



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 9 January 2013
Room 21

Present:

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Sean Rogers MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Paula Best (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)
Ursula Savage (Bursary Student)

Apologies:

Michaela Boyle MLA
Brenda Hale MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

The meeting commenced in open session at 10.00am.

Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting at 10.02am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Chairperson's Business

- 2.1.** The Chairperson informed Members that an invitation had been received for the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition in the RDS.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson would attend the event on behalf of the Committee.

- 2.2.** The Chairperson discussed recent press reports relating to a Signature Project to promote literacy and numeracy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting an urgent update regarding progress on the implementation of the relevant Signature Project.

- 2.3. Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite Parents Outloud to attend the Early Years informal briefing event scheduled for 16 January 2013.

3. Draft Minutes of 12 December 2012

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2012 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

There were a number of matters arising from last week's meeting.

4.1 The Committee noted an additional paper from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education enclosing their proposed amendments to the Education Bill.

4.2 The Committee noted correspondence from a member of staff at a Voluntary Grammar School and a concerned parent regarding the Education Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking a copy of the EQIA or Equality Screening document for the Education Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking a written response to all of the queries raised by stakeholder in written evidence and raised by stakeholders and Members during the oral evidence sessions on the Education Bill.

5. Briefing from NICCE and CCMS on the Committee Stage of the Education Bill

The briefing commenced at 10.07am.

Bishop Donal McKeown, Chairperson Northern Ireland Commission for Catholic Education (NICCE); Father Tim Bartlett, NICCE and Dr Muredach Dynan, NICCE and Bishop John McAreavey, Chairperson Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS); Mr Jim Clarke, Chief Executive CCMS; and Mr Gerry Lundy, Deputy Chief Executive CCMS presented their submission to the call for evidence for the Committee Stage of the Education Bill.

Father Tim Bartlett left the meeting at 11.36am.

Sean Rogers declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors of a maintained school at 11.43am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) to determine whether an article published in the Irish News on 5 January 2013 on the Education Bill represented the views of the SELB.

The briefing ended at 12.14pm.

6. Briefing from the WELB on the Committee Stage of the Education Bill

The briefing commenced at 12.16pm.

Reverend Robert Herron, Chairperson, Western Education and Library Board (WELB); Mr Barry Mulholland, Chief Executive, WELB; and Ms Helen Duffy, Head of Human Resources, WELB/South Eastern Education and Library Board presented WELB's submission to the call for evidence for the Committee Stage of the Education Bill

The briefing ended at 1.01pm.

7. Departmental response on the Education Bill

The briefing commenced at 1.02pm.

Mr Chris Stewart, Director of Equality and All-Ireland Division, DE provided clarification on a number of issues raised during the evidence session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for additional information on the following:

- whether the Bill as drafted will alter the requirement for teachers in Catholic primary schools to obtain the Catholic Teaching Certificate;
- clarification as to whether, following the amalgamation of a controlled school and a maintained school, teachers in the new school would be required to obtain the Catholic Teaching Certificate;
- confirmation that ESA will carry all employer liability;
- clarification as to the interim arrangements when a scheme of employment is in the process of referral to the Independent Tribunal;
- clarification as to whether the Department can use Article 101 or other powers to overrule the Independent Tribunal;
- clarification as to the final arbiter in respect of Clause 9 and the determination as to whether a Board of Governors (BoGs) has given effect to its employment scheme;
- clarification as to whether can ESA compel a BoGs to comply with any particular action;
- information as to whether and how Youth Services will be represented on the ESA Board; and
- clarification as to whether CCEA has a recruitment freeze in place and whether it is included in the so-called ESA-affected group and if its staff are included in ESA employment trawls.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department requesting that all Departmental drafting amendments and other amendments be made available to the Committee for its consideration as soon as possible.

The briefing ended at 1.26pm.

8. Correspondence

8.1. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding financial forecasting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a briefing from the Assembly Research and Information Service on analysing departmental financial forecasts.

- 8.2. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the Programme for Government 2011-15.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a single Departmental briefing on PfG delivery progress; the Savings Delivery Plan and the Investment Strategy progress.

Jonathan Craig left the meeting at 1.29pm.

- 8.3. The Committee noted the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland Investing Activity Report for Department of Education – December 2012.

