



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2015
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:

Peter Weir MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kennedy MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Nelson McCausland MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Paul Stitt (Assistant Clerk)
Paula Best (Clerical Supervisor)
Kevin Marks (Clerical Officer)
Caroline Perry (Assembly Research – item 6 only)

Apologies:

Sandra Overend MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10:08am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are as indicated above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Committee condolences

The Committee expressed its condolences to the Deputy Chairperson on her recent family bereavement.

2.2 Controlled Schools' Support Council

The Committee noted and welcomed Departmental correspondence confirming that a letter of offer had been issued in support of the formal establishment of the Controlled Schools' Support Council from 1 April 2016.

2.3 Christmas Cards

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send traditional hard copy Christmas cards to its stakeholders.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 4 November 2015.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Report on Free School Meal Entitlement and school funding

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would not, at this time, seek a plenary debate on the report produced by the Committee's Special Adviser, Dr Ian Shuttleworth, on Free School Meal Entitlement and school funding. The Committee further agreed to keep this matter under review.

5. Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill – Committee Stage – Rescinding of Decision / Consideration of Report

Agreed: The Committee agreed to rescind its previous decision in respect of the inclusion of a new clause (Clause 8A) which would guarantee children the right to present evidence at SENDIST hearings.

The Committee considered its report on the Committee Stage of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed the Contents section of the report.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed the Remit, Powers and Membership section of the report.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed the Executive Summary section of the report.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed the Introduction section of the report.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed the Consideration of the Bill section of the report.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed the Clause by Clause Consideration of Bill section of the report.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed the summary of the contents of the Appendices of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the minutes of the meeting of 11 November 2015 to be included in the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to order the Report on the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill to be printed as the Sixth report of the mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that an electronic copy of the Bill report should be provided to all organisations that had provided evidence to the Committee Stage.

The Committee noted that it would receive a briefing on 18 November 2015 from Steven Agnew MLA, on his views on the potential overlap between the Committee's proposed amendments to the SEND Bill and the provisions of the Children's Services Co-operation Bill (NIA 44/11-16).

6. European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020) Strategy - Assembly Research briefing

Assembly Research joined the meeting at 10:17am

The Committee considered a briefing on an Assembly Research paper entitled 'European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020) Strategy'.

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

Assembly Research left the meeting at 10:35am

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the research paper to the Committee for Employment and Learning, for its information.

Robin Newton left the meeting at 10:36am

In order to facilitate a planned suspension, the Committee altered the order of agenda items.

7. Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

7.2 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in respect of:

- the cross-departmental post-19 Special Schools Transition Focus Group Action Plan which is to be published shortly;

- a Departmental report on the administration of Voluntary Grammar / Grant Maintained Integrated funding to be produced in November 2015;
- reported marginal variations in STEM GCSE entries; and
- the Departmental commitment to improve the attainment of Looked After Children.

7.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in respect of improvements in GCSE English and maths attainment by FSME children.

7.4 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education providing further information on the Education and Training Inspectorate report on the Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing (CCET) pilot programme.

7.5 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding literacy and numeracy recovery services and the baseline for literacy and numeracy attainment developed from Levels of Progression data.

7.6 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the implementation of the Sure Start report recommendations and providing further information on Early Years provision.

7.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education enclosing the recent Deloitte reviews of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education.

7.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education advising that the Special Schools Provision Report has been published.

7.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Fermanagh Trust regarding the Shared Education Bill.

7.10 The Committee noted an invitation from the Department of Education to attend an information event on 18 November 2015 at 2pm in Stranmillis on Departmental progress in respect of the OECD recommendations on evaluation and assessment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk would attend this event on its behalf.

7.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding a Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) on a proposed cap on public sector exit payments.

7.12 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning to the Department of Education regarding its inquiry into Post-Special Educational Needs Provision in Education, Employment and Training for those with Learning Disabilities.

7.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education enclosing information on the membership of the Careers Advisory Forum which is to meet on 12 November 2015.

The meeting was suspended at 10:38am

The meeting recommenced at 11:11am with the following Members: Peter Weir, Trevor Lunn, Nelson McCausland, Seán Rogers, and Pat Sheehan.

8. Elective Home Education – Briefing from Home Education Northern Ireland

Witnesses joined the meeting at 11:12am.

Sarah Dickinson, Home Education NI; Edward Underwood, Home Education NI; Tim Courtney, Home Education NI; and Shevaun Rafferty, Home Education NI briefed the Committee on Elective Home Education.

Danny Kennedy rejoined the meeting at 11:14am

Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 11:15am

Robin Newton rejoined the meeting at 11:22am

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

The witnesses left the meeting at 12:10pm.

The Committee went into private session at 12:11pm

The Committee returned to public session at 12:25pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking an update on the draft Elective Home Education policy and information the numbers of children undertaking Elective Home Education. The Committee also agreed to request information as to how the Education Authority is to improve access for home educated children to formal qualifications.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking information on its advice to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in relation to child protection considerations for home educated children.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety seeking information on recent child protection guidance relating to children that are educated at home.

9. Public Private Partnerships (PPP) / Private Finance Initiative (PFI) projects - Legacy Costs – Departmental briefing

Officials joined the meeting at 12:27pm.

Philip Irwin, Director of Investment and Infrastructure, Department of Education; Linda McAllister, Estate Policy Team, Department of Education; Clare Brady, Estate

Policy Team, Department of Education; and Roger Sayers, Head of NI PPP Education Service, Education Authority briefed the Committee on Public Private Partnerships (PPP) / Private Finance Initiative (PFI) projects - Legacy Costs.

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

Nelson McCausland left the meeting at 12:39pm.

The witnesses left the meeting at 12:53pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting clarification on the variation in the reported total costs associated with unitary payments. The Committee also agreed to seek a breakdown of unitary costs and their sensitivity to external factors. The Committee further agreed to request examples of recent savings secured by the Department in respect of unitary payments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission Assembly Research to provide information on the 'Non-profit distributing' model of PFI.

10. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold its meeting on 9 December 2015 in Room 21.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would not seek an extension to the Committee Stage of the Shared Education Bill.

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

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 18 November 2015, at 10.00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:56pm.

Peter Weir
Chairperson, Committee for Education
18 November 2015