



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 8 OCTOBER 2014
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:

Michelle McIlveen MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Nelson McCausland MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Sandra Overend MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Paula Best (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Jonathan Watson (Clerical Supervisor)
Alicia Muldoon (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

None

The meeting commenced in public session at 10.02am.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Education Committee Membership Changes

The Committee noted that Stephen Moutray MLA had left the Education Committee.

The Chairperson extended her thanks to Mr Moutray for his service to the Committee

The Chairperson welcomed Nelson McCausland MLA to the Education Committee.

2.2 Sentinus STEM in Action Event

The Chairperson thanked Members for their attendance at the Committee's recent successful STEM in Action event which was organised by Sentinus.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write letters of thanks to the participating schools and Sentinus.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold a future Committee meeting in the W5 facility in the Odyssey, Belfast.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting of 30 September 2014.

10.04am Maeve McLaughlin joined the meeting.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 October Monitoring Round

The Committee considered draft correspondence in respect of issues raised during the October Monitoring briefing at the previous meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the October Monitoring Round correspondence to the Department for a response.

10.04am Danny Kinahan joined the meeting.

4.2 Shared and Integrated Education Inquiry

The Chairperson advised Members that additional submissions to the inquiry had been added to the SkyDrivePro link.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish all responses to the inquiry received to-date on its webpage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite Professor Smyth (UNESCO Centre) and Brandon Hamber (ENCORE), University of Ulster and Sir Bob Salisbury to make submissions to the inquiry.

4.3 Education Bill

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department on the structure and staffing for the proposed Education Authority.

10.06am Nelson McCausland joined the meeting.

5. Primary School Area Planning - Joint briefing from the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)

Witnesses joined the meeting at 10.08am.

Malachy Crudden, Senior Education Advisor, CCMS; Ray Gilbert, Senior Education Officer, North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB); Rosemary Watterson, Chief Administrative Officer, Western Education and Library Board (WELB); Gregory Butler, Chief Executive, South-Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB); and Mike Donaghy, Head of Development, Planning and Support Services, Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) briefed the Committee on Primary School Area Planning.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

10.28am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

10.37am Chris Hazzard joined the meeting.

11.13am Nelson McCausland left the meeting.

12.04pm Jonathan Craig left the meeting.

Witnesses left the meeting at 12.17pm.

12.19pm Danny Kinahan left the meeting.

12.19pm Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the ELBs and CCMS asking that they set out how they facilitate the engagement of parents and the wider community in the Area Planning development process.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) requesting an oral briefing on Primary School Area Plans in the BELB area and the Special School Area Planning process in Northern Ireland when information on the latter becomes available.

6. Primary School Area Planning – Departmental Briefing

Departmental witnesses joined the meeting at 12.20pm.

Jacqui Durkin, Director of Area Planning; Lorraine Finlay, Head of Area Planning Policy Team; and Dorina Edgar, Area Planning Policy Team briefed the Committee on Primary School Area Planning.

12.24pm Danny Kinahan re-joined the meeting.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Officials left the meeting at 12.56pm.

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

- on the timescale and the nature of the regional strategy for Irish Medium Education;
- on the impact closure and amalgamation has had on the level of school financial deficit in the last 5 years;
- clarity on the funds generated by the sale of school property following closure and amalgamation in the last 5 years;
- clarity on the role of CCMS and trustees in respect of the transformation of Maintained schools to Integrated status; and
- as previously requested, on the Needs Model and the planning of Integrated provision.

12.59pm Robin Newton left the meeting.

7. Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted an invitation for Members to attend the Dissolving Boundaries and Shared Education Seminar on Tuesday 21 October 2014 in the University of Ulster.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing with Professor Austin on the use of ICT in the Dissolving Boundaries and Shared Education programme on 10 December 2014 as part of the Committee's inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education.

7.2 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education replying to Committee queries regarding the Programme for Government / Business Plan / Savings Delivery Plan including: attainment targets in other jurisdictions; clarification on the study of Early Years patterns of attendance; plans to enhance teacher professional development; possible revisions to the terms of reference of the School Workforce Review; the review of the delivery of the Revised Curriculum and clarification on rising teacher substitution costs.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking: clarity as to whether initial parental engagement with Early Years has increased or decreased since 2006-07; sight of the PEDU Actions Plans; an update on the review of the Revised Curriculum; and a briefing on teacher professional development.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a briefing paper from Assembly Research comparing attainment targets across the United Kingdom.

7.3 The Committee noted correspondence from members of the public in respect of a suggested Committee inquiry into Autism Provision and Schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a briefing paper from Assembly Research on autism legislation and the current position in respect of relevant Departmental obligations.

Agreed: In line with its previous deliberations on the overlap between health and education provision, the Committee agreed that the Clerk should prepare an update paper which would inform further consideration of this matter.

7.4 The Committee noted an invitation from Ceara Special School to visit the school.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to visit Ceara Special School as part of its inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education.

7.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNl) offering to brief the Chairperson in respect of the challenges facing the youth sector.

7.6 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education indicating that the second call for applications to the Shared Education Campuses Programme will begin on 1 October 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department and schedule a briefing on the Shared Education Campuses Programme protocol and to seek further information on the provision of facilitators for Shared Education projects.

7.7 The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned parent to the Minister for Education regarding children with Down's Syndrome in education.

7.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education enclosing a copy of the completed EQIA for the revised Common Funding Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarity on the 2015/16 budget position for schools when transitional and additional funding is not expected to be available.

7.9 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education replying to the Committee's queries regarding the CCEA 2013/14 Report and Accounts.

7.10 The Committee noted a response from BELB regarding the consultation on Elective Home Education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from ELBs on the consultation on Elective Home Education.

7.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (COFMDFM) enclosing a submission from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education for the COFMDFM inquiry into the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) programme.

7.12 The Committee noted correspondence from COFMDFM enclosing Department of Education correspondence regarding the T:BUC Buddy Up Scheme in nursery and primary schools.

7.13 The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Finance and Personnel regarding Free School Meals in England and a related unhypothecated Barnett consequential. The Minister indicated that owing to current financial uncertainties he is unable to clarify how the related consequentials are to be spent.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Education to ask if he intends to seek to secure the relevant consequential for the Education budget.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response from the Minister of Finance and Personnel to the concerned parent who had initiated the original query.

7.14 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education enclosing a copy of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) report on transition arrangements for pupils leaving Special Schools and mainstream learning support centres to post-school provision.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the ETI report to the Committee for Employment and Learning in order to inform its ongoing Inquiry into post-Special School education.

7.15 The Committee noted an invitation from NICIE to visit Bangor Integrated Primary School as part of the inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a visit to Bangor Integrated Primary School.

7.16 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the interaction between officials from DE and the Department of the Environment in respect of Community Planning and schools.

1.06pm Seán Rogers left the meeting.

8. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted that as previously agreed, it is to visit Drumragh Integrated College and Shimna College. These visits have been provisionally scheduled for the 25 February 2015 and 11 March 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 15 October 2014 at 10.00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.08pm.

Michelle McIlveen
Chairperson, Committee for Education
15 October 2014