

**EDUCATION AUTHORITY  
MINUTES OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee held in Antrim Board Centre on 8 March 2018 at 1.00 pm

**PRESENT** Rev R Herron (Chair)

Rev A Adams	Mr G Lundy
Mr J Craig	Dr I McMorris
Mr G Doran	Mr O McMullan
Dr M Dynan	Miss R Rainey

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr M Baker, Mrs K Scott, Mr J Unsworth, Ms L McCall and for part of the meeting Mr G Boyd, Mrs R Bell and Mr M Watterson.

L Ó Flannagáin and P Misteil

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been received from Ms Á Andrews, Mr D Cargo, Mrs M Culbert, Sr C Hegarty, Sir Gerry Loughran, Dr A McMorran, Ms S O'Connor and Mr R Pollock.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**3. ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATION PARTNERS - COMHAIRLE NA GAELSCOLAÍOCHTA**

The Chair welcomed to the meeting L Ó Flannagáin, Chief Executive, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, and P Misteil, Principal of Bunscoil an tsleibhe dhuibh and Chair of the Irish Medium Leaders' Group.

L Ó Flannagáin gave a presentation\*\* on the background of the Irish Medium sector, the role of CnaG, the growth and development of IM education, key challenges facing the sector and steps for improvement. Current challenges included infrastructural needs; teacher supply in post-primary, primary and pre-school; the shortage of bespoke educational tools and resources for IM including special needs and assessment; funding issues, and area planning issues. He advised that a CnaG sectoral plan had been developed and CnaG engaged at all levels within the area planning process. It had supported EA in the development of a network of IM Learning Support Centres and supported the IM Learning Community in partnership with EA.

L Ó Flannagáin said that CnaG would give focus to building the IM Learning Community. It would seek to support the IM sector through the development of bespoke school support tools such as assessment tools and methodologies of dissemination of good practice. He highlighted the need for additional bursary support for pre-school qualifications with focus on IM.

P Misteil said that the agreed recommendations, contained within the Irish Medium School Leaders' Working Group Report, were the first steps of an approach within the sector to look at school improvement. Four learning communities had been established to cover geographical areas and representatives from those learning communities comprised the Leaders' Group. He said that the Leaders' Group was reviewing professional development, the delivery of Literacy, Numeracy and ICT, and transition and pilot projects. He advised that the Leaders' Group was

currently working with EA on a web portal. Progress had been made in the last number of years on collective dissemination of practice and the school improvement programme. He said that EA had commissioned a report on the assessment of needs within the sector which would be completed in the following months.

P Misteil highlighted challenges relating to embedding immersion pedagogy within IME. He referred to specific challenges around staffing and specialist provision, early years' provision and special educational needs. The sector did not have access to cognitive diagnostic tools based on a bilingual child in an immersion setting. He advised that while assessment tools had been developed in Ireland, this was based on a different curriculum. He said that the Leaders' Group wished to develop a positive working relationship with EA. He expressed appreciation that the organisational model of delivery within the School Development Service gave focus to sectoral support.

P Misteil said that he was a member of the Trust which had been set up by DE under the Good Friday Agreement to support the establishment of IM schools. The Trust worked with local communities and interest groups to establish IM provisions. Once these schools were sustainable, funding would transfer from DE to the Trust. Members commented that affordability issues impacted on the quality of the premises at initial set up stage.

In response to a Member's query on sustainability of IM schools, L Ó Flannagáin said that IM schools were expanding in a fairly steady state. Currently 7 schools fell below threshold figures. Some schools were restricted in their capability to expand due to issues relating to poor accommodation or a poor site. He said that area planning was based on the concept of building for need at the current time. He considered that the current area planning process was flawed and not fitted to the IM sector.

A Member highlighted the benefits to pupils of learning a second language at an early age. She acknowledged the additional complications involved within special education where there was a shortage of appropriate tools and resources to support assessment and a lack of expertise among relevant professionals. She queried whether opportunities were available to the sector through the CASE Shared Education Project. L Ó Flannagáin said that the sharing opportunity would be English language. He drew attention to some positive examples of sharing involving the IM sector.

A Member also highlighted the benefits of bilingualism for young people. He referred to a general reduction of languages within the system and to issues around attracting teachers into the IM sector. He queried the sector's approach with regard to securing high quality leadership. L Ó Flannagáin said that the sector did not have a cohort of recently retired professionals to assist with mentoring. He considered that the sector needed to enhance collaboration through external means in order to provide support to the sector.

