

**EDUCATION AUTHORITY
MINUTES OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee held in Antrim Board Centre on 9 February 2017 at 1.00 pm

PRESENT Rev R Herron (Chairperson)

Rev A Adams	Sr C Hegarty
Ms Á Andrews	Dr A McMorrán
Mr D Cargo	Dr I McMorris
Mr J Craig	Mr R Pollock
Dr M Dynan	Miss R Rainey

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr J Collings, Ms K Scott, Mr J Unsworth, Mr M McConkey and Ms L McCall.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mrs M Culbert, Sir Gerry Loughran and Ms S O'Connor.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12 JANUARY 2017

The minutes* (E/2/17/3) of the meeting held on 12 January 2017 were agreed on the proposal of Miss Rainey and seconded by Rev Adams.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

4.1 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT - CHIEF INSPECTOR'S REPORT 2014-16 (6.1.3)

A Member referred to the meeting with the Permanent Secretary on 23 January 2017 at which issues relating to the school inspection framework and other educational matters had been briefly discussed. He said that the Board needed to identify a process whereby it could engage with the Permanent Secretary from time to time to discuss key issues. It was noted that this matter would be taken forward by the Chair of the Board.

Members discussed the need for continued improvement in the relationship between the EA and the ETI, the role of the district inspector, and the internal documentation and guidance materials used by district inspectors as part of the inspection process. A Member referred to the findings of surveys carried out, as part of the inspection framework, with parents and other issues which were not made transparent to schools. Mr Collings said that EA officers had access only to the documentation that was provided to schools and published on the ETI website. Mrs Scott outlined the process whereby school documentation was extracted from C2K to assist with inspections.

It was agreed that a Board Member working group would be established to prepare for a meeting with the Chief Inspector on 27 April 2017. The working group would comprise Ms Á

Andrews, Dr A McMorrان, Mr R Pollock and Miss R Rainey. Mr Collings said that the Authority would seek to have a clear understanding about the role of the school inspector in school improvement.

The paper drafted by the working group would be issued to all Board Members in advance of the April Board meeting.

It was also agreed that a short workshop would be provided to Members to assist them in their understanding of the school inspection process.

Action: Board Member working group to be established to prepare for meeting with Chief Inspector; paper drafted by the working group to be issued to all Board Members in advance of the April Board meeting; and short workshop to be provided to Members to assist in understanding the school inspection process.

4.2 TEACHERS' PAY NEGOTIATIONS (4.2)

A Member said that he had been approached by a number of principals who were concerned about the ongoing industrial action and maintaining relationships within schools. He said that a significant number of teachers were not engaging with assessment arrangements and the inspection process on account of the strike action. This impacted on the data gathered by the district inspectors and ultimately on the outcome of the inspection. He said this did not give a fair and accurate picture of a school and was misleading for the wider school community. The strike action was placing principals in an invidious position.

Mr Collings said that EA and CCMS officers had met the Chief Inspector and the Deputy Chief Inspector to discuss the ETI's strategy regarding the escalating industrial action. Mrs Scott said that, where an inspection was affected by industrial action, the ETI had indicated that it would move to publish the school's inspection report and in certain cases where particular information was not forthcoming, the published report could include a clause that the school was a "cause for concern". In addition, the district inspector could determine that, due to the lack of evidence to make a judgement, the school would become a high priority for a re-inspection without notice. The ETI had also indicated that, in the absence of appropriate assurance being provided on safeguarding issues on account of the strike action, an inspector would revisit the school within a six week period. Mr Unsworth said that should the ETI not receive safeguarding information, it would ultimately declare a lack of confidence in the school's safeguarding arrangements.

5. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

ASSEMBLY ELECTION ON 2 MARCH 2017

The eight EA political members serving on the Board would cease to hold office on 2 March 2017. It was noted that this matter would be discussed by the Board at its meeting on 23 February 2017.

6. BUDGET MONITORING 2016/17 - UPDATE

Mr Collings presented papers** setting out savings targets and projected year end spend within the School Development Service and the Music Service. The Committee noted the red / amber / green rating associated with each savings target.

Mr Unsworth said that an Interim Head of the Music Service had been appointed. Work would be taken forward on introducing a common policy for charges and activities across the Region.

Members noted that it was anticipated that approximately £300k efficiency savings would be achieved within the Music Service by 31 March 2017. A Member queried projected savings in 2017/18. Mr Unsworth advised that savings would result from efficiencies and the voluntary exit scheme. Further information on savings would be presented to the Committee in due course.

Members queried the status of the Belfast School of Music which had its own Management Board. They considered that the fundamental review of the Music Service should set out clearly the vision for a future service delivery model and advised officers to look into the status of the School of Music as it could form the basis of a future delivery model.

Mr Unsworth said that the rationale and terms of reference for the fundamental review of the Music Service would be presented to the Committee for consideration in due course.

The Chair requested that the Committee should receive at a future meeting an overview of the activities and spend within the Music Service.