- 8.4. The Committee noted a response from the Southern Education and Library Board regarding the Educational Psychology Service's use of NfER assessment information. The Committee also noted correspondence from a concerned parent regarding the usefulness of NILAs and NINAs.

- 8.5. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for OFMDFM regarding the European Commission Work Programme- Pilot Project.

- 8.6. The Committee noted an invitation from the Northern Ireland Assembly Legislative Strengthening Trust to participate in an Effective Questioning and Scrutiny Workshop.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule the workshop for 13 March 2013.

- 8.7. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for Education regarding the future delivery of ESA procurement services in the education sector.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarity in respect of the Minister's plans for the procurement of supplies and services specifically:

- clarification as to why the Department is not to establish a single CoPE for all procurement;
- clarification in respect of the role of the procurement advisory team and the procurement unit;
- confirmation as to whether ESA is to attempt to gain CoPE accreditation for supplies and services and on what timescale;
- information as to whether supplies and services procurement activity is to be out-sourced to Central Procurement Directorate;
- clarification as to the Arms Length Bodies for which procurement resources are to be provided; and

- information as the nature of the procurement activities which Arms Length Bodies will undertake in future and the resources which they will require from ESA.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to determine the timescale for ESA's CoPE accreditation for construction procurement and how construction procurement will be managed in the interim.

- 8.8.** The Committee noted correspondence from Committee for the Environment requesting that correspondence and supporting documentation regarding Road Safety Education be forwarded to all Boards of Governors via the Department of Education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Education for distribution.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would write to the Department of Environment highlighting the absence of any reference to the work of the Road Safety Council in the Road Safety Education Officer Service information and asking for the reasons for this omission.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Education and Library Boards asking them to set out the criteria to determine when a traffic patrol person was required.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek information on initiatives to encourage neighbouring schools to co-ordinate school start and finish times so as to reduce school transport costs.

- 8.9.** The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the community use of schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting a briefing from officials when the relevant guidance for schools becomes available.

- 8.10.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure enclosing information on the Replay Theatre show BLISS and requesting the support of the Committee for Education to sponsor an event in Parliament Buildings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure indicating that it would co-sponsor an event to highlight the value of arts projects for audiences with learning disabilities.

- 8.11.** The Committee noted correspondence from the Controlled Schools' Sectoral Support Body – Working Group enclosing a copy of the December Newsletter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department asking whether funding had been provided for the Working Group and for an updated position on the business case to establish the Controlled Schools' Sectoral Support Body

8.12. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the Entitlement Framework.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department asking for the estimated cost to schools for implementation of the Entitlement Framework.

8.13. The Committee noted a response from the Minister for Education regarding future communication with the Committee in respect of Departmental consultations.

8.14. The Committee noted responses from the Department of Education, the Belfast Education and Library Board and a joint response from the Southern Education and Library Board and the Western Education and Library Board regarding the draft Priorities for Youth policy.

8.15. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the Woodlands Speech and Language Unit.

8.16. The Committee noted correspondence from NICCY regarding the Committee's Inquiry into School Councils and requesting the opportunity to update the Committee on its work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to NICCY seeking further details of its work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking a response to the Committee's Inquiry Report on School Councils and the status of any related policy.

The Committee also noted a Department of Education News Release which was previously emailed to Members.

9. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule evidence sessions on the Education Bill from the Catholic Heads Association; the Association of Controlled Grammars and the Voluntary Grammars Bursars' Association.

The Committee noted that the Public Accounts Committee will consider a NIAO report entitled: Improving Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer scrutiny of this issue in-line with usual procedure.

10.AOB

The Committee discussed the Heads of Agreement document. Members noted oral Departmental evidence to the Committee Stage of the Education Bill which referred to:

- legal advice which indicated that the clauses of the Bill which refer to the Heads of Agreement are “not capable of being operated” and therefore require amendment; and
- the requirement for schemes of management and employment to be compatible with the Heads of Agreement and legal advice which indicated that this is not possible as the relevant paragraphs in the Heads of Agreement are “mutually exclusive”.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Education and the First Minister and deputy First Minister highlighting recent Departmental evidence and seeking amendments to the Education Bill or Heads of Agreement which would resolve the difficulties.

11.Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 16 January 2013 at 10.00am in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.49pm.

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
16 January 2013