



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 12 MARCH 2014
Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

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

In Attendance:

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

Apologies:

Pat Sheehan MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10.42am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were recorded as above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 COIN Website

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to attend the launch of the Careers Opportunity in Newry (COIN) revamped website organised by the Newry & Mourne Labour & Education Forum later on Wednesday 12 March 2014.

2.2 Alignment of GCSEs

Members noted that in his statement to the Assembly on Tuesday 11 March 2014 the Minister of Education indicated that he was not minded to adopt the new grading system for GCSEs in England and also referred to the continuing work of the Fundamental Review Expert Group.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek an assurance that the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) is to work with other regulators to ensure equivalence is maintained in respect of the different GCSE grading systems and to request the terms of reference for the continuing work of the Fundamental Review Expert Group.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to CCEA to request an update on the changes to GCSEs and A-Levels originating from Westminster and the implications for Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the principal of De La Salle College, Belfast, who expressed concerns about the transferability of qualifications in a media report following the Minister's statement.

2.3 St. Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh

Members noted the recent decision with regard to St. Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh which is to remain a grammar school whilst discontinuing all academic selection.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request clarification on Home to School transport policy and the relevant implications for a pupil living near St. Patrick's who wishes to attend a Catholic selective grammar school.

3. Draft Minutes of 5 March 2014

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2014 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

The Committee deferred consideration of Agenda item 5 and considered Agenda item 6 which was the written briefing on the second Outline Business Case for the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus.

5. Written Briefing - Lisanelly Shared Education Campus – Second Outline Business Case

The Committee considered the Second Outline Business Case for the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive a further update on Lisanelly when the Department briefs the Committee on its Programme for Government progress.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an informal briefing with Drumragh Integrated College regarding the reported exclusion of that school from the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus.

6. Correspondence

6.1 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding funding for an Advancing Shared Education Programme.

6.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department in response to queries arising from the consultation on the fundamental review of GCSEs and A-Levels.

6.3 The Committee noted correspondence from Stranmillis College regarding the pool of unemployed graduate post-primary English and Maths teachers and the implications for the Signature Project for literacy and numeracy.

6.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS); South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB); and Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) in response to a request for information from the Committee for Finance and Personnel in respect of its Inquiry into Flexible Working in the Public Sector.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the relevant correspondence to the Committee for Finance and Personnel.

6.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department in respect of reported inaccuracies in AQW 29579/111-15 relating to Kirkinriola Primary School.

6.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) in respect of the treatment of unachieved Education and Library Board (ELB) Savings Delivery Plan savings in the 2013-14 budget.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification regarding the treatment of unachieved savings in ELB 2013-14 Savings Delivery Plan in respect of the 2014-15 budget.

6.7 The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the Terms of Reference for the Independent Review of Home to School Transport.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Panel Chair, Sian Thornthwaite, requesting a Committee briefing on the interim findings of the Review, when available.

6.8 The Committee noted correspondence from Western Education and Library Board (WELB) regarding the definition and numbers of schools which are “no longer financially viable”.

6.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding the completion of Post Project Evaluations by Executive Departments.

6.10 The Committee noted correspondence from CCEA in response to queries from a teacher in respect of Randomised Controlled Trials and the use of the “Mathletics” resource.

6.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel which highlighted the “Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland” report, authored by the Carnegie Trust.

6.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department about the use of the Northern Ireland Science Park “Generation Innovation” resource.

6.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding its response to the COFMDFM report on the Delivering Social Change Signature Projects.

7. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme and noted that the Minister of Education had indicated his availability to brief the Committee on Wednesday 9 April 2014 on the Common Funding Scheme and on the Education Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister confirming its invitation and requesting that all parts of the briefing be held in public session.

Members noted that an additional plenary session was scheduled for Wednesday 19 March 2014, due to commence at 10.30am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commence its meeting on Wednesday 19 March 2014 at 9.30am.

Members also noted an invitation from the Assembly Education Service and the Geological Survey Northern Ireland to attend a STEM event in Parliament Buildings on the morning of 19 March 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

9. Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 19 March 2014 at 9.30am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

10. Inquiry into Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process – Final Departmental Briefing

The following officials joined the meeting at 11.03am:

Noelle Buick, Chief Inspector; Faustina Graham, Assistant Chief Inspector; John Anderson, Managing Inspector; and Heather Jackson, Managing Inspector.

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

11.50am Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.

12.07pm Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting.

Jonathan Craig declared an interested as the Chairperson of a Board of Governors of a school.

1.01pm Danny Kinahan left the meeting.

1.38pm Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

The officials left the meeting at 1.44pm.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.44pm

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
19 March 2014