A Member queried opportunities for the IM sector to broker relationships with partners in Scotland or Wales. P Misteil said that while Scotland was slightly ahead of the IM sector in terms of bilingualism, the sector could benefit from engagement with Wales as it had developed diagnostic testing and assessment practices.

The Chair thanked L Ó Flannagáin and P Misteil for their presentations and engagement with the Committee. The two guests withdrew from the meeting.

Members discussed various issues raised by L Ó Flannagáin and P Misteil, particularly area planning considerations. It was pointed out that many issues facing the sector had been experienced previously by the Integrated sector.

Mr Baker outlined EA's commitment to support the development of relationships in order to maximise potential supports to the IM sector.

#### **4. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 8 FEBRUARY 2018**

The minutes\* (E/3/18/3) of the meeting held on 8 March 2018 were agreed on the proposal of Mr Craig and seconded by Miss Rainey.

#### **5. MATTER ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

##### **IRISH MEDIUM EDUCATION (6)**

A Member referred to the report to be provided on supports available to the IM sector by the Youth Service. In light of the presentation provided earlier in the meeting, he asked that the report would also take account of issues relating to CnaG.

The Chair said that the report from the Youth Service would be presented to the Children and Young People's Services Committee in due course.

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

##### **6.1 WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY**

A Member asked if EA engaged in any activity to recognise World Down Syndrome day on 21 March 2018. Mr Boyd said that the matter would be referred to the Children and Young People's Services Committee for consideration for future years.

***Action:** Children and Young People's Services Committee to consider the recognition of World Down Syndrome Day for future years.*

##### **6.2 MUSIC SERVICE - MUSIC MAKERS**

A Member paid tribute to 'Music Makers' which provided young musicians with their first opportunity to make music in much larger groups than was possible at school. He said that he had attended an event in Newry to showcase the talent of over 200 young people from over 50 schools. He expressed disappointment that the terms of the Collaborating and Sharing in Education (CASE) Project, which was funded through PEACE IV, did not facilitate EA to access funding for Music Service initiatives. Mr Baker said that one strand of the CASE Project specifically related to centrally funded projects. This matter was being investigated and a report would come back to the Committee in due course.

#### **7. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

##### **7.1 C2K REPORT**

Mrs Scott said that C2K, in collaboration with DE, had consistently highlighted to schools and Boards of Governors security considerations in circumstances where a school established its own non-C2K ICT systems. DE, in consultation with C2K, had issued a circular in December 2013 on eSafety (to remind schools of their responsibilities to have in place an eSafety policy and an Acceptable Use Policy. The circular also set out specific safeguarding advice for schools in the event that staff and pupils were using non-C2K equipment or had access to the internet via non-C2K connections. Further guidance had been issued to schools by DE in December 2016 on online safety. This provided a set of guiding principles on prioritising online safety and filtering responsibilities of schools.

Mrs Scott presented a paper\* (E/3/18/7.1) on the extent to which schools had access to independent broadband lines outside the C2K network. Of the 739 schools which had participated in a survey, 22% of schools had indicated that they had access to an independent broadband line.

Members discussed levels of risk associated with schools' access to non-C2K internet connections as well as DE's and EA's responsibilities in this area. They noted that schools had been informed of best practice around online safety. They noted that C2K officers supported schools in policy implementation in this area. They also noted that, at the current time, schools appeared to be rejecting alternative internet connections and that the number of legacy educational ICT suppliers was disappearing from the commercial landscape.

A Member queried if a general survey could be undertaken to understand the motivation for schools wishing to avail of independent broadband lines.

A Member queried the supports available to schools by C2K on technical issues. She also queried supports for schools where issues arose relating to programme delivery.

Mrs Scott said that online safety could be included in the Governor Training Programme going forward. She advised that technical support was provided to schools through an ICT helpdesk. As part of the current C2K contract, officers also provided training to schools around ICT. A C2K user forum was in operation to allow schools to share concerns and disseminate good practice.

Mrs Scott advised that the Committee, at its April meeting, would be considering a report on C2K Lot 8 Procurement.

*(Mr McMullan left the meeting at 2.52 pm.)*

## **7.2 COMMUNITY BALANCE IN INTEGRATED SCHOOLS**

Mr Baker presented a paper\* (E/3/18/7.2) setting out information on community balance within the integrated sector between 2012/13 and 2016/17.

It was noted that Article 92 of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 stated that DE would not approve a proposal unless reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Catholic pupils were likely to attend the school. This was set out in the DE booklet 'Integration Works - Transforming your School' which was considered by the Committee at its January meeting. A Member commented that the split in community balance in the schools in the paper could be reflective of demographics in an area.

