

EDUCATION AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The second meeting of the Education Committee was held in 3 Charlemont Place, Armagh at 2.00 pm on Thursday 10 September 2015.

PRESENT: Rev R Herron (Chairperson)

Rev A Adams
Ms A Andrews
Fr T Bartlett
Mr D Cargo
Mrs M Culbert
Dr M Dynan
Mr M Gray-Sloan
Sr C Hegarty

Sir G Loughran
Mrs D McDonald
Dr A McMorrان
Dr I McMorris
Ms S O'Connor
Mr R Pollock
Miss R Rainey
Ms N Toman

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr G Boyd (Interim CEO)
Mr B Mulholland (RMD NE and W Regions)
Mr G Butler (RMD SE and S Regions)
Mr R Gilbert (SEO, NE Region)

Mr P Mackey (SEO, W Region)
Mr M Donaghy (ASEO, S Region)
Mr M McConkey (ASEO, B Region)
Mrs M McCrory (Sen Ex Officer, W Region)

Mr J Smith, Department of Education (DE) and Ms F Kane, Strategic Investment Board Ltd (SIB) attended for Item 8.2.

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and thanked them for facilitating the change in venue.

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

The Chair introduced Education Authority (EA) Officers to the meeting and explained their role in the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were reminded of the requirement to declare any interests during the course of the meeting.

Mr Pollock declared an interest in Item 9.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 11 JUNE 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2015 were agreed on the proposal of Miss Rainey, seconded by Dr Dynan.

4. MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Appointments of Boards of Governors (Page 2 Item 3.1)

Mr Mulholland referred Members to the tabled paper which outlined the current position on Board of Governor vacancies.

After some discussion, it was agreed that assurance is required to confirm that schools are not being adversely affected by vacant Board of Governor positions.

Action: Mr Mulholland to review the current positions and provide feedback at the next meeting.

4.2 Restructuring the School Improvement Service (Page 3 Item 5.1)

Mr Mulholland introduced Mr Mackey to Members, explaining that Mr Mackey is currently leading the restructuring process within the School Improvement Service and will be leaving the Education Authority in March 2016 and therefore has no vested interest in future positions.

Mr Mackey provided Members with an update and confirmed that they now have an overview of how Voluntary Severance is going to impact on staff numbers and the areas of expertise affected. He stated that he has several meetings arranged in order to map out a profile of remaining staff to ensure regional consistency. Mr Mackey confirmed that a progress report will be brought to the October meeting.

Action: Mr Mackey to provide a progress report at the next meeting.

4.3 Development Proposal No 403 – Proposal to extend the approved enrolment number for Bocombra PS from 300 pupils to 320 pupils (Page 4 Item 7.2.2)

Mr Donaghy referred Members to the letter received from the Controlled Schools Support Council in relation to the Development Proposal for Bocombra PS. He confirmed that the level of applications for Primary Schools in this area has been reviewed against the number of Primary 1 places available and remains of the view that this proposal will not have an adverse impact on other Controlled Schools in the immediate area.

4.4 Development Proposal Nos 400, 401 and 402 – Proposal to close St Joseph's College and increase the enrolment number and admissions numbers at Dominican College and Loreto College

Mr Mulholland informed Members that the DE is considering the establishment of a group to consider a phased closure in St Joseph's College. In response to Sir Loughran, Mr Boyd stated that all DE policies have been Equality Impact Assessed.

5. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

5.1 Venue and timing of Committee Meetings

Further to a short discussion, Members agreed to hold the meetings in Antrim Board Centre commencing at 1.00 pm for the foreseeable future. Mr Boyd stated that some consideration may be given to holding meetings in Fortwilliam in the future further to possible refurbishment.

5.2 Topics for Discussion

The Chair requested thoughts on what topics Members would like to discuss at this meeting. Dr Dynan stated that the agenda should be driven by priorities. Members agreed that it would be helpful to have a template at the front of the papers indicating if the agenda item is for noting, for discussion/action and/or for approval and that all papers have the appropriate headings/agenda item numbers on them. It was agreed that a similar template would be useful for the Finance and General Purposes Committee also.

Action: Template to be placed at the front of the papers.

5.3 Consultation on New Further Education Strategy for NI

Mr Mulholland referred Members to a Consultation on the New Further Education Strategy for NI which is currently open. He stated that a draft response is almost complete and will be circulated to Members prior to the next meeting. An extension to the closing date has been sought which will allow the draft response to be discussed at the October meeting before returning to Department for Employment and Learning (DEL).

