

**EDUCATION AUTHORITY  
MINUTES OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee held in Antrim Board Centre on 11 May 2017 at 1.00 pm

**PRESENT** Rev R Herron (Chairperson)

Rev A Adams	Sir Gerry Loughran
Mr D Cargo	Mr O McMullan
Mr G Doran	Dr I McMorris
Dr M Dynan	Ms S O'Connor
Sr C Hegarty	Ms N Toman

Mrs B Hale attended.

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr J Collings, Mrs L Gardiner, Mrs K Scott, Mr J Unsworth, Mr M McConkey, Mr N Freeburn and Ms L McCall.

**1. WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed Mrs B Hale to the meeting.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Ms Á Andrews, Mr J Craig, Mrs M Culbert, Dr A McMorran, Mr R Pollock and Miss R Rainey.

The Chair expressed the Committee's sympathy to Mr Craig, and his wider family circle, following a family bereavement.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were reminded of the requirement to declare interests where appropriate.

**4. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 13 APRIL 2017**

The minutes\* (E/2/17/3) of the meeting held on 13 April 2017 were agreed on the proposal of Dr Dynan and seconded by Rev Adams.

**5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**5.1 AREA PLANNING DOCUMENTATION (2.1)**

A Member referred to the implications of Brexit on the Strategic Area Plan. He considered that Brexit should be included on the Board agenda for Members' consideration. He said that this matter had been discussed at the Shared Education Committee earlier in the day when the Committee had received a progress report on the business case submitted by the EA, in partnership with Leargas, for PEACE IV monies. The Shared Education Committee had noted that assurances had been received from SEUPB and Treasury that

funding was committed to PEACE IV (Shared Education) for the period up to March 2022 (beyond Brexit). However, he considered that it was crucial that the EA should be planning for the period after 2022.

The Chair of the Board said that a report on European funding streams, including the implications of the cessation of funding on programmes and staff, could be presented to Members.

A Member said that it might be useful to write to the Permanent Secretary in the first instance to receive DE's assessment of how Brexit might impact on the overall Education portfolio. He considered that this would provide a framework within which the EA might take forward this matter.

The Chair of the Board said that the Board, at its September meeting, would receive a report on EU funding programmes. She would also liaise with the Chief Executive in order that he might engage with DE on the impact of Brexit on the overall Education sector.

**Action:** Board to consider, at its meeting on 28 September 2017, a report on European funding streams; Chief Executive to seek from DE an assessment of Brexit on the overall Education portfolio.

## **5.2 EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE (3)**

A Member welcomed the engagement that had taken place between the Chief Inspector and the Deputy Chief Inspector of the ETI with Board Members on 27 April 2017. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that the Education Committee continued to engage with the ETI on a regular basis on behalf of schools and queried the best approach to communicate this information to schools.

It was pointed out that, at the meeting with the ETI on 27 April, the Chair of the Board had asked the Chief Inspector for more regular engagement between the Board and the ETI. The Board had also agreed that a letter would issue to the ETI setting out the matters discussed at the meeting held on 27 April.

The Chair of the Board undertook to speak to the Chief Executive on the matter of a communication issuing to schools. She was attending the NAHT conference the following day and she undertook to inform school leaders at that conference of the Board's wish to engage on a regular basis with the ETI on the school inspection framework.

Mr Collings said that officers were reviewing the best possible means to keep schools informed of how the EA was working on their behalf.

A Member suggested that, as part of such a communications strategy, it might be possible to include news items on the EA website for schools.

The Chair of the Board said that she had met the Communications Manager the previous day to discuss various business matters. She said that a member of the Communications Team could attend particular meetings in order to capture news items.

## **6. CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

The Chair congratulated Mrs K Scott and Mr J Unsworth on their appointment to the post of Assistant Director within the Education Directorate. The Committee noted that Mr M Baker had also been appointed to the post of Assistant Director.

The Chair reported that Mrs Gardiner would remain part of the Directorate management team until the fourth Assistant Director had been appointed.

