



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2013
ROOM 29

Present:

Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Chris Hazzard MLA

The meeting commenced in public session at 9.38am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were recorded as above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 The Chairperson advised Members he had received an informal briefing from officials on Tuesday 10 December on the OECD report on Northern Ireland's assessment and evaluation framework and advised that the Committee is to be invited to a formal launch of the report in January 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department to provide a briefing on the key findings of the report and the proposed way forward.

Stephen Moutray joined the meeting at 9.40am.

2.2 The Chairperson advised that the Western Education and Library Board (WELB) Annual Report and Accounts for 2012-13 had now been published; and noted that the Savings Delivery Plan target for 2012-13 was not achieved, and that financial pressures associated with post-primary school deficits in 2013-14 were also highlighted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to WELB to seek clarity on the above.

Danny Kinahan joined the meeting at 9.41am.

2.3 The Chairperson advised Members of an event on Thursday 23 January 2014 based on widening participation in science and encouraging enterprise education, which is part of the Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS) and that he was invited to make some opening remarks on behalf of the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to participate in the KESS event on behalf of the Committee.

3. Draft Minutes of 4 December 2013

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2013 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted the following information relating to its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process:

- a summary of the confidential evidence received during the closed evidence session of 27 November 2013;
- an Assembly Research paper on school inspection complaints procedures; and
- a response from NIPSA regarding budget cuts, the use of Associate Assessors and Development Proposals.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the correspondence should be published on the Committee's webpage with the other Inquiry papers.

The Committee noted a response from the Department to Committee queries relating to complaints; judicial reviews; confidentiality and benchmarking but also noted that a query with regard to how the Inspectorate weighted pupil attainment data had not been answered.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write again to seek clarity on this point.

Pat Sheehan joined the meeting at 9.45am.

5. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Oral Evidence from Professors Borooah and Knox

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 9.46am:

Professor Colin Knox, Professor of Comparative Public Policy, University of Ulster; and Professor Vani Borooah, Professor of Applied Economics, University of Ulster.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

Maeve McLaughlin joined the meeting at 9.49am.

Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting at 10.05am.

Stephen Moutray left the meeting at 11.05am.

Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 11.06am.

Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting at 11.09am.

Danny Kinahan left the meeting at 11.11am.

The witnesses left the meeting at 11.11am.

6. STEM is Cool Event

The Chairperson reminded Members that, at its meeting on 11 September 2013, the Committee had agreed to host a Northern Ireland Science Park 'STEM is Cool' event in the Long Gallery on Wednesday 29 January 2014.

Members noted a written briefing which included an agenda for the day and a summary of the Committee's recent engagement in STEM issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the proposed format and agenda for the Northern Ireland Science Park event on 29 January 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to circulate the agenda, relating to the STEM is Cool event, to the Committee for Employment and Learning; the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment; and the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure, and to seek confirmation of their participation.

Danny Kinahan returned to the meeting at 11.13am.

7. Committee Visit to Scotland - Written Briefing - Follow-up information

Members noted relevant documentation regarding a fact-finding visit to Edinburgh in October 2013 to inform the Committee's understanding on a number of educational issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the information as indicated by the Clerk in the cover note; and that further consideration would be given to hosting an event with the former Chair of the Scottish Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education once the Department had published the Primary School Area Planning outcomes.

8. Correspondence

8.1 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding commentary on STEM in a Belfast Education and Library Board paper on its strategic partnership with the National Science Learning Centre.

8.2 The Committee noted an invitation to the 50th BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition: 8-11 January 2014, RDS, Dublin; and that a number of Members had indicated that they wish to participate in a hosted tour on Thursday 9 January 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk would confirm arrangements for those Members in due course.

8.3 The Committee noted a response from the Belfast Education and Library Board as to how Orangefield High School enrolment had altered given the absence of an approved Development Proposal.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education to seek clarity in respect of legal cover relating to enrolment changes without an approved Development Proposal.

8.4 The Committee noted a response from the Western Education and Library Board (WELB) in respect of the compliance of Republic of Ireland school transport providers with the Northern Ireland vehicle testing regime.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the WELB to determine the number of Republic of Ireland operators providing short term transport contracts and to seek confirmation as to whether or not they are compliant with the NI vehicular regime.

8.5 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education indicating that Departmental circulars may suggest that pupils learn Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) twice during their school education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek confirmation in respect of the relevant circulars.

8.6 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in respect of Community Access to Schools.

8.7 The Committee noted responses from the Belfast, Southern, South Eastern and Western Education and Library Boards and the Department of Education, confirming that music tutors with previous AccessNI approval require further approval (with associated cost) when applying for additional posts.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department suggesting that as music tutors provide services for a number of different schools and therefore may have to ordinarily apply for a number of jobs, the relevant access and disclosure procedures might require review.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to AccessNI to seek clarification on the enhanced disclosure certificate.

8.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the North Eastern Education and Library Board regarding the Ballee Community High School proposals in respect of the Area Plan for Ballymena.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to await a response from the Minister of Education on this matter before taking any further action.

8.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Southern Education and Library Board regarding their maintenance contracts.

8.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Controlled Schools Sectoral Support Body Working Group advising that following Ministerial correspondence withdrawing support from 31 December 2013, the work on the Controlled Schools Support Council is to cease.

8.11 The Committee noted a paper from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on competitive funding opportunities available from the European Union.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this and include it as part of the briefing with officials on EU related matters in February 2014.

8.12 The Committee noted a written brief from the Department of Education on the January Monitoring Round.

Agreed: The Committee commented on the surprising absence of a bid for additional resource or capital and agreed to seek written details from the Department on the school surplus end year flexibility stock when available.

8.13 The Committee noted a holding response from the Department of Education on the Common Funding Scheme consultation.

8.14 The Committee noted a Department of Education response on the Review of Home to School transport.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted that an informal evening event with ETI Associate Assessors was scheduled for the evening of Wednesday 19 February 2014.

Agreed: Members agreed to advise the Clerk of their availability for this event.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to give consideration to rescinding its previous decisions on the Terms of Reference for the Special Adviser's work on alternatives to Free School Meal Entitlement at its next scheduled meeting on 8 January 2014.

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

10. Any Other Business

The Chairperson wished Members a Happy Christmas and thanked Committee staff for their work throughout the year.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 8 January 2014 at 10.00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 11.21am.

Mervyn Storey
Chairperson, Committee for Education
8 January 2014