Me book.	800.00

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CRC22/42195	The Fostering Network	This project would support kinship fostering families to nurture hope through connecting with, understanding and celebrating each other, themselves, their cultures and diverse narratives.	1,700.00
CRC22/42203	Terra Nova Productions	Terra-Nova will bring 12+ diverse groups together to participate in 3 programmes exploring racial and cross-community issues through art, challenging misconceptions around our shared history.	1,270.00
CRC22/42219	JoinHer Network CIC	Celebration of women's achievements, successes and experiences that impact our diverse communities.	2,130.00
Total for Regional			46,250.23
Overall Total			173,551.00

North Belfast Scheme 2022

Reference	Name	Short Description	Amount (£)
Belfast			
NBF22/46001	Ardoyne Youth Enterprises	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	79,999.00
NBF22/46002	Ashton Centre	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	100,000.00
NBF22/46003	Ballysillan Community Forum	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	54,000.00
NBF22/46004	Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	108,000.00
NBF22/46005	Greater Whitewell Community Surgery	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	47,167.00
NBF22/46006	Intercomm	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	88,000.00
NBF22/46007	Ligoniel Improvement Association	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	60,000.00
NBF22/46008	Mount Vernon Community Development Fund	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	33,000.00
NBF22/46009	Shankill Women's Centre (SWC)	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	90,000.00
NBF22/46010	The Vine Centre	Support costs towards good relations projects in North Belfast	14,134.00
Overall Total			674,300.00

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Pathfinder Grant Scheme 2022 – 2023

Please Note:

Multiple Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 2 – 4 District Council areas

Reference	Name	Short Project Description	Amount (£)
Belfast			
PF22/43004	Forthspring Inter Community Group	The planned activities across 3 distinct cross community projects will focus on raising awareness of the key drivers of sectarianism, segregation and interface violence. Forthspring's message is about finding commonality, building positive community relations and promoting non-violence as a methodology for social action. They will also focus on good relations activity in an increasingly Multi-Cultural community, promoting and celebrating diversity.	22,319.00
PF22/43025	Blackmountain Shared Space Project	The programme is directly linked to the ongoing political/contentious discussions between residents, in particularly men in the Upper Springfield/Upper Shankill areas	7,500.00
Total for Belfast			29,819.00
Derry and Strabane			
PF22/43018	Cathedral Youth Club	Creative activities for young people which will impact on their physical and mental health as well as improving their understanding and knowledge of other cultures.	3,375.00
PF22/43023	Bloody Sunday Trust	This project will fund a PT community relations coordinator for the Bloody Sunday Trust putting a targeted resource into community relations work across the city.	14,665.00
Total for Derry and Strabane			18,040.00
Multiple			
PF22/43008	Shankill Women's Centre (SWC)	The group intends to provide a variety of project activities on a shared community (PUL/CNR) basis with GR/CD themes that will help create a more cohesive, peaceful society through: GR/CD Training/Courses, Dialogue, Personal Development, Residential, Conferences etc.	24,832.00
PF22/43010	St. Columb's Park House	St Columb's Park Reconciliation Trust is at the forefront of innovative peacebuilding within the Waterside area of the City. The organisation will deliver a series of community based good relations projects that meets the current needs of the communities with which they work. Their programming includes working and mediating at one of the City's most 'active' interface areas, engaging young people at a flashpoint between the peace bridge and a predominantly PUL community.	21,736.52
Total for Multiple			46,568.52
Overall Total			94,427.52

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Publications Grant Scheme 2022- 2023

Please Note:

Regional Councils – the grant was awarded for projects taking place in 5 – 11 District Council areas

Reference	Name	Book Title	Amount (£)
Regional			
Pubs22/44013	North West Cultural Partnership	Division, Partition, and Political Change in Ireland 1920-1925	1,470.00
Pubs22/44014	Irish School of Ecumenics	Is There A Common Good? An Educational Resource	4,700.00
Pubs22/44034	Trademark	The Double Transition: 25 Years Since the Good Friday Agreement	2,711.00
Overall Total			8,881.00

