

**EDUCATION AUTHORITY  
MINUTES OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee held in Antrim Board Centre on 13 June 2017 at 1.00 pm

**PRESENT**                      Rev R Herron (Chairperson)

Ms Á Andrews	Sir Gerry Loughran
Mr D Cargo	Dr A McMorran
Mr J Craig	Dr I McMorris
Mrs M Culbert	Mr O McMullan
Dr M Dynan	Ms S O'Connor
Mrs B Hale	Mr R Pollock
Sr C Hegarty	Miss R Rainey

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr J Collings, Mrs L Gardiner, Mrs K Scott, Mr J Unsworth, Mr M McConkey, Ms L McCall and for part of the meeting Mr D Canmore and Mrs L Gough.

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Rev A Adams, Mr G Doran and Ms N Toman.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

Dr Dynan declared an interest in the item relating to the Strule Shared Education Campus.

**3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 11 MAY 2017**

The minutes\* (E/2/17/3) of the meeting held on 11 May 2017 were agreed on the proposal of Mr Cargo and seconded by Sr Hegarty.

**4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**4.1 MUSIC SERVICE (7.1)**

A Member indicated that the party which he represented was not in favour of increased charges for school-based instrumental tuition.

This matter was a substantive item on the agenda and would be considered later in the meeting.

**4.2 COMMUNITY PLANNING (9)**

A Member queried if progress had been made in seeking engagement with NILGA, SOLACE or the Department for Communities in order to give strategic oversight to the community planning process. The Chair said that she would seek to discuss this matter with the relevant stakeholders.

## 5. MINI MODEL DAY CARE AT BELFAST GIRLS' MODEL SCHOOL

The Committee agreed to consider this matter as the next item of business.

Mrs Gough said that the day care centre was part of a cross-departmental funded project to develop community facilities as part of the North Belfast City Learning Centre. The centre was operated under a Memorandum of Understanding between the EA and DE. Mrs Gough drew attention to the proposals, as set out in the paper\* (E/6/17/9.1), to increase the daily and half day fees at the centre which would take effect from 1 September 2017.

Members received information on the educational experiences of the children at the centre, the number of staff employed and other cost drivers, the rationale for the price increase, and the centre's current financial position. They also received an update on statutory nursery provision in the area. Mrs Gough said that the centre was in the second year of an expansion programme; it was anticipated that the budget for the centre would break even in the next three years.

On the proposal of Dr Dynan, seconded by Mr Craig, the Committee agreed to recommend the increased charges, as set out in the paper, which would be effective from 1 September 2017.

## 6. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

### IRISH MEDIUM WORKSHOP - 13 JUNE 2017

The Chair said that Members, at the Irish Medium workshop held earlier in the day, had acknowledged the complexities of Irish Medium Education and various issues facing the sector. Members had noted the Authority's statutory responsibilities with regard to IME and that strategic direction in this area was given by the Minister and DE.

The Chair said that consideration had been given at the workshop to an IM bursary scheme. The officers had recommended that the bursary scheme (£40k in 2017/18) should be used in the same way as it had been in 2016/17. This matter would be referred to the Board, at its meeting on 29 June 2017, for further consideration and approval.

A Member drew attention to specific challenges in the sector. She suggested that a Board Member working group should be established to explore and address strategic issues in the sector, including supporting the School Development Service in the development and consolidation of immersion pedagogy and good practice within IME.

A Member suggested that this matter could be given consideration at the Board Member Development Day on 19 June 2017 when Members would be reviewing the overall committee structure. This was agreed.

The Chair recorded his appreciation to Mrs Gardiner for facilitating the Irish Medium workshop.

**Action:** *Consideration to be given to the IM bursary scheme at the Board meeting on 29 June; and review the committee structure at the Board Member Development Day on 19 June.*

## 7. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

### 7.1 MUSIC SERVICE - SCHOOL BASED INSTRUMENTAL TUITION

*(Ms Rainey declared an interest as she served on the Management Board of Belfast School of Music.)*

The Chair said that a discussion paper setting out a range of issues and options on the future delivery model for the Music Service would be presented to the Committee in the Autumn for consideration. The discussion paper would inform the development of more substantial proposals which would be subject to further consideration by the Committee and consultation with stakeholders.

