

**EDUCATION AUTHORITY
MINUTES OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee held in Antrim Board Centre on 10 March 2016 at 1.00 pm.

PRESENT: Rev R Herron (Chairperson)

Rev A Adams	Sir Gerry Loughran
Ms A Andrews	Dr A McMorran
Fr T Bartlett	Dr I McMorris
Mrs M Culbert	Mr R Pollock
Dr M Dynan	Miss R Rainey
Mr M Gray-Sloan	Ms N Toman
Sr C Hegarty	

Members of the full Board attending:

Mr E Jardine	Mrs N Lappin
--------------	--------------

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr G Boyd, Mr B Mulholland, Mr G Butler, Mr J Collings, Mr R Gilbert, Mr P Mackey, Mr M Burns, Ms S McCartan, Ms K Scott and Ms L McCall.

Ms F Hepper, Mr T Connolly and Mr G Patrick (DE officials) attended for part of the meeting.

The Chair welcomed Mr Collings to the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr D Cargo, Ms N Gowan, Mrs D McDonald and Ms S O'Connor.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Dr Dynan declared an interest in Development Proposal No 9.1.5 (Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Omagh).

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2016

It was noted that Dr McMorran had seconded the proposal contained within minute 8.4. Subject to this amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2016 were agreed on the proposal of Sr Hegarty and seconded by Miss Rainey.

4. MATTER ARISING

STRULE SHARED EDUCATION CAMPUS - MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (5.2)

The Chair declared an interest as he served on the Strule Main Campus Phase 2 Project Board and was a member of the Board of Governors of Omagh Academy.

Mr Mulholland reported that collective and individual meetings had been held with representatives of the Boards of Governors of Omagh Academy, Arvalee School and Omagh High School to discuss the draft Memorandum of Agreement. A paper** setting out the comments and concerns raised by the three controlled schools was noted. Mr Mulholland stated that the Trustees of the other three schools involved in the Programme had also engaged in consultation meetings. In addition, he advised that the Controlled Schools' Support Council would be submitting comments on the draft Memorandum of Agreement directly to DE.

The Committee noted that a final draft of the Memorandum of Agreement, which would take account of issues raised by all consultees, was now being prepared by the DE Project Team. When complete, the Memorandum of Agreement would be shared with the Boards of Governors for information and presented to the EA Board for consideration. It was originally anticipated that this would be at the March meeting of the Board; however, the timeframe was such that it was more likely to be the April meeting of the Board.

5. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

SEN PROVISION

Mr Boyd outlined the media attention that had been given earlier in the week to an issue concerning early years' provision for children in special schools. He advised that the Minister had written to the Chair of the Board to request a review of arrangements in respect of early years' provision. The Chair had confirmed to the Minister that the EA would review its decision.

Dr Mangan advised that children with assessed special educational needs in early years were educated either within PEAG funded playgroups, statutory nurseries or early years' classes attached to special schools, of which 100% of PEAG funded places were part-time and 39.5% of statutory nursery schools / units were part-time. The EA had 40 special schools of which 29 provided for early years' classes. Current data showed that 15 of the 29 special schools provided part-time early years' classes and that 300 children attended early years' classes attached to special schools. Dr Mangan said that the margin of flexibility was challenging for the EA to ensure that there was capacity to meet current and future needs. She stated that the Minister for Health had announced, in recent weeks, a further £1.2m for autism diagnostic services. This was anticipated to place further pressures on demand.

Dr Mangan advised that the move in recent years to part-time provision had been to ensure that the EA could fulfil its statutory duties to meet the needs of children who had more complex needs for whom an early years' special school placement was deemed to be appropriate. Since April 2015, the increased pressure for early years' places had resulted in part-time provision being introduced in three special schools. In Belfast, in September 2015, all special schools that had early years' provision had no spare capacity. This therefore placed pressure on the EA to meet its statutory duties should further children be identified with special educational needs.

