

Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

COUNCIL

Minutes of the seventieth meeting of Council held on Thursday 11 October 2007 at 1000 am in the Boardroom, Manor House Hotel, Killadeas, Co Fermanagh.

Present: Mr D McKee (Chairman) Mr M Bowen
Mr D Thompson Ms P O'Farrell
Ms M Watson Professor P Roebuck
Mr J Collins Mr N Downing
Dr M Brown

Mr N Anderson (Acting Chief Executive)
Mr M Fegan (Finance Manager)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

The Chairman welcomed members and the Finance Manager to the Manor House, Killadeas, venue for the Council meeting and the Joint NCCA/CCEA Conference which took place on 11 and 12 October 2007.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs D Black; Mr J Wilkinson; Mrs H McClenaghan; Mr J Clarke; Dr I McMorris; Ms K Godfrey and Ms M Cree.

Non-attendance: Ms C McKinney.

2 Chairman's business

The Chairman advised members that this meeting would focus on Corporate issues and the meeting to be held on 20 December 2007 would focus on Educational matters.

Information has been exempted under section 40 (Personal information) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The Audit & Risk Committee now has an insufficient number of members and volunteers were sought from Council. Members were asked to contact the Chairman, Chairman of the Committee or Miss Kennedy outside of this meeting if they were interested in joining.

Copies of the minutes of the Business and Audit and Risk Committees held on 29 September and 3 October respectively were provided for members to take away.

Second Tier Management Structures

The Chairman informed members that the constitution of the interview panel for these posts would consist of a minimum of the Chairman of Council, the Acting Chief Executive and one other Council member. This allows for an additional member to be involved. He sought Council's approval to appoint an Independent Assessor to the panel to ensure the process and interviews would be conducted in a fair, consistent and robust manner. Members agreed.

Future Council Meetings

Clarification was sought as to whether the relevant committee meetings had been scheduled to coincide with these Council meetings. It was agreed that this had been taken into consideration. The Chairman asked Manager of the Council Secretariat to look at the schedule to ensure that this was the case.

The Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee confirmed that he had met with a number of officers to discuss ways of running future meetings more efficiently. Several suggestions had already been taken on board.

3 Minutes of previous meeting held on 18 September 2007

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 September 2007 were proposed by Mr M Bowen and seconded by Mr N Dowling as a true and accurate record. A copy was signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising from last meeting were as follows:

Information has been exempted under section 36 (Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Under section 36 (2) (b) information may be exempt information if, in the reasonable opinion of a qualified person, disclosure would, or would be likely to, inhibit

- i. the free and frank provision of advice, or*
- ii. the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation, or*
- iii. would otherwise prejudice, or would be likely otherwise to prejudice, the effective conduct of public affairs.*

Market Share

A Council member reported on negative comments received from Heads of Department on the new GCE specifications for Science and Modern Languages. He sought clarification on whether feedback had been collated. The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that the new specifications had been issued to schools in September 2007 and to date no substantive feedback had been received.

The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that an inclusive and robust process had been conducted involving schools and stakeholders to ensure clients had an input into the content of these specifications.

The former Chairman of the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Committee confirmed that he and a number of Council and Committee members had been involved in this process and it had been carried out robustly and all deadlines met.

It was confirmed that a similar process would be followed for revising the GCSE Specifications.

Standing Committee NCCA/CCEA

The Chairman sought approval from Council members to set up a Standing Committee to draw up criteria for joint projects with NCCA which would be of mutual benefit, for example, English as a second language is becoming increasingly important in both the North and South.

The Acting Chief Executive, whilst agreeing that joint collaboration was worthwhile, said it would be important to secure funding for such initiatives.

Members agreed that this would be an appropriate mechanism in terms of projects and conference planning. The Chairman asked Mr Thompson to take this forward through the Ad Hoc Committee.

4 Finance & Planning

- ***Report of Business Committee Meeting : 27 September 2007***

The Chairman of the Business Committee reported on the following:

- *Management Structures & Responsibilities*

Business Committee approved the process for appointing posts at Director level to strengthen the Top Management Team. It was hoped that 4 appointments would be made.

- *Quality & Continuous Improvement*
- Several standards were achieved and reaccredited from May to September 2007;
- CCEA has been nominated as one of 5 finalists for the UK Quality Awards. The Awards Ceremony would take place on 24 October 2007.

The Chairman asked members to note the substantive item in the committee minutes.

Members received a copy of the Customer Charter and viewed extracts from the new interactive Corporate Plan.

- *Absence management report*

Members received an overview of the current situation and remedial action put in place to help improve absence throughout the organisation. Managers had undergone training and the new Absence Management Policy would be implemented from 1 November 2007.

- *Finance and Planning*

Members received an update on the financial position as at 31 August 2007 showing the budget was slightly overspent due to a range of issues which were brought into line during September.

