



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 05 JUNE 2013
The SENATE CHAMBER

Present:

Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Brenda Hale MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Christopher McNickle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Chris Hazzard MLA
Seán Rogers MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10.05 am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 The Chairperson noted that the Committee had written to CCEA to seek clarification on its policy in respect of supporting curricular materials related to sensitive issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to await a response from CCEA.

2.2 The Committee noted press reports regarding CCMS' proposed changes to recruitment policies for teachers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to CCMS to seek information on its proposals.

2.3 The Committee considered the literacy and numeracy programme associated with one of the Delivering Social Change Signature Projects.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to highlight the Committee's concerns that schools had not been given sufficient time to identify the need for resources to support the literacy and numeracy programme.

2.4 The Committee considered a recent informal briefing event organised by the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure which featured the work of the Replay Theatre Company and the Bliss Project which is designed to bring performances to children with profound and multiple disabilities and learning difficulties.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Replay Theatre Company and request a copy of the BLISS project performance DVD.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed that a joint approach involving the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure be adopted in respect of the relevant policy issues.

2.5 The Committee discussed an informal briefing event concerning Orangefield High School and the relocation of Year 10 pupils following the planned closure of the school.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Belfast Education and Library Board, the South Eastern Education and Library Board and the Department to request an urgent briefing on the matters raised by the representatives of Orangefield High School.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Belfast Education and Library Board and to the South Eastern Education and Library Board to seek all relevant documentation covering the transfer of pupils and staff of this school.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Orangefield High School to seek a copy of the minutes of the relevant Board of Governors meetings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an appropriate thank you event for the staff of Orangefield High School following its closure.

3. Draft Minutes of 29 May 2013

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 29 May 2013 were agreed as amended by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Briefing from the Department on the June Monitoring Round

Officials joined the meeting at 10.15 am.

Trevor Connolly, Director of Finance, Department of Education; and Stephen Creagh, Deputy Director of Investment and Infrastructure, Department of Education briefed the Committee on the June Monitoring Round.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Brenda Hale joined the meeting at 10.17am.

Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting at 10.35am.

Brenda Hale left the meeting at 10.43am.

Jonathan Craig joined the meeting at 10.55am

Jonathan Craig left the meeting at 11.07am

Michelle McIlveen left the meeting at 11.10am

Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 11.10am

The Committee lost its decision-making quorum at 11.10am and in accordance with Standing Order 49(5) the Committee continued to receive evidence with a quorum of four Members.

Officials left the meeting at 11.11am

6. Briefing from the Department on the School Enhancement Programme

Officials joined the meeting at 11.12am

Stephen Creagh, Deputy Director of Investment and Infrastructure, Department of Education and Diarmuid McLean, Director of Investment and Infrastructure, Department of Education briefed the Committee on the School Enhancement Programme.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Pat Sheehan returned to the meeting at 11.14am, the Committee regained its decision-making quorum at this time.

Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting at 11.15am

The Committee lost its decision-making quorum at 11.15am and in accordance with Standing Order 49(5) the Committee continued to receive evidence with a quorum of four Members.

Jonathan Craig returned to the meeting at 11.16am, the Committee regained its decision-making quorum at this time.

Brenda Hale returned to the meeting at 11.17am

Michelle McIlveen returned to the meeting at 11.26am

Michaela Boyle left the meeting at 11.26am

Officials left the meeting at 11.31am.

As the Committee regained its decision-making quorum the Committee agreed the following actions in respect of the Departmental briefing on the June Monitoring Round.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request the following:

- an update on the capital and resource outturn for 2012-13;
- a progress update on the capital projects announced in June 2012 and January 2013;
- copies of the monthly financial submissions provided by the Department to DFP;
- information on the flexibility available to schools in respect of the use of school surpluses for capital works;
- clarification as to Departmental policy in respect of additional spend at new or relatively new schools; and
- clarification as to whether there will be a clawback of funds associated with expenditure earmarked for NILAs and NINAs in 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education and Library Boards to seek information as to how they selected the Minor Works projects for the June Monitoring Round bid.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for Regional Development to seek information regarding the Travelwise 'Safer Routes to Schools' initiative which is led by DRD in partnership with the Department of Education – in particular, Members sought clarification as to funding responsibility in respect of pavements and road upgrades etc. associated with schools.

