



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2014
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:

Michelle McIlveen MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Colum Eastwood MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Nelson McCausland MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Sandra Overend MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Paula Best (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Kevin Marks (Clerical Supervisor)
Alicia Muldoon (Clerical Officer)
Pamela Dugdale (Public Finance Scrutiny Unit – Assembly Research) - *item 1 only*

Apologies:

None

The meeting commenced in private session at 10.04am.

1. 2015-16 Draft Budget scrutiny – Public Finance Scrutiny Unit – Assembly Research – oral briefing

The Committee received an oral briefing from Assembly Research Public Finance Scrutiny Unit regarding the scrutiny of the 2015-16 Draft Budget.

10.07am Jonathan Craig joined the meeting.

10.13am Colum Eastwood joined the meeting.

10.52am Robin Newton left the meeting.

10.55am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department commenting on the absence of information in respect of the Draft Budget and seeking clarity, in advance of the briefing scheduled for 3 December 2014, regarding:

- DE's plans to encourage Arms Length Bodies (including the Education Authority) to make use of Financial Transaction Capital funding, the Change Fund and European Investment Bank support for capital or other projects;
- the level of contractual commitments in respect of capital and resource funding;
- the level and treatment of accruing resources available to the Department and its ALBs; and
- the linkage between the 2015-16 Draft Budget and Programme for Government targets.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission a paper from Assembly Research on the financing of education services in other jurisdictions.

2. Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education - Written briefing paper inquiry submissions

The Committee noted a written briefing paper on submissions to the Committee's inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education.

11.06am Robin Newton re-joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a programme of oral evidence sessions including representatives from the early years, Irish Medium and youth sectors.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission a paper from Assembly Research on the 'Educate Together' programme in the Republic of Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to seek an informal meeting in January 2015 with the Oireachtas Select Sub-Committee on Education and Skills to discuss issues relating to Shared Education.

3. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

11.20am Trevor Lunn left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking an update on the timeline for the publication of the Home to School Transport Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking an update on the Department's legislative programme for the remainder of the current mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should forward the Hansard of the Education Bill: Council for Catholic Maintained Schools/Northern Ireland Commission for Catholic Education oral evidence session of 9 January 2013 to Members for their information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme as amended.

The meeting entered public session at 11.21am.

4. Apologies

There were no apologies.

5. Chairperson's Business

5.1 New Member

The Chairperson welcomed Colum Eastwood MLA to the Education Committee.

11.22am Jonathan Craig left the meeting.

11.22am Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

5.2 Marshall Report

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety had recently made a statement on the Marshall Report on Child Sexual Exploitation. The report included commitments from the Education Minister that all children are to receive preventative education and that further advice and guidance will be made available to schools, parents and carers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking further information, prior to the briefing on iMatter on 10 December 2014, on the Department's plans in this regard.

11.23am Trevor Lunn re-joined the meeting.

11.23am Chris Hazzard re-joined the meeting.

11.25am Jonathan Craig re-joined the meeting.

5.3 Informal meeting with teaching unions on the NITPS

The Chairperson discussed the Committee's informal meeting which took place on Tuesday 18 November 2014 with representatives of the teaching unions in respect of the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee expressed concerns in respect of the complexity of the proposed changes to the NITPS and agreed to write to the Department

calling on it to do more to explain teachers' pension options and to provide information/clarity on:

- the current and expected age profile of retirees;
- the number of union representatives on the new pensions board;
- the provision of a pensions' calculator and annual statements for teachers;
- the reported lack of pensions expertise in managing authorities;
- whether a 10 year gap is to be maintained between Normal Pension Age and the earliest age for retirement;
- whether further early retirement phased options are being explored;
- whether there are any guarantees in respect of a limit to further increases in contributions for teachers;
- whether teachers electing to retire early and making additional contributions are obliged to make this decision at the start of their careers; and
- the numbers of Further Education lecturers who are current members of the NITPS and the nature of any consultation with this group in respect of the proposed reforms to the NITPS.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the teaching unions seeking a breakdown of their membership and information in respect of retirees.

5.4 Christmas Cards

The Committee discussed whether it would issue hard copy Christmas cards and deferred further consideration of this matter.

5.5 Youth Services for Irish Medium Education

Members noted a recent Departmental press release relating to enhanced support for youth services in the Irish Medium Education sector in particular £130k for additional opportunities for informal learning in the Irish language.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking sight of the relevant business case and an explanation in respect of the allocation of additional funds for this purpose.

6. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting on 12 November 2014.

7. Matters Arising

7.1 The Chairperson advised Members that additional submissions to the inquiry had been added to the SkyDrivePro link.

Agreed: The Committee noted some late submissions to the inquiry and agreed that they should be published on the Committee's webpage and included in the inquiry report.

The Committee also noted a response from Parenting NI following its briefing on 5 November 2014.

7.2 The Committee noted further information from the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) in respect of the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme.

8. Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education – Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education

NICIE witnesses joined the meeting at 11.33am.

Noreen Campbell, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE); Helen McLaughlin, Vice Chairperson, NICIE; and Frances Donnelly, Senior Development Officer, NICIE briefed the Committee as part of the inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education.

11.45am Pat Sheehan re-joined the meeting.

11.48am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

12.44pm Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting.

12.56pm Colum Eastwood left the meeting.

The witnesses left the meeting at 1.02pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to NICIE requesting further information on its Directors' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2014 and proposed organisational review.

9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

9.2 The Committee noted a response from the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) to the Committee's queries regarding complaints procedure for parents.

9.3 The Committee noted responses from the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) and Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) in respect of the Needs Model and adjustment to projections in respect of Integrated Education.

9.4 The Committee noted correspondence from Ligoniel Primary School in relation to a recent Education and Training Inspectorate inspection. The Committee noted an invitation to the Chairperson to meet with Ligoniel Primary School Board of Governors.

9.5 The Committee noted an invitation from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to attend the launch of the Commission's 3rd Annual Statement on Wednesday 10 December 2014 in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings at 12 noon- 2.00pm.

9.6 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to its request for information regarding the October Monitoring Round.

9.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for Education following the recent North South Ministerial Council meeting statement on the services provided by Middletown Centre for Autism.

9.8 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to queries in regards to the Capital Programme and the revised protocol.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking a further update on the progress of school builds.

9.9 The Committee noted a response from SELB in respect of engagement undertaken as part of the Area Planning process.

9.10 The Committee noted an invitation to attend the Momentum Digital Conference on 27 November 2014 at the Belfast Met Building, Titanic Quarter.

9.11 The Committee noted correspondence from Seagoe Primary School to/from the Department of Education regarding proposed changes to procedures in respect of Temporary Variations to enrolment.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 26 November 2014 at 10.00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.04pm.

Michelle McIlveen
Chairperson, Committee for Education
26 November 2014