Projects: members noted that the project management framework was now in place and was being monitored closely.

The Chairman of Council asked that early notification of concern on any projects be highlighted and reported back. The Finance Manager gave an assurance that this had been built into the procedure and would be taken forward.

Information has been exempted under section 43 (2) (Commercial interests) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Under section 43 (2) information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it).

Information has been exempted under section 40 (Personal information) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

- *Appeal*

The Chairman of Council reported that he had chaired a second stage appeal supported by the Business Assurance Director and Executive. He commended the officers on the way in which the process was conducted and wished to place on record his thanks for their support.

Finance report as at 31 August 2007

C/70/1

The Finance Manager reported an improvement in Baseline during September. The budget remained slightly overspent due to:

- a higher salary increase for all staff;
- a higher than expected rent increase which was currently under negotiation; and
- an unexpected rise in pension contribution rates from 11% to 13%. Further rises of 15% to 17% respectively would result in an overall 6-7% increase to CCEA's remuneration bill.

It was confirmed that CCEA would meet with DE to discuss these and other business running costs in advance of submitting the operational plan for 2008/09.

The Acting Chief Executive wished to place on record his concerns that these increases would affect the running of the organisation and sought Council's support to address this with DE as a matter of urgency. The Chairman agreed that this was an important issue and asked the Acting Chief Executive and Finance Manager to meet with DE as soon as possible.

Income: The majority of income came in during September and had been reflected in the monthly accounts.

Projects: savings have been identified due to the levels of substitute cover required being lower than anticipated.

A Council member sought clarification on why this was the case. It was confirmed that due to the concentrated period of training teachers and principals found that there were insufficient numbers of sub-teachers to cover these days.

Media

The Chairman sought clarification on the recent statement by the Chairman of the Assembly Education Committee regarding CCEA providing 11+ papers in Irish free of charge. The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that the article was inaccurate. Providing there are no copyright issues CCEA make past papers available to schools and parents for a small fee in English and Irish.

- ***Audit & Risk Committee Meeting Report : 3 October 2007***

The Chairman of the Committee reported on the following:

- *Non-compliance with purchasing policy:* concern was expressed regarding the lack of improvement in some areas. A small sub-committee will be formed to take this work forward.
- *NIAO report:* a significant drop in the number of observations in CCEA's annual accounts was noted: 19 (2006) down to 5 (2007). These were minor in nature.

The Chairman advised that these observations were minor in nature and wished to place on record his congratulations to those officers involved in this achievement.

The Committee received a presentation from People Services and members were assured that risks were being managed effectively.

Advice was sought from Ernst and Young regarding CCEA's move into the Education and Skills Authority (ESA). One recommendation arising from discussion was the amount of meetings of the Committee during the year.

The Chairman of Council said that he would refer to the Management Statement to ensure sufficient meetings of the committee were scheduled until 31 March 2009.

- *Merger/Dissolution of Council:* the committee were informed of progress made since the last meeting of the Committee.

It was agreed that an update would be brought before Council at its next meeting in February 2008.

The Chairman of Council sought clarification on whether CCEA had met with the ESA Finance Manager. It was confirmed that a meeting had taken place. These meetings would continue on a regular basis.

Members expressed the need for continuous communication with ESA and the other affected education bodies moving into ESA. The Chairman agreed to raise this with the Chief Executive Designate of ESA.

5 Business Improvement

- *EFQM : Feedback report on UK Assessors visit*

The Acting Chief Executive tabled an overview of the key areas which make up the EFQM Model. He reported that significant improvements had been made. One area which remains a concern for CCEA is 'Society'. Although CCEA supports other organisations and charities through various initiatives, advice from the assessors is to survey our stakeholders and raise awareness of how active CCEA is in society.

Members sought clarification on how the results compared with 2006. The Acting Chief Executive said that although the score would not be known until the 24 October, he was confident that CCEA's score would improve.

He wished to place on record his thanks to those officers involved in this process for the work done to date.

The awards ceremony would take place on 24 October 2007. Members would be informed of the outcome as soon as possible thereafter and a full feedback report would be made available at the next meeting of Council.

6 Draft Schedule of meetings September 2008 to March 2009

The Chairman reported that due to the delay to 1 April 2009 it had been necessary to schedule Council and Committee meetings up until 31 March 2009.

Committee meetings had been scheduled to coincide with the relevant Council meetings as far as possible.

Members were asked to note these dates and if changes were required to speak to the Manager of the Secretariat outside of this meeting.

7 Any Other Business

None identified by the secretariat.

8 Date of next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for **Wednesday 20 December 2007** at 1000 hours. This meeting would focus on Education Issues.

Subsequent to this meeting the Council meeting was rescheduled to **Wednesday 5 December 2007** at 1000 hours.