

## **COUNCIL**

Minutes of the one hundred and seventh meeting of Council held on Wednesday 11 September 2013 at 10.00 am in Room 115, CCEA HQ, Clarendon Road, Belfast.

**Present :** Mr T Carson (Chairman) Mrs H McClenaghan  
Mr M Donnelly Mr R Thompson  
Mr J Wilkinson Mr E Cullen  
Mrs C Harpur Mrs R Cowan

Mr R Hanna (Interim Chief Executive)  
M Quinn (Director, Corporate Services) (Items 1 – 5 only)  
Ms AM Duffy (Director, Qualifications)  
Miss R Kennedy (Business Manager, Curriculum & Assessment)  
Mr R McCune (Regulation & Accreditation Manager) (Item 7 only)  
Mr J Daly (Financial Services Manager) (Items 1 – 5 only)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

### **1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mrs D Black; Ms M Crilly; Mrs J Mussen; Dr P Cunningham; Mr D Thompson.

### **2 Chair's Business**

#### *FOI Requests*

Members noted the most recent FOI requests.

#### *Closed session of Council*

The Chairman reminded members that a closed session of Council would follow normal business.

#### *Meeting with Minister : 27 August 2013*

Members were advised that the Chairman, Interim Chief Executive and relevant officers attended a meeting with the Minister and senior officials to discuss the report on the Review of GCSEs and A Level Qualifications.

The report was well received and the Minister recognised the significant amount of work that had been completed in the timeframe allocated.

The main issues discussed were the portability, comparability and regulation of qualifications.

The Minister advised of his intention to consult on the recommendations and it is anticipated that this will take place during the Autumn term. Following feedback arising from the consultation, CCEA may be asked to undertake further work.

Clarification was sought on what was being done to ensure CCEA's qualifications have portability in different countries. It was confirmed that this is an ongoing process involving reviews of standards across all awarding bodies. However, one of the main challenges is to manage perceptions.

Members agreed that a robust PR strategy was required to ensure CCEA qualifications continued to be regarded highly and compatible to similar qualifications taken elsewhere.

#### *OfQual*

The Interim Chief Executive advised that OfQual had raised the issue of CCEA surrendering its recognition in England. This will be on the agenda for Education Committee and Council going forward.

#### *Update on CBA*

The Interim Chief Executive gave an update on Computer Based Assessment. He confirmed that approximately 230 schools had volunteered to participate in this year's pilot (following the Minister's decision that CBA would not be statutory in 2013/14).

He reported that he was considered by DE to be the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for the delivery of the CBA pilot in 2013, and drew attention to the tabled correspondence between himself and DE re CCEA Quarterly Assurance Statement as at 20 June 2013.

He advised on two significant issues:

- The transformation (by C2K) of schools from legacy systems to new systems. Throughout this year there will be schools that have been transformed, not transformed and in the process of being transformed. CCEA had plans in place to address both transformed and non-transformed schools within the pilot. No piloting will take place in schools undergoing transformation.
- A change in the technical specification (Shockwave) by Capita to the transformed system without prior notification to CCEA. This change could have an impact on the Numeracy assessment which will be managed and monitored closely by CCEA. Because of this development the Interim Chief Executive informed Council that planned pre-piloting in transformed schools had been postponed.

He confirmed this was similar to the issue which arose in Autumn 2012 where (un-notified) changes outside of CCEA's control had a significant impact on what was thought to be a stable platform.

Work is underway on how the transformed system could be tested so numeracy assessments can be delivered, possibly in November of this year.

Members were assured that CCEA was working to full capacity within its authority and control. A significant amount of work has been completed during the summer months including a pilot programme which has been tested within one or two schools. The larger scale pilot will be rolled out during October. A Programme Plan has been developed (copies available for members' information) detailing activities which have joint responsibility and dependencies. This is updated and submitted to the Interim Chief Executive on a weekly basis following discussions with C2K and Capita.

The Chairman stated he had requested an MOU and relevant SLAs to be put in place between CCEA and relevant parties. He asked that the documentation be explicit and robust to ensure that there is evidence to support CCEA carried out all its responsibilities to the highest standards and ensure satisfactory outcomes for learners.

Members expressed concern about the SRO role of the Interim Chief Executive given the fact that CCEA does not have control or authority for all aspects of the project. It was felt that as CCEA is the Interim Chief Executive's employer, the Chairman and/or Council should have been consulted.

The following points were raised :

- Concerns to be expressed to DE in the strongest possible terms highlighting the risks associated with the SRO and that this designation had been made without the agreement of Council;
- Clarification on whether CCEA Council has a role to play in accepting this additional responsibility for the Interim Chief Executive.
- Appropriate support for the Interim Chief Executive in carrying out this role.

Members suggested that the Chairman write to the Permanent Secretary highlighting Council's concerns and seeking the appropriate assurances.

The Chairman agreed to consider the points raised by Council and report back at the next meeting.

The Interim Chief Executive wished to place on record his gratitude to Council for their support on this matter. He assured members that CCEA had highly competent project managers (including ICT), experienced in dealing business critical, technical projects. CCEA would continue to work closely with C2K and Capita.

He confirmed that piloting in non-transformed schools would proceed, however, testing in the transformed schools would be postponed until CCEA can be assured that the software has been unaffected by the changes to the platform.

The Chairman thanked members and officers for their input in to this item and agreed to raise the issues at the Governance and Accountability Meeting on 19 September 2013.

### **3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 June 2013**

The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed by Mrs Christine Harpur and seconded by Mrs Rosemary Cowan as a true and accurate record. A copy was signed by the Chairman.

#### *Action Points*

Members noted the status of the Action Points.

*Qualifications Technology Roadmap:* members were advised that further clarification was required on some elements of the business case. These were now being progressed. The DoQ advised she had sought a meeting with DE to agree an appropriate process for preparation of business cases to ensure delays such as this do not happen in the future.

Council expressed its dissatisfaction at the length of time taken for business cases to be considered/approved. The Interim Chief Executive confirmed he had written to the Director of Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards (DE) outlining his concerns and the risks to timebound elements of the case. Although this has been raised at Governance and Accountability Review meetings (GAR) several times over the last 12 months – progress has been disappointing and work has been re-prioritised to allow staff to carry out enabling work for the A2C project so that CCEA can continue to fulfil its statutory responsibilities.

The Chairman agreed to raise the urgency of this matter at the GAR meeting on 19 September 2013.

#### **4 Correspondence**

Members noted the correspondence in relation to :

- *Proposal for new GCSE award administered by CCEA :Ltr from D Heaney (17 May 2013) and R Hanna response (2 August 2013).*
- *CCEA Financial Plan 2013/14 : Amendment : Ltr from C Tonner (23 May 2013) and R Hanna response (18 July 213).*
- *CCEA Work Programme (Business Plan) 2013/14 :Ltr from K Godfrey (26 July 2013) and R Hanna response (5 August 2013).*

Members expressed dissatisfaction about the way in which the budget had been allocated and were concerned about the impact this had on CCEA's planning and management of business throughout the year. They were particularly concerned at how the three separate interim allocations of 2,4 and 7 twelfths had been approved and asked the Chairman write to DE seeking an opportunity to discuss a suitable way forward