



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 17 April 2013
The SENATE CHAMBER

Present:

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

In Attendance:

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

Apologies:

Brenda Hale MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10.05am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1. The Chairperson referred Members to recent statements by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools in respect of the requirement for the Certificate in Religious Education for teachers in Catholic Maintained primary schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite CCMS to brief the Committee on this issue and its proposed policy changes.

2.2. The Chairperson noted that the Association of Education and Library Boards had highlighted the adverse impact of delays in the establishment of ESA on the management of the Boards.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information from the Association on its concerns.

2.3. The Chairperson reminded Members that the first stage of the allocation of pre-school places had commenced.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the Department include an update on pre-school places during its forthcoming briefing on the Early Years consultation.

3. Draft minutes of 9 and 10 April 2013

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 9 and 10 April 2013 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Briefing from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) on DE Efficiency Delivery Plans

Danny Kinahan declared an interest as the Chairperson of the Audit Committee.

Michaela Boyle declared an interest as the Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee.

NIAO officials joined the meeting at 10.10am.

Eddie Bradley, Assistant Auditor General, and Jacqueline O'Brien, Audit Manager, briefed the Committee on the aspects of the NIAO Review of the Efficiency Delivery Programme 2008-2011 relating to the Department of Education.

Jonathan Craig joined the meeting at 10.16 am.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Mervyn Storey left the meeting and Danny Kinahan assumed the Chair at 10.43 am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting further clarification, in respect of the 2008-11 Efficiency Delivery Plans, during its forthcoming briefing on the 2011-15 Savings Delivery Plans.

NIAO officials left the meeting at 10.56 am.

6. Departmental Briefing on Capital Investment Plans

Mervyn Storey declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors of Ballymoney High School.

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 10.57 am.

John McGrath, Deputy Secretary; Diarmuid McLean, Director of Investment and Infrastructure; and Stephen Creagh, Deputy Director of Investment and Infrastructure, briefed the Committee on the Department's plans for new-build capital projects.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Mervyn Storey rejoined the meeting and resumed the Chair at 11.20 am.

Jonathan Craig left the meeting at 11.59 am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an update on the status of Knockevin Special School in Downpatrick.

Departmental officials left the meeting at 12.10 pm.

Danny Kinahan left the meeting at 12.10 pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department suggesting that it publish and update regularly a spreadsheet showing all new build capital projects including: those that are 'shovel ready'; those that are at the planning stage and those which are to be subject to further consideration. The Committee indicated that the spreadsheet should set out the assessment score, status and key dates for all new build capital projects.

Danny Kinahan rejoined the meeting at 12.11 pm.

Michelle McIlveen left the meeting at 12.11 pm.

7. Committee Response to the Review of the Common Funding Scheme

The Committee considered a draft response to the Minister in respect of the Review of the Common Funding Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer further consideration of this response until its next meeting.

8. Correspondence

8.1. The Committee noted correspondence from the Transferor Representatives' Council in response to concerns raised by the Coalition for Marriage on the teaching of issues relating to same sex marriage.

8.2. Members noted correspondence from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister inviting comments on the Draft Rules for its Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse 1922-1995.

8.3. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department on the Review of employment opportunities for teaching staff including its assessment of the requirement for a Certificate in Religious Education for Catholic Maintained primary and nursery schools.

The Committee had previously agreed, above, to request a briefing on this issue from CCMS.

8.4. The Committee noted a response from the Department in relation to computer-based assessment programmes, NINAs and NILAs.

8.5. The Committee noted correspondence from Orchard County Primary School to the Minister of Education in relation to a Development Proposal by the school.

8.6. The Committee noted correspondence from the Ulster Farmers' Union expressing its views on the Primary School Area.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the UFU to its forthcoming informal briefing session on this topic.

8.7. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department on training opportunities for physics teachers at the CERN Institute in Geneva.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department asking how its policy on the advancement of STEM subjects is actively promoted through staff development.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the National Science Learning Centre for information on the uptake of its programmes by teachers from Northern Ireland.

8.8. Members noted a response from the Committee for Employment and Learning on the closure of crèche facilities at the University of Ulster.

8.9. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning, enclosing a request for information from the Department of Education relating to the Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department as requested.

- 8.10. Members noted correspondence from the Western Education and Library Board on the monitoring of the authenticity and traceability of food for school meals.
- 8.11. The Committee noted an invitation from the Early Years Organisation to the Launch of the Respecting Difference in the Education Sector Project on 10 May 2013.
- 8.12. Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning on funding for the Entitlement Framework.
Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Minister as requested.
- 8.13. The Committee noted the eighth issue of the Roe Valley Learning Community (RVLC) Shared Education newsletter.
- 8.14. The Committee noted an invitation from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People to the launch of her report, *Shared Education – Views of Children and Young People*, on 24 April 2013.
- 8.15. The Committee noted an update from the Department on progress in delivering its commitments under the Programme for Government.
Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing on this issue after the summer recess.
- 8.16. Members noted an invitation from the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure to a stakeholder event to take place on 2 May 2013 on internet and social media use by young people.
- 8.17. The Committee noted an invitation from Booktrust and the Fostering Network to a celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Letterbox Club.

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

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the draft Forward Work Programme and noted that an informal stakeholder briefing session on Primary School Area Planning has been scheduled for 19 June 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Rural Community Network and Professor Colin Knox, University of Ulster, to this event.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer a Departmental briefing on the School Enhancement Programme until 5 June 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content not to schedule a joint meeting on errors relating to the allocation of places at the University of Ulster as the Employment and Learning Committee had concluded its work on this issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Forward Work Programme as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would consider potential topics for a Committee Inquiry at its next meeting.

10. Any Other Business

The Committee referred to email correspondence received by Members on a development proposal for St Ita's Primary School, Carryduff.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider this correspondence at its next meeting.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 24 April 2013 at 10:00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.27 pm.

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
24 April 2013