Media Grant Scheme 2022 – 2023

Reference	Name	Short Description of Project	Amount (£)
Belfast			
Media22/45012	Northern Visions	An engagement process with community groups involved in community relations work and peace building to deliver a series of four discussion programmes around predetermined themes and four location based news features, highlighting their work and best practice for broadcast on NVTv, Belfast's local public service channel.	5000.00
Media22/45030	Richard Willis	"Disagreeing Well" will blend a powerful and bespoke piece of spoken word poetry (performed by Fighting Word's Benji Wallis), with striking animated visuals. The overarching message of the piece will challenge how young people engage and communicate with those that they do not agree with.	5,000.00
Total for Belfast			10,000.00
Derry and Strabane			
Media22/45022	Holywell Trust	Following the success of the Forward Together Podcast, we will continue and deepen the conversations that have been started through the reimagined Holywell Trust Conversations podcast series. For this	4,954.37

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		series we will carry out 18 new interviews with linked articles on Slugger O'Toole.	
Total for Derry and Strabane			4,954.37
Overall Total			14,954.37

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107530

Annual return

Report to Those Charged with Governance

Community Relations Council
2022-23

24 November 2023

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We have prepared this report for the Community Relations Council's sole use. You must not disclose it to any third party, quote or refer to it, without our written consent and we assume no responsibility to any other person.

1. Key Messages

This report summarises the key matters from our audit of the 2022-23 Community Relations Council's financial statements which we must report to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, as those charged with governance. We would like to thank the finance team for their assistance during the audit process.

Audit Opinion

The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) has reported on the 2022-23 financial statements with an unqualified audit opinion, without modification on 22nd November 2023.

The Audit Certificate is included at [Appendix Two](#).

Misstatements

Financial Statement Adjustments

The net effect of adjustments on the financial statements was to increase Net Expenditure by £809 and increase Total net liabilities by £809.

Uncorrected misstatements

Uncorrected misstatements would decrease expenditure and increase net assets by a further £23,885.

Irregular expenditure

As disclosed in the Governance Statement, there was irregular expenditure of £15,302 in 2022-23. This was not considered to be material. Further information is provided in the Findings section.

Audit Findings

During the audit we reviewed internal controls; accounting systems; and procedures to the extent considered necessary for the effective

performance of the audit. We identified one priority 1 recommendation in relation to regularity¹ and the internal control environment.

Full details of findings are included at [Findings from the Audit](#).

Status of the Audit

Audit fieldwork is now complete. The Chief Executive signed the Annual Report and Accounts together with a letter of representation, which is included at [Appendix One](#), on 14th October 2023.

The total audit fee to be charged is in line with that set out in our Audit Strategy.

Independence

We consider that we comply with the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) Ethical Standard and that, in our professional judgment, we are independent and our objectivity is not compromised.

Charges for non-audit services provided to the Community Relations Council for participation in the National Fraud Initiative have been disclosed in the financial statements (£1,319).

Management of information and personal data

The Community Relations Council is required to comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR) in the handling and storage of personal data. Those Charged with Governance should ensure they have made sufficient enquiries of management to form a view on whether there were any significant specific data incidents which should be disclosed in the Governance Statement. We are unaware of any data handling incidents during the year. Confirmation to this effect has been sought within the letter of representation included at [Appendix One](#).

During the course of our audit we have access to personal data to support our audit testing. We have established processes to hold this data securely

¹ Regularity - expenditure and income have been applied to the purposes intended by the Northern Ireland Assembly and that the transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

within encrypted files and to destroy it where relevant at the conclusion of our audit. We can confirm that we have discharged those responsibilities communicated to you in accordance with the requirements of UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.

Actions for the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee should note the findings set out in this report, including management comments.

2. Audit Scope

We have completed our audit of the 2022-23 financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs) issued by the Financial Reporting Council; with Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements of Public Sector Entities in the United Kingdom'; and with the Audit Strategy presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in May 2023.