Dr Mangan advised that the transitional framework for children and young people's services had been considered on 4 June 2015. This included the action that the EA should move to part-time early years' placements with effect from 1 September 2016. She advised that, during September and October 2015, EA officers had engaged with the Educational Psychology Service and Special School Principals on the transitional framework. A policy had also been drafted on early years' places and the policy was currently being considered in terms of Section 75 duties.

Dr Mangan indicated that information could be provided to the Children and Young People's Services Committee at its next meeting in order to allow for a review of provision.

A Member said that she had asked for this item to be included on the agenda for the March meeting of the Board. The Chair of the Board was not present at the current meeting and she would have welcomed the Chair's opinion on this matter. While she did not serve on the Children and Young People's Services Committee, she considered that this matter should have been set out in the minutes of the Committee and discussed at the subsequent Board meeting. DE's policy document 'Learning to Learn' provided a framework for children attending mainstream education. In this context, she considered that the decision taken by the Children and Young People's Services to move to part-time provision for children assessed with special educational needs in early years should be reviewed. She considered that the EA Members had received criticism in the media on this issue and the public relationship between DE and the EA had been undermined. She said that she wished the matter to be raised at the Board meeting in March.

A Member indicated that while she served on the Children and Young People's Services Committee, she was unaware of the information in the transitional framework document which had led to the Committee's decision to move to part-time early years' placements for children with assessed special educational needs. She highlighted that all contentious issues should be highlighted to Members during any decision making process.

A Member stated that this issue should be debated within the Children and Young People's Services Committee.

The Chair asked Members to forward concerns to the Chair of the Board and / or the Chief Executive.

6. BUDGET 2016/17 : DE PRESENTATION

Ms F Hepper, Mr T Connolly and Mr G Patrick were in attendance for this item.

The Committee noted that DE's final Resource budget for 2016/17 was £1,947.5m which included £70.7m earmarked for the Teaching and Non-Teaching Voluntary Exit Scheme and the Investing in the Teaching Workforce Scheme. On a like for like basis with 2015/16, the Budget 2016/17 Resource allocation for Education represented a net cash reduction of £72.1m (3.8%).

DE had allocated a total capital budget of £193.7m which included £20.3m to fund projects agreed under the Together : Building a United Community (TBUC) Initiative. The total capital budget represented an increase of £46.9m (32%) based on the opening 2015/16 capital allocation. The initial indicative budget allocations by programme for 2016/17 were noted.

The Committee noted that it was anticipated that the Resource budget would receive an additional £20m within the June 2016/17 monitoring round. This funding commitment meant that the net cash reduction was £52.1m (2.7%).

Ms Hepper said that the scale of the net cash reductions required in 2016/17 meant that savings could not be delivered through efficiencies alone. The cash reduction did not take account of inescapable cost pressures in 2016/17 such as pay increases, changes in National Insurance contributions, price inflation and meeting statutory and contractual commitments.

Ms Hepper said that, as part of the Budget process, specific inescapable pressures had been identified that the Minister had agreed to fund. These included Pathway Fund, CCEA development costs for additional GCSEs, Free School Meals Entitlement, C2K ICT costs and others, amounting to £7.4m. This funding pressure, when added to the net cash reduction of £52.1m, resulted in a funding gap of £59.5m.

Ms Hepper said that 2015/16 baseline allocations had been identified (£25.1m) that could be reallocated to address the 2016/17 funding gap. In addition, the Minister had agreed Budget reductions in 2016/17 amounting to £35.5m. These included £22m in respect of the EA Block Grant, £1.5m for DE staffing, £1m within CCEA, £1m within other and £10m within the Aggregated Schools' Budget (ASB). She pointed out that the Minister had sought to protect, as far as possible, the ASB. The funding gap of £59.5m would therefore be addressed through the identification of £25.1m of budget reallocations and £35.5m of 2016/17 budget reductions, leaving DE with a net balance of £1.1m for a contingency fund.

Ms Hepper advised that a review of earmarked funds had been carried out in 2015/16 at the request of the Minister. The Minister had decided that, as a result of the review, £119.5m of funds previously earmarked would transfer to the EA Block Grant in 2016/17.