7. Briefing from the Department on the draft Priorities for Youth policy.

Officials joined the meeting at 11.34am

Linda Wilson, Director of Families and Communities, Department of Education; Brenda Shearer, Head of Youth and Schools in the Community Team, Department of Education; Christine Leacock, Youth and Schools in the Community Team, Department of Education; and David Savage, Youth and Schools in the Community Team, Department of Education briefed the Committee on responses to the consultation on the draft Priorities for youth policy.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Michaela Boyle returned to the meeting at 11.37am

Officials left the meeting at 11.57am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond to the Department indicating that the Committee:

- values the contribution and role of volunteers and their particular skills in connecting with local hard-to-reach groups;
- notes the focus in the policy in respect of targeting disadvantage but would wish to ensure that the Department / ESA will avoid a rigid adherence to a single or particular measure of deprivation;
- felt that although the targeting of disadvantage was important, not all funding for youth services should be linked to disadvantaged or Section 75 groups;
- wishes to see the policy lead to a better definition of responsibilities in respect of youth services for the Department of Education and particularly also the Department for Employment and Learning; and
- highlighted the need for sensitivity in the delivery of local youth services and called for the non-politicisation of such services.

The Committee also requested an update on the development of the youth services advisory groups.

8. Correspondence

8.1 The Committee noted an invitation from PTA-UK to its Gold Star Awards 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to PTA-UK and seek further information on the Northern Ireland winners at the Gold Star Awards 2013.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to PTA-NI and seek further information on its recent award winners.

8.2 The Committee considered correspondence from Nigel Halliday regarding the work of Attendance Solutions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Mr Halliday to seek further information on his work and organisation.

8.3 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding STEM in schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Association of Science Education and to the Royal Society of Chemistry to seek their views and to request a briefing on this matter.

8.4 The Committee noted the Children and Young People's Strategic Programme May 2013 Newsletter.

8.5 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding arrangements during expected exam disruption at schools coinciding with the G8 summit.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek further information including relevant contact procedures.

8.6 The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister regarding the joined-up delivery of services for children including particularly the Delivering Social Change framework and the Sure Start Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety for information.

8.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety regarding the delivery of joined-up services for children.

8.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding updated guidance for post-primary transfer.

8.9 The Committee noted correspondence from Children in Northern Ireland regarding Special Educational Needs legislation and the Code of Practice.

8.10 The Committee considered correspondence from concerned parents regarding post-primary Area Plans in the Craigavon area.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Southern Education and Library Board for comment.

8.11 The Committee noted correspondence from concerned parents regarding the allocation of places in St Francis' Primary School in Loughbrickland.

8.12 The Committee noted correspondence from Steelstown Primary School regarding the funding of a Nurture Unit at the school.

The Committee noted that the school in question had not secured funding for a nurture unit owing to higher levels of pupil attainment at the school.

8.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding Third Sector mapping exercises.

8.14 The Committee considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Assembly European Project Manager regarding details on the Peace IV framework.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a further briefing on the Peace IV framework.

8.15 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding a reception to celebrate the achievement of schools and pre-school providers.

8.16 The Committee noted correspondence from the Controlled Sector Steering Group regarding the Area Planning Steering Group.

8.17 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding surplus school places.

8.18 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding special circumstances for examination candidates.

9. Forward Work Plan

The Committee noted an invitation from Assembly Education Services to a “Let’s talk at Stormont” event on 19 June 2013.

The Committee considered travel arrangements for the next meeting scheduled to take place in Ebrington Square on 12 June 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members would make their own way to the next Committee meeting.

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

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 12 June 2013 at 10:30 am in the Ballroom, Ebrington Square, in the UK City of Culture.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.08pm.

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
12 June 2013