



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2015
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:

Michelle McIlveen MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Sandra Overend MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Paula Best (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Kevin Marks (Clerical Supervisor)
Alicia Muldoon (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

None

The meeting commenced in public session at 9.41am.

Agreed: In response to the Department's request, the Committee agreed to amend its agenda and receive the briefing on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disability Bill at the end of the meeting and in closed session.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Condolences

Agreed: The Committee agreed that in light of last week's tragic circumstances, the Chairperson would write to the family and school (St. Michael's College, Enniskillen) of Oisín McGrath offering the Committee's deepest sympathies at this very sad time.

2.2 SEELB Annual Report 2013-14

The Chairperson advised Members that the South Eastern Education and Library Board Annual Report for 2013-14 had been published and laid in the Business Office.

2.3 Welcome to Pupils

The Chairperson welcomed pupils from St. Louis' Grammar School, Kilkeel to the public gallery.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 11 February 2015.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Shared and Integrated Education Inquiry

The Committee noted further correspondence from the Department on the Delivering Social Change Shared Education Signature Project and other support for schools wishing to undertake cross-sectoral amalgamation.

The Committee also noted correspondence from the Western Education and Library Board relating to Shared Education projects in Fermanagh.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for this correspondence to be published on the Committee's webpage.

5. Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education - Transferors' Representative Council (TRC)

The witnesses joined the meeting at 9.44am.

Reverend Trevor Gribben, Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland; Reverend Donald Ker, Secretary of Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland; and Reverend Dr Ian Ellis, Secretary to the Church of Ireland

Board of Education and Secretary to the TRC briefed the Committee as part of the inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education.

9.45am Maeve McLaughlin joined the meeting.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

10.05am Pat Sheehan joined the meeting.

10.05am Jonathan Craig joined the meeting.

The witnesses left the meeting at 11.04am.

11.05am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

11.05am Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting

6. Education Authority – progress update

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 11.06am.

Fiona Hepper, Deputy Secretary, Department of Education; Gavin Boyd, Interim Chief Executive, Education Authority; Mark Mawhinney, Education Authority Unit, Department of Education; and Beverley Wall, Director, Education Authority Delivery, Department of Education provided the Committee with a progress update on the establishment of the Education Authority.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

11.43am Sandra Overend joined the meeting.

11.57am Danny Kinahan left the meeting.

12.14pm Seán Rogers left the meeting.

The officials left the meeting at 12.19pm.

The Committee noted the Education (2014 Act) (Commencement No.1) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a further Departmental briefing following the establishment of the Education Authority.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking sight of the approved Full Business Case and the Education Authority project plans. The Committee also agreed to seek the projected detailed savings associated with the establishment of the Education Authority and further information as to the extent to which the Education Authority will lead to a greater proportion of Departmental spending being allocated directly to schools.

7. NITPS – laid draft statutory rule - The Teachers’ Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

As the Committee had previously agreed that it was content for the relevant rule to be laid, the Committee noted the laid draft statutory rule the Teachers’ Pension Scheme (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

8. Correspondence

8.1 The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

8.2 The Committee noted an Invitation to Committee to attend the Children’s Rights Education Event on Tuesday 10 March in the School of Education, QUB at 12.00- 1.30pm.

12.20pm Seán Rogers re-joined the meeting.

8.3 The Committee noted responses from CCEA, Sentinus and the Department of Education providing information on computer coding in schools and the uptake and portability of the GCE A-Level in Software and Systems Development. Members noted that CCEA had indicated that Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Ireland do not currently recognise so-called Applied A-Levels.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister expressing concerns in respect of the status and portability of Applied qualifications in the Republic of Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. The Committee also agreed to suggest that consideration be given to recording pupil experience of computer coding in the annual school census in order to establish a baseline for this area of study and inform the development of relevant qualifications.

8.4 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the promotion of school participation in Northern Ireland in the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister suggesting that the Department be more proactive in promoting the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition to schools within Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include a link to the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition on its webpage.

8.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure to the Minister for Education regarding defibrillator provision in schools.

8.6 The Committee noted a response from the Southern Education and Library Board to Committee queries in respect of the Achieving Belfast/Derry projects; Targets for increasing Free School Meals uptake; and SEN Early Years pilot project evaluation reports.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking sight of the Regional Project Manager and Education and Training Inspectorate Reports on the SEN Early Years pilot schemes.

8.7 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries regarding the funding of Irish Medium youth organisations.

8.8 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries regarding the 2015-16 Draft Budget. Members noted particularly the Department of Education's comments about the unsuitability of Financial Transaction Capital as a means of funding the development of the schools' estate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his information.

9.9 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the implementation of the Career Review 2014 Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking sight of the Action Plan when it is produced.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Committee for Employment and Learning.

8.10 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries in respect of Dromore Central Primary School.

8.11 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education providing a copy of the InterBoard CRED Business Plan for 2014-15 and results of the school training satisfaction survey.

8.12 The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the Children's Services Co-operation Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for the Office of first and deputy First Minister offering to provide feedback from the Committee's curricular access event on 18 March 2015.

8.13 The Committee noted an invitation from the Special EU Programmes Body for Members to attend the SEUPB Pre-Application Development Workshops ahead of the launch of the new PEACE and INTERREG Programmes in late spring 2015.

8.14 The Committee noted an invitation to the Chairperson from the Assembly Outreach Office to meet with the Latvian Ambassador, Mr Andris Teikmanis on Monday 23rd February in Room 115 at 4.30pm.

8.15 The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Commons Speaker's Advisory Panel on Public Engagement to the Chairperson relating to the teaching of democracy in schools.

8.16 The Committee noted a request from Dr Kimberly Cowell-Meyers to meet the Chairperson on Tuesday 10 March 2015 at 11:00am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Deputy Chairperson would attend this meeting on behalf of the Committee, diary permitting.

8.17 The Committee noted an invitation from the Department of Finance and Personnel to the Chairperson to meet with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) team to discuss the OECD Public Governance Review – Northern Ireland Improving Public Services on 23 February 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Deputy Chairperson would attend this meeting on behalf of the Committee, diary permitting.

8.18 The Committee noted confidential correspondence from Kinship Care Northern Ireland relating to the placement in a school of a child in kinship care arrangements.

9. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reschedule the Levels of Progression Event to 13 May 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, owing to the large number of planned briefings in its forward work programme, it would not hear evidence from Shimna Integrated College on 11 March 2015, as previously planned.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme as amended.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 25 February 2015 at 10.00am in Drumragh Integrated College, Omagh.

12.29pm Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

Proceedings were suspended at 12.29pm.

Proceedings resumed in closed session at 12.32pm.

12. SEN and Disability Bill– Departmental briefing

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 12.32pm.

Caroline Gillan, Director of Access, Inclusion and Well-being; Irene Murphy, Head of Special Education and Inclusion Review Team and Jan Matthews, Special Education and Inclusion Review Team briefed the Committee on the SEN and Disability Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

12.53pm Robin Newton left the meeting.

The officials left the meeting at 1.05pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting a fuller explanation in respect of those matters which are to be dealt with in associated secondary legislation and those which are to be the subject of changes to the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Education Needs.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add: the Parents' Dyslexia Group based in Slemish College; Fostering Network; the Health and Social Care Trusts; and the Education and Library Boards to the Committee's stakeholder event on curricular access on 18 March 2015.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.06pm.

Michelle McIlveen
Chairperson, Committee for Education

25 February 2015