

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY HELD ON 11 MARCH 2021 AT 10.00 AM (by zoom)

1. **PRESENT** Rev R Herron (Chair)

Rev A Adams	Mr F Maskey
Miss F Boyd	Mr N McCausland
Mr D Cargo	Mrs G McGrath
Mr J Craig	Dr A McMorrán
Mr G Doran	Mrs A Mervyn
Mr M Johnston	Mr B Mulholland
Mrs S Kelly	Mr K Mulvenna
Sir Gerry Loughran	Miss R Rainey
Mr G Lundy	

2. **IN ATTENDANCE**

Ms S Long, Mrs M Corkey, Mrs P Cooney, Mr M McConkey, and Ms L McCall.

3. **PROTOCOL FOR EA BLENDED AND REMOTE ATTENDANCE MEETINGS**

All present were observing the protocol.

4. **APOLOGY**

An apology had been received from Mr L Ó Flannagáin.

5. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were reminded of the requirement to declare interests, as appropriate, during the course of the meeting.

6. **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 11 MARCH 2021**

The Committee agreed the minutes* (E/2/21/4) of the meeting held on 11 February 2021 on the proposal of Miss Rainey and seconded by Mr McCausland.

7. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**
 - 7.1 **ENGAGE PROGRAMME (7.1)**

Information setting out the current position for schools participating in the Engage Programme had been circulated previously to the Committee.
 - 7.2 **CORRESPONDENCE - POST PRIMARY ADMISSIONS AND ADDENDUM TO DE CIRCULAR NO 2021/02 (8.1 and 8.2)**

A copy of the letter sent to primary schools setting out advice around sharing progress and attainment information with post primary schools as well as a copy of the Addendum to the DE Circular regarding WJEC qualifications had been circulated previously to the Committee.
 - 7.3 **ENABLING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT THROUGH CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

Information on monitoring remote learning by schools through the use of checklists had been circulated previously to the Committee.

8. **CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

QUERY ON COVID-19 TESTING IN SCHOOLS

A Member sought an update on the arrangements to plan for Covid-19 testing in schools. Mrs Corkey said that the Education through Covid team was working with practitioners on this issue so that testing could be rolled out as soon as it became operational.

9. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

9.1 SHARING REMOTE LEARNING CONFERENCES

Mrs Cooney said that, in conjunction with DE, EA intended to deliver a series of mini-conferences for schools in order to support peer engagement on 'Sharing Remote Learning'. These mini-conferences would take place during the weeks commencing 22 March and 29 March 2021 within localities and across phases. All schools would be invited to participate and, where effective and enabling practice had been identified, individual schools would be asked to contribute. Mrs Cooney said that, as discussed at the Locality Leadership Network (LLN) meetings, school leaders from Wales and Scotland had also been invited to participate in the mini-conferences in order to share practices.

Mrs Corkey said that the LLN meetings were currently taking place and were being well received by principals. A Member said that he had attended a number of the LLN meetings and had observed that principals had commented on being overwhelmed by emails. Mrs Cooney said that the education partners were working together to address concerns relating to correspondence.

Members welcomed the proposals to deliver a series of mini-conferences which gave focus to professional development. They queried whether the overall findings of the conferences and the LLN meetings would be disseminated to all schools and also whether members of Boards of Governors would be invited to the mini-conferences. Mrs Cooney said that invites had been extended to the principal, a member of the senior leadership team, and a member of the Board of Governors of each school. She advised that, on all occasions where learning could be captured, EA sought to record and disseminate good practice with schools.

The Committee noted the paper* (E/3/21/7.1)

Action: *Share dates of mini-conferences with Board Members.*

9.2 NI SCHOOL LEADERSHIP FORUM

Mrs Cooney presented a paper* (E/3/21/7.2) setting out the arrangements to establish an EA NI School Leadership Forum 'Leading Together, Learning Together'. The forum would seek to bring formal oversight and strategic coherence to all reference groups, engagement networks, and the Locality Leadership Networks. It would also provide formal opportunities for school leaders to have early sight of and input into developmental work across EA. It would seek to have broad representation from across NI, drawn from every phase, sector and region.