## **7. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **7.1 MUSIC SERVICE**

Mr Collings said that, as part of the financial savings strategy for the Music Service (£2.3m), the Board had previously agreed to consider an increase in charges within the Service.

Mr Unsworth presented the paper\* (E/5/17/6.1) which set out the interim management structure of the Music Service from January 2017 and a progress report on the movement towards a regionalised Music Service. The paper also set out recommendations in respect of the phased increase in the hourly tuition rate to be charged to schools, with an initial increase to be introduced from September 2017. It was considered that this approach would support a process of full harmonisation of tuition charges across the Region, effective from 1 September 2018.

Some Members expressed concern that while the proposals would allow for full harmonisation of tuition charges in 2018/19, they continued to provide for regional variations in the 2017/18 school year. Members considered that, in order to give appropriate consideration to the charging model, a report should be presented to the Committee which would take account of various factors. This report would include an analysis of:

- current models and levels of provision across the region;
- the current uptake across the various instrumental types across the region (including frequency of tuition);
- income generation and expenditure (unit cost), including aspirations for generating savings over a two year period; and
- the guiding principles around remission rates / subsidisation for FSME pupils.

Discussion also ensued in relation to tension in the model between income generation and the release of tutors through voluntary severance, the principle of full cost recovery and partial cost recovery, instrumental rental charges which issued directly to parents, disparity in unit costs between urban and rural areas, rural proofing, the experience of music within special schools, timetabling of music tuition in schools to prevent pupils missing essential class work, and provision for orchestras and ensembles across the Region.

The Committee noted that a paper setting out the strategy for a future service delivery model for the Music Service would be presented to the Committee for consideration in due course.

It was agreed that an analysis paper setting out proposals in respect of a charging model would be presented to the Committee at its June meeting. This paper would reflect the issues raised by Members. It was also agreed that, in light of the need to inform schools of any changes in tuition charges prior to the end of the school term, the Board at its meeting on 25 May 2017 would be asked to delegate authority to the Education

Committee, at its June meeting, to enable the Committee to agree tuition charges effective from 1 September 2017.

**Actions:** *An analysis paper setting out proposals in respect of a charging model to be presented to the Committee at its June meeting; Seek delegated authority from the Board to enable the Committee to agree tuition charges effective from 1 September 2017.*

## 7.2 STEM MODULE : UPDATE

Mrs Gardiner referred to the Directorate's savings delivery plan, in which Members had proposed decommissioning the STEM module as one possible savings measure. She advised that legal advice had been received to confirm that the EA owned all the resources associated with the STEM module. With Members' agreement, she said that a paper would be presented to the Committee, at its June meeting, on options for the future delivery of this service.

Some Members drew attention to the priority given to STEM subjects within the curriculum. A Member queried whether any consultation had taken place with schools on the module's decommissioning.

Mrs Gardiner said that no decision had yet been taken on communicating with schools regarding the future service delivery of the module. This engagement with schools awaited the Committee's consideration. It was noted that the module was predominantly used by post-primary schools.

It was agreed that an options paper would be presented to the Committee at its June meeting on proposals for the STEM module. It was also agreed that the STEM module, if available, would be located at Antrim on the day of the June Committee meeting for Members to view.

**Actions:** *Options paper to be presented to the Committee at its June meeting on proposals for the STEM module; if available, the STEM module to be located at Antrim on the day of the June Committee meeting for Members to view.*

## 8. AREA PLANNING

*(Dr Dynan declared interest an interest in a school in the West Belfast area. Ms Toman declared an interest in DP 508 - Lismore Comprehensive as she was a past pupil of the school and a relative was employed at the school.)*

### 8.1 Development Proposal No 508 - Lismore Comprehensive (to establish two learning Support Centres with the addition of an Autism Specific Learning Support Centre with effect from 1 September 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter)