A Member acknowledged the importance of the Music Service being made available to children from socially deprived backgrounds. She also praised the Service for its history of encouraging and promoting shared education and requested that the fundamental review of the Service should give regard to shared education.

Mr Collings drew attention to the Authority's contribution to the Music Service which was non-statutory (£4m) and the School Improvement Service (£5m) which was statutory.

Action: *Overview of activities and spend within the Music Service to be presented to the Committee at a future meeting; officers to look into the status of the Belfast School of Music as it could form the basis of a future delivery model.*

7. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

FORMAL INTERVENTION PROCESS – PROGRESS REPORT

Mr Unsworth presented the paper* (E/2/17/7.1) setting out a summary of all schools across the Authority which had entered and exited the Formal Intervention Process since the introduction in 2009 of Every School a Good School, the DE policy document for School Improvement.

Mr Unsworth said that the main focus of the School Development Service was to support schools in formal intervention. The historical model to support schools in formal intervention was becoming increasingly challenging and the SDS was now seeking to identify other support models. This support included the use of associates and current teachers as well as partnering arrangements with schools.

Members queried the capacity of the SDS to support schools prior to the inspection process where it was considered that early intervention was necessary. Mr Collings said that resources within the SDS were being utilised as efficiently and effectively as possible. The Authority had a statutory responsibility to support schools in formal intervention regardless of sector. The SDS

was currently drawing up a risk assessment approach, in collaboration with other management authorities, to alert officers to key indicators where schools were in need of early intervention. Mrs Scott said that the Authority had a statutory duty to work with a school once it had entered the formal intervention process. The district inspector's role was to monitor the school.

Mrs Scott advised that the school would now receive 48 hours' notice from the ETI that a monitoring inspection would take place. This type of inspection could provide the trigger for a full inspection. She also advised that, from January 2017, all new and amalgamated schools would only receive a baseline inspection. The aim of the baseline inspection was to enable the leadership and management to have time to develop capacity in those schools. Members welcomed this change in practice.

The Committee noted that 29 schools were currently in formal intervention and that 16 of those schools had entered the programme in 2015/16.

Members discussed the long tail of underachievement, intervention programmes, dissemination of good practice, assessment practices and the need to determine a model which could assess school performance on the progress individual pupils should expect to make at various key stages based on prior assessments.

Members commented that some schools remained in the formal intervention programme for a significant period of time while the timeframe for other schools was considerably shorter. Attention was drawn to consistency of judgements across the inspection framework. Mrs Scott outlined various circumstances that could affect the duration, for example the rate of improvement in a small primary school with 3-4 teachers could be significantly different to a primary school with a large staffing complement. In addition, a new principal taking up post would require time to build capacity. Mr Collings referred to non-recovering schools and advised that the Authority was required to make an assessment on sustainability when a school was entering the formal intervention process. He said that the Authority would be required to formalise that assessment of sustainability.

It was agreed that Mr Collings would engage with schools which had experience of the formal intervention process and invite representatives from those schools, including Governor representatives, to meet the Committee to discuss their experiences.

A Member commented that the use of a school stakeholder reference group would add value to the Committee's consideration on any given matter. It was agreed that Mr Collings would establish a process whereby the Committee could engage with or access the views of a stakeholder reference group comprising school representatives.

Actions: *Schools which have experience of the formal intervention process to be invited to meet the Committee; establish a process whereby the Committee can engage with or access the views of a stakeholder reference group.*

8. IRISH MEDIUM EDUCATION – NOTE OF WORKSHOP HELD ON 10 NOVEMBER 2016

Mr Collings expressed appreciation to Ms Andrews for raising the Committee's awareness to challenges within the Irish Medium sector.

Mr Collings referred to the recommendations in the paper* (E/2/17/8). These related to the Authority making comment on the challenges associated with the standardised testing mechanism within the Irish Medium sector in any future ETI consultation process and, also, a

review of the roles and responsibilities within the SDS to enable capacity for support to be provided to the Irish Medium sector.

(Mr J Craig declared an interest as he served as chair of a local PEACE IV body.)

Members referred to various funding streams which might assist building capacity within the Irish Medium sector. In response to a Member, Ms Andrews outlined the specific challenges for the sector in delivering the curriculum in an immersion context.

On the proposal of Rev Adams, seconded by Miss Rainey, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board approve the two recommendations as set out in the paper.

9. AREA PLANNING

9.1 STRATEGIC AREA PLAN 2017-20

Mr Collings said that following the Board's approval on 26 January 2017, the Strategic Area Plan for School Provision, the year one Action Plan and the consultation report had been submitted to the Area Planning Steering Group and DE. He advised that some further minor presentational amendments had been agreed at the meeting of the Area Planning Steering Group.

(Ms Andrews left the meeting temporarily at 2.57 pm.)