Members welcomed the establishment of the forum. They sought clarity on its size, terms of reference, and linkages with other groupings particularly the NI Principals' Forum. Mrs Cooney said officers were mindful of the optimum size of the forum's membership. It would become an umbrella organisation for all reference and engagement groups, for example its membership would include a member of the NI Principals' Forum and a member of each of the three Locality Leadership Networks. She drew attention to the discrete role of the NI Principals' Forum which had been established by the Teachers' Negotiating Council. She advised that the terms of reference for the EA NI School Leadership Forum

would set out clearly its role as a resource to policy makers, the provision to share knowledge and expertise and to make representation, and to provide rigour and transparency across the education sector. She said that decision making would remain with managing authorities.

A Member received confirmation that the forum's membership would seek to comprise all organisations, learning communities, and principal clusters.

A Member asked officers to monitor the progress and success of the initiative by building in appropriate metrics. This was agreed.

The Committee noted the paper.

Action: *Monitor the impact of the initiative by building in indicators of success.*

9.3 AOE ACCREDITATION

Mrs Cooney presented a paper* (E/3/21/7.3) setting out the details by which EA planned to engage in an accredited professional development programme with the Association of Education Advisers. It was noted that a number of places within the programme's initial cohort would be made available to partner organisations.

The Chair queried if ETI would also be availing of this programme. Mrs Cooney said that while ETI had indicated interest, it would avail of accreditation specific to inspectors.

A Member queried if officers could also monitor the progress and success of the accreditation programme by building in appropriate metrics. She considered that governors continued to be overlooked as part of any professional development programme and this area of training needed to be improved. Mrs Cooney advised that a paper on governor training and support would be presented to the Committee in the coming months.

A Member queried the current capacity of the School Development Service to provide high quality supports to schools. She also sought an update on the current approach to ensure that SDS officers were availing of professional development and the method of monitoring progression.

Mrs Cooney outlined the work of the SDS to support school professional development through facilitated networks. She also drew attention to the introduction of innovation models which, in conjunction with partner organisations, facilitated teachers to take forward the planning for establishing a model for specific subject areas with the intention of sharing this practice across the wider education system. She also outlined the role of cross organisation link officers in supporting schools and advised that plans were in place to develop this role further.

The Chair of the Board said that he had attended the recent LLN meetings at which principals had paid tribute to the work carried out by cross organisation link officers.

The Chair asked for a paper on SDS resources to be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

The Committee noted the paper.

Actions: *Monitor the impact of the programme by building in indicators of success; and paper on SDS resources to be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.*

9.4 COACHING AND RESILIENCE PROGRAMME

Mrs Corkey said that the coaching and resilience programme had been introduced two years ago and had been well received by schools. She advised that funding had been received for the continuance of this programme and its launch had taken place the previous week.

9.5 EDUCATION RE-IMAGINED INNOVATION LAB

Mrs Cooney said that, in light of the significant challenges facing education during the pandemic, the education partners were planning to host an innovation lab to enable stakeholders to provide comments and opinions on any relevant educational issue. Engagement would be wide-ranging and would include schools, children and young people, parents, youth and community groups. A paper on this matter would be presented to the Committee in due course.

The Chair referred to the review of education being taken forward by DE at the current time and commented that the findings and recommendations arising from the innovation lab would also require consideration by DE.

10. AREA PLANNING

10.1 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 626 - BALLYMONEY HIGH SCHOOL

Proposal to establish post-16 provision and increase its enrolment number from 670 to 810 with an annual phased increase with effect from 1 September 2022 or as soon as possible thereafter

Rev Adams declared an interest in this Development Proposal.

Mr McConkey outlined the background to this proposal which included the previous consideration given by the Committee to arrangements for post-16 provision in the Ballymoney area involving all key education partners. He presented the papers* (E/3/21/8.1) 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, 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, current sustainability of the school, the impact of the proposal on schools in the locality, the responses received to the consultation, and the associated costs of the proposal.

On the proposal of Mr Cargo, seconded by Mr Lundy, the Committee approved the response for submission to DE along with the publication of the Proposal.

10.2 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 658 - BREFNE NURSERY SCHOOL, BELFAST

Proposal to transform to controlled integrated status with effect from 1 September 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter

Mr McConkey presented the papers* (E/3/21/8.2) 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, 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, current sustainability of the school, the impact of the proposal on schools in the locality, and the response received to the consultation. Members also noted that the Pre-School

Education Programme (PEG) had supported the proposal and had commented that all funded pre-school settings, regardless of location and management type, were accessible to children from all backgrounds and were subject to the same inspection standards.