Mr Unsworth said that, in order to facilitate planning for school-based instrumental tuition for the incoming school year, it was necessary that the Committee should give consideration to tuition charges and tuition weeks on a regional basis. This would enable schools to be informed of any changes prior to the end of the current school term.

Mr Unsworth presented the paper\* (E/6/17/6.1) which set out options for the harmonisation of music charges and tuition weeks across the five offices effective from 1 September 2017. He pointed out that the hourly tuition rate was charged to the school; it was a matter for the school to pass on the whole or partial cost of the hourly rate to the parents of individual pupils who received tuition during that hour. In addition, schools received advice in respect of their duties in relation to wider charging and remission policies.

Members noted the information provided on tuition charges and income for 2016/17 across the Region and an analysis of the cost of providing instrumental tuition in schools under the current models of service delivery.

Consideration was given to the options to harmonise music charges and tuition weeks, as set out in the paper, to take effect from 1 September 2017.

A Member commented that the variations in the projected income from the three options in the paper were not significant. Mr Canmore said the purpose of the paper was to ensure full harmonisation of tuition charges across the Region effective from 1 September 2017.

A Member said that he wished to consider the harmonisation of tuition charges as part of the fundamental review of the Music Service. He queried if the proposals in the paper had been rural proofed. He also queried if the Service would seek to establish further efficiency savings through staff reductions and / or increased charges.

Mr Collings said that, as part of the financial savings strategy for the Music Service, the Board had previously agreed to consider an increase in charges within the Service. This matter regarding tuition charges was an annual consideration which was necessary at this time of year to inform schools of service charges for the incoming academic year. Mrs Scott said that she would be presenting a paper to the Committee in the Autumn on options for the future delivery model of the Music Service. The review of the Music Service could present opportunities for further efficiency savings.

Mr Canmore confirmed that music provision was offered to all schools irrespective of their urban or rural locality. It was pointed out that the proposed price increases in the options presented in the paper reflected well on rural areas.

A Member highlighted the serious challenges facing the EA Block Grant in 2017/18. He queried the level of savings achieved within the Music Service in 2016/17. Mr Collings stated that only £300k savings had been effected in 2016/17 out of the projected target savings of £2.3m.

The Chair referred to the impact of the voluntary severance scheme on instrumental tutors and queried the Authority's ability to deliver on future structures. Mr Unsworth said that any staffing reductions within the Music Service would be contingent upon the Committee's approval to a future delivery model and the release of funding for severance.

The Board at its meeting on 25 May 2017 had delegated authority to the Education Committee to take a decision, on its behalf, on school-based instrumental tuition charges due to the need to inform schools of any changes as soon as possible and prior to the end of the school term.

On the proposal of Mr Craig, seconded by Dr Dynan, the Committee approved option 1 in the paper, ie harmonisation of the hourly charge to £30 across the Region over a period of 33 weeks.

## **7.2 STEM MODULE**

*(Mr Pollock declared an interest as he was a member of the Board of Sentinus. Mrs Hale declared an interest as she had worked with Engineering and Training Councils in her previous employment.)*

As part of the Directorate's financial savings strategy, officers had undertaken to review ending the programme for the STEM module. Legal advice had been received to confirm that the EA owned all the resources associated with the STEM module.

In a presentation\*, Mrs Gardiner set out the aim and remit of the STEM module, its usage since being commissioned by DE in 2008, the staffing associated with the module, the costs associated with the module and operational considerations.

It was noted that DE had made available capital funding for the initial purchase of the module and equipment and had provided an earmarked allocation each year to assist with recurrent costs. In 2016/17, the earmarked allocation for the STEM module had been subsumed within the EA Block Grant. Members commented that the module was a depreciating asset and noted that it would require a minimum of £264k each year to deliver the current service.

A Member reminded the Committee of the serious challenges facing the EA Block Grant in 2017/18.

It was noted that all courses and programmes associated with the module were evaluated via a teacher questionnaire and responses had consistently demonstrated a very high level of satisfaction. Members noted a paper\*\* summarising recent comments received from schools regarding a possible end to the current programme for the STEM module.

The Committee considered a number of options, as set out in the presentation, as a way forward.

Members commented that the module was a tremendous teaching resource in support of the STEM curriculum, it presented opportunities to young people to be inspired by its state of the art equipment and it assisted in supporting pathways to local industry.