The Committee noted DE's final 2016/17 Resource Budget allocations set out at Annex A in the paper.

The Committee also noted the EA's Block Grant position of £498.1m which included £119.5m for Earmarked funds and the budget reduction of £22m.

An overview of Departmental restructuring following the Assembly Election in May was provided. It was noted that, as agreed by the Executive, the 2016/17 June monitoring round would provide new Ministers with flexibility, as an exceptional provision, to reallocate budgets in line with their priorities without requiring the agreement of the Executive.

Ms Hepper said that DE was seeking improved financial stability in final reporting from the EA in 2016/17. DE officials were agreeable to meeting the Finance and General Purposes Committee on the Budget position should this be requested.

A Member referred to the transfer of £119.5m, which had been previously earmarked, to the EA Block Grant. She considered that a significant proportion of these funds related to contractual commitments which meant a reduced level of flexibility. It was noted that C2K and PPP were the two largest elements within the £119.5m.

Mr Connolly advised that schools had been informed of their budgetary positions the previous week. An additional £30m had been included within the ASB. The 0.8% increase in cash terms for schools did not take account of inescapable pressures such as pay and price increases and changes in national insurance contributions. Ms Hepper confirmed that £38.7m of school surpluses was currently banked with DFP. It was noted that while initial projections for schools' draw down had previously been £7m, the estimated year end draw down was less than £0.7m.

A Member queried if any assessment had been carried out on the impact of the 2016/17 Budget on the ASB by school sector. Mr Connolly confirmed that a high level equality assessment had been carried out and no negligible impact had been found with regard to Section 75 responsibilities.

A Member queried the timeframe for a Comprehensive Spending Review. Ms Hepper advised that a review would commence in the Autumn on the Resource budget, planned for 2020, and the Capital budget, planned for 2021.

A Member said that the information available to EA Board Members regarding in year monitoring could create tension between the EA and DE. Ms Hepper provided clarity on the additional allocations received by the EA in 2015/16 and reminded Members that they should have no expectations that any further in year allocations would be made in 2016/17. She reminded Members of their obligations to submit a balanced budget for 2016/17.

(Mr Jardine left the meeting at 2.45 pm.)

7. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ISSUES

DELIVERY SOCIAL CHANGE LITERACY AND NUMERACY SIGNATURE PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the final evaluation report* (E/3/16/7.1) for the DSC Literacy and Numeracy Signature Programme.

Mr Burns, in a presentation**, outlined the resources that were put in place to support the Programme and gave a summary of key findings in respect of primary and post-primary achievements. Within the two year Programme, 5,230 primary pupils and 13,333 post-primary pupils had received additional support. He advised that a booklet on the primary sector's experiences within the Programme had been issued to all primary schools and the post-primary booklet would be made available, when complete, at the end of March.

A Member indicated that he had served on the Taskforce for Literacy and Numeracy for 4 years. He had observed that the pupils' attendance, behaviour, engagement in school activities and their self-esteem had improved as part of the programme. He was discouraged that DE had ceased the funding for the Signature Programme in light of the evidence of its considerable benefits to young people.

Discussion ensued in relation to the significant investment into graduate teachers. Mr Burns said that officers had asked DE to incorporate strategies into teacher training to support beginning teachers. DE had also been asked to track the performance of the primary school pupils who had taken part in the Programme. Mr Burns advised that some Signature teachers had received employment in the schools in which they worked and some primary schools were seeking to share Signature teachers. It was noted that the results of the Programme showed improvements except for a slight decline in achievement in Maths in year 2 within the primary sector. A Member stated that teachers should be supported in lower primary in order to provide a firm foundation for learning in Maths.

(Sir Gerry Loughran left the meeting at 3.30 pm.)

Ms Scott said that DE would shortly be launching the Teacher Professional Learning Strategy which would set out strategic objectives in respect of an agreed framework for Teacher Professional Learning, strengthening leadership in schools, and promoting collaborative working and sharing best practice through learning communities.