A Member drew attention to the stability of enrolment numbers within the sector. He said that it would be useful to have local demographics in terms of community data reflected in the paper. This could be done on a council basis if local data was not available. This was agreed.

*(Mr McMullan re-entered the meeting at 2.58 pm.)*

Mr Boyd referred to schools in the paper which were part of current Area Planning considerations.

The Committee commended the usefulness of the paper.

**Action:** Paper to include local demographics in terms of community data.

## **8. AREA PLANNING**

### **8.1 PROVIDING PATHWAYS - STRATEGIC AREA PLAN FOR SCHOOL PROVISION: ANNUAL ACTION PLAN 2018-19**

Mrs Scott said that, at a meeting with DE officials held on 12 February, officers had agreed to make a number of minor amendments to the 2018/19 Annual Action Plan. These related to the insertion of carry over actions from the 2017/18 Annual Action Plan and a narrative to highlight that the document was the second plan in a series of three action plans to support the delivery of the EA 'Providing Pathways' Strategic Area Plan.

Mrs Scott said it was anticipated that the 2018/19 Annual Action Plan would be published the week beginning 9 April following the Easter break.

A Member queried the arrangements for EA officers to consult with schools named in or affected by the action plan. Mrs Scott advised that, depending on the level of impact on schools, officers would either visit schools to discuss the plan or a communication would be issued to schools.

A Member commented on the considerable workload to take forward actions identified in the plan, particularly in relation to special schools.

A Member referred to the meeting of the Transformation Programme Members' Sub-Group held on 19 February at which concerns had been raised about the current Area Planning process and whether it was capable of supporting EA's needs regarding transformation.

Mrs Scott said that the Strategic Investment Board and Queen's University Belfast had produced an area planning modelling tool which would support and contribute to the work around school sustainability. This modelling tool could be presented to the Committee for consideration at a future meeting. She also outlined the arrangements for management to consult with Trade Unions and staff in order to commence the recruitment process for an Area Planning team within the School Development Service.

The Committee noted the 2018/19 Annual Action Plan\* (E/3/18/8.1) which incorporated the amendments made by DE.

*(Mr McMullan left the meeting temporarily at 3.10 pm.)*

### **8.2 BELFAST SPECIAL SCHOOLS**

East Belfast (the following proposals to be read in conjunction with each other)

- With a view to facilitating the establishment of a new 3-19 special school for children with severe / profound learning difficulties, Greenwood House Assessment Centre to discontinue with effect from 31 August 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter
- With a view to facilitating the establishment of a new 3-19 special school for children with severe / profound learning difficulties, Mitchell House School to discontinue with effect from 31 August 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter
- With a view to facilitating the establishment of a new 3-19 special school for children with severe / profound learning difficulties, Park Education Resource Centre to discontinue with effect from 31 August 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter
- A new 3-19 special school for children with severe / profound learning difficulties to be established with effect from 1 September 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter; the

new school to relocate to a site in east Belfast to be determined through an approved business case with effect from the completion of a new build school

North Belfast (the following proposals to be read in conjunction with each other)

- With a view to facilitating the establishment of a new 3-19 special school for children with severe / profound learning difficulties, Fleming Fulton School to discontinue with effect from 31 August 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter
- With a view to facilitating the establishment of a new 3-19 special school for children with severe / profound learning difficulties, Glenveagh School to discontinue with effect from 31 August 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter
- A new 3-19 special school for children with severe / profound learning difficulties to be established with effect from 1 September 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter; the new school to relocate to a site in north Belfast to be determined through an approved business case with effect from the completion of a new build school

South Belfast (the following proposals to be read in conjunction with each other)

- With a view to facilitating the establishment of a new 3-19 special school for children with severe / profound learning difficulties, Harberton School to discontinue with effect from 31 August 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter
- With a view to facilitating the establishment of a new 3-19 special school for children with severe / profound learning difficulties, Oakwood School to discontinue with effect from 31 August 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter
- A new 3-19 special school for children with severe / profound learning difficulties to be established on the site of the existing schools with effect from 1 September 2019 or as soon as possible thereafter

Mrs Bell said that the recommendations from the Ministerial Review of Special School Provision (March 2015) had been reflected in EA's Strategic Area Plan 2017-2020. She presented the first tranche of papers\* (E/3/18/8.2) setting out recommendations to consolidate provision and redistribute special schools across Belfast. The recommendations would enable EA to make provision for pupils with severe and profound needs aged 3 to 19 within three new schools and two new capital builds.

