



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2014
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:

Michelle McIlveen MLA (Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Nelson McCausland MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Sandra Overend MLA
Seán Rogers MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Paula Best (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Jonathan Watson (Clerical Supervisor)
Alicia Muldoon (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Pat Sheehan MLA

The meeting commenced in private session at 10.06am.

1. Area Planning – next steps

The Committee considered a written briefing on the next steps for its scrutiny of Area Planning.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department, following a recent briefing on Area Planning, regarding Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta's regional Irish Medium Education strategy and the disposal of school buildings by Education and Library Boards (ELBs).

The Committee noted correspondence from the North Eastern Education and Library Board; the South Eastern Education and Library Board; and the Western Education and Library Board in response to Committee queries regarding meaningful Area Planning engagement with parents and schools etc..

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek additional commentary from its Special Advisor in respect of: the impact of Area Planning to-date; the validity of the surplus school vacancy calculation methodology; the Area Profile information; the Needs Model (including as appropriate the implications of the Drumragh Judgement); possible enhancements to the Area Planning consultation and communication process; and the facilitation of alternative cross-sectoral or cross-border solutions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold an Area Planning stakeholder event on the evening of 4 February 2015.

10.16am Sandra Overend joined the meeting.

2. Health Support Services and Access to the Curriculum – next steps

The Committee considered a written briefing on the next steps for its scrutiny of the availability of health support services which provide access to the curriculum.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold a joint event with the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety focusing on: the availability of Educational Psychology services; the development of teacher capacity in respect of the identification of Special Educational Need; and variable availability of health support services which provide access to the curriculum and the need for statutory obligations, Memoranda of Understanding, and Service Level Agreements between ELBs and Health and Social Care Trusts.

The meeting entered public session at 10.25am.

3. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

4. Chairperson's Business

4.1 2015-16 Budget

The Chairperson noted the Minister for Finance and Personnel's 2015-16 budget statement and reminded Members that a briefing on the budget had been requested for the meeting on 3 December 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking clarity on the 2015-16 budget in respect of the reported: allocation of £147m of capital expenditure; resource allocation of £145m; reduction in resource expenditure of £94m; additional pension liabilities; and planned OECD governance review.

4.2 IME post-primary strategy

The Chairperson noted the Minister of Education's recent statement in respect of the post-primary Irish Medium Education strategy report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking sight of the report; requesting a briefing on the Department's response and seeking information on the Terms of Reference for the review of Integrated Education as also announced by the Minister on 4 November 2014.

5. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting 22 October 2014.

6. Matters Arising

6.1 Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education

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

The Committee noted responses from the Department of Education regarding the Shared Education Signature Programme and the Shared Education Campuses Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should confirm whether Belfast Education and Library Board; Southern Education and Library Board and the South Eastern Education and Library Board are to make submissions to the inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to accept responses to the inquiry received after the published deadline.

The Committee noted that, as previously agreed, submissions to the inquiry were to be published on the Committee's webpage.

6.2 Teachers' Pensions

The Chairperson referred Members to a submission from the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) relating to proposed changes to the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to undertake an informal meeting with the teaching unions on 18 November 2014 in order to inform its understanding of the proposed changes to the NITPS.

The Chairperson referred Members to correspondence from the Department of Education advising of another consultation in respect of the NITPS – relating to technical changes associated with the closure of the old NITPS scheme and deferred members' rights.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking a briefing on this matter as part of its scrutiny of the related statutory rule.

7. Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education- briefing from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

The witnesses joined the meeting at 10.35am.

Patricia Lewsley-Mooney, Commissioner; and Alison Montgomery, Senior Policy and Research Officer briefed the Committee as part of the inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

11.11am Trevor Lunn left the meeting.

11.26am Jonathan Craig left the meeting.

11.29am Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting.

The witnesses left the meeting at 11.29am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking further information on the Department's reported plans to seek feedback from pupils on a biennial basis.

8. Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education- briefing from Parenting NI

The witnesses joined the meeting at 11.32am.

