

**EDUCATION AUTHORITY
MINUTES OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

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

PRESENT Rev R Herron (Chairperson)

Rev A Adams	Sir Gerry Loughran
Ms Á Andrews	Mr R Pollock
Dr M Dynan	Miss R Rainey
Sr C Hegarty	

IN ATTENDANCE

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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Dr I McMorris 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 9 FEBRUARY 2017

It was agreed that a paragraph within minute 4.2 should be amended to read: "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 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."

Members noted that these minutes had been presented to the Board for approval on 23 February 2017. They queried the process to raise issues of accuracy in the minutes, either at the Board meeting or at the subsequent meeting of the Committee. It was agreed that this matter would be further considered by the Board at its meeting on 30 March.

Subject to this amendment, the minutes* (E/2/17/3) of the meeting held on 9 February 2017 were agreed on the proposal of Rev Adams and seconded by Miss Rainey.

***Action:** Board to discuss procedure regarding approving Committee minutes.*

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

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

The Committee noted that the working group, established to prepare for the meeting with the Chief Inspector, would take place on 13 April 2017. A workshop to assist Members in their understanding of the school inspection process would take place on 27 April 2017.

4.2 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS (9.2)

Mr McConkey said that the Area Planning Working Group, at its meeting on 22 March 2017, would be informed of the Board's decision that all area planning documentation should explicitly record the outcome of consideration given to shared education opportunities.

5. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

5.1 IRISH MEDIUM SCHOOL LEADERS' WORKING GROUP - REPORT (MARCH 2016)

Mrs Gardiner presented the Report* (E/3/17/6.1) of the Irish Medium School Leaders' Working Group which had been established by the then Minister of Education in 2015 to develop proposals for a regional programme in the Irish medium sector to facilitate the development and sharing of best practice in order to drive school improvement. The membership of the Working Group was detailed in the Report. Mrs Gardiner said that the EA and CNAG had facilitated a principals' conference on 9 February 2017 at which the Report had received endorsement by the wider school principals' grouping in the Irish medium sector.

Mrs Gardiner referred to the letter* (E/3/17/6.1) dated 5 May 2016 from the then Minister of Education to the Chair of the EA advising that he had accepted all the recommendations in the Report with the exception of two. DE had subsequently requested the EA to work in partnership with the Leaders' Group, and CCEA where appropriate, to flesh out how the recommendations in the Report might be taken forward. Funding had been provided by DE to facilitate meetings of the Leaders' Group.

Discussion ensued in relation to previous earmarked funding provided by DE to support professional development within the Irish medium sector. Mr Collings said that, historically, funding had been provided to enable three members of staff of the former Education and Library Boards to work with the Irish medium sector; currently one officer within the School Development Service undertook those responsibilities. He confirmed that, as part of the overall review of the SDS, roles and responsibilities were being examined to ensure that capacity for support was provided to the Irish medium sector. Mrs Gardiner advised that ESaGS tv was currently producing bespoke material on sharing effective practices in the Irish medium pre-school sector.

Mrs Gardiner said that she had engaged with members of the School Leaders' Working Group and with CCEA and CNAG to discuss the recommendations contained in the Report. It was intended that an update report would be presented to DE at the end of March on the proposed implementation of those recommendations, including indications of additional funding required. A final meeting of the Leaders' Group would take place in April after which a newly constituted school leaders' group would be established as had been agreed at the Irish medium principals' forum.

Members commended the Report and acknowledged that its recommendations would require significant investment. They discussed the considerable number of pupils with special educational needs in the Irish medium sector, specific challenges in delivering the curriculum in an immersion context, the need for co-operation and sharing not only across Irish medium schools but between the Irish medium sector and other school sectors, and the need to urgently address deficits in the Irish medium sector.

A Member suggested that the Report should be presented to the Children and Young People's Services Committee for consideration given the high percentage of children with special educational needs in the sector. Mrs Gardiner advised that Dr Mangan had been approached by the CNaG SEN cluster group on this matter.

