



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 21 JANUARY 2015
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:

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

In Attendance:

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

Apologies:

None

The meeting commenced in private session at 10.07am.

1. NIPSO Bill – written briefing

The Committee noted the draft Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsperson (NIPSO) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister seeking his views on the proposed inclusion of schools within the remit of the NIPSO.

10.10am Danny Kinahan joined the meeting.

The meeting entered public session at 10.15am.

2. Apologies

There were no apologies.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Congratulations

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairperson congratulated Mr Robin Newton MLA on his appointment as Principal Deputy Speaker of the Assembly.

3.2 2015-16 Final Budget

The Chairperson noted a Departmental press release which indicated that the proposed reduction in the Aggregated Schools Budget of £78.7m is to be offset by an allocation of £80m.

The Chairperson referred to budget concerns expressed by teachers and principals and highlighted the importance of the Department communicating the 2015-16 Final Budget decisions as soon as possible to schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department urging the provision of clarification to schools in respect of changes (if any) to the Average Weighted Pupil Unit or other elements of the Common Funding Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department seeking clarity in respect of additional funds allocated to Nurture Units and the impact on the previously reported funding gap.

3.3 January Monitoring Round

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification on the additional funds allocated through the January Monitoring Round for the Delivering Social Change Literacy and Numeracy Programme and the impact on the continuity of relevant teachers' contracts.

3.4 Committee Visit to Moy

The Committee agreed to write to Moy Regional Primary School and St John's Primary School, Moy thanking them for hosting the Committee's visit on 14 January 2015.

10.18am Maeve McLaughlin joined the meeting.

10.19am Nelson McCausland joined the meeting.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 14 January 2015.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 DE Consultations

The Committee noted a list of current Departmental consultations and closing dates.

5.2 BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition

The Committee noted correspondence from BT thanking Members for attending the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition. Members also noted a list of participating Northern Ireland schools.

10.21am Chris Hazzard joined the meeting.

6. Statutory Rules – NI Teachers’ Pension Scheme – Oral Departmental Briefing

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 10.22am.

Seamus Gallagher, Head of Pensions Policy Team and Brian Quinn, Pensions Policy Team briefed the Committee on the statutory rule - SR 2014/310 – The Teachers’ Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Committee noted the Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules on SR 2014/310.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Members recorded considerable disquiet in respect of additional costs for teachers and longer mandatory teaching careers associated with the related Northern Ireland Teachers’ Pension Scheme legislation.

10.25am Sandra Overend joined the meeting.

10.26am Nelson McCausland left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee for Education considered: *SR 2014/310 The Teachers’ Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014* and agreed that it has no objection to the Rule.

7. Statutory Rules – NI Teachers’ Pension Scheme – Oral Departmental Briefing

Departmental officials also briefed the Committee on the proposed statutory rule: The Teachers’ Pensions (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the proposed Statutory Rule - *The Teachers' Pensions (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015* to be laid.

The Committee also noted the Department's consultation on the Teachers' Pension Scheme (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and the revaluation of the NITPS liabilities including an increased employer contribution rate of 17.7% equating to £38m pa in 2015-16 to 2018-19.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking an update on employer and employee contribution rates in comparable public sector pensions.

Officials left the meeting at 10.53am.

8. Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education – Departmental briefing Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy; Draft Shared Education Policy & Draft Shared Education Bill

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 10.55am.

Faustina Graham, Director of Collaborative Education and Practice; Andrew Bell, Head of Shared Education and Community Relations Team; Dr Suzanne Kingon, Shared Education and Community Relations Team; and Dr John Hunter, Education and Training Inspectorate briefed the Committee on the Department's Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) Policy; draft Shared Education Policy & draft Shared Education Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

11.11am Nelson McCausland re-joined the meeting.

11.33am Jonathan Craig joined the meeting.

12.20pm Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

Officials left the meeting at 12.21pm.

12.21pm Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

12.21pm Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to the Department for response a number of outstanding questions relating to the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking a further oral briefing at the conclusion of the Committee's Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education and sight of the Education and Training Inspectorate's report on the CRED policy, when available.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Glenveagh Special School seeking an informal meeting to discuss issues relating to Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision and the anticipated SEN and Inclusion Bill.

9. Assembly Research – Written briefings - Looked After Children / Financing Education

The Committee noted research papers provided by Assembly Research on Looked After Children and Financing Education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to revisit the Assembly Research paper on Looked After Children as part of the Committee's consideration of the provision of Health Services to support access to the curriculum for school children on 18 March 2015.

10. Correspondence

10.1 The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

10.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the launch of a consultation on Addressing Bullying in Schools.

10.3 The Committee noted a response from the Belfast Education and Library Board to Committee queries in respect of reported over-subscription at Strandtown Primary School.

10.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education to Committee queries in respect of the NIAO Report on Public Sector Sickness Absence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification in respect of: zero hours contracts and the non-teaching pay bill in the Education and Library Boards and whether the latter will be considered as part of the OECD review of the public sector.

10.5 The Committee noted correspondence from Tapestry of Colours in respect of an educational resource.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to CCEA seeking information on the commissioning, production and endorsement of educational resources and a list of current resources.

10.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Education and Library Boards providing the latest ELB/Staff Commission Equality Action Plan (December 2014).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the South Eastern Education and Library Board seeking an update on: the action plan for the ETI recommendations relating to Achieving Belfast and the Derry Bright Futures projects; the planned increase uptake of Free School Meal Entitlement; and the evaluation report of the Improved Access capacity building pilots.

10.7 The Committee considered a response from the Department in respect of the Inquiry into ETI and the School Improvement process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of this response until 28 January 2015.

10.8 The Committee considered a response from the Department regarding the inspection of youth provision by ETI.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write again to the Department in respect of the curriculum to which youth provision is inspected.

10.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) enclosing a copy of a new IEF resource 'Communities in Dialogue: A Citizens' Panel Toolkit for Schools'.

10.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the Education Authority - Progress Update.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an oral briefing from the Department on the establishment of the Education Authority.

10.11 The Committee noted a response from the Department to Committee queries in respect of the funding of Irish Medium youth work.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification as to whether Irish Medium youth work organisations are eligible to apply for funding through the same channels as other youth work and whether the £130k pa allocation represents additional funding.

10.12 The Committee noted correspondence from Fóram Na nÓg requesting the opportunity to brief the Committee on Irish Medium Youth Work.

11. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme

12. Any Other Business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking an oral briefing on the ETI report entitled 'An evaluation of the implementation of The World Around Us in primary schools'.

13. Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 28 January 2015 at 10.00am in the Point Board Room, W5.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.37pm.

Michelle McIlveen
Chairperson, Committee for Education
28 January 2015