



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## **COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION**

### **Minutes of Proceedings**

WEDNESDAY 29 JANUARY 2020

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

**Present:** Mr Chris Lyttle MLA (Chairperson)  
Ms Karen Mullan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA  
Mr Robbie Butler MLA  
Mr William Humphrey MLA  
Ms Catherine Kelly MLA  
Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA  
Mr Justin McNulty MLA  
Mr Robin Newton MBE MLA

**Apologies:** None

**In Attendance:** Mr Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)  
Ms Carla Campbell (Clerical Supervisor)  
Mr Ian McAdam (Clerical Supervisor)  
Mr Ed McCann (Clerical Officer)

*The meeting commenced at 10:07am in open session.*

#### **1. Apologies**

No apologies were received.

#### **2. Chairperson's Business**

**2.1** Informal meeting with the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC)

The Chairperson reminded Members of their informal meeting with representatives of NITC on Tuesday 28 January 2020. The Chairperson indicated that the key issues underpinning the teachers' pay and conditions dispute had been discussed. NITC had advised that an agreement in principle had been reached with the Department and employers in June 2019 and that the estimated cost (up to but not including 2019-20) was given as £68m. It is understood that approval of the related business case is awaited from the Department of Finance after which a formal offer is expected to be made by the Department of Education and then submitted to NITC members for their consideration. NITC also identified a number of important supporting workstreams which were underway with the Department.

## **2.2 Informal meeting Education Authority Board**

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee was to meet informally with the Education Authority Board on Thursday 30 January 2020. Members noted a related information pack.

## **3. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of its meetings held on 22 January 2020.

## **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **5. Ministerial Briefing - Educational Priorities**

The Minister for Education and Permanent Secretary joined the meeting at 10.11am.

Mr Peter Weir MLA, Minister for Education

Mr Derek Baker, Permanent Secretary, Department of Education

The Minister briefed the Committee on the Department's educational priorities,

*Mr Butler joined the meeting at 10:30 am.*

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The briefing was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the Minister and the Permanent Secretary for their attendance.

## **6. Department of Education First Day Briefing**

*Mr Newton left the meeting at 11:44 am.*

*Mr McCrossan left the meeting at 11:44 am.*

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 11.44am.

Ms Lianne Patterson, Deputy Secretary, Resources, Reform and Infrastructure

Mr Gary Fair, Director of Finance

Mr Philip Irwin, Director of Investment and Infrastructure

Mr John Smith, Deputy Secretary, Strule Shared Education Campus

The officials provided an overview briefing on the Education Transformation Programme, financial issues, the capital programme and the Strule Shared Education Campus.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The briefing was reported by Hansard.

*Mr Butler left the meeting at 12:50 pm.*

*Mr Humphrey left the meeting at 1:02 pm.*

*Ms Mullan left the meeting and the decision-making quorum was lost at 1:13 pm.*

*Ms Mullan rejoined the meeting and the decision-making quorum was restored at 1:16 pm.*

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Chairperson should write to the Minister, thanking him for the First Day and educational priorities briefings and seeking clarity on the next steps for the Strule Shared Education Campus.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking:

- the Terms of Reference for its Review of Home to School transport and information on the provision of school transport for children living in mobile homes;
- details of the provision of Learning Support Units and Learning Support Tools in Irish Medium schools;
- a breakdown of the £10m allocation for Special Educational Needs made to the Department in the January Monitoring Round;
- details of the Department's priority actions in respect of Special Educational Needs involving cooperation with other departments;
- information on how the Department is to encourage sharing in education through the use of IT and clarification as to how this will be incorporated in the Digital Learning in Schools Programme;
- sight of the report of the Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team, established in 2017;

- an oral briefing on how the Department is tackling educational underachievement including a summary of the findings of the PISA study;
- information on how the Department is to address anomalies in the system for post-primary transfer which leads to children being unable to transfer to a suitable school in their area;
- sight of the Departmental paper which identifies barriers to efficient Area Planning and which is to inform the relevant strand of the Education Transformation Programme;
- clarification as to how the Department intends to address capital programme eligibility issues for schools with legacy financial deficits;
- clarification as to whether as part of the procurement process for Education Authority buses, the Department had given due consideration to options which include leasing arrangements;
- clarification on the timescales for a call for capital projects for the School Enhancement Programme 2 Tranche 4;
- sight of the Department's Fresh Start capital plans for the remaining 5 years of the programme; and
- a breakdown by sector of the number of schools making use of temporary accommodation.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority regarding its use of the Contingency Fund - seeking information on Contingency Fund expenditure over recent years and its plans for the current and subsequent financial years.

## **7. Correspondence**

7.1 The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

7.2 The Committee noted an invitation to an NAHT(NI) event - Conversation on Education - scheduled for 28 February 2020.

7.3 The Committee considered Departmental correspondence regarding a Gateway Review relating to the Education Transformation Programme.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the Departmental Gateway Review correspondence.

7.4 The Committee noted an invitation from mTech.Academy to an event which was held on 27 January 2020.

7.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Queen's University of Belfast providing a briefing paper on UK withdrawal from the European Union, Statutory Instruments and devolved competence.

7.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) on the anticipated launch of its report into Special Educational Needs on 31 March 2020.

7.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Transferor Representatives' Council seeking a meeting with the Committee Chairperson.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson and other Members to meet with the Transferor Representatives' Council.

## **8. Draft Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered a draft forward work programme.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed, in line with Standing Order 64, to consider a briefing from the Department of Education, the Department for Health and the Public Health Agency on the Emotional Health and Well-being Framework on 12 February 2020. The Committee also agreed to defer a related informal stakeholder event and to reschedule its planned joint committee meeting (with the Committee for Health) until after the publication of the new Mental Health Action Plan and subject to the agreement of the Committee for Health.

## **9. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **10. Date, Time and Place of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 5 February 2020 at 9.45am in Room 30 Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 1:32pm.*

**Mr Chris Lyttle MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**5 February 2020**