A Member requested that the SDS should give urgent consideration to addressing the deficits of the Irish medium sector. She referred to recommendations relating to provision of bursary funding and queried value for money with this type of investment for the sector.

On the proposal of Dr Dynan, seconded by Rev Adams, the Committee agreed to recommend that:

- a report would be provided for the Committee's consideration on the possible actions that the EA could take in response to the recommendations outlined in the School Leaders' Working Group Report; and
- a workshop would be facilitated on the EA's statutory duties for Irish medium education and the actions taken by all the EA directorates to fulfil those statutory duties.

Actions: *As detailed in the two recommendations above.*

5.2 ENTITLEMENT FRAMEWORK - SCHOOL COMPLIANCE 2014/15 TO 2016/17

Mrs Scott said that the Entitlement Framework was the statutory curriculum for every pupil at Key Stage 4 and post 16. Currently the statutory entitlement for a pupil at KS4 was access to 24 subjects with at least one third having an applied qualification and at least one third having a general qualification. The statutory entitlement for a pupil at post 16 was access to 27 subjects with at least one third applied and at least one third general. On 16 January 2017, the then Minister of Education had announced a reduction in this requirement to 21 courses for both Key Stages effective from September 2017.

Mrs Scott said that since 2006 post primary and special schools had completed an annual audit of their curriculum offer using the Entitlement Framework Online Audit System. This system managed and analysed data provided by schools, including schools' collaborative arrangements. Mrs Scott said that the Entitlement Framework Audit Report* (E/3/17/6.2) summarised schools' compliance with both Key Stages during the period 2013/14 to 2016/17 and also highlighted specific examples of schools' compliance levels for comparison. She said that the Entitlement Framework Audit Team had analysed the 2016/17 data for projected compliance on the basis of the new 21 subject specification. The outcome was a projected full compliance of 86%.

Members discussed the participation of schools in Area Learning Communities to achieve the statutory requirements of the Entitlement Framework and noted that these schools received additional funding for collaborative provision. Members discussed issues relating to a reduction in funding for collaboration and the implications for some schools with smaller enrolments at post 16. Members also discussed inescapable costs associated with transporting pupils participating in courses at other schools, including the release of teachers undertaking supervisory duties.

Mrs Scott said that schools were largely welcoming the reduction in the requirement to 21 subjects.

The Committee noted the Report.

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING

Mr Collings referred to the role of District Councils in community planning and their obligations to develop individual Community Plans, in partnership with the EA and CCMS, by April 2017. He drew attention to different approaches being adopted by the 11 District Councils in developing their Community Plans and in setting their priorities.

Mr Collings said that the EA and CCMS would be asked to respond to each Community Plan over the coming months. He advised that officers were working with CCMS officers to agree a common approach to responding to those Plans. Draft responses to the Community Plans would be presented to the Education Committee for consideration prior to Board approval.

(Mr Pollock left the meeting temporarily at 2.16 pm.)

7. AREA PLANNING

7.1 STRATEGIC AREA PLAN 2017-20 AND ANNUAL ACTION PLAN 2017-18

The Committee had received copies of:

- Providing Pathways - Draft Strategic Area Plan for School Provision 2017-20*. This document had been previously considered by the Board on 26 January 2017 and had subsequently been updated to reflect amendments following the analysis of consultation responses. The document was now submitted to the Committee for final consideration prior to Board approval.
- The Annual Action Plan 2017-18 (version 1)* as considered by the Board at its meeting on 26 January 2017.
- The Annual Action Plan 2017-18 (version 2)* as amended and submitted to the Area Planning Steering Group (APSG) on 22 February 2017.
- The Annual Action Plan 2017-18 (version 3)* to reflect the changes made by the APSG on 22 February 2017. The document was now submitted to the Committee for final consideration prior to Board approval.

(Mr Pollock re-entered the meeting at 2.20 pm.)

Some Members pointed out that there was no mechanism to allow representation of the Transferor Representatives' Council on the Area Planning groupings. It was noted that the membership of the Area Planning Steering Group and the Area Planning Working Group was determined by DE.