There are no new matters to communicate concerning the planned scope and timing of the audit. Completion of the audit was delayed due to the need to amend the accounts submitted for audit to properly reflect the impact of IFRS 16 Leases.

3. Significant Risks

The significant risk identified in our Audit Strategy has been addressed as follows:

Significant Risk 1

Management override of controls

Under ISA (UK) 240, there is a presumed significant risk of material misstatement due to fraud through management override of controls.

Audit Response

As required by ISA (UK) 240, we:

- Tested the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements;
 - Reviewed accounting estimates for biases and evaluated whether the circumstances producing the bias, if any, represent a risk of material misstatement due to fraud; and
 - Considered significant transactions that are outside the normal course of business for the entity, or that otherwise appear to be unusual.
-

Outcome

During the course of the audit no significant items have come to our attention which would indicate an override of the control systems in place. However, please see Finding 2 on page 10 regarding the ability to post journals without review or approval.

No additional significant risks were identified during our audit fieldwork.

4. Findings from the Audit

Financial Reporting

As part of our audit, we evaluate the qualitative aspects of accounting practices and financial reporting. In this section we draw to your attention any significant changes or issues in respect of accounting policies; accounting estimates; and financial statement disclosures.

The Community Relations Council has robust processes in place for the production of the accounts and have produced good quality supporting working papers. Officers dealt efficiently with audit queries, effectively prioritising them. However, the audit process was delayed due to the need to amend the accounts submitted for audit to properly reflect the impact of IFRS 16 Leases.

Accounting Policies

Except for the amendments required to the accounts to properly reflect the impact of IFRS 16 Leases, accounting policies applied by the Community Relations Council are considered to be appropriate.

Accounting Estimates

Judgments made with regards to accounting estimates were considered appropriate.

Financial Statement Disclosures

We have made a number of suggestions to improve narrative disclosures and to ensure completeness of the disclosures required under the Financial Reporting Manual, Statement of Recommended Practice and other relevant guidance.

Going Concern

No events or conditions were identified from our audit work that cast significant doubt about the Community Relations Council's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting.

Annual Report

The Annual Report was considered to be consistent with our understanding of the business, and was in line with the other information provided in the financial statements.

Remuneration Report

The parts of the Remuneration Report to be audited were considered to be properly prepared in accordance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Accountability Report

The parts of the Accountability Report to be audited were considered to be properly prepared in accordance with the directions issued by The Executive Office under the Companies Act 2006.

Governance Statement

The Governance Statement was considered to reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Regularity, Propriety and Losses

There is an ongoing issue in respect of salary adjustments for historical differences in the level of employee contributions to pension schemes, which has resulted in irregular expenditure of £15,302 in 2022-23. The amount is not considered to be material and therefore the audit opinion has not been qualified.

Internal Control

No material weaknesses in the design and implementation of internal control have come to our attention during the audit.

Related Parties

No significant matters arose during the audit in connection with the Community Relations Council's related parties.

Audit Recommendations

This section outlines the findings arising from our audit, as well as management's response and target date for implementation. Our findings are defined as:

- **Priority 1** – significant issues for the attention of senior management which may have the potential to result in material weakness in internal control.
 - **Priority 2** – important issues to be addressed by management in their areas of responsibility.
 - **Priority 3** – issues of a more minor nature which represent best practice.
-

Finding 1

Employee Superannuation Contributions

The Community Relations Council continues to 'gross up' the basic salaries of some employees by 6% to make a contribution to the cost of employees' superannuation contributions to the NILGOSC pension scheme. This was to ensure that staff were not disadvantaged as a result of paying what were historically higher contributions to the NILGOSC pension scheme compared to the PCSPSNI. We note that from 2014-15, the 6% grossing up is not applied to new members of staff.

The Community Relations Council calculated that, for 2022-23, staff were better off in their net pay as a result of this 6% uplift by £15,302 (2021-22: £19,373).

In our opinion, as this is contrary to guidance letter FD(DFP) 05/16 Pay Remit Approval Process, it is considered to be irregular. The Community Relations Council have obtained legal advice that the additional 6% must continue to be paid.