Mr Collings said that the Committee's concerns with regard to area planning considerations in the period leading up to the Election on 2 March had been conveyed to DE officials. DE had confirmed that the Minister still intended to sign off the documentation prior to his leaving office on 2 March to allow for publication at the end of March.

Mr McConkey said that DE had indicated that the Consultation Report had not given sufficient detail to the analysis of the consultation responses. The Consultation Report and Annual Action Plan would be amended and resubmitted to the Minister and also presented again to the Board for approval to publish.

(Ms Andrews re-entered the meeting at 3.01 pm.)

A Member said that the Strategic Area Plan should be presented to the Board for final approval after its consideration by the Area Planning Steering Group and DE. It was noted that that Area Planning Steering Group comprised representatives from CCMS, CSSC, NICIE, GBA, DE and the EA. A Member commented that the Board had statutory responsibility for area planning. He considered that DE's role in this area should therefore be discussed with the Permanent Secretary.

Mr McConkey said that, following discussions with DE, officers would now be undertaking a lessons learned exercise on the area planning process in its first year.

9.2 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

9.2.1 DP 496 - Tullycarnet Primary School

Proposal to close with effect from 31 August 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Mr McConkey presented the papers* (E/2/17/9.1) 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, staff and parents of

the school, and 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 responses received to the consultation process. Members considered the comments as set out in the draft EA Response to the Department of Education.

A Member commended officers for the manner in which this proposal had been taken forward.

On the proposal of Rev Adams, seconded by Sr Hegarty, the Committee approved the Response* (Appendix 4) for submission to DE along with the publication of the Proposal.

9.2.2 DPs 509, 510, 511 Carrickfergus College / Downshire School, Carrickfergus

DP 509 - Carrickfergus College - proposal to discontinue with effect from 1 September 2018 or as soon as possible thereafter.

DP 510 - Downshire School - proposal to discontinue with effect from 1 September 2018 or as soon as possible thereafter.

DP 511 - Proposal to establish a new co-educational non-selective controlled post-primary school in Carrickfergus for pupils aged 11-18 with an approved admissions number of 210 and an approved enrolment number of 1250 with effect from 1 September 2018 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Mr McConkey presented the papers* (E/2/17/9.2) 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, staff and parents of the schools, and 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 two schools, the impact of the proposal on schools in the locality and responses received to the consultation process. Mr McConkey outlined the position regarding Ulidia Integrated College and the change to its admission numbers some years previously. Members noted the challenges facing Downshire School in light of reducing enrolment numbers and increasing costs associated with post 16 provision. They noted concerns raised in respect of a split site provision; however, Governors and staff were in favour of moving forward with the proposals. A Member received confirmation that there had been no significant concerns raised at the consultation meeting involving community representatives. It was noted that the CSSC had expressed positive comments about the proposals. Mr McConkey said that, if the proposals received Ministerial approval, the Authority would include the new school as a priority on its list for capital investment.

Members considered the comments as set out in the draft EA Response to the Department of Education.

On the proposal of Miss Rainey, seconded by Mr Pollock, the Committee approved the Response* (Appendix E) for submission to DE along with the publication of the Proposal.

A Member queried the rationale for three separate development proposals in this case to establish one school. He was advised that each school was a legal entity and each was required to be discontinued before establishing a new school.

9.2.3 DP 502 St Brigid's Primary School, Augher (to close with effect from 31 August 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter)

Mr McConkey presented the papers* (E/2/17/9.3) 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 and the impact of the proposal on schools in the locality. Mr McConkey said that 7 consultation responses had been received from the Governors and staff of the school setting out their objections to the closure. He said that CCMS had set out a two phase approach for schools in this locality: the first phase included the closure of St Brigid's PS as at 31 August 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter; the second phase included the proposed amalgamation of other two maintained schools in the area. Members queried the rationale for not bringing forward the two proposals together to enable consultation to take place at the same time. It was pointed out that a delay in bringing forward the current proposal would further exacerbate the school's significant financial deficit position. Mr Collings said that this issue would be discussed with CCMS colleagues.

Members queried whether the opportunity for a shared solution had been discussed for the Augher and Clogher area. Mr Unsworth outlined the shared activity that was currently taking place in the area. Mr McConkey advised that shared education opportunities were always discussed at the outset of all meetings of Area Planning Local Groups.

It was agreed that all area planning documentation, where relevant, being presented to the Committee would record the outcome of consideration given to shared education opportunities.

Members considered the comments as set out in the draft EA Response to the Department of Education. A Member said that the Response should offer the possibility of shared education for the Minister's consideration. With this amendment, on the proposal of Mr Cargo, seconded by Dr McMorris, the Committee approved the Response* (Appendix E) for submission to DE along with the publication of the Proposal.

Action: All area planning documentation, where relevant, being presented to the Committee to record the outcome of consideration given to shared education opportunities.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on 9 March 2017.

The meeting ended at 3.50 pm.

CHAIRPERSON

DATE

* Paper issued with agenda *** Paper tabled