

Report on Governance Support Work Carried out by

East Belfast Community Development Agency

on Connswater Community and Leisure

Produced for

John Nelson, Belfast City Council

Report compiled by

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June 2011

1.0 Introduction

In June 2010 Belfast City Council, during a general review with CC&L, discovered what they thought might be a breach of the terms and conditions of the contract they had with CC&L. BCC decided to conduct an investigation. During this time BCC took control of the physical and financial management of the building and organisation.

As part of their investigation and work with the committee of CC&L, BCC produced a brief report (Appendix 1) dated 30th November 2010. This report detailed some of the areas that CC&L needed to address, in order for BCC to consider allowing CC&L, to again control, the physical and financial management of the building and organisation.

In January 2011 EBCDA were asked by BCC and CC&L to work with CC&L to support them in developing mechanisms to address all of the issues highlighted by BCC in Appendix 1

2.0 Process

In order for EBCDA to get a picture of what needed to happen a series of meetings took place with the Chair, Treasurer and Board Members to identify where some of the gaps were and how these might be addressed. Using the report produced by BCC on 30th November 2010, the following actions were agreed to take forward:

- 2-3 meetings of the Board of Directors in small groups to allow for conversation and clarification on issues, to be discussed.
- Bring some understanding as to what it means to be a company limited by guarantee and the function of the Articles of Association and Memorandum of understanding.

- Dates and times set for regular committee meetings.
- Understanding of office bearer roles
- Importance of properly structured agenda
- Understanding and management of finance and cash flow projections.
- Further work on Governance including a governance health check.
- Production of a year long development plan and action plan for implementation in September 2011.
- Regular support from EBCDA throughout this process.

3.0 Outcomes To Date On Agreed Actions

EBCDA Director and Finance and Resource Manager have held a series of meeting with CC&L between December 2010 and May 2011 and the following outcomes have been achieved.

- **2-3 meetings of the Board of Directors in small groups to allow for conversation and clarification on issues, to be discussed.**

As series of conversations has now been completed with small groups of the Board of Directors. This has been an opportunity to clarify positions and provide a better understanding of the issues. This has also resulted in a better understanding as to their role, as individuals, on a Board of Directors.

- **Bring some understanding as to what it means to be a company limited by guarantee and the function of the Articles of Association and Memorandum of understanding.**

The importance and role of the Articles of Association and Memorandum of understanding was explained to the Board of Directors and some sections with these documents explored in practical terms as to their day to day outworking.

It was highlighted to the Board of Directors that the current Articles of Association and Memorandum of understanding are old and should be reviewed and updated in line with the new Northern Ireland Charities Commission. This was agreed and will be completed by September 2011.

- **Dates and times set for regular committee meetings.**

Board of Directors now meets on 1st Tuesday of each month. Reports on the work of the centre and financial reports presented and agreed future plans and programmes also presented and agreed.

- **Understanding of office bearer roles**

Governance health Check carried out and Office bearer's roles explored and clarified as a result of the check.

- **Importance of properly structured agenda**

Structured agenda agreed and used for each of the monthly meetings. Members encouraged to add to the agenda on regular basis.

- **Understanding and management of finance and cash flow projections.**

EBCDA have spent time working with the Treasurer to set up a cash flow system for the organisation. We work regularly with the Treasurer to refine this on a month by month basis.

- **Further work on Governance including a governance health check.**

Governance Health Check carried out using the documents and guidelines published by the “Developing Governance Group” October 2010. The Governance health Check asks for groups to look at the following

- Leadership
- Legal Requirements and Responsibilities
- Effectiveness
- Performing, Reviewing and renewing
- Delegation
- Integrity

This is broken down into 36 sections and groups are asked to ascertain if the sections are

- Not Met
- Partially Met
- Fully Met.

To date the breakdown of the sections for CC&L is

- Not Met - 7
- Partially Met - 6
- Fully Met – 23

The majority of the “Not Met” and “Partially Met” sections relates to Governance and will be resolved when a new Articles of Association and Memorandum of Understanding are completed.

- **Production of a year long development plan and action plan for implementation in September 2011.**

Currently being developed and will be completed for September 2011.

- **Regular support from EBCDA throughout this process.**

EBCDA staff have had regular contact with the Chair and Treasurer and have attended 4 meetings with the Board of Directors. EBCDA will continue to support the development of CC&L on a regular basis and have made this commitment to the Board of Directors.

4.0 Opinion

Based on the work EBCDA have completed to date with CC&L and given the fact that CC&L really were at crisis point, we are of the opinion that they have made exceptional progress in such a short space of time.

The Board of Directors have a full and frank understanding of their governance role as an organisation and they're need to manage and deliver their programme and manage their building and financial responsibilities on a day to day to basis.

They have responded to and met all requests made to them by BCC.

As volunteers they have put their heart and sole into turning the organisation around and implementing new ways of working and delivering and they are to be commended for this effort.

They have set in place a date of 5th July for their EGM to nominate a new Board of Directors and for permission from the Board to put in place a review of their Memorandum of Understanding and Articles of Association, as well as a review of their policies.

We would have confidence in their ability to take on again, the full day to day physical and financial management of the building and organisation.

APPENDIX 1

Urgent Need

Red = Score 1-3

- Legal Responsibilities of Board
- Role of the Board
- Role of the secretary
- Role of Treasurer (please note that this category scored a 5 by those present. I would still recommend further training for the whole Board in this area)
- Getting the Board actively involved in the work of the Centre
- Communicating information and how it trickles down
- Storing/Maintaining Information (it was acknowledged that work in this area has improved)
- Letter writing
- Minute taking
- Health & Safety process & procedures, legal responsibility
- Insurance legal responsibility
- Financial Procedures (progress has been made in this area but the group acknowledge more training needed)
- Volunteers Boards Legal Responsibilities
- Need to know how BCC's budget is allocated and to what categories if any.
- Keeping petty cash systems including limits (progress has been made in this area)
- Knowledge of ordering systems
- Knowledge bank reconciliation
- Knowledge of fundraising/applications and whose role it is
- Relations with Statutory Bodies needs to be improved/widened
- Relationships with private business needs further exploration
- Knowledge of Mentoring/Evaluations
- Programme development in relation to Area Needs

APPENDIX 1 - *Continued...*

Near Future

Amber = Score 4

- Role of the Chairperson
- Team working
- Commitment
- Good diverse range of skills within the Board
- Knowledge of Bank Accounts
- Knowledge of Record Keeping
- Knowledge of basic book keeping
- Relations with Voluntary Agencies
- Relations with Community Groups

Medium Term

Green = Score 5

- Role of Treasurer
- Willingness to engage in training to develop community work skills
- Child Protection (Most of the Board members have undertaken training but not all. Also some volunteers may need training.)