We note that the Community Relations Council, as required by the Department of Finance, are actively trying to obtain a resolution to the issue and last met with their sponsor department, The Executive Office (TEO), in May 2023 to discuss this issue. TEO advised CRC that they are hoping to progress this matter, although there are ongoing court cases involving other bodies which will impact this issue.

Priority Rating

1

Recommendation

The Community Relations Council should continue to engage with TEO on this matter and agree a plan and timeline for resolution of this longstanding issue.

It is important that this matter is brought to a conclusion at the earliest opportunity.

Management Response (including target date)

Ongoing.

Since October 2023 The Executive Office has commenced regular meetings with CRC to discuss the content and timetable for approval of the business case (previously provided by CRC to TEO in 2020). As was previously the case, the business case will be approved by CRC Board before resubmission to TEO and the options will take into account legal advice.

Finding 2

Lack of Manual Journals Approval

Our review of journals identified that Finance employees have the ability to post journals without any review or approval. This can increase the likelihood of journals being posted in error or the risk of fraud.

Priority Rating

2

Recommendation

The Community Relations Council should ensure that there is appropriate review of all manual journals posted and that evidence of this review is retained.

Management Response (including target date)

Completed.

Due to staff vacancies and difficulties in recruitment during 2022-23, CRC was operating largely without a Director of Finance, Admin and Personnel. This position was resolved in 2022-23 as the post of Director of Finance, Admin and Personnel was filled part time from March and full time since September 2023. The organisation also has a temporary Finance Manager with much more experience of ALB processes. Both are qualified accountants. The Director of Finance, Admin and Personnel now reviews and approves all journals.

A review of management's implementation of priority one recommendations made in our prior year Report to those charged with Governance is set out at Appendix Three.

5. Misstatements

Adjusted misstatements

During the audit process we identified the following misstatements above our clearly trivial threshold of £2,147. These misstatements have been adjusted and the net effect on the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet was £809.

ISSUE	AREA	SoFA DEBIT / (CREDIT) £	Balance Sheet DEBIT / (CREDIT) £
Implementation of IFRS 16 Leases	Tangible fixed assets		216,253
	Depreciation	49,905	(49,905)
	Expenditure	(49,096)	
	Current Liabilities – Finance Lease		(49,594)
	Non Current Liabilities – Finance Lease		(117,563)
TOTAL		809	(809)

Uncorrected misstatements

The table below lists unadjusted misstatements which exceed our clearly trivial threshold of £2,147. Uncorrected misstatements would decrease expenditure and increase net assets by a further £23,885.

ISSUE	AREA	SoFA DEBIT / (CREDIT) £	Balance Sheet DEBIT / (CREDIT) £
Being the recognition of a grant clawback balance in the accounts	Debtors: Grant Clawbacks	-	8,250
	Charitable Activities/Expenditure: Grant Expenditure	(8,250)	-
Being the correction of an under accrual for agency costs	Charitable Activities/Expenditure: Staff Costs	2,529	-
	Creditors: Accruals	-	(2,529)
Being the release of an over accrual against Intercomm grants	Creditors: Grants Payable		18,164
	Charitable Activities/Expenditure: Grant Expenditure	(18,164)	
TOTAL		(23,885)	23,885

We recommend that uncorrected misstatements be corrected by the Community Relations Council.

Irregular Expenditure

The following irregular expenditure was identified during the course of our audit.

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT £
Employee Superannuation Contributions	15,302

This amount is not considered to be material and therefore the audit opinion has not been qualified. Please refer to Finding 1 for more details.

Appendix One – Letter of Representation

The Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
BELFAST
BT7 1EU

LETTER OF REPRESENTATION: THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL 2022-23

As Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council I have fulfilled my responsibility for preparing accounts that give a true and fair view of the state of affairs, net movement in funds and cash flows; and the related notes of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council for the year ended 31 March 2023.