Members discussed the availability of sponsorship to support the STEM module. It was suggested that the DE Permanent Secretary could be approached in order to seek

support to spread the cost of the module across other Government Departments. It was also suggested that officers should investigate the possibility of using PEACE IV monies for this module. Members discussed the possibility of exploring partnership opportunities with other STEM related organisations to include the potential for a jointly funded service. They also considered a change of remit for the module which would allow for professional development and statutory training (health and safety) for Science and Technology teachers and technicians. They discussed the possibility of charging customers for the use of the module and highlighted that officers should seek to minimise its running costs, perhaps through arrangements with District Councils for secure storage at locations across the Region.

Mrs Gardiner referred to an operational challenge regarding management arrangements of the module.

Members noted that the current business case for the STEM module agreed with DE covered a four year period. Mr Collings said that while the STEM agenda was not part of the EA's statutory responsibilities, the Committee should seek to understand its role within the STEM strategy.

The Chair drew attention to possible collaboration between schools and FE colleges in order to better meet the needs of students in schools undertaking STEM subjects.

On the proposal of Dr McMorris, seconded by Mrs Hale, the Committee agreed to recommend that the STEM module would continue to be delivered in the short term to the same target cohort of pupils, and officers would seek to minimise recurrent costs where possible. This period of time would allow officers to explore partnership opportunities and seek alternative sources of funding in order to provide for a sustainable way forward for a STEM programme.

*(Mr McMullan left the meeting temporarily at 2.59 pm, Dr Dynan left the meeting temporarily at 3.01 pm and Ms O'Connor left the meeting at 3.01 pm.)*

### **7.3 INSPECTION SUMMARY - JANUARY TO MARCH 2017**

The Committee noted the summary\* (E/6/17/6.3) of published inspection findings for January to March 2017, including a breakdown of findings by phase and management type and the impact of action short of strike on inspection activity. It also noted the update on changes to inspection models within the period.

*(Mr McMullan re-entered the meeting at 3.02 pm.)*

Mrs Gardiner outlined the arrangements for the two new inspection models, which had been piloted previously by the ETI, relating to Sustaining Improvement Inspection in special, primary and post primary schools, and Monitoring Inspection for primary and post primary schools. The outcomes of these two new models were now being evidenced and presented new challenges. The School Improvement Service would monitor areas of concern and prioritise its staffing resources to provide key supports to schools.

Mrs Gardiner said that the quality of outcomes for the nursery sector continued to be exceptionally high compared to other phases of education. She commented that this was unprecedented in any other sector or phase. It was noted that this good practice would be captured and disseminated through ESaGStv.

*(Dr Dynan re-entered the meeting at 3.04 pm.)*

Mrs Gardiner said that action short of strike had impacted significantly on school inspections. Members noted the tables which reflected the number of schools, within phase and management type, where action short of strike activity had resulted in the ETI being unable to reach a conclusion on the quality of provision. Where the ETI had identified urgent safeguarding issues at a school, it had indicated that it would return to that school within six weeks to monitor and report on the arrangements for safeguarding. Mrs Gardiner confirmed that the SIS would be prioritising support to these schools.

A Member commented on the nature of the safeguarding issues which were identified by the ETI. It was pointed out that individual published reports would detail the nature of any issue. A Member also commented that he had been made aware of the detrimental impact of the action short of strike on children's education. It was vital that the Authority reviewed and progressed this matter as quickly as possible.

Members commented on the terminology used by the ETI in the reports and the impact of this language on the teaching profession.

Mrs Gardiner said that a summary inspection report would be presented to the Committee in the Autumn giving an overview of the 2016/17 academic year. This annual report would provide sufficient numbers to enable better management analysis.

A Member paid tribute to nursery schools for excellent inspection outcomes which reflected continued high quality leadership and provision for learning in that sector. He also paid tribute to former employing authorities which had continued to support statutory provision in this phase.

#### **7.4 TRANSITIONAL MODEL SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Mr Collings said that DE required Boards of Governors to establish formal written procedures for dealing with complaints and to make their complaints procedures available to the wider school community. He advised that, from 1 April 2017, the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) (the Ombudsman) had the power to investigate complaints from the public about maladministration in relation to all publicly funded schools. As a result of these new powers, a revised draft school complaints procedure\* (E/6/17/6.4) had been compiled in consultation with Education stakeholders and the Ombudsman's Office. This procedure was intended to be a transitional model to allow for engagement with schools during 2017/18 and would be formalised to coincide with the reconstitution process for Boards of Governors in 2018. It was intended that the transitional model could also be shared with other managing authorities.