Action: Draft response to be circulated to Members prior to the next meeting.

6. Responsibilities of EA Board Members: EA Solicitors Letter dated 19 June 2015

Members agreed to note the contents of the letter.

7. School Improvement

7.1 Review on Policy on Publishing Admissions Information – Summary of Consultation (May 2015)

Mr Mulholland referred Members to the Consultation Summary regarding Publishing Admissions Information. He gave Members an overview of the current position and the proposed on-line version which adheres to Section 75 of the NI Act. In response to Members' queries, Mr Mulholland confirmed that each school will be furnished with a hard copy of each booklet with additional copies available upon request from the EA. It was also highlighted that parents are generally only interested in specific schools, therefore it would be acceptable to furnish them with specific pages as opposed to a complete book. The anticipated savings will be in the region of £145k per annum. Further to Members' agreement that this would be reviewed at the end of the year, the Policy was proposed by Fr Bartlett and seconded by Dr McMorris.

A short discussion followed on Section 75 Equality Duties and it was agreed that the EA Equality Scheme and Interim Disability Action Plan documentation which was discussed at the recent Finance and General Purposes Committee should be circulated to Members for information. Mr Cargo stated that a Committee meeting regarding Equality issues may also be useful a couple of times per year.

Action: Policy to be reviewed at the end of the year. EA Equality Scheme and Interim Disability Action Plan to be circulated to Members.

8. Shared Education Issues

8.1 Moy Shared Education Campus: Update

Mr Donaghy informed Members that recent meetings have taken place with the DE and CCMS to review site, governance and finance issues. EA and CCMS are completing a second draft of the full Business Case for submission to DE.

8.2 Presentation on the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus, Omagh

The Chair welcomed Mr John Smith and Ms Fiona Kane to the meeting.

Ms Kane gave a presentation on the work that has taken place with McCaddens regarding branding of the campus. She gave an overview of the stakeholder engagement and how the responses have shaped the brand. Ms Kane continued to give Members a flavour of possible names for the campus and where they have originated from.

Members commended Ms Kane on the very informative presentation and expressed their enthusiasm towards this project.

In response to a query raised by Dr Dynan regarding ownership, governance and management of the Lisanelly Campus, Mr Smith advised that he will be circulating a draft Memorandum of Agreement to Trustees and EA officials for scrutiny in the near future.

Discussion ensued on the costs associated with the Campus. Mr Smith advised that the most recently calculated cost is £125m, which was at the Stage 3 review. He continued that the bulk of the expense will be in 2017 – 2019.

Members continued to query the efficient use of funds and what assessment has been carried out. Mr Mulholland informed Members that a full Economic Appraisal has been carried out and DFP approval has been received.

Rev Adams sought assurance on what is being put in place to ensure the stated aspirations will become a reality. In order to address this, a short discussion followed on the possibility of members from Omagh Learning Community giving a presentation at either a forthcoming meeting of the Education Committee or the Board.

The Chair thanked Mr Smith and Ms Kane for attending the meeting.

Action: Omagh Learning Community to give a presentation at a future meeting.

9. Area Planning Issues

9.1 NI Assembly Education Committee Position Paper on Area Planning

9.2 The EA draft response to NI Education Committee Position Paper on Area Planning

It was agreed that Items 9.1 and 9.2 would be considered together.

Mr Butler presented the NI Assembly Education Committee Position Paper on Area Planning and the EA draft response to it.

Mr Cargo asked if the DE has responded and if they have then we need to be considerate of their response. Members also suggested that some positive aspects should be incorporated into the response and that reference should be made to the independent NI Education Improvement Service.

It was agreed members would be circulated with a copy of the Department of Education response and an amended version of the paper for a future meeting.

9.3 NIAO Report on Sustainability of Schools

Members agreed to note the contents of the Report.

9.4 Development Proposals

Mr Butler acknowledged the amount of paperwork relating to Development Proposals and suggested the continuation of the current template.

For Publication

9.4.1 Development Proposal No 424 – Proposal to discontinue Evisk Primary School

Mr Mulholland outlined the proposal to discontinue Evisk Primary School. On the proposal of Ms O'Connor, seconded by Mrs McDonald, Members agreed to recommend to the Board publication of the Development Proposal for the closure of Evisk Primary School.

