



Northern Ireland  
Assembly  
Committee for Education  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 7 DECEMBER 2016  
STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

**Present:**

Barry McElduff MLA (Chairperson)  
Chris Lyttle MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Rosemary Barton MLA  
David Hilditch MLA  
Carla Lockhart MLA  
Phillip Logan MLA  
Colin McGrath MLA  
Lord Morrow MLA  
Sandra Overend MLA  
Catherine Seeley MLA

**In Attendance:**

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)  
Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)  
Bronagh Irwin (Clerical Supervisor)  
Kevin Marks (Clerical Officer)

**Apologies:**

None

*The meeting commenced in closed session at 11:40am with the Deputy Chairperson acting as chairperson for the meeting.*

**1. Committee Response: 2016-21 Programme for Government draft Delivery Plans consultation.**

The Committee considered its response to the Committee for the Executive Office in respect of the 2016-21 Programme for Government draft Delivery Plans consultation.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer consideration of its response in respect of the 2016-21 Programme for Government draft Delivery Plans consultation until its meeting on 14 December 2016.

*The meeting moved to public session at 11:50am*

## 2. Apologies

There were no apologies.

*The order of agenda items was altered.*

## 3. Draft Minutes

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 30 November 2016.

## 4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

## 5. Committee Motion – Education and Training Inspectorate’s 2014-16 Report

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to put down the following motion for debate in plenary:

“That this Assembly takes note of the Education and Training Inspectorate’s Chief Inspector’s Report 2014-16.”

## 6. Department of Education - oral evidence session - January Monitoring Round

The Committee noted that the Department had declined to provide oral or written evidence to the Committee in respect of the January Monitoring Round.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer consideration of January Monitoring pending a response from the Department in respect of the provision of other budget and expenditure information.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding statutory committee scrutiny of the resource budget 2017-2018 and the capital budget 2017-21.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Finance and the Department of Education indicating that in the absence of a Departmental response, it was unable (at this time) to scrutinise the relevant resource and capital budgets and highlighting the following budget priorities for 2017-18:

- the protection of school budgets given particularly the increased pressures associated with higher employers’ National Insurance contributions;
- the importance of support for Early Years provision including particularly the Early Years Pathway;

- the need for greater support for childcare including particularly the Employers for Childcare Approved Home Childcare Scheme;
- the need to meet increasing pressures associated with Special Educational Needs;
- the need for programmes to tackle numeracy and literacy underachievement;
- the importance of maintaining support for Youth Provision including particularly Outdoor Education Centres; and
- the need to appropriately support teachers' pay.

## **7. Education / Health Special Educational Needs Co-operation– oral evidence session**

Officials joined the meeting at 12:02pm.

*Mr Barry McElduff joined the meeting and assumed the chairpersonship of the meeting at 12:03pm.*

Caroline Gillan, Director of Access, Inclusion and Wellbeing, Department of Education; Ruth Bell, Assistant Senior Education Officer, Education Authority; Kieran McShane, Health and Social Care Board; Dr Gerry Mackin, Health and Social Care Trust; Michelle Tennyson, Public Health Agency; and Geraldine Teague, Public Health Agency provided oral evidence to the Committee.

The Committee noted a Departmental response to Committee queries relating to SEN expenditure in schools and Education and Training Inspectorate inspections of SEN provision.

*Lord Morrow left the meeting at 1:19pm.*

*Ms Carla Lockhart left the meeting at 1:22pm.*

*Mr David Hilditch left the meeting at 1:22pm.*

The officials left the meeting at 1:25pm.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education seeking a response to previous correspondence on the timely processing of SEN statements and clarification on associated valid exceptions.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to write to the Department of Education and appropriate Arms Length Bodies seeking:

- commentary on the solutions proposed at the Committee's stakeholder event to enhance Education/Health co-operation;
- an update on the previous reviews of the Allied Health Professionals and the Multi-Disciplinary Support Teams;
- sight of the annual Sure Start targets and the related, most recent 6 monthly report on outcomes provided by the Health and Social Care Board.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking further information on its Regional Language and Communications Service which is to be launched in 2017. The Committee further agreed to seek a needs breakdown for children at Stage 5 of the SEN statementing process

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward its report on its Special Educational Needs stakeholder event to the Committee for Health, for its information.

## **8. Chairperson's Business**

### **8.1 Visit to Stranmillis University College**

The Chairperson and Committee recorded their thanks to the principal and staff of Stranmillis University College for hosting the Committee's meeting.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write a letter of thanks to the principal of Stranmillis University College.

The Committee noted an invitation from Stranmillis University College to attend a Christmas concert on 15 December 2016.

### **8.2 Informal meetings/briefings**

The Chairperson referred Members to an informal meeting with (Parents Teachers Associations) PTA-NI on Monday 5 December 2016.

The Chairperson referred Members to an informal briefing from Departmental officials on the latest Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results on Tuesday 6 December 2016.

The Chairperson and Committee recorded their congratulations to post-primary pupils, schools and teachers on the PISA results. The Chairperson noted however that challenges remained in respect of the improvement of the ability and attainment of some children from socio-economically deprived backgrounds.

### **8.3 National Children's Bureau Report on sharing best practice**

The Chairperson referred Members to recent written answers which include reference to a report by the National Children's Bureau (NCB) on the sharing of best practice in schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking sight of the NCB's report on sharing best practice, when it is published in 2017.

### **8.4 Sectoral Audit of Brexit**

The Chairperson referred Members to recent written answers which include reference to a sectoral report undertaken by the Department on the impact of Brexit.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking sight of the sectoral report undertaken by the Department on the impact of Brexit. The Committee agreed that it would, if required, treat the report as confidential.

### **8.5 Vacated Sites Working Group**

The Chairperson referred Members to recent written answers which included reference to a Vacated Sites Working Group

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking sight of the terms of reference and the timeline for reporting for the Vacated Sites Working Group.

### **8.6 e-Safety Strategy**

The Chairperson welcomed recent comments by the Minister indicating that a new e-Safety Strategy for schools is to be launched in early 2017 for consultation.

Committee Members noted that that there had been considerable delay to the strategy's launch.

## **9. Correspondence**

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

**9.2** The Committee noted an invitation from the Policy Forum inviting the Chairperson / Deputy Chairperson to chair a seminar entitled "Education in Northern Ireland – improving attainment and reducing inequalities" on Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content that the Chairperson / Deputy Chairperson participate in the conference, diaries permitting.

**9.3** The Committee noted the Investment Strategy Northern Ireland Investment Activity report for the Department of Education for November 2016.

**9.4** The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the Employers for Childcare, Approved Home Childcare Scheme.

Members recorded their disappointment that the Department was not to provide interim funding for the scheme.

**9.5** The Committee noted an invitation from Fleming Fulton School to its Christmas Show on Friday 9 December 2016.

**9.6** The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the Every School a Good School reception on 7 December 2016.

**9.7** The Committee noted a response from the Education Authority regarding the rationalisation of Outdoor Education Centres.

**9.8** The Committee noted an invitation to the Chairperson from the Fostering Network to its Aspire Achieve Succeed Event on Monday, 16 January 2016.

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

**9.9** The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned individual in respect of poor provision for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Tyrone.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking clarity on the consistency of autism provision across Northern Ireland.

## **10. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

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

## **11. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

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

The Committee will meet again on Wednesday 14 December 2016, at 10.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 1:43pm.*

**Barry McElduff**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Education**  
**14 December 2016**