



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 29 APRIL 2015
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:

Michelle McIlveen MLA (Chairperson)
Trevor Lunn MLA
Nelson McCausland MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Sandra Overend MLA
Seán 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:

Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Robin Newton MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10.07am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are as indicated above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 European Studies Programme

The Chairperson advised Members of the reported discontinuation of funding by the Department for the European Studies Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking confirmation of the above and an assessment of the impact on schools.

10.08am Nelson McCausland joined the meeting.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 22 April 2015.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 SEND Bill

The Committee noted that Members could view written submissions to the Committee Stage of the Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) Bill via SkyDrivePro.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish all of the written submissions on its webpage and to share submissions with the Department.

The Committee also noted that a stakeholder event on the SEND Bill has been provisionally scheduled for Wednesday 24 June 2015.

The meeting moved into private session at 10.10am.

5. Area Planning – position paper

The Committee noted and discussed changes to its position paper on Area Planning.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed the Introduction to the position paper.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed the Progress To-Date section of the position paper.

The Committee considered the Findings and Recommendations section of the position paper.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed paragraphs 57 to 64 which deal with the need for Area Planning.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed paragraphs 65 to 67 which deal with the capital programme. The Committee also agreed a revised recommendation and also agreed, subject to confirmation by correspondence, additional wording on equality issues.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed paragraphs 68 to 76 which deal with the calculation of surplus places.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed paragraphs 77 to 85 which deal with the Needs Model.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed paragraphs 86 to 90 which deal with rural issues. The Committee also agreed subject to confirmation by correspondence, additional wording on the role of rural schools.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed paragraphs 91 to 94 which deal with consultation issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the cover page, remit of the Committee and summary of recommendations as amended.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include papers from the Special Adviser; relevant extracts from minutes of proceedings and notes from the stakeholder events as appendices to the position paper.

Agreed: The Committee agreed, subject to the approval by correspondence of the amendments described above, to put down the following motion:

“That this Assembly notes the position paper produced by the Committee for Education on Area Planning and calls on the Minister of Education to implement the recommendations contained therein.”

10.42am Sandra Overend joined the meeting.

The meeting moved into public session at 10.43am.

6. Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education - Review of and next steps for Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) Policy – Department of Education / Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) oral briefing

Officials joined the meeting at 10.44am.

Faustina Graham, Director of Collaborative Education and Practice, Department of Education; Paul McAlister, Assistant Chief Inspector, Education and Training Inspectorate and Andrew Bell, Head of Shared Education & Community Relations Team, Department of Education briefed the Committee on the next steps for the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) policy as part of the inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education.

An official left the meeting at 11.37am.

7. Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education – Jointly Managed Church Schools - Departmental oral briefing

An official joined the meeting at 11.37am.

Faustina Graham, Director of Collaborative Education and Practice, Department of Education; Andrew Bell, Head of Shared Education & Community Relations Team, Department of Education and Suzanne Kingon, Shared Education and Community

Relations Team, Department of Education briefed the Committee on Jointly Managed Church Schools as part of the inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education.

12.13pm Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting.

The officials left the meeting at 12.14pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking sight of the Department's CRED policy update and details of the Young Life and Times survey results in respect of relevant pupil attitudes.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking:

- clarity on the legal protection of the Christian ethos within Controlled, Integrated and Jointly Managed Church schools - including a definition of the Christian ethos;
- information on the Department's considerations in respect of the withdrawal in certain circumstances of Home to School transport support for pupils whose parents do not wish them to attend a Jointly Managed Church school; and
- clarification on the differences between a Jointly Managed Church school and an Integrated school;

12.20pm Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

8. Correspondence

8.1 The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

8.2 The Committee noted a letter of thanks from the Paediatric Vision Research team at Ulster University.

8.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries regarding issues relating to Special Schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to Glenveagh Special School for information.

8.4 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority Southern and South Eastern Regions to Committee queries in respect of variations to Home to School Transport arrangements where the route to a pick-up point is deemed to be unsafe.

8.5 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries regarding the Contingency Fund and in-year school enrolment changes.

8.6 The Committee noted a holding letter from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to the Committee regarding the Delivering Social Change – Literacy and Numeracy Signature Programme.

The Committee also noted a response from the Department indicating that the Programme is to be discontinued and that further recruitment is not to be undertaken.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking an explanation of the Minister's plenary comments on 14 April 2015 in respect of the continuation of the Programme.

8.7 The Committee noted an invitation from Young Enterprise Northern Ireland to the Chairperson to attend the Young Enterprise NI Year Awards 2015 on Thursday 7 May 2015 at the City Hall, Belfast.

8.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Assembly EU Affairs Manager enclosing a copy of the monthly newsletter on European Issues.

8.9 The Committee noted an invitation from the Fermanagh Trust for Members to attend the Shared Education Celebration Event on 10th June at lunchtime, in Fermanagh.

8.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding its recent report on Sickness Absence in the Northern Ireland Public Sector.

8.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding reported delays to the payment of a pay rise for employees of the Education Authority.

8.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the anticipated call for evidence for the Committee Stage of the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill.

8.13 The Committee noted the April update of the Departmental capital programme report.

8.14 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries regarding the Education Authority Business Case.

8.15 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to Committee queries regarding the Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

8.16 The Committee noted an invitation from the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) to the Chairperson to attend the annual conference of NAHT(NI) in the Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle on the 14 and 15 May 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the Chairperson would attend the conference, diary permitting.

8.17 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority – Southern and South Eastern Region to Committee queries confirming ineligible pupils can not use Authority contracted transport services even on a fare-paying basis.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the concerned parent who raised the issue in respect of the designation of St Ronan's College.

8.18 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to concerns raised by UNISON in respect of the re-tendered school counselling service.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to UNISON for comment.

8.19 The Committee discussed press reports regarding Home to School Transport safety.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of the Environment in respect of school bus safety.

9. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted that the previously agreed informal meeting with representatives of Home Education Northern Ireland (Hedni) was now scheduled for Tuesday 12 May 2015.

The Committee noted that the previously agreed informal meeting with representatives of St Columbanus' College, Bangor was now scheduled for Tuesday 26 May 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that following its meeting in Derrygonnelly on 10 June 2015, Members would attend the Fermanagh Trust shared education event.

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

10. Any Other Business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department expressing concern and seeking details in respect of schools that had received School Enhancement Programme funding but which had had funding for associated equipment and furniture withdrawn.

11. Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 13 May 2015 at 10.00am in the Senate Chamber.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.29pm.

**Peter Weir
Chairperson, Committee for Education
13 May 2015**