*(Mrs Culbert left the meeting temporarily at 3.18 pm.)*

Mr Collings said that once Board approval was given to the transitional procedure, it would be circulated to Boards of Governors of controlled schools in order that they might adopt the new procedure. He advised that training on the new procedure was already being rolled out within the Governor Training Programme and that training sessions for school principals would take place in the Autumn term.

A Member queried the rationale for leaving out the appeal stage to the school as part of the former school complaints procedure. Mr Unsworth said that NIPSO had considered

the former procedure to be lengthy, the procedure had therefore been revised from 5 stages to 2 stages and facilitated a shortened timeframe.

Members requested that some minor amendments be made to the procedure in respect of terminology, the use of the word 'policy' and the inclusion of contact details for school development proposals. This was agreed.

*(Mrs Culbert re-entered the meeting at 3.24 pm.)*

Subject to the inclusion of the minor amendments agreed by Members, the Committee agreed to recommend the adoption of the interim school complaints procedure, on the proposal of Mr Cargo and seconded by Mr Pollock. In order to allow for feedback on the interim procedure from stakeholders, the procedure would be presented to the Committee for further consideration after a 12 month period.

*(Ms Andrews left the meeting temporarily at 3.28 pm.)*

## **8. SHARED EDUCATION**

### **STRULE SHARED EDUCATION CAMPUS - REVIEW OF MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (MoA)**

Mr Collings presented a letter\* (E/6/17/7.1) from DE dated 19 May 2017 advising of two proposed amendments to the MoA for the Strule Shared Education Campus. The DE letter had enclosed the MoA and a copy of the Strule Campus Shared Areas Funding Model Stakeholder Engagement Process. Mr Collings advised that the MoA had been agreed by the EA in May 2016 and was due for review in 2017. A further review of the MoA would be undertaken in May 2019 in advance of the Campus becoming operational.

Mr Collings said that he had sought the advice of the EA Solicitors and had been advised that the two proposed amendments did not change the MoA in any material way.

On the proposal of Miss Rainey, seconded by Mr Cargo, the Committee noted DE's letter and agreed to the amendments to the MoA as put forward by DE.

## **9. AREA PLANNING**

### **9.1 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 which was linked to arrangements for Drumcree College and St John the Baptist Primary School. He outlined the timeframe for the Judicial Review hearing and advised that, in consultation with the legal teams of EA and CCMS, it was necessary to continue to withhold the publication of Development Proposal No 508 until September 2017 in order to receive a final judgement.

The Committee noted the position.

*(Ms Andrews re-entered the meeting at 3.34 pm.)*

## 9.2 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS - OUTCOMES

The Committee noted the paper\* (E/6/17/8.2) advising that DE approval had been given to the following Development Proposals:

- DP 470 Anamar Primary School (to close with effect from 31 August 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter)
- DP 471 St Patrick's Primary School, Crossmaglen (to increase its capacity number from 350 pupils to 476 pupils; this would permit the school to increase the admissions number from 50 pupils to 68 pupils with effect from 1 September 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter)
- DP 472 Clonalig Primary School, Culloville, Newry (to increase its capacity number from 168 pupils to 203 pupils; this would permit the school to increase the admissions number from 24 pupils to 29 pupils with effect from 1 September 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter)
- DP 477 Slemish College (to increase Slemish College's admission number from 120 to 140 in Year 8; this would occur through an annual phased increase in its enrolment number from 720 up to 880, commencing in September 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter)
- DP 496 Tullycarnet Primary School (to close with effect from 31 August 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter)

The Committee noted that approval had not been given to the following Development Proposals:

- DP 475 Proposal to establish a New Grant Aided Other Maintained Irish Medium Post-Primary School in Derry, with effect from 1 September 2017, or as soon as possible thereafter
- DP 488 Enniskillen Integrated Primary School (to establish a single pre-school afternoon session, for 26 children (part-time places) from 1 September 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter)

## 10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee would next meet on 14 September 2017, along with the Shared Education Committee, at Strule Shared Education Campus.

The meeting ended at 3.40 pm.

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**CHAIRPERSON**

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**DATE**

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