



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

29 September 2021

Meeting Location: Teleconference

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Nicola Brogan MLA

Mr Robbie Butler MLA

Mrs Diane Dodds MLA

Mr Harry Harvey MLA

Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA

Mr Justin McNulty MLA

Mr Robin Newton MBE MLA

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)

Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)

Mr Craig Mealey (Clerical Supervisor)

Ms Emma Magee (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

Mr Chris Lyttle MLA (Chairperson)



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The meeting commenced at 9:31am in public session with Mr Sheehan in the Chair.

1. Apologies

Apologies as above.

Mrs Dodds joined the meeting at 9:32am.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Independent Review of Education – Panel Appointment

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education on the appointment of a panel for the Independent Review of Education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister seeking further information on the panel.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the panel to brief it on the review.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 22 September 2021.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.



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The Committee changed the order of its agenda.

5. Correspondence

5.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

5.2 The Committee noted correspondence from The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on a consultation on the Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework.

5.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance about the 3 Year Budget-Setting Process.

5.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance providing forecast and outturn information for August provided by the Department of Finance.

5.5 The committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance about additional funding for the Unique Circumstances of Northern Ireland provided under New Decade New Approach.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking spending proposals regarding this funding.

5.6 The Committee noted a response from the Association for Quality Education (AQE) to the Committee's invitation to brief it on the post primary transfer test indicating that it would be unable to attend due to its current workload. The Committee also discussed proposed changes to the transfer test.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the proposed new transfer test examination organisation to brief it in due course.

5.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Bytes Project regarding a report on the nature and extent of work carried out by youth work providers in the community and voluntary sector.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and consider the report in due course when it becomes available.



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5.8 The Committee noted correspondence about the Independent Review of Education and the appointment of its Chair and panel members.

6. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme and discussed possible Committee visits after restrictions lift later in the week.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its forward work programme.

7. Any Other Business

No Other Business was discussed.

8. 14-19 Strategy - Oral Briefing by Pivotal Public Policy Forum NI

The Committee noted a presentation and reports from the thinktank, Pivotal, on Education, Skills and Training for Young People Aged 14-19 Years Old.

The following witness joined the meeting by video conference at 9:46am:

Ms Ann Watt, Director, Pivotal

Dr Ben Harper, Research Manager, Pivotal

The witnesses briefed the Committee on Education, Skills and Training for Young People Aged 14-19 Years Old.

The briefing was covered by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education and the Department for the Economy regarding:

- improving the delivery of career advice through schools and into the workplace; and
- seeking data on life-long development especially for those with special educational needs.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a briefing from the Education Authority on progress with its business plan and the SEN reform process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for Communities seeking information on its role in providing advice to young people.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Pivotal seeking copies of reports referred to by witnesses.

9. Autism (Amendment) Bill - Oral Briefing by Bill Sponsor

The Committee noted:

- The Autism (Amendment) Bill, As Introduced;
- Autism (Amendment) Bill Explanatory and Financial Memorandum;
- A briefing paper from Autism NI on Education, Skills and Training for Young People Aged 14-19 Years;
- A response from the Minister of Education to the Committee's letter supporting Mandatory Autism Training for Teachers; and
- A Call for Evidence from the Committee for Health on the Autism (Amendment) Bill.

The following witness joined the meeting by video conference at 11:40am:

Mrs Pam Cameron, MLA - South Antrim, Northern Ireland Assembly

Ms Kerry Boyd, Chief Executive Officer, Autism NI

Dr Arlene Cassidy, Adviser, Autism NI

Ms Kelly Maxwell, Director of Family Support Services, Autism NI



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The witnesses briefed the Committee on the Autism (Amendment) Bill.

The briefing was covered by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mrs Dodds left the meeting at 12:51pm.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed write to the Minister of Education seeking an update on the previous Minister's letter of 5 May 2021 on mandatory autism training for teachers and other school staff.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority regarding what actions it will take to implement the training provisions of the bill as a public body.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Education Trade Unions seeking their views on mandatory autism training for teachers and other school staff.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Official Report on the briefing along with relevant correspondence to the Committee for Health as part of its Committee Stage on the bill.

10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next formal Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 6 October 2021 by video conference at 9:15am.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00pm.

Chris Lyttle MLA

**Chairperson, Committee for Education
6 October 2021**