9.4.2 Development Proposal No 425 – Proposal to establish a Nursery Unit at Holy Cross Girls' PS

Mr McConkey outlined the proposal to establish a Nursery Unit at Holy Cross Girls' PS. In response to Mr Cargo, Mr Butler confirmed that they are satisfied that there will be no displacement from existing providers. On the proposal of Ms O'Connor, seconded by Sr Hegarty, Members agreed to recommend to the Board publication of the Development Proposal for the establishment of a Nursery Unit at Holy Cross Girls' PS.

9.4.3 Development Proposal Nos 426 and 427 – Proposal to discontinue Holy Family Nursery School and establish a Nursery Unit at Holy Family Primary School

Mr McConkey outlined the proposal to discontinue Holy Family Nursery School and establish a Nursery Unit at Holy Family Primary School. On the proposal of Ms O'Connor, seconded by Sr Hegarty, Members agreed to recommend to the Board publication of the Development Proposal for the discontinuance of Holy Family Nursery School and establishment of a Nursery Unit at Holy Family Primary School.

Response to Published Development Proposals

- 9.4.4 Development Proposal No 227 – To establish an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Centre for children at Key Stage 1, and a general Learning Support Centre (LSC) for Key Stage 2 pupils in Harding Memorial Primary School from 1 September 2015 or as soon as possible thereafter**

Members noted that the Minister had carefully considered Development Proposal No 227 and has decided to approve the establishment of an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) centre for children at Key Stage 1, and a general LSC for Key Stage 2 pupils in Harding Memorial Primary School from 1 September 2015 or as soon as possible thereafter.

For Pre-Consultation

- 9.4.5 Forge Integrated Primary School – Approval to proceed to the pre-consultation stage of the development process**

On the proposal of Miss Rainey and seconded by Dr McMorris Members agreed to recommend to the Board progression to the pre-consultation stage of the development process in support of a relocation of Forge Integrated Primary School to another school building within the school's pupil catchment area. Approval was also granted for the establishment of an ASD Centre for children at Key Stage 1, and a general Learning Support Centre (LSC) for Key Stage 2 pupils.

For Noting

- 9.4.6 Gaelscoil na Mona (DP 226)**

Members noted that the Minister has approved the Development Proposal with a modified date of 31 August 2016.

- 9.4.7 Avoniel PS (DP 223) and Elmgrove PS (DP 224)**

Members noted that the application to judicially review the decision of the Minister to close Avoniel PS was dismissed on 28 August 2015.

In response to Mr Cargo, Mr McConkey confirmed that the Community Forum would be established by the beginning of October 2016.

In response to Rev Adams, Mr McConkey confirmed that the listed aspects of Avoniel PS will be retained.

- 9.4.8 Iveagh PS, Rathfriland (DP 316)**

Members noted that the Minister has approved the Development Proposal with a modified date of 1 September 2016.

9.4.9 Primate Dixon PS, Coalisland (DP 323)

Members noted that the Minister has approved the Development Proposal with implementation dependent upon capital resources.

Mr Butler circulated a paper for Members' consideration on the future of Cygnet House Prep Department, Glenlola Collegiate. On the proposal of Dr McMorris, seconded by Ms S O'Connor it was agreed to commence pre Development Consultation with affected stakeholders.

10. Draft 2015/16 Education Authority Business Plan

Mr Mulholland referred Members to the tabled paper which is a copy of the Business Plan with the targets relevant to the Education Committee highlighted in yellow. He indicated that some of the targets will be cross cutting with other Committees. He continued that a regular report will be given to Members on the relevant targets with the first update scheduled for November.

In response to Members' queries, Mr Mackey stated that these targets are similar to what was outlined in the previous Resource Allocation Plans. He stated that intense work is ongoing and Action Plans are being prepared in order to address some of the issues outlined. He continued that the reduced staff numbers will also need to be taken into consideration.

In response to a query raised by Ms Andrews regarding the input of Irish Medium Officers, Mr Mackey stated that the Department of Education have just confirmed an allocation of £14k to provide funding to support the establishment of a working group of Irish Medium School Leaders. The aim of the group will be to develop practical and deliverable solutions to help drive school improvement in the Irish Medium Sector through collaborative practice.

Fr Bartlett recommended that the target referring to achieving 5 or more GCSEs at Grades A* -C (or equivalent) inc. GCSEs in English and Maths should be a priority.

Action: Update to be provided at November meeting.

11. Any Other Business

There were no items under Any Other Business.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The third meeting of the Education Committee will be held on Thursday 8 October 2015 at 1.00 pm in Antrim Board Centre.

The meeting ended at 5.10 pm.

CHAIRPERSON

DATE