A Member praised the work of the Programme in raising educational standards and received clarification that the Programme had cost £6m for each year of operation. He queried the role of ICT in raising those standards. Mr Burns advised that the Programme had been mainly

reliant on website material. A Member said that the positive impacts of digital resources should not be underestimated at all levels of development, particularly with regard to children with special educational needs. Discussion ensued in relation to the role of C2K and the need to ensure value for money whilst raising educational standards. Mr Mulholland indicated that the current contract with C2K was due to finish in 2019. The time was now appropriate for the EA to start to assess and identify its ICT needs. A Member pointed out that the £6m per annum for the Signature Programme related to the employment of graduate teachers who had helped to raise educational standards. The focus of the EA should therefore be on raising educational standards, maximising teacher time and continual professional development. A review of initial teacher training in colleges should also be considered.

It was suggested that raising educational standards could become a standing item on the Committee agenda.

On the proposal of Dr Dynan, seconded by Dr McMorran, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board should approve the final evaluation report.

Mr Mulholland expressed appreciation to Mr P Mackey and Mrs H Duffy for their work in taking forward the Literacy and Numeracy Signature Programme.

The Chair said that Mr Mackey was retiring at the end of March. He paid tribute to Mr Mackey for his services to education over the last 43 years and for his leadership in areas such as the Literacy and Numeracy Signature Programme.

8. SHARED EDUCATION ISSUES

PEACE IV FUNDING

Mr Mulholland reported that the EA, in partnership with Leargas, was developing a business case as part of an open bid to secure funding against Specific Objective 1 (Shared Education) of the Peace IV Programme. The stage 1 application was required to be submitted by 26 April 2016 and stage 2 by the end of June 2016. He referred to the team of staff that would require to be established to deliver the project should the bid be successful and he outlined the arrangements agreed with DE in respect of deploying staff to prepare the business case. This arrangement would be affirmed in writing from DE prior to any staff recruitment.

The Committee noted the aims of the project and acknowledged the challenges associated with the key outputs, as set out in the paper* (E/3/16/8.1). It also noted that the bid, once completed, would be presented to the Board.

(Fr Bartlett left the meeting at 4.05 pm. Dr Dynan and Mr M Gray-Sloan left the meeting at 4.06 pm.)

9. AREA PLANNING

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The Chair said that a paper setting out the protocols associated with considering Development Proposals would be presented to the Committee at its April meeting.

For Publication

- 9.1 Development Proposal Nos 433, 434 and 435**
Altishane Primary School; Loughash Primary School, St Patrick's Primary School, Dunamanagh
Proposal to discontinue the above schools with effect from 31 August 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter

Development Proposal No 436

Proposal to establish a new Catholic Maintained Co-Educational Primary School for 105 pupils with effect from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Ms McCartan outlined the proposal* (E/3/16/9.1.1) drawing attention to the consultation which had taken place and the comments received.

On the proposal of Dr McMorris, seconded by Sr Hegarty, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board should publish the Development Proposal and approve the draft Response as set out in Appendix 1*.

- 9.2 Development Proposal No 453 – Glenraig Integrated Primary School, Hollywood**
Proposal to decrease the approved enrolment number from 252 to 210, the current admission figure of 30 to remain. The school to continue as a single stream entry school with an admission of 30 and an approved enrolment of 210 with effect from 1 September 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter

The Committee considered the proposal* (E/3/16/9.1.2).

On the proposal of Miss Rainey, seconded by Mr Pollock, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board should publish the Development Proposal and approve the draft Response as set out in Appendix C*.

- 9.3 Development Proposal Nos 455 – Bunscoil an Iuir**
Proposal to establish a grant-aided Irish Medium Nursery Unit with effect from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter. The Nursery Unit will provide part-time pre-school education through the medium of Irish for 26 children and will replace the existing voluntary Naiscoil an Iuir

(Mrs Andrews declared an interest in this item.)

