



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 3 October 2012  
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

**Present:**

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)  
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Michaela Boyle MLA  
Jonathan Craig MLA  
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA  
Brenda Hale MLA  
Chris Hazzard MLA  
Michelle McIlveen MLA  
Sean Rogers MLA  
Pat Sheehan MLA

**In Attendance:**

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)  
Sheila Mawhinney (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Paula Best (Clerical Supervisor)  
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)  
Ursula Savage (Bursary Student)

**Apologies:**

Trevor Lunn MLA

*The meeting commenced in public session at 10.02am.*

**1. Apologies**

Apologies are detailed above.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

*Danny Kinahan joined the meeting at 10.03am.*

- 2.1.** The Chairperson referred Members to correspondence from the Minister on the Terms of Reference for the Review of GCSEs and A-Levels.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request details of the membership of the expert group to be appointed by CCEA. The Committee also agreed to seek a meeting with the expert group at an appropriate stage of the Review.

- 2.2.** The Chairperson advised Members that the Department had established a working group to develop a Controlled Schools sectoral support body.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department, welcoming the formation of the working group, seeking details of its Terms of Reference, and requesting further information on the time scale for the establishment of the Controlled Schools sectoral support body. The Committee also agreed to request a meeting with the members of the working group.

- 2.3.** The Chairperson reminded Members that officials from the Department of Education were briefing the Committee for Employment and Learning as part of its inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance.

**Agreed:** Members agreed that the Clerk should advise the Committee of future briefings so as to enable Members' attendance.

### **3. Draft Minutes of 26 September 2012**

**Agreed:** The draft minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2012 were agreed by the Committee.

### **4. Matters Arising**

- 4.1.** The Committee considered the response received from CCEA relating to a Committee request (agreed 26 September 2012) for CCEA papers referenced during a briefing on 4 July 2012.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to again write to CCEA requesting the relevant papers. The Committee also agreed to seek clarification regarding CCEA's support to the Minister during the consultation process which preceded the decision to continue to offer unitised and linear options at GCSE.

- 4.2.** The Committee expressed its thanks to staff for the organisation of the recent stakeholder event to discuss Viability Audits and the current consultation on the Area Planning process. The Committee noted a response from the Minister declining the Committee's request to extend the consultation period on the draft Area Plans.

*Brenda Hale joined the meeting at 10.10am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the Minister's letter to all stakeholders who had attended the event on 26 September 2012. The Committee also agreed to write to the Minister highlighting the concerns raised at the stakeholder event and again requesting an extension for the draft Area Planning consultation.

*Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting at 10.13am.*

*Chris Hazzard joined the meeting at 10.13am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask its Special Adviser to produce an interim report on the use of Viability Audits and the Area Planning process with a view to developing a Committee motion for debate in November.

**4.3** The Committee considered a list of stakeholders prepared by Assembly Research and discussed how it might proceed with the anticipated Committee Stage of the Education Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee endorsed the list of stakeholders and agreed to write out accordingly inviting submissions to the anticipated Committee Stage of the Education Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to contact Boards of Governors in all schools in Northern Ireland, through C2K, to seek submissions to the anticipated Committee Stage of the Education Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposed communication strategy for the anticipated Committee Stage of the Bill using various social media including Facebook and Twitter.

## **5. Joint Departmental briefing on School Transport**

*Departmental officials joined the meeting at 10.24am.*

Mr Paul Sweeney, Permanent Secretary, Department of Education; Mr Alan McMullan, Head of School Access Team, Department of Education; Mr Dale Hanna, Transport Manager for the Education and Library Boards; together with Mr Iain Greenway, Department of the Environment; and Mr James Hutchinson, Driver and Vehicle Agency, Department of the Environment; briefed the Committee on school transport health and safety issues.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education for further information on:

- contracts which had been discontinued as a consequence of health and safety non-compliance issues;
- Access NI checks for non-UK nationals involved in the provision of Home to School transport services;
- reported whistle-blowing / fraud prevention issues; and
- the renewal of contracts with Translink.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to write to the Driver and Vehicle Agency for further information on vehicles in the WELB area removed from service because of non-compliance and on the Agency's current or planned engagement with Operation Coachman in 2012.

