



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 22 JANUARY 2014
SENATE CHAMBER

Present:

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

Trevor Lunn MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10.02am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as recorded above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 OECD Report on Assessment and Evaluation Framework

The Committee noted feedback from the Deputy Chairperson who had attended a Department of Education briefing on Friday 17 January 2014 from the OECD on its report on evaluation and assessment frameworks in the Northern Ireland education system.

2.2 KESS Workshop - Education, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The Chairperson reminded Members of the Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series event on “Education, Innovation and Entrepreneurship” to be held in the Long Gallery on Thursday 23 January at 1:30pm; and encouraged Members to attend if available.

3. Draft Minutes of 15 January 2014

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2014 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted a paper from Assembly Research (RalSe) about Parent Councils in Scotland commissioned as part of the Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and the School Improvement Process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the RalSe paper on Parent Councils in Scotland to the Department for comment.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to invite Assembly Research to provide Members with an oral briefing on the research papers provided to-date in respect of the Inquiry into ETI and the School Improvement Process.

The Committee noted a paper from the General Teaching Council Northern Ireland (GTCNI) giving its response to the OECD report on assessment and evaluation frameworks.

Agreed: Members noted that Departmental officials were scheduled to brief the Committee on the OECD report at the meeting on 12 February 2014 and agreed to forward the GTCNI paper to the Department for comment at that briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the papers should be published on the Committee’s webpage with the other Inquiry papers.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to invite GTCNI to brief the Committee on the findings from its on-line survey on perceptions of the ETI, at its meeting on 26 February 2014.

5. Area Planning - Special Adviser Briefing

Professor Tony Gallagher joined the meeting at 10.08am.

The briefing was recorded by Hansard.

Jonathan Craig left the meeting at 10.18am.

Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 10.24am.

Chris Hazzard joined the meeting at 10.31am.

Professor Gallagher left the meeting at 10.54am.

The Chairperson suspended the meeting at 10.56am.

The meeting resumed at 10.58am.

6. Area Planning - Primary Integrating / Enriching Education (PIEE) Project - Non-Departmental Oral Briefing – North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) and the University of Ulster

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 10.58am:

Jayne Millar, Senior Education Officer, NEELB; Ray Gilbert, Senior Education Officer, NEELB; Dr Aideen Hunter, Lead Evaluation Researcher, School of Education, University of Ulster; and Dr Alan McCully, Research Co-ordinator, School of Education, University of Ulster.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

Stephen Moutray left the meeting at 11.23am.

Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting at 11.43am.

Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting at 12.02pm.

The witnesses left the meeting at 12.02pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department highlighting the achievements of the PIEE project and suggesting that in addition to capital, resource funding be made available to support similar shared education projects in schools across Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to ask if resource funding will be made available to support shared education projects, like PIEE, under the 'Together, Building a United Community' initiative.

7. Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted correspondence from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers inviting Members to the ATL Annual Lecture on Thursday 22 May 2014 in the Stormont Hotel.

7.2 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding Committee queries on the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure (CAL) report on Child Protection and Safeguarding in the CAL Remit.

7.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education responding to Committee queries on the revised DE Corporate/Business Plan, including limited reference to the analysis of poor parental interaction with the pre-school allocation process. The Committee also noted that the Department had more recently provided the Clerk with more detailed information on this subject.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk would summarise the information provided by the Department in respect of parental interaction with the pre-school allocation process and report back at the next meeting.

7.4 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Education regarding Committee queries on DE's proposals to revise the Common Funding Scheme.

7.5 The Committee noted correspondence from Barnardo's, providing information on its most recent Northern Ireland policy and practice briefing: "Safe Choices: Responding to the changing nature of child sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland".

7.6 The Committee noted correspondence from Department of Agriculture and Rural Development which included relevant extracts of the "Annual Progress Report 2013 – Rural White Paper Action Plan".

7.7 The Committee noted a response from the Western Education and Library Board to Committee queries in respect of Minor Works identified in the June monitoring Round.

7.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning confirming that the Chairperson and other Members would attend the "STEM is Cool" event on Wednesday 29 January 2014.

7.9 The Committee noted correspondence from Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister including the Barroso Task Force Desk Officers' Report July – September 2013.

7.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the Education and Library Boards' STEM Regional Reports for Primary and Post-Primary 2012/2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a briefing on the reports as part of its wider consideration of STEM issues.

7.11 The Committee noted a response from the Western Education and Library Board (WELB) regarding Committee queries in respect of the Savings Delivery Plan and post-primary school deficits.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to WELB seeking further detail on the reference to demographic changes; the related financial pressures, and the need to rationalise post-primary provision.

7.12 The Committee noted a response from the Northern Ireland Commission for Catholic Education to outstanding Committee queries relating to issues raised by the Coalition for Marriage.

7.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment advising that the Deputy Chairperson would attend the “STEM is Cool” event on 29 January 2014.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted that its informal briefing event with District Inspectors would take place on Thursday 23 January 2014 at 6pm in Room 115 with a slightly amended format.

Stephen Moutray rejoined the meeting at 12.08pm.

The Committee noted that the “STEM is Cool” event would take place on Wednesday 29 January 2014, from 9.30am until 1pm in the Long Gallery and that consequently there would no meeting of the Committee on that day.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue a press release for the “STEM is Cool” event, subject to the agreement of the other relevant Committees.

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

9. Any Other Business

Members expressed their concerns about the apparent intermittent support available to pupils with learning difficulties, their parents/carers and schools.

A Member also highlighted concerns in respect of poor or inappropriate careers advice provided to a pupil with learning difficulties.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department expressing concern in respect of intermittent provision and inappropriate careers advice for pupils with learning difficulties and seeking information on the provision of support for these pupils; their parents/carers and schools.

10. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 5 February 2014 at 10.00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.13pm.

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
5 February 2014