Clarification was received that the enrolment data contained in the Case for Change related to target pre-school age children.

On the proposal of Mr Johnston, seconded by Mrs Boyd, the Committee approved the response for submission to DE along with the publication of the Proposal.

A Member commented on the unnecessary bureaucracy around taking forward development proposals for the nursery sector given that all funded pre-school setting, regardless of location and management type, were accessible to children from all backgrounds and were subject to the same inspection standards.

10.3 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 647 - HARDY MEMORIAL PRIMARY SCHOOL, RICHHILL

Proposal to decrease admissions and enrolment numbers from 74 to 60 and 515 to 420 respectively with effect from 1 September 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter

Mr McConkey presented the papers* (E/3/21/8.3) 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, EA had undertaken formal consultation with the Board of Governors and Trustees of schools which might be affected by the proposal. He drew attention to DE's programme of work around resetting school admission numbers and said that Hardy Memorial Primary School had not met DE's criteria to proceed through the voluntary resetting process. However, he said that DE had undertaken to further clarify the situation for Hardy Memorial with a view to enabling the school to proceed by means of the voluntary resetting process and without the need for a development proposal.

Members considered the Case for Change. This included the rationale for the proposal, current sustainability of the school, the impact of the proposal on schools in the locality, and the responses received to the consultation.

On the proposal of Mr Craig, seconded by Mrs Kelly, the Committee agreed that, should approval not be forthcoming from DE with regard to the school proceeding to decrease its admissions and enrolment numbers (as indicated above) by means of the voluntary resetting process, EA's response for submission to DE was approved along with the publication of the Proposal.

10.4 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 612 - MAGUIRESBRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Proposal to increase admissions number from 15 to 20 with an annual phased increase in the enrolment number from 104 to 140 with effect from 1 September 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter

Mr McConkey presented the papers* (E/3/21/8.4) 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, 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, current sustainability of the school, the impact of the proposal on schools in the locality, and the responses received to the consultation.

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

10.5 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 659 - THE ARMSTRONG PRIMARY SCHOOL, ARMAGH

Proposal to increase enrolment number with an annual phased increase from 443 to 510 with effect from 1 September 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter

Mr McConkey presented the papers* (E/3/21/8.5) 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, 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, current sustainability of the school, the impact of the proposal on schools in the locality, and the responses received to the consultation.

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

10.6 BELFAST POST-PRIMARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS

Miss Rainey declared interests in Grosvenor Grammar School and Bloomfield Collegiate.

- DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 638 - ASHFIELD GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

Proposal to increase admissions from 113 to 130 with an annual phased increase in the enrolment number from 660 to 790 with effect from 1 September 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter

- DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 639 - ASHFIELD BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL

Proposal to increase its admissions from 110 to 140 with an annual phased increase in the enrolment number from 700 to 900 with effect from 1 September 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter

- DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 640 - BREDA ACADEMY

Proposal to decrease its admissions from 170 to 140 with an annual phased decrease in the enrolment number from 1,000 to 900 with effect from 1 September 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter

- DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 641 - GROSVENOR GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Proposal to increase admissions from 155 to 175 with an annual phased increase in the enrolment number from 1,075 to 1,225 with effect from 1 September 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter

- DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 642 - WELLINGTON COLLEGE

Proposal to increase admissions from 110 to 120 with an annual phased increase in the enrolment number from 770 to 800 with effect from 1 September 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter

- DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 643 - BLOOMFIELD COLLEGIATE

Proposal to increase admissions from 100 to 110 with an annual phased increase in the enrolment number from 710 to 770 with effect from 1 September 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter

Mr McConkey provided background information on the proposals which included the Committee's prior consideration to ensuring that a strategic approach for controlled post primary provision would be adopted for the Belfast area. For the benefit of new Members, he drew attention to particular information contained in the Case for Change relating to location of schools, NISRA information on live births, current sustainability of the schools, pupil migration in and out of Belfast, the impact of the proposals on schools in the locality, the previous uptake of temporary variations, and the alignment of the proposals to the Area Plan to ensure a network of sustainable schools.

