



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 11 JANUARY 2017  
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

**Present:**

Chris Lyttle MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Rosemary Barton MLA  
David Hilditch MLA  
Phillip Logan MLA  
Colin McGrath MLA  
Lord Morrow MLA  
Sandra Overend MLA

**In Attendance:**

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)  
Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)  
Bronagh Irwin (Clerical Supervisor)  
Kevin Marks (Clerical Officer)  
Caroline Perry (Assembly Research and Information Service) - items 7 and 8 only

**Apologies:**

Barry McElduff MLA (Chairperson)

*The meeting commenced in closed session at 10:07am with the Deputy Chairperson acting as Chairperson.*

**1. Committee Practices**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer consideration of this agenda item.

*The meeting moved into public session at 10:09am*

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were as indicated above.

### **3. Chairperson's Business**

#### **3.1 BT Young Scientist Exhibition**

The Chairperson informed Members that the Committee's planned visit to the BT Young Scientist Exhibition in the RDS in Dublin on 12 January 2017 had been cancelled.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to BT congratulating the participants in the BT Young Scientist Exhibition.

#### **3.2 Recent Informal Meetings**

The Chairperson reminded the Committee that Members had met informally on 14 December 2016 with the teaching unions and with representative bodies involved in the consultation on the rationalisation of the Outdoor Education Centres.

#### **3.3 Dissolution of the Northern Ireland Assembly**

The Chairperson considered the consequences of the possible dissolution of the Northern Ireland Assembly in the next few days or weeks. Members highlighted concerns in respect of school budgets and ongoing reviews and consultations.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite the Minister for Education to provide an oral evidence session, at the meeting on 18 January 2017, on relevant contingency plans including: the 2017-18 Departmental budget; the allocation of budgets for schools and youth provision; and decision-making in relation to ongoing / planned consultations e.g. Area Planning, pre-school Special School provision and Outdoor Education Centres.

### **4. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 14 December 2016.

### **5. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **6. 2017-18 Resource Budget and 2017-21 Capital Budget**

The Committee noted a briefing paper from Assembly Research and Information Services on Resource and Capital Budgets.

*Mr Colin McGrath joined the meeting at 10:16am.*

## 7. **Assembly Research and Information Service – oral briefing 2006-16 Children and Young People’s Strategic Indicators**

*Assembly Research and Information Service joined the meeting at 10:18am.*

The Committee noted a paper and considered an oral briefing on the Children and Young People’s Strategic Indicators 2006-16.

## 8. **Assembly Research and Information Service – oral briefing on key PISA / TIMSS findings**

The Committee noted a paper and considered an oral briefing on the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (2015) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (2015).

*Assembly Research and Information Service left the meeting at 10:50am.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the papers to the Department seeking its commentary and its actions to address underachievement.

## 9. **Correspondence**

**9.1** The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

**9.2** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office on its report on the Executive’s Draft Programme for Government 2016-21.

The Committee also noted a response from the Department on the educational aspects of the 2016-21 Programme for Government.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish its submission to the Committee for the Executive Office on its website.

**9.3** The Committee noted a copy of a paper from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) to the Executive Office on the Programme for Government.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Executive Office seeking its response to NICCY’s paper including its call for an extension to the PfG consultation for children and young people.

**9.4** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department on the consultation on the Executive Strategy for Children and Young People 2017-27.

**9.5** The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Framework and the numbers of late SEN statements. Members also noted a response to written questions where reference was apparently made to problems with the Education Authority’s (EA’s) Education Management System and the generation of SEN statement reports.

Additionally, the Committee also noted correspondence from the Health and Social Care Board regarding the Allied Health Professional review and the review of Multi-Disciplinary Support Teams.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking clarity in respect of the Education Management System and confirmation as to whether erroneous SEN statement statistics had been used to inform EA decision-making e.g. in the case of pre-school Special School enrolment.

**9.6** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the recently launched Strategy for Improving Pupil Attendance.

**9.7** The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority regarding the timing of the review of the Youth Estate.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking the terms of reference for the review of the Youth Estate.

**9.8** The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority on the rationalisation of Outdoor Education Centres (OECs). The Committee also noted a response from the Education Authority on the cessation of the use of a part-time register of tutors for OECs.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority:

- again seeking information on full-time and part-time staffing levels for the last 5 years in OECs; and
- seeking an explanation for the apparent conflict between the Minister's comments and the EA's correspondence in respect of the reallocation of savings related to the rationalisation of OECs.