A Member sought clarity on the roles and responsibilities of DE and the EA within the context of area planning. Guidance on this matter was set out in the Providing Pathways document on page 16. This guidance also set out the role of CCMS, sectoral bodies and other participants. Members discussed the definition of a sectoral body, as defined by the Minister.

Mr Collings referred to the tracked changes that were identified in the Annual Action Plan. Specific attention was given to page 6 where alternative wording was suggested and where a query had been raised by a Member at the Board meeting on 23 February 2017. Members discussed the revised paragraphs and were content that the issue raised

previously at the Board meeting had been resolved. However, they considered that clarification should be provided on page 6 within a footnote that engagement with the controlled sector would include consultation with the Transferor Representatives' Council. A Member also referred to a typographical error on page 6 relating to the representative body of Voluntary Grammar Schools.

The Committee considered the Department of Education's letter** dated 2 March 2017 to the EA Chief Executive advising that the Minister had considered the near final drafts of the Area Plan 2017-20 and the Annual Action Plan 2017-18. While the Minister was aware that the EA wished to consider some final textual changes, the letter had indicated that the Minister required the EA to publish the Strategic Area Plan for Schools 2017-20, the consultation findings report and the supporting Annual Action Plan 2017/18 before 31 March 2017.

Members noted the date of the DE letter. A Member highlighted that the instruction in the letter was contrary to pre-election guidance and pointed out the risks to the Authority in proceeding to publish the documents as requested.

On the proposal of Dr Dynan, seconded by Sr Hegarty, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board should approve the Strategic Area Plan 2017-20.

On the proposal of Rev Adams, seconded by Sr Hegarty, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board should approve the Annual Action Plan 2017-18 subject to the inclusion of a footnote on page 6 which would point out that engagement with the controlled sector would include consultation with the Transferor Representatives' Council. Furthermore, the terminology for managing authorities of some schools in the Irish medium sector would be clarified and amended where necessary.

The Committee also agreed to recommend that legal opinion should be sought on the appropriateness of publishing Providing Pathways - Strategic Area Plan for Schools 2017-20 and the supporting Annual Action Plan 2017/18 before 31 March 2017, as requested in DE's letter of 2 March 2017, in light of pre-election guidance and prior to the appointment of a new Minister.

Actions: *Amendments agreed to Annual Action Plan 2017-18; seek legal opinion on the appropriateness of publishing Providing Pathways - Strategic Area Plan for Schools 2017-20 and the supporting Annual Action Plan 2017/18 before 31 March 2017 as requested by DE.*

7.2 CLARIFICATION AND REVIEW OF AREA PLANNING PROCESS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

(Ms Andrews left the meeting at 3.20 pm.)

The Committee noted DE's guidance document* on Area Planning for Primary and Post Primary Schools (September 2016) which set out a timetable for the area planning process. A copy of a presentation* previously given to EA Board Members based on the DE Area Planning guidance was also made available.

Mr Collings presented Appendix 1* (E/3/17/8.2) which set out a timeline from 14 April 2016 to March 2017 on the EA's governance arrangements to agree the Strategic Area Plan 2017-20. He pointed out that the Assembly Election on 2 March 2017 had impacted on the process due to the rules concerning purdah.

The Committee agreed that Mr Collings should, in future, ensure that sufficient time would be made available in the planning cycle to allow for the Board's full consideration and final approval of its Area Plan and / or Action Plan prior to submission to the Minister.

Action: *Mr Collings to ensure sufficient time is made available in the planning cycle to allow for the Board's full consideration and final approval of its Area Plan and / or Action Plan prior to submission to the Minister.*

7.3 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS – SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

The Committee noted the paper* (E/3/17/8.3) setting out Ministerial approval to the following Development Proposals:

DP 478 Killyleagh Integrated Primary School; DP 479 Moneyrea Primary School; DP 480 Hazelwood College; DP 482 Lagan College; DP 489 Antrim Grammar School; and DP 500 Parkhall Integrated College

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on 13 April 2017.

The meeting ended at 3.25 pm.

CHAIRPERSON

DATE

* Paper issued with agenda *** Paper tabled