

Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

COUNCIL

Minutes of the eighty-first meeting of Council held on Thursday 1 October 2009 at 10.00 hours in Room 226, CCEA, Clarendon Road, Belfast.

Present : Mr D McKee (Chairman) Mr M Bowen
Ms M Watson Mr J Wilkinson
Mr D Thompson Mr J Clarke
Mrs D Black Mrs H McClenaghan
Dr M Brown Ms P O'Farrell
Mr J Collins

Mr N Anderson (Acting Chief Executive)
Mr R Hanna (Director of Education Strategy)
Ms AM Duffy (Director of Qualifications)
Mr M Fegan (Chief Finance Officer)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Ms M Crilly; Mr N Downing; Ms C McKinney and Mr M Quinn.

2 Chairman's business

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. He advised that Mr Richard Hanna had been appointed as Director Designate of Curriculum, Assessment and Examinations, ESA. Members congratulated Mr Hanna on his appointment and wished him well in the challenges ahead.

2nd Tier ESA Posts

The Chairman advised that 6 out of 7 2nd Tier Directors had been appointed. Members had received the detail of the appointments via e-mail prior to the meeting.

End of Committee Reports

The first draft reports will be reviewed by the Chairman. If changes are required officers will be notified well in advance of the deadline for Council papers.

Joint Council/Curriculum and Assessment Committee

There will be a joint Council and Curriculum & Assessment Committee meeting on 21 October 2009. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss and agree advice on the Formative Record of Achievement in order to meet DE's deadline of 31 October 2009.

Members have been notified of this date.

Ad Hoc Committee : 2 September 2009

Members noted the minutes of the meeting. The following issues were discussed:

14-19

The Minister agreed to a meeting on 6 October 2009.

The Chairman has written to the Minister of the Department for Employment and Learning seeking a meeting on same. No response has been received.

Council Residential

It was confirmed that the Council residential would take place in the Slieve Donard Hotel 26-27 November. The meeting will include the presentation of CCEA's handover document to the Chief Executive Designate of ESA.

Members agreed that the Permanent Secretary be invited to the meeting.

The Chairman advised that he had agreed with the Acting Chief Executive that there would be no additional committee meetings after the 26 November 2009.

(Information has been redacted under section 36(2)(b)(ii) Information to which this section applies is exempt information if, in the reasonable opinion of a qualified person, disclosure of the information would, or would be likely to inhibit the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation.)

PRP

The Acting Chief Executive advised that no instruction from DE had yet been received to proceed with the payment of PRP. The CFO reported that a revised submission was with DFP for consideration and it was hoped that they would respond as soon as possible.

It was confirmed that TMT had met with those officers eligible for PRP to keep them as well informed as possible.

The CFO advised that some staff had asked for feedback on their performance. The Chairman of the Business Committee agreed that this should be organised immediately to avoid raised expectations.

The Chairman of Council expressed concern regarding this delay and hoped that this would be resolved before the end of December 2009. He asked that a Remuneration Committee be organised for early November, subject to DE approval.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 June 2009

The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed by Mr Jim Clarke and seconded by Mr M Bowen as a true and accurate record. A copy was signed by the Chairman.

Action points

Members noted that all of the action points had been completed.

4 Occupational Studies : Interim Advice

C/81/1

The Chairman of the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Committee drew members' attention to the detail of the paper, in particular the draft recommendations set out in page 4. He advised that a significant amount of work had taken place to address the issues raised at the consultation events earlier in the year.

The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that this was an interim position with a view to bringing coherence over the next few years. He recognised that there was a need for a fundamental review of these units in order for occupational studies to sit alongside other qualifications that have the same currency as GCSEs and GCEs.

Following discussion, members agreed that Option 3 should be adopted as an interim structure for the Occupational Studies qualification pending further review. They asked that the advice reflect the need for the review to include progression, STEM and the Entitlement Framework and that all of this work should continue into the Curriculum, Assessment and Examinations Directorate of ESA.

The Director of Education Strategy assured members that the qualifications development work would be a key part of this Directorate. He stated that this would be a key piece of work for ESA moving forward to ensure there are high quality qualifications within the Entitlement Framework with the appropriate currency.

The Chairman wished to place on record his thanks to the officers involved in drawing this together and for the significant work carried out in a very short timeframe.

5 Finance and Planning

Business Committee Report : 23 September 2009

The Chairman of the Business Committee apologised that the minutes were not finalised in time for this meeting.