Mr McConkey reminded Members of the background to this Development Proposal and EA's responsibilities with regard to the placement of children with statements of special educational needs. He referred to the legal issue which had been highlighted at the last meeting and to correspondence that had been received from the Solicitors acting on behalf of CCMS. In light of that correspondence, the EA had not proceeded to publish the Development Proposal. He said that the EA had sought legal counsel and had drafted a response which had been shared with CCMS. He reported that, should an amendment be required to the Development Proposal in light of the legal advice, the amended Proposal

would be presented to the Committee for further consideration. He pointed out that officers within Special Education continued to engage with parents on this matter. The Committee noted the pause in the process which had been taken in light of legal advice. A progress report on this matter would be provided to the Committee at its June meeting.

A Member queried the process for Development Proposals to receive Ministerial consideration at the current time. Mr McConkey said that Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 provided authority to the Permanent Secretary of DE to give final consideration to Development Proposals.

## **8.2 Strategic Area Plan 2017-20 and Annual Action Plan 2017-18 – Next Steps**

Mr Collings said that the Strategic Area Plan and the Annual Action Plan had been published on 28 April 2017. He reported that the media coverage given to the area planning documentation had been well received and that officers continued to engage with political groups.

Mr Collings reported that the area planning documentation had been sent to the 11 District Councils as part of the Community Planning process. While the Strategic Area Plan and the Annual Action Plan were not consultation exercises, a Member commented that some Councils could adopt a position on their own particular District Council area.

Mr McConkey said that local groups, involving the various sectoral interests, were meeting to commence work on the Annual Action Plan for year 2. This work would include a review of the year 1 Annual Action Plan. He advised that officers were engaging with the Strategic Investment Board and Queen's University Belfast on a model which would assist in the area planning process. It was anticipated that this model would be operational in the summer months.

## **9. COMMUNITY PLANNING**

*(Dr Dynan left the meeting temporarily at 2.55 pm.)*

Mr Freeburn reported that Mr Collings and he had met District Council representatives, Community Partnerships and officials from the Department for Communities in order to develop relationships as part of the Community Planning process. He said that the EA, as a statutory partner, was required to identify appropriate officers to participate in the governance arrangements for community planning in each of the 11 District Council areas. As these meetings would require a considerable staffing resource particularly at a senior level, the EA had agreed to share representation with CCMS on each of the 11 Strategic Partnership Boards. Mr Freeburn said that the District Councils had considered however that representation from both the EA and CCMS was necessary. He confirmed that the EA and CCMS had both therefore nominated senior officers to serve on the Strategic Partnership Boards.

*(Dr Dynan re-entered the meeting at 2.58 pm and Ms Toman left the meeting temporarily at 2.58 pm.)*

Mr Freeburn said that challenges remained with regard to populating the working groups of the 11 District Councils. Officers from the School Development Service and the Youth Service attended where local knowledge was required. He highlighted the importance of developing relationships and driving projects forward; however, capacity remained an issue. Mr Collings said that the EA, being mindful of staffing capacity issues across all the Directorates, would

seek to play an appropriate role in supporting Community Planning at operational level in line with its statutory duties.

A Member commented on the absence of an agreed timeframe as part of the Community Planning framework. He urged caution when engaging with the Councils in order to ensure that fair and consistent delivery of services was achieved across all the Council areas.

As part of a strategic oversight of the process, the Chair of the Board said that the EA could engage with NILGA, SOLACE and officials from the Department for Communities. A Member highlighted opportunities to share resources with Councils and create synergy for the benefit of children and young people.

Mr Freeburn gave examples of projects which had been taken forward by the EA (and formerly the Education and Library Boards) in partnership with District Councils.

*(Ms Toman re-entered the meeting at 3.14 pm.)*

## **10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the Committee would next meet on 13 June 2017. Furthermore, the Irish Medium Education workshop would be held on the morning of 13 June 2017.

The meeting ended at 3.16 pm.

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**CHAIRPERSON**

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**DATE**

\* Paper issued with agenda    \*\*\* Paper tabled