



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2016
ASHFIELD BOYS HIGH SCHOOL, BELFAST

Present:

Barry McElduff MLA (Chairperson)
Chris Lyttle MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Rosemary Barton MLA
Carla Lockhart MLA
Phillip Logan MLA
Colin McGrath MLA
Lord Morrow MLA
Sandra Overend MLA
Catherine Seeley MLA

In Attendance:

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

Apologies:

Jennifer McCann MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 10:16am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Stakeholder events

The Chairperson highlighted the format of the Committee's informal stakeholder events. Members noted that a summary note of proceedings of the Special

Educational Needs event, held on Wednesday 9 November 2016, would be issued shortly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking confirmation as to a reported obligation on schools to set out their Special Educational Needs spending and seeking information on the aggregate of this expenditure.

The Chairperson noted that Colm Davis, the principal of Tor Bank Special School, had suffered a recent family bereavement.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Mr Davis expressing its sympathies.

2.2 Scrutiny of Department of Education's in-year budget

The Chairperson referred to recent correspondence from the Department of Finance providing information on departmental spending.

Mr Chris Lyttle joined the meeting at 10:23am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking detailed quarterly updates on its resource and capital spending. The Committee further agreed that upon confirmation of the provision of this information, it would forego requests for monitoring round bid information.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 9 November 2016.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Anti- Bullying Week - Evidence session with the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum

Representatives from the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF) joined the meeting at 10:25am.

Celine McStravick, Director of the National Children's Bureau NI and Chairperson of NIABF; Rosanna Jack, NIABF coordinator; Gillian Cuthbert, Education Authority; and Catherine Creed, Community Relations in Schools provided oral evidence to the Committee.

Ms Carla Lockhart joined the meeting at 10:35am

The witnesses left the meeting at 11:22am

Mrs Sandra Overend left the meeting at 11:28am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department indicating its support for: the work of the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum, continuing related Departmental financial support and the introduction of a multi-year funding package for the Forum. The Committee also agreed to write to the Department seeking:

- an explanation for the current funding arrangements for the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum and information on its planned funding for 2017-18;
- an update on the Department's plans to undertake new research into bullying in schools: recognising demographic changes, including Special Schools and EOTAS (Education Other Than At Schools) providers, underpinning resilience training for school pupils, and including plans to communicate relevant findings to school pupils; and
- an update on the development of anti-bullying guidance for schools and the commencement of the provisions of the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016.

6. Rationalisation of Outdoor Education Centres – Evidence session with the Education Authority

Officials from the Education Authority joined the meeting at 11:28am.

Clare Mangan, Director of Children and Young People's Services and Arlene Kee, Assistant Senior Education Officer provided oral evidence to the Committee.

Mrs Sandra Overend rejoined the meeting at 11:33am.

Mr Barry McElduff left the meeting at 11:52am.

Mr Chris Lyttle assumed the chairpersonship of the meeting at 11:52am

Mr Barry McElduff rejoined the meeting and resumed the chairpersonship at 11.59am.

Officials left the meeting at 12:36pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification in respect of restrictions on the employment of part-time tutors by the Education Authority in outdoor education centres.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking written information and a further oral briefing on the responses to the consultation prior to the Committee sharing its views on the relevant proposals. The Committee also agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking further explanation in respect of the development of the rankings for centres and in particular, the associated weightings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should return to the Committee with plans for a suitable stakeholder event designed to support the Committee's deliberations on the consultation.

The order of agenda items was altered.

7. Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

7.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission offering to provide briefings on human rights treaty obligations related to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

7.3 The Committee noted an invitation from the Children's Law Centre and the Centre for Children's Rights, at Queen's University Belfast to a seminar on the implications of BREXIT for children and young people, on Tuesday 6th December 2016.

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

7.4 The Committee noted an invitation to the PTA-NI School Community Volunteers Programme event in the Long Gallery, on Wednesday 30th November 2016 at 12.30pm.

7.5 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Minister to schools seeking feedback on possible increases to financial delegation responsibility for schools.

7.6 The Committee noted a response from the Department in relation to teacher redundancies.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking a breakdown of the teaching departures to-date supported by the voluntary redundancy programme.

7.7 The Committee noted correspondence from Angel Eyes NI, Royal National Institute for the Blind NI and Guide Dogs NI in relation to education and health cooperation issues.

7.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office relating to implications for departments of the UK exit from the European Union.

7.9 The Committee noted a response from the Department in respect of Elective Home Education.

7.10 The Committee noted a response from the Department in respect of Education and Training Inspectorate inspections in Irish Medium Education schools.

7.11 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority regarding the Special Educational Needs Framework.

7.12 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority regarding the Curriculum Advisory Support Service and the support provided to schools who are in Formal Intervention or receive adverse inspection reports.

7.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance providing information on departmental spending.

7.14 The Committee noted an invitation from Business in the Community to the Partners in Leadership Celebration event, on Monday 28 November 2016 at Malone Integrated College.

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

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted that informal meetings had been scheduled with the Combined Area Principals' Group and Volunteer Now on Monday 21 and Tuesday 22 November 2016 respectively.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to provide lunch for attendees visiting as part of the #Iwill campaign.

The Committee discussed its draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reschedule a Departmental briefing on the Children and Young People's Strategy and on Home to School Transport policy, originally scheduled for 30 November 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to take oral evidence from the Department on Levels of Progression at its meeting on Wednesday 30 November 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reschedule a training session on effective questioning to Wednesday 25 January 2017.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Forward Work Programme, as amended.

9. Members of the Youth Parliament –Make Your Mark Campaign

Members of the Youth Parliament (MYPs) joined the meeting at 12:45pm.

Keava Toland; Jennifer Iredale; and Ben Sharkey provided oral evidence to the Committee.

The witnesses left the meeting at 1:00pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Northern Ireland Youth Forum seeking clarification on the funding position for the Youth Parliament and offering to engage further with MYPs on relevant issues.

10. Any other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 23 November 2016, at 10.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00pm.

Barry McElduff
Chairperson, Committee for Education
23 November 2016