He advised that as well as the finance reports already on the Council agenda, the following items were discussed :

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- September Monitoring Round : Although the submission has been verbally accepted, CCEA have not yet received the revised allocation letter from DE regarding the 2010/11 budget.
- Operational Plan 2010/11 timetable: members noted the information provided in the timetable. It was recognised that the majority of the curriculum, assessment and examinations functions would continue within the CAE Directorate of ESA.

The draft operational plan would come forward to the last meeting of Business Committee for approval.

- Quality Initiatives and Continuous Improvements: members noted that all of the initiatives had received external verification and accreditations maintained.

Members commended the organisation on a good performance.

- Tenders : two tenders were approved due to the significant amount of funding involved.

- **ESA Update** : members note the information provided in particular the appointment of the ESA Chairman : Sean Hogan.
- **Any Other Business** : clarification was sought on whether there were any outstanding grievances or potential Industrial Tribunal cases which could continue into ESA. An assurance was given that there were no cases outstanding.

Members noted the information provided.

Finance Report as at 31 August 2009

C/81/2

The CFO advised that the budget was showing a significant underspend in a number of areas at this time. However there have been a number of adjustments following the September monitoring round.

At this point in the year Earned Income is low due to invoicing for summer exams taking place in October. Early indications show an 8% increase in sales due to the success of the new GCE specifications. Other GCSE and ACETs sales are on target. Overall there will be a 3% increase on the agreed budget. DE has been notified and funding handed back as part of the September monitoring round.

The underspend shown in Expenditure has been largely rectified by the monitoring round. Savings have been made in relation to cancelling organisation and conference events and printing efficiencies where better deals have been agreed.

The Chairman of the Business Committee recognised that although funding was being handed back, in these circumstances this was due to good management and negotiation.

Contracts

The CFO advised that the BELB has signalled they will not be awarding new contracts before ESA. Contracts will be awarded on a case to case basis subject to DE and ESA approval. He also confirmed that existing business critical contracts would be extended into the next financial year to ensure business continuity.

Projects

The CFO reported that as a result of projects being deferred to the next financial year and awaiting policy decisions funding would be handed back for repurposing in the Education sector. He confirmed that the Director Designate (CAE) and Finance Director Designate (ESA) have been made aware of these issues.

The Chairman sought an assurance that the curriculum projects deferred to 2010/11 would be picked up. The CFO confirmed that this would be the case.

Balance Sheet as at 31 August 2009

C/81/3

Members noted that the fixed assets figure had dropped due to the switch over to ESA's accounting policies. The increased pension liability from 2008 to 2009 was due to the current economic climate.

Audit and Risk Committee Report : 16 September 2009

The Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee reported on the following :

- *(Information has been redacted under section 36(2)(b)(ii) Information to which this section applies is exempt information if, in the reasonable opinion of a qualified person, disclosure of the information would, or would be likely to inhibit the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation.)*
- Non-compliance with CCEA's purchasing policy : 4 invoices totalling £21,153 had been brought to the attention of the committee. The Director of Corporate Services has met with officers responsible and assured members that the procedures would be adhered to in future.
- DE Annual Fraud Report : the committee were assured that there were no incidences of fraud within CCEA.
- Internal Audit Provider : KPMG have been appointed as CCEA's Internal Auditors from July 2009 to June 2010.
- Audit Activity : members noted that 2 internal audit had taken place during the May – September quarter. Both were awarded with satisfactory assurances.
- Revised CCEA Corporate and ESA Harmonisation Risk Register : the 2 risk registers had been incorporated into one to ensure fit for purpose going forward. Members agreed that the register was clear and comprehensive.
- Harmonisation Project Plan Update : the main item was DE's request for the payrolls of CCMS, Youth Council and the Staff Commission to be merged with CCEA's and for CCEA to take the lead on this.

The Chairman of Council expressed concern that this issue had not been brought to the attention of the Business Committee in the first instance and then go forward to the Audit and Risk for the identification.

- NIAO Update : following an external audit conducted by PWC on behalf of the NIAO, it was confirmed that an unqualified audit opinion had been received. Members agreed that this was an excellent performance.

6 Any Other Business

A Council member sought clarification on the latest position regarding the Assessment Arrangements post-consultation. The Director of Education Strategy confirmed that this would be the topic for discussion at the Joint meeting on 21 October 2009.

7 Date of next meeting

The Chairman confirmed that the next meeting would be a joint meeting with Curriculum & Assessment Committee on Wednesday 21 October 2009 at 10.30 am.

The last meeting of Council would take place on Thursday 26 November 2009 at 2pm in the Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle.