



Northern Ireland
Assembly
Committee for Education
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2016
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present:

Peter Weir MLA (Chairperson)
Sandra Overend MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Dolores Kelly MLA
Danny Kennedy MLA
Nelson McCausland MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Robin Newton MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Paul Stitt (Assistant Clerk)
Paula Best (Clerical Supervisor)
Kevin Marks (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

The meeting commenced in public session at 10:11am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are as indicated above.

2. Chairperson's Business

None

3. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meetings held on 2 February 2016 and 3 February 2016.

Chris Hazzard joined the meeting at 10:12am

4. Matters Arising

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue a press release relating to the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill report.

Robin Newton joined the meeting at 10:14am

5. Shared Education Bill – Further Consideration Stage – Departmental briefing

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 10:14am.

Andrew Bell, Head of Shared Education and Community Relations Team, Department of Education; and Joanne Maxwell, Shared Education and Community Relations Team, Department of Education briefed the Committee on the Shared Education Bill – Further Consideration Stage.

Jonathan Craig joined the meeting at 10:17am.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department setting out revised amendments to the Further Consideration Stage of the Shared Education Bill. The Committee also noted a copy of correspondence from the Minister to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on the Bill.

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

The officials left the meeting at 10:26am.

6. Capital Programme Protocol – oral evidence – Department of Education

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 10:27am.

Philip Irwin, Director of Investment and Infrastructure, Department of Education; and Stephen Creagh, Deputy Director of Investment and Infrastructure, Department of Education briefed the Committee on the Capital Programme protocols and progress.

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

Nelson McCausland joined the meeting at 10:42am

Danny Kennedy left the meeting at 10:48am

Peter Weir left the meeting and Sandra Overend assumed the chairpersonship at 11:00am

Peter Weir rejoined the meeting and resumed the chairperson at 11:07am

Chris Hazzard left the meeting at 11:08am

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

- clarity on school capital delegation thresholds;

- an explanation in respect of design decisions affecting a primary school;
- a synopsis of the youth projects in the capital programme and the funding allocated to these projects;
- the equality screening documentation associated with the revised capital programme protocol;
- confirmation of the funding decision for capital works at Clan Eireann GAA/GAC; and
- clarification as to whether the 3 feeder schools for Strandtown Primary School have made applications under the Schools Enhancement Programme.

The officials left the meeting at 11:19am.

The Committee revised the order of agenda items.

7. Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

7.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Speaker regarding a public petition in respect of a Development Proposal to discontinue Little Flower Girls School and St Patrick's College, Bearnageeha in North Belfast.

7.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department in relation to asbestos in schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking confirmation that the Department's planned awareness programme will include Grant Maintained Integrated and voluntary grammar schools etc.

7.4 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education providing an update on the use Levels of Progression as part of the criteria for the Delivering Social Change Shared Education Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification on the resolution/suspension of the industrial relations dispute relating to the use of the Levels of Progression.

7.5 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in relation to over-subscription in pre-school education provision.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking information on levels of over-subscription for pre-school places across schools in Northern Ireland, broken down by constituency.

7.6 The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority in relation to oversubscription in school and pre-school places in the Lagan Valley constituency.

7.7 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education in relation to the Erasmus+ Connections Report on mental health provision in schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Erasmus+ Connections group, for its information.

7.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding the Budget Bill (Northern Ireland) 2016 and the Spring Supplementary Estimates 2015-16.

7.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the NI Human Rights Commission enclosing a copy of its draft Strategic Plan 2016-2019 - 'Building a Culture of Human Rights'.

8. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its draft forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee noted that an informal briefing event with Booktrust has been arranged for Tuesday 1 March at 1.15pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme, as amended.

9. Any Other Business

None

10. Strategic Leadership Forum for Special Schools

The witnesses joined the meeting at 11:27am.

Colm Davis, Principal, Tor Bank School; and Martin McGlade, Principal, Harberton School briefed the Committee on the "Review of Special School Provision in Northern Ireland" report which was published by the Minister on 3 November 2015.

A question and answer session followed the briefing.

Dolores Kelly left the meeting at 11:44am

The witnesses left the meeting at 12:14pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission Assembly Research to produce a paper comparing funding arrangements for Special Schools in other jurisdictions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking information on:

- the planned consultation in respect of the regional plan for special schools;
- enrolment and transportation arrangements for Special Schools;
- the funding of outreach support for mainstream schools which is provided by Special Schools; and
- governance in Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) settings.

11. Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 17 February 2016, at 10.00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:16pm.

Peter Weir
Chairperson, Committee for Education
17 February 2016