Mr McConkey advised that the Area Planning Local Group for the locality had established a Belfast sub-group to look at the impact of increasing demographics, the pressures on post primary schools, and the need to plan strategically for an increase in capacity. This sub-group was representative of all sectors within education, managing authorities, and support bodies. Mr McConkey said it had been hoped that all proposals for the Belfast area could be brought forward at the same time for consideration. However, EA had received requests to publish development proposals for phased increases in admission and enrolment numbers within the Voluntary Grammar sector in October/November 2019. These proposals had already been published and were awaiting Ministerial decision.

Mr McConkey presented the papers* (E/3/21/8.6) for publication and said that, in accordance with Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, EA had undertaken formal consultation with the Board of Governors and Trustees of schools which might be affected by the proposal. He advised that the proposals had been delayed in being presented to the Committee on account of the out-workings of Covid-19 and the associated pause in area planning. The Chair received confirmation that the figures outlined in the papers were the same figures that had been used as part of the pre-publication consultation exercise.

Members considered the Case for Change for all the Development Proposals listed above for the Belfast area, including the responses received to the consultation.

Clarity was sought on the DE Additional Places exercise to secure additional places in pressure areas. Mr McConkey said that EA was fully sighted on all parental preferences for all schools and had data to map feeder primary schools to post-primary schools over a number of areas. This information helped to inform pressure areas. He said that DE had issued a communication to schools in the previous week with regard to the application process for the Additional Places exercise for 2022/23.

A Member expressed concern that the proposals concerning Grosvenor Grammar School and Bloomfield Collegiate would have a detrimental impact on the sustainability of non-selective schools in the Ards and North Down area. He asked for his comments to be factored into EA's response. A Member also expressed concern that the proposals could also impact negatively on controlled post primary provision in the Lagan Valley area. He said that, when considering a development proposal, EA should have flexibility to support a school to increase its admission and enrolment numbers over a fixed period of time and to reconsider that decision at a point in time to align with changes in demographics as published by NISRA.

Mr McConkey advised that officers were preparing a separate report on the Lisburn and Castlereagh LGD area as there was significant demand for post-primary places particularly in Lagan Valley. This information had been factored into the proposals. He advised that officers were still examining proposals for controlled post-primary provision in the Ards and

North Down area and these proposals would be presented to the Committee for consideration in due course.

The Committee considered that the present processes around area planning were inflexible and onerous given that small changes required considerable work. It considered that there was a need for policy adjustment to provide for a more flexible method of achieving changes in numbers.

A Member also said that area planning processes should give consideration to the ecological and environmental impacts of development proposals.

The Chair of the Board said that future area planning considerations should also reflect on the impact of Covid-19 on schools.

On the proposal of Mr Cargo, seconded by Mr Mulvenna, the Committee approved the response for submission to DE along with the publication of the Proposals.

10.7 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL OUTCOMES

The Committee noted the paper* (E/2/21/8.1) setting out the Minister's decisions on published Development Proposals.

10.8 COMMITTEE PAPERS

Members discussed the nature and volume of the paperwork being presented to the Committee to support the consideration of development proposals. Whilst mindful of the legalities around presenting the Case for Change, officers undertook to review the content of the accompanying summary paper.

Action: Review content of summary paper that accompanies the Case for Change.

11. MUSIC SERVICE CHARGING POLICY FOR 2020-21 – REVISED PROPOSAL

Mrs Corkey drew attention to the consideration given by the Committee in November 2020 to the current year's charging model for the Music Service. She presented a paper* (E/3/21/9) which set out the proposal to implement revised arrangements which would ensure that no charges would be levied for 2020/21 on account of the unprecedented disruption caused by the pandemic to the service during the year.

Clarification was given on a matter concerning staffing costs.

On the proposal of Dr McMorrán, seconded by Mr Johnston, the Committee agreed to recommend that no charges should be levied for the Music Service for 2020/21, as set out in the paper.

12. CHAIR'S REMARKS

As the new Committee structure was anticipated to be in place for April 2021, the Chair expressed his appreciation to all Members and officers for their support to the work of the Committee.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

All Committee dates from April onwards would be captured within the new Committee structure and would be agreed by the Board.

The meeting ended at 12.23 pm.

CHAIRPERSON

DATE

* Paper issued with agenda