



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 3 DECEMBER 2014
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:

Michelle McIlveen MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Sandra Overend MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Paula Best (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Kevin Marks (Clerical Supervisor)
Alicia Muldoon (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

Trevor Lunn MLA
Nelson McCausland MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 9.48am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Nurture Units

The Chairperson advised of a recent Committee visit to the nurture units at Edenbrooke Primary School and St Patrick's Primary School. Members indicated that they were greatly impressed by the professionalism and positive attitude of the school principals and nurture unit staff. The Committee reaffirmed its interest in the review of the relevant Delivering Social Change Signature Project.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to both schools, commending them for their professionalism and thanking them for their hospitality.

2.2 Committee Membership Change

The Chairperson thanked Colum Eastwood for his service to the Committee.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting on 26 November 2014.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department responding to Committee queries relating to proposed changes to the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Departmental response to the teaching unions for their information.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to forward relevant information to the Employment and Learning Committee.

Agreed: The Committee, as requested by the Department, agreed to schedule an additional meeting on Tuesday 9 December 2014 at 2.00pm to include a briefing on the NITPS and possibly on the January Monitoring Round.

9.54am Jonathan Craig joined the meeting.

5. 2015-16 Draft Budget - Departmental briefing

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 9.56am.

Trevor Connolly, Director of Finance; Gavin Patrick, Deputy Director of Finance, and Philip Irwin, Director of Investment and Infrastructure briefed the Committee on the Department's 2015-16 Draft Budget.

The Committee noted correspondence from Area Learning Partnerships in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area commenting on the 2015-16 Draft Budget and proposed reductions in funding for the Entitlement Framework.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Michelle McIlveen declared an interest as a member of the Boards of Governors of a number of schools.

Jonathan Craig declared an interest as a member of a Board of Governors of a school.

11.13am Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting.

Officials left the meeting at 11.43am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed write to the Minister:

- indicating disappointment at the absence of information on the draft budget and the limited time allowed for scrutiny;
- recording concern both in respect of: the impact on teaching and non-teaching employment levels and also the proposed timelines for redundancy;
- noting the absence of information in respect of: PEDU recommendations relating to school catering and school transport; savings associated with the establishment of the Education Authority; and Welfare Reform penalties;
- calling for greater use of output measurements, benchmarks and evaluation of policies including the development of a revised Savings Delivery Plan; and
- given the wide-ranging impact of the proposed changes, inviting him to brief the Committee on the anticipated impact of the 2015-16 Budget.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department seeking:

- information on how the school meals nutritional standards obligation is to be met and measured;
- clarification as to whether the Sure Start programme is to be rolled out, as planned, from the 20% most deprived wards to the 25% most deprived wards;
- clarification as to how proposed reductions to support for the Entitlement Framework will impact on associated transport costs for pupils;
- clarification in respect of the references in the budget consultation document to Area-based Planning and the sustainability of schools;
- detail in respect of the budget reductions for 3rd party organisations and Non-Departmental Public Bodies; and
- an updated budget distribution table for 2015/16.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk would draft and circulate for approval a response to the Committee for Finance and Personnel in respect of the 2015-16 Draft Budget.

6. Correspondence

6.1 The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

6.2 The Committee noted a response from the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety confirming participation in a joint stakeholder event on

the availability of health services which provide access to the education curriculum for children with Special Educational Needs.

6.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries regarding biennial feedback from school pupils on education policy which is to be obtained using the Young Life and Times Survey.

6.4 The Committee noted a response from the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to Committee queries regarding the uptake of GCSEs and A-Levels with computer coding content.

6.5 The Committee noted an invitation from the Department of Education to attend the OECD Report stakeholder engagement event on Wednesday 10 December 2014 1.00pm at Stranmillis University College, Belfast.

6.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the National Association of Head Teachers regarding a proposal to fund Nursery Principal Release Time.

6.7 The Committee noted an invitation from the Belfast Education and Library Board to the Chairperson to attend the BELB Christmas Concert on Wednesday 10 December 2014 in the Ulster Hall, Belfast at 7.30pm.

6.8 The Committee noted a response from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education to Committee queries regarding NICIE's Directors' Report; Financial Statements; and a proposed organisational review.

6.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC) – Working Group enclosing a copy of CSSC Newsletter number 7.

6.10 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to the Committee regarding child protection and cyber bullying issues which were raised in the recent BBC Spotlight Programme.

6.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education to the Committee regarding the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study 2015 – primary schools are to participate between May and June 2015.

6.12 The Committee considered a response from the Department of Education in respect of the Minister's statement on the Post-Primary Irish Medium Education Strategy.

6.13 The Committee considered a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries on the provision of autism diagnoses and services; waiting lists and time delays.

6.14 The Committee noted correspondence from the Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure seeking support for expected recommendations from the strategic review of the Sign Language Partnership Group 2010 'Roadmap' document.

6.15 The Committee noted an invitation from the British Red Cross for Members to attend the launch of the British Red Cross new corporate strategy 'Refusing to Ignore People in Crisis' on Wednesday 28 January 2015 at the Dunsilly Hotel, Antrim at 10.30am.

7. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the invitee list and the invitation letter to the Committee's previously agreed Area Planning stakeholder event on Wednesday 4 February 2015.

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 Tuesday 9 December 2014 at 2.00pm in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

10. Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process Inquiry

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of its reply to the Department's response to the Committee's report on its inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.57am.

Michelle McIlveen
Chairperson, Committee for Education
10 December 2014