**9.9** The Committee noted correspondence from UNISON regarding the rationalisation of Outdoor Education Centres.

**9.10** The Committee noted correspondence from the Coleraine Primary Principals Group regarding the rationalisation of Outdoor Education Centres.

**9.11** The Committee noted correspondence from Policy Forum NI providing further information on a conference on Education in Northern Ireland on Tuesday, 4th April 2017.

**9.12** The Committee noted correspondence from staff members at a Special School providing a copy of the minutes of the Children and Young People's Services committee of the Education Authority.

**9.13** The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority on the number of filled pre-school places in Special Schools in 2016-17.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking:

- a breakdown of the demand for Special Needs pre-school places in 2016/2017 by school; and

- an update on the progress of the pre-school Special School review and consultation.

**9.14** The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding Special Schools and Development Proposals.

**9.15** The Committee noted a response from the Department providing the terms of reference for the Strule Shared Education Campus Vacated Sites Working Group.

**9.16** The Committee noted a response from the Department providing a list of the pre-school settings involved in the Getting Ready to Learn programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department highlighting a number of inaccuracies in the information provided.

**9.17** The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding issues raised in an Assembly Research briefing paper on 'International Human Rights Standards: Recommendations Relating to Northern Ireland'

**9.18** The Committee noted a response from the Department declining to provide sight of its sectoral report on the impact of Brexit.

**9.19** The Committee noted correspondence from the Children's Law Centre providing a copy of a seminar contribution entitled: Brexit Costs: Assessing the Implications for Children.

**9.20** The Committee noted a copy of the latest Assembly EU Matters Newsletter

**9.21** The Committee noted a response from the Department on the absence of comparative data on school performance in Northern Ireland in the Confederation of British Industry report: Unlocking Regional Growth.

**9.22** The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned individual relating to the teaching of road safety in schools.

**9.23** The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority regarding a review of the Music Service. The Committee also noted related extracts of the most recent EA Board minutes which referred to £23m of possible savings and charge increases relating to school meals, school transport, the Music Service and the Common Funding Scheme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking information on the proposed new transport charges.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to seek clarity from the Minister, at the oral briefing on 18 January 2017, on the proposed new EA savings and charge increases.

**9.24** The Committee noted correspondence about the application of child protection legislation to amateur music and drama productions.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health seeking information on the availability of Child Protection Guidance.

**9.25** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health in relation to the timing of legislation designed to provide a VAT exemption on approved Home Childcare Schemes.

**9.26** The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for the Economy regarding the Committee inquiry into Educational Underachievement.

The Committee also noted correspondence from a primary school principal in respect of the inquiry.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish all responses to the inquiry on its webpage.

**9.27** The Committee noted guidance for schools from the Integrated Education Fund entitled: Communities in Dialogue a Primary School Good Practice Guide for Newcomer Integration.

**9.28** The Committee noted correspondence from the Principal of Tor Bank School

**9.29** The Committee noted 2 items of correspondence from concerned parents regarding De la Salle School and a recent Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspection report. Members noted with concern, ETI's reference to child safeguarding procedures at the school and its intention to consider these important matters again in 6 weeks' time.

The Committee also noted correspondence from the Department regarding changes to school inspections and a related consultation.

**9.30** The Committee noted an invitation from Tannaghmore Primary School in Lurgan to hold a Committee meeting on 1 February 2017.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that, owing to other work programme commitments, it would decline the invitation.

**9.31** The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office regarding the publication of the Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation (ILiAD) report.

**9.32** The Committee noted an invitation from Volunteer Now to the Chairperson to an event on 2 February 2017 in Craigavon Civic Centre.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to attend the event, diary permitting.

**9.33** The Committee noted correspondence to the Minister, to which it had been copied, in respect of allegations of bullying in an Education Other Than at School setting. The Committee noted that the Department had confirmed that it is managing this correspondence through its complaints procedure.

**9.34** The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the administration of medication in schools.

**9.35** The Committee noted correspondence from the Joint Consultative Forum providing information on its meeting of 12 October 2016.

## **10. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

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

## **11. Any Other Business**

The Chairperson recorded his thanks for Members' contribution to the work of the Committee.

## **12. Date, Time and Place of next meeting**

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 18 January 2017, at 10.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 11:25am.*

**Chris Lyttle**  
**Deputy Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**18 January 2017**