Mrs Bell said that the papers set out specific recommendations for a new school and new capital build in north Belfast (to replace Fleming Fulton and Glenveagh Schools), a new school on the Harberton site for south Belfast (to replace Harberton and Oakwood Schools), a new capital build in the east (to replace Greenwood, Mitchell and Park Schools), with St Gerard's School in the west of the city remaining on its existing site. The proposals sought to enable equitable provision within a common structure and reduce travelling times for pupils.

Mrs Bell said that these recommendations complemented other work being developed across EA in line with the Area Plan. Officers were working to extend specialist Autism and General Learning Support provision attached to mainstream schools across EA and particularly in Belfast and Ballymena where there was deemed to be a deficit of inclusive specialist provision.

Mrs Bell advised that officers had consulted with the chairs and principals of the schools, set out in the paper, to discuss the need to align special schools to ensure equitable provision for pupils aged 3 to 19 with severe and profound learning difficulties.

Members considered the Case for Change and the summary paper.

In response to a Member's query, Mrs Bell said that the Early Years' Panel had been established and was informing EA at the earliest stage on children with severe / profound learning difficulties. She said that as the EA moved to a more inclusive model of support it would extend the number of specialist provisions attached to mainstream schools.

A Member referred to DE's methodology for new capital builds. He emphasised that, based on data for special schools, flexibility should be built into the system to allow for additional capacity. He considered that EA should reflect this strongly to DE.

The Chair said that the proposals in the papers had already received consideration by the Children and Young People's Services Committee.

Members impressed upon officers the need to consult effectively with all interested parties to explain that the proposals would enable equitable provision and improve the educational experiences for these young people. Members queried the process of engagement with principals and chairs of Boards of Governors. Mr Watterson outlined the process under Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. Should the Committee agree to proceed, officers would commence pre-publication consultation with Governors, staff and parents of the affected schools and that process of consultation would be extended to other stakeholders. All issues raised within the pre-publication consultation would be presented to the Committee for further consideration at a subsequent meeting. A Member commented that it would be helpful if communities were provided with information on procedures around Development Proposals.

On the proposal of Miss Rainey, seconded by Mr Lundy, the Committee agreed to recommend that the EA would commence pre-publication consultation on the above proposals. *(The Board, at its meeting on 29 March 2018, did not approve minute 8.2 but referred this matter back to the relevant Committee for further consideration.)*

### **8.3 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 544 - TAUGHMONAGH PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Proposal to increase the admission number from 25 to 30 with an annual phased increase in the enrolment number from 174 to 210 with effect from 1 September 2018 or as soon as possible thereafter

Mrs Scott presented the papers\* (E/3/18/8.3) for publication and provided a summary of key areas for the Committee's consideration including that, in accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, the EA had undertaken formal consultation with the Board of Governors and Trustees of schools which might be affected by the proposal.

Members considered the Case for Change. This included the rationale for the proposal, the sustainability of the school, the impact of the proposal on schools in the locality and the two responses received to the consultation process outlining support for the proposal. Mrs Scott outlined the implications of the proposal on existing accommodation at the school. Members considered the draft EA response to the proposal for submission to DE as set out in the Case for Change.

On the proposal of Miss Rainey, seconded by Rev Adams, the Committee approved the response for submission to DE along with the publication of the Proposal.

### **8.4 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 523 - DRUMLINS INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 535 - ROWANDALE INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The Chair said that officers were awaiting further clarification from DE with regard to encouraging and facilitating Integrated and Irish medium education in the pre-school sector. This information, once received from DE, would be presented to the Children and Young People's Services Committee and the Education Committee and would facilitate further consideration of Development Proposals Nos 523 and 535.

### **8.5 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS - SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES**

The Committee noted that DE had approved the following Development Proposals as set out in the paper\* (E/3/18/8.6):

- DP 519 - Drumragh Integrated College: to increase the approved enrolment from 580 to 645 with effect from 1 September 2018 or as soon as possible thereafter. This would permit an increase in admissions from 96 to 105 and an increase in sixth form provision from 100 to 120 students.
- DP 531 - St Brigid's Primary School, Tirkane: to increase the admissions and enrolment numbers from 29 to 35 and 203 to 245 respectively by way of an increase to admissions and enrolment numbers of the Irish medium unit from 16 to 22 and 120 to 154 respectively with effect from 1 September 2018 or as soon as possible thereafter.

### **9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be held on 12 April 2018.

The meeting ended at 3.30 pm.

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**CHAIRPERSON**

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**DATE**

\* Paper issued with agenda