Members noted that the proposal* (E/3/16/9.1.3) could displace the existing good quality pre-school provision in the locality.

On the proposal of Sr Hegarty, seconded by Dr McMorran, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board should publish the Development Proposal and highlight to DE that the Authority was not supportive of the proposal as it would lead to displacement of an existing pre-school provision in the locality. It was noted that the last ETI report on pre-school provision had reported that 'the quality of education provided by this Naiscoil is very good. The Naiscoil is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.'

- 9.4 Development Proposal No 457 – Hollywood Nursery School**
Proposal to increase the enrolment from 52 part-time places to 78 part-time places with effect from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter

The Committee considered the proposal* (E/3/16/9.1.4).

On the proposal of Miss Rainey, seconded by Mrs Culbert, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board should publish the Development Proposal and approve the draft Response as set out in Appendix C*.

(The Chair declared an interest in Development Proposals Nos 458 and 459 as he served on the Board of Governors of Omagh Academy. Dr Dynan's interest in Development Proposal No 458 was noted.)

**9.5 Development Proposal No 458 – Christian Brothers’ Grammar School, Omagh
Proposal to discontinue academic selection for the year 8 intake. Process to be introduced on a phased basis, beginning September 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter with the view that the school will have a non-academic selective intake by September 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter**

The Committee considered the proposal* (E/3/9.1.5). It was pointed out that on previous occasions the discontinuance of academic selection at a maintained school had meant that some pupils, instead of applying to undertake GL examinations had made application for AQE examinations. This had ultimately resulted in pupils being displaced from a controlled grammar school to a controlled post-primary school.

On the proposal of Sr Hegarty, seconded by Mrs Culbert, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board should publish the Development Proposal and approve the draft Response as set out in Appendix 1*. The Response would incorporate the comment relating to the potential impact on displacement within the controlled sector.

**9.6 Development Proposal No 459 – Loreto Grammar School, Omagh
Proposal to discontinue academic selection for the year 8 intake. Process to be introduced on a phased basis, beginning September 2017 or as soon as possible thereafter with the view that the school will have a non-academic selective intake by September 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter**

The Committee considered the proposal* (E/3/9.1.6). It was pointed out that on previous occasions the discontinuance of academic selection at a maintained school had meant that some pupils, instead of applying to undertake GL examinations had made application for AQE examinations. This had ultimately resulted in pupils being displaced from a controlled grammar school to a controlled post-primary school.

On the proposal of Sr Hegarty, seconded by Mrs Culbert, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board should publish the Development Proposal and approve the draft Response as set out in Appendix 1*. The Response would incorporate the comment relating to the potential impact on displacement within the controlled sector.

**9.7 Development Proposal No 460 – Altayeskey Primary School, Draperstown
Proposal to discontinue with effect from 31 August 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter**

The Committee considered the proposal* (E/3/16/9.1.7).

On the proposal of Rev Adams, seconded by Mr Pollock, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board should publish the Development Proposal*.

**9.8 Development Proposal No 461 – St Joseph’s Primary School, Bessbrook
Proposal to change the General Learning Support Centre to an Autism Specific Learning Support Centre from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter**

The Committee considered the proposal* (E/3/16/9.1.8).

On the proposal of Dr McMorris, seconded by Sr Hegarty, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board should publish the Development Proposal*.

**9.9 Development Proposal No 454 - Gaelscoil na Daróige
Proposal to establish a statutory part time (26 pupil) Irish Medium nursery unit with effect from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter**

The Chair reported that the Committee had endorsed the publication of this Proposal at its February meeting.

On the proposal of Sr Hegarty, seconded by Miss Rainey, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Board should approve the draft Response as set out in Appendix 1* (E/3/16/9.1.14).

Development Proposal Outcomes

9.10 Development Proposal No 425 - Holy Cross Girls' Primary School

The Committee noted the paper* (E/3/16/9.1.9) advising that the Minister had not approved the proposal to establish a statutory nursery unit at this school to provide for 26 part-time places with effect from 1 September 2016.