Clare-Anne Magee, Director for Parenting Forum, Parenting NI; and Nicola McKeown, Participation Worker for Parenting Forum, Parenting NI briefed the Committee as part of the inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education.

11.33am Chris Hazzard joined the meeting.

11.39am Jonathan Craig re-joined the meeting.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The witnesses left the meeting at 12.10pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Parenting NI seeking information on the levels of responses from parents in respect of the establishment of a single teacher training facility.

9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

9.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding employability skills and connectedness between schools and businesses.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Education to seek a response on the issues raised.

9.3 The Committee noted an invitation from Foram na nOg for Members to attend an Irish Medium Youth Work event on Thursday 13 November 2014 in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings at 10.30am.

9.4 Members noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the Department's October Monitoring Round submission including bids for severance costs and school maintenance.

9.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding a proposed Legislative Consent Motion on Public Service Pension Schemes.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking its views on the Legislative Consent Motion.

9.6 The Committee noted correspondence from Assembly Outreach-External Liaison Unit regarding a visit by a Brazilian education delegation on 13 November 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members would advise Committee staff of their availability to meet with the delegation.

9.7 The Committee noted an invitation from Sentinus for Members to attend a Sentinus breakfast briefing as part of its 'It's Your Choice' programme on Tuesday 4 November 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) requesting an update on the uptake of GCSE and A Levels in Computing and to ask that CCEA outlines the additional Continuous Professional Development for teachers that it provides in this subject area

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Down High School and Cookstown High School asking what measures they have in place to promote computing and ICT within their schools.

9.8 Members noted a response from the Department of Education regarding Early Years engagement with parents.

9.9 The Committee noted correspondence from Investment Strategy Northern Ireland enclosing the October 2014 update on the Department of Education's Capital Programme.

9.10 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education indicating that the review of the delivery of the Revised Curriculum is scheduled to conclude at the end of 2015.

9.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (COFMDFM) enclosing further information from Community Relations in School (CRIS) regarding its campaign in respect of the Buddy Up Scheme in Schools.

9.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the South Belfast Area Learning Community regarding concerns relating to costs associated with transportation for students between schools in support of the Entitlement Framework.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Education for comment.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Regional Development/Translink seeking information on the use of sessional bus tickets to allow travel between different schools for educational purposes.

9.13 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education relating to Relationship and Sexuality Education for school pupils with learning difficulties. The Department advised that CCEA is to issue updated guidance to schools by the end of the present financial year.

9.14 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning regarding its inquiry into Post Special Educational Need Provision in Education, Employment and Training for those with Learning Disabilities in Northern Ireland. Members noted the Committee for Employment and Learning evidence events are scheduled for 3 December 2014 and 4 February 2015.

9.15 The Committee noted a response from the Minister for Education to the Chairperson regarding the Barnett consequential relating to the extension of Free School Meals in England.

9.16 Members noted correspondence from the EU Affairs Manager enclosing the monthly newsletter on European issues.

9.17 The Committee noted responses from the University of Ulster and Queen's University Belfast enclosing data on employment levels for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) graduates.

9.18 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education enclosing letters from the Minister for Education to schools in respect of new arrangements for end of Key Stage assessments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a briefing from the Department of Education and CCEA regarding these matters.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold a stakeholder event regarding End of Key Stage assessments and to give further consideration to a related school visit later in this session.

10. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

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

12.25pm Jonathan Craig left the meeting.

12.26pm Sean Rogers left the meeting.

11. Any Other Business

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should circulate to Members copies of:

- the Department of Education: Assessment of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages – Application of the Charter in the United Kingdom – 4th Monitoring Report; and
- the Languages for the Future: Northern Ireland Languages Strategy report.

12. Autism paper- Assembly Research- written briefing

The Committee noted the Assembly Research paper on autism and additional information provided by the Department of Education.

13. Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 12 November 2014 at 10.00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.30pm.

Michelle McIlveen
Chairperson, Committee for Education
12 November 2014