



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 8 JUNE 2016
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:

Barry McElduff MLA (Chairperson)
Chris Lyttle MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Rosemary Barton MLA
David Hilditch MLA
Carla Lockhart MLA
Philip Logan MLA
Colin McGrath MLA
Lord Morrow MLA
Caitriona Ruane MLA
Catherine Seeley MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)
Kevin Marks (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

Sandra Overend MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10:05am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are as indicated above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Tragic incident at Killowen Primary School

The Chairperson commented on a recent tragic incident at Killowen Primary School. The Chairperson and Committee Members indicated that their thoughts and prayers were with the family and the school staff at this difficult time.

2.2 Early Years

The Chairperson discussed the plenary debate on Tuesday 7 June 2016 on Early Years provision.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking further information on, and the timescales for, the Childcare Strategy.

2.3 Autism

The Chairperson referred to a recent report on autism issues entitled: Broken Promises.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to meet with Autism NI and the National Autistic Society in order to discuss the educational aspects of their report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite Autism NI and the National Autistic Society to provide a formal briefing following summer recess.

Ms Caitríona Ruane joined the meeting at 10:12am.

Mr Chris Lyttle joined the meeting at 10.13am.

2.4 Strategic Planning Session

The Committee discussed options for its strategic planning session.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 1 June 2016.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. June Monitoring Round

The Committee noted a Departmental briefing paper on its capital programme.

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 10:18am.

Trevor Connolly, Director of Finance; Susan Anderson, Head of Budgeting Team; Philip Irwin, Director of Investment and Infrastructure; and Stephen Creagh, Deputy Director, Investment and Infrastructure briefed the Committee

Departmental officials left the meeting at 11:24am.

The Committee considered a motion that it should write to the Minister suggesting that additional finance be sought as part of the June Monitoring

Round process in order to address the reported funding gap associated with the Early Years Pathway.

The Committee divided.

Ayes	Noes	Abstained	Not voting
Barry McElduff		David Hilditch	
Chris Lyttle		Carla Lockhart	
Rosemary Barton		Philip Logan	
Colin McGrath		Lord Morrow	
Caitríona Ruane			
Catherine Seeley			

The motion was passed.

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

- details of school surpluses and deficits for all sectors including a breakdown of public and non-public sources of funding;
- information on the management of school surpluses and deficits;
- a breakdown of the £14m Other Capital expenditure planned for 2016-17;
- information on the potential savings associated with co-operation within Area Learning Communities, including the Entitlement Framework;
- clarity on the cost savings to schools associated with previous teacher redundancy programmes;
- information on the phasing of Fresh Start capital expenditure; and
- an update on the funding and progress of the Strule campus project.

6. Special Schools Early Years provision - Strategic Leadership Forum for Special Schools and Parents' Equal Education Coalition

Agreed: The Committee agreed to make recent relevant correspondence from the Education Authority available to witnesses.

Witnesses joined the meeting at 11:34am.

Colm Davis, Principal, Tor Bank School; Martina McComish, Principal, Knockavoe Special School; Nadine Heron, Parent - Parents' Equal Education Coalition; Angela Haughey, Parent - Parents' Equal Education Coalition; and Francine Burrows, Parent - Parents' Equal Education Coalition briefed the Committee on early years provision in Special Schools.

Witnesses left the meeting at 12:32pm.

Mr Chris Lyttle left the meeting at 12:33pm.

Mr Colin McGrath left the meeting at 12:33pm

7. Special Schools Early Years provision - Early Years Organisation

Witnesses joined the meeting at 12:34pm.

Siobhan Fitzpatrick, Chief Executive, Early Years Organisation and Pauline Walmsley, Director of Knowledge Exchange, Early Years Organisation briefed the Committee on early years provision in Special Schools.

Ms Caitríona Ruane left the meeting at 1:00pm.

Witnesses left the meeting at 1:04pm.

Ms Carla Lockhart left the meeting at 1:04pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking further information on its review of pre-school provision in Special Schools including: the relevant Terms of Reference; the Action Plan; details of the consultation process; and an explanation in respect of the disclosure of the concerns of stakeholders.

8. Assembly Research briefing

The Committee noted a briefing paper prepared by Assembly Research relating to: Early Intervention; Special Educational Needs; and the promotion of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics in schools.

An oral briefing on the paper was deferred.

9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee considered an index of incoming correspondence.

9.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Children's Law Centre providing a response to a DE consultation on regulations relating to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

9.3 The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned parent regarding free transport for post primary schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarity in respect of the policy relating to free home to school transport and academic selection.

9.4 The Committee noted an invitation from Barnardo's NI to an event celebrating its Graduate Teacher Programme for schools, on Friday 10 June 2016 in Stranmillis University College.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for Members to attend, diaries permitting.

10. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive evidence from Departmental officials on June Monitoring, at its next meeting.

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 15 June 2016, at 10.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:07 pm.

Barry McElduff
Chairperson, Committee for Education
15 June 2016