9.11 Development Proposal Nos 426 and 427 - Holy Family Nursery School and Holy Family Primary School

The Committee noted the paper* (E/3/16/9.1.10) advising that the Minister had approved the proposals to discontinue Holy Family Nursery School with effect from 31 August 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter and to establish a statutory nursery unit at Holy Family Primary School to provide 52 full-time places with effect from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter.

9.12 Development Proposal No 431 - Cliftonville Integrated Primary School

The Committee noted the paper* (E/3/16/9.1.11) advising that the Minister had approved the proposal to increase the admission number at this school from 48 to 58 and the enrolment number from 338 to 406 from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter.

9.13 Development Proposal No 432 - Strandtown Primary School

The Committee noted the paper* (E/3/16/9.1.11) advising that the Minister had approved the proposal to increase the admission number at this school from 236 to 261 and the enrolment number from 943 to 1044 from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter.

9.14 Development Proposal Nos 450 and 451 – Gaelscoil an tSeanchai

The Committee noted that communication had been received to advise that this transfer would be taken forward under Article 17 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986.

9.15 Development Proposals – Summary

The Committee noted a paper** advising that the Minister had approved the following Development Proposals:

- DP 405 Ballymacash Primary School (Increase in admission and enrolment number)
- DP 406 Harmony Hill Primary School (Increase in admission and enrolment number)
- DP 408 Largymore Primary School (Decrease in admission and enrolment number)
- DP 409 Lisburn Central Primary School (Decrease in admission and enrolment number)
- DP 411 West Winds Primary School (Decrease in enrolment number)
- DP 412 Castle Gardens Primary School (Decrease in enrolment number)
- DP 413 Londonderry Primary School (Increase in admission and enrolment number)
- DP 416 St Comhghall's College, Lisnaskea (Amalgamation)
- DP 417 St Eugene's College (Amalgamation)
- DP 418 Establishment of a new Catholic Maintained 11-19 Post-Primary School in Lisnaskea (Amalgamation)

The Committee noted that the Minister had approved the following Development Proposals with some modifications:

- DP 402 Loreto College (Increase in enrolment number)
- DP 401 Dominican College (Increase in enrolment number)
- DP 400 St Joseph's College, Coleraine (Closure)

The Committee also noted that the Minister had not approved the following Development Proposal:

- DP 425 Holy Cross Girls' Primary School / Nursery Unit (establishment of a 26 part-time place nursery unit)

10. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

IRISH MEDIUM EDUCATION

Ms Andrews said that, at the November meeting of the Committee, she had expressed willingness to serve on a group which had been established at the invite of the Minister to review issues within Irish Medium education. She reported that she had attended meetings of this group, which comprised leaders and principals within Irish Medium education, to draw up practical and deliverable solutions to take forward improvements within Irish Medium. Ms Andrews, however, outlined her concerns with the terms of reference of this group and she reported that she had recently withdrawn her membership.

Mr Mulholland pointed out that the Irish Medium group had been established at the Minister's request. The role of EA had been to facilitate the process. It was important to note that the terms of reference had not been drafted by the EA. He advised that the Irish Medium group was required to present its report to DE the following day.

Ms Andrews acknowledged this. She said that there were significant issues within Irish Medium education which needed to be addressed. She therefore requested that the Education Committee should establish a working group to examine those issues.

It was agreed that the Education Committee's responsibilities with regard to the Irish Medium sector would be clarified and that a working group would be established to take forward improvements within Irish Medium education.

It was also agreed that a presentation would be provided to the Committee on Irish Medium in due course.

11. RETIREMENT OF REGIONAL MANAGING DIRECTORS

The Chair advised that as Mr Butler and Mr Mulholland would be retiring at the end of March, this was their last Education Committee meeting. He paid tribute to Mr Butler and Mr Mulholland for their contributions to the EA and their regional responsibilities over the past 40 and 35 years respectively.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for 14 April 2016.

The meeting ended at 4.55 pm.

CHAIRPERSON

DATE