*Officials left the meeting at 11.46am.*

*Michaela Boyle, Jo-Anne Dobson, Jonathan Craig and Brenda Hale left the meeting at 11.46am.*

*Michelle McIlveen left the meeting at 11.48am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to issue a press release.

The Committee noted the Committee for Regional Development's ongoing inquiry into Integrated Transport policies in other jurisdictions.

Members expressed some support for the adoption of greater integration in respect of transport policy as it pertains to Home to School transport.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Regional Development providing relevant information and indicating Members' views in respect of greater integration of Home to School transport provision.

## **6. Departmental briefing on the proposed Statutory Rule: The Education (Levels of Progression for Key Stages1, 2 and 3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012**

*Departmental officials joined the meeting at 11.51am.*

Mr Dale Heaney, Head of Qualifications and Assessment Team; Mr Richard Hanna, Director of Education Strategy, CCEA; Mrs Katrina Godfrey, Director of Planning and Performance Management; and Mr Carl Savage, Qualifications and Assessment Team; briefed the Committee on the proposed statutory rule.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*Michaela Boyle rejoined the meeting at 11.52am.*

*Michelle McIlveen rejoined the meeting at 11.53am.*

*Jonathan Craig rejoined the meeting at 11.53 am.*

*Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 12.01 pm.*

*Jonathan Craig left the meeting at 12.02pm.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the proposed statutory rule pending the receipt of further information from the Department.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking further information on:

- the costs and learning points from the 'Shadow Year' pilot scheme;
- the projected costs and details of the implementation plans for the new Levels of Progression; and
- the anticipated impact of any delay in agreeing the proposed rule.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to write to the Department seeking responses to the concerns raised by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and Ulster Teacher's Union in recent correspondence.

*Officials left the meeting at 12.56pm.*

## **7. Correspondence**

**7.1.** The Committee considered correspondence from the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) to the Minister, expressing NAHT's concerns regarding issues facing school principals.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request a copy of the Minister's response to NAHT.

- 7.2.** The Committee considered a response from the Department on school uniform guidance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking information as to the level of compliance by schools with Departmental guidance on school uniforms and to consider reviewing its guidance to include e.g. a maximum cost.

- 7.3.** The Committee noted a response from the Department on the provision of new buildings for Arvalee Special School.

- 7.4.** **Also 7.11.** The Committee noted a response from the North Eastern Education and Library Board on its allocation of post-primary places.

- 7.5.** The Committee noted correspondence from UNISON enclosing a submission to the Review of the Common Funding Formula (CFF).

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider this document during its briefing on the CFF scheduled for 17 October 2012.

- 7.6.** Members noted correspondence from the Department enclosing details of attendees at the Preparing for Success Conference.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Employment and Learning as requested.

- 7.7.** The Committee noted an invitation from Bookstart to an Early Years seminar on 26 October 2012.

- 7.8.** The Committee considered a response from the Department on the inclusion of mental health issues in the Revised Curriculum.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to suggest that consideration be given to a revision to the Revised Curriculum to set out resources and programmes which promote good mental health. The Committee also agreed to write to the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety for comment on this issue.

*Michaela Boyle left the meeting at 12.59pm.*

- 7.9.** The Committee noted a response from the Belfast Education and Library Board on premises for the Artillery Youth Club.

- 7.10.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Education and Training Inspectorate regarding the launch of the Chief Inspector's Report.

- 7.12** The Committee noted correspondence advising Members of an EU consultation on the promotion of IT among education and training providers.

**7.13** The Committee noted correspondence advising Members of an EU Programme which provides support for study visits.

The Committee also noted a number of Department of Education News Releases which were previously emailed to Members.

## **8. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee discussed its draft Forward Work Programme from September to December 2012, and the impact on its workload of the anticipated Committee Stage of the Education Bill.

The Committee also considered a programme for its planned visit to Omagh on 10 October 2012.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme from September to December 2012.

## **9. Any Other Business**

The Committee noted correspondence inviting Members to take part in events planned to mark World Mental Health Day.

## **10. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 10 October 2012 at 11.00am in the Lecture Theatre, South West College, Omagh.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.06pm.*

Mervyn Storey  
Chairperson, Committee for Education  
10 October 2012