In preparing the accounts, I was required to:

- observe the accounts direction issued by The Executive Office, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements and apply appropriate accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis; and
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed and disclosed and explain any material departures in the accounts; and
- make an assessment that the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council is a going concern and will continue to be in operation throughout the next year; and ensure that this has been appropriately disclosed in the financial statements.

I confirm that for the financial year ended 31 March 2023:

- having considered and enquired as to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's compliance with law and regulations, I am not aware of any actual or potential non-compliance that could have a material effect on the ability of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council to conduct its business or on the results and Balance Sheet disclosed in the accounts;

- all accounting records have been provided to you for the purpose of your audit and all transactions undertaken by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council have been properly recorded and reflected in the accounting records. All other records and related information, including minutes of all management meetings which you have requested have been supplied to you; and
- the information provided regarding the identification of related parties is complete; and the related party disclosures in the financial statements are adequate.

All material accounting policies as adopted are detailed in note 1 to the accounts.

INTERNAL CONTROL

I have fulfilled my responsibility as Chief Executive for the design and implementation of internal controls to prevent and detect error and I have disclosed to you the results of my assessment of the risk that the financial statements could be materially misstated.

I confirm that I have reviewed the effectiveness of the system of internal control and that the disclosures I have made are in accordance with the Department of Finance guidance on the Governance Statement.

FRAUD

I have fulfilled my responsibility as Chief Executive for the design and implementation of internal controls to prevent and detect fraud and I have disclosed to you the results of my assessment of the risk that the financial statements could be materially misstated as a result of fraud.

I am not aware of any fraud or suspected fraud affecting the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and no allegations of fraud or suspected fraud affecting the financial statements has been communicated to me by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

ASSETS

General

All assets included in the Balance Sheet were in existence at the reporting period date and owned by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and free from any lien, encumbrance or charge, except as

disclosed in the accounts. The Balance Sheet includes all tangible assets owned by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council.

Non Current Assets

All assets over £500 are capitalised. They are not revalued annually and instead are held at depreciated cost. Depreciation is calculated to reduce the net book amount of each asset to its estimated residual value by the end of its estimated useful life in the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's operations.

Other Current Assets

On realisation in the ordinary course of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's operations the other current assets in the Balance Sheet are expected to produce at least the amounts at which they are stated. Adequate provision has been made against all amounts owing to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council which are known, or may be expected, to be irrecoverable.

Pension Assets

I have considered the IAS 19 report produced by the NILGOSC actuary and I am satisfied that the pension liability included in the financial statements is a reasonable estimate. It is based upon the best information available at the time.

LIABILITIES

General

All liabilities have been recorded in the Balance Sheet.

There were no significant losses in the year and no provisions for losses were required at the year end.

All litigation and claims have been disclosed to you and correctly accounted for.

Provisions

There are no provisions in the financial statements and I confirm that I am not aware of any provisions that should be made.

Contingent Liabilities

I am not aware of any pending litigation which may result in significant loss to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council.

OTHER DISCLOSURES

Results

Except as disclosed in the accounts, the results for the year were not materially affected by transactions of a sort not usually undertaken by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, or circumstances of an exceptional or non-recurring nature.

Uncorrected Misstatements

The following uncorrected misstatements have been brought to my attention:

ISSUE	AREA	SoFA DEBIT / (CREDIT) £	Balance Sheet DEBIT / (CREDIT) £
Being the recognition of a grant clawback balance in the accounts	Debtors: Grant Clawbacks	-	8,250
	Charitable Activities/Expenditure: Grant Expenditure	(8,250)	-
Being the correction of an under accrual for agency costs	Charitable Activities/Expenditure: Staff Costs	2,529	-
	Creditors: Accruals	-	(2,529)
Being the release of an over accrual against Intercomm grants	Creditors: Grants Payable		18,164
	Charitable Activities/Expenditure: Grant Expenditure	(18,164)	
TOTAL		(23,885)	23,885

I consider the effect of these uncorrected misstatements to be immaterial, both individually and in aggregate, to the financial statements taken as a whole.

Events after the Reporting Period

Except as disclosed in the accounts, there have been no material changes since the reporting period date affecting liabilities and commitments, and no events or transactions have occurred which, though properly excluded

from the accounts, are of such importance that they should have been brought to notice.

Accounting Estimates

The methods, significant assumptions and the data used in making the accounting estimates and the related disclosures are appropriate to achieve recognition, measurement or disclosure that is in accordance with the financial reporting framework.

Management of Personal Data

Except as disclosed in the Directors' Report, there have been no personal data related incidents in 2022-23 which are required to be reported.

Jaqueline Irwin
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

14th November 2023

Appendix Two – Audit Certificate

NORTHERN IRELAND COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council for the year ended 31 March 2023 under the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013. The financial statements comprise: the Statement of Financial Activities; Balance Sheet; Statement of Cash Flows; and the related notes, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

I have also audited the information in the Directors' Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs as at 31 March 2023 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described

in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of this certificate.

My staff and I are independent of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

The going concern basis of accounting for the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it is anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer and Directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other Information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements, the parts of the Directors' report described in that report as having been audited, and my audit certificate and report. The Accounting Officer and Directors are responsible for the other information included in the annual report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information

and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my report I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Directors' Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual; and
- the information given in the Strategic Report and Directors' Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Strategic Report and Directors' Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Strategic Report and Directors' Report. I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Directors' Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by the Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or

- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer and Directors for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's and Directors' Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer and Directors are responsible for:

- preparing the Annual Report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report, in accordance with the Companies Act 2006;
- the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- such internal controls as management determines are necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; and
- assessing the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council will not be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulation, including fraud.

My procedures included:

- obtaining an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council through discussion with management and application of extensive public sector accountability knowledge. The key laws and regulations I considered included governing legislation and any other relevant laws and regulations;
- making enquires of management and those charged with governance on the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's compliance with laws and regulations;
- making enquiries of internal audit, management and those charged with governance as to the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's susceptibility to irregularity and fraud, their assessment of the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and irregularity, and their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud and irregularity;
- completing risk assessment procedures to assess the susceptibility of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur. This included, but was not limited to, an engagement director led engagement team discussion on fraud to identify particular areas, transaction streams and business practices that may be susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the posting of unusual journals;
- engagement director oversight to ensure the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework throughout the audit;
- documenting and evaluating the design and implementation of internal controls in place to mitigate risk of material misstatement due to fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- designing audit procedures to address specific laws and regulations which the engagement team considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements in terms of misstatement and irregularity, including fraud. These audit procedures included, but were not limited to, reading board and committee minutes, and agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation and approvals as appropriate, testing of journal entries and reviewing internal audit reports; and
- addressing the risk of fraud as a result of management override of controls by:

- performing analytical procedures to identify unusual or unexpected relationships or movements;
- testing journal entries to identify potential anomalies, and inappropriate or unauthorised adjustments;
- assessing whether judgements and other assumptions made in determining accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and
- investigating significant or unusual transactions made outside of the normal course of business.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.

**Dorinnia Carville
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
BELFAST
BT7 1EU**

22nd November 2023

Appendix Three – Implementation of Prior Year Priority One Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Employee Superannuation Contributions

The Community Relations Council should continue to press the sponsor department to re-engage on this matter and agree a plan and timeline for resolution of this longstanding issue.

It is important that this matter is brought to a conclusion at the earliest opportunity.

Status

Not cleared

This is still an ongoing issue – see Finding 1.

Recommendation 2

Quality of Financial Reporting

The Community Relations Council should ensure that appropriate resources are secured so that they can be confident that financial reports/ accounts produced by the finance team are robust and can be relied on. A proper system of quality review of financial reports/ accounts should also be established.

Status

Cleared

An agency worker with previous public sector experience was engaged to prepare the 2022-23 Annual Report and Accounts. A new Director of Finance, Administration and Personnel was also appointed. As a result, the quality of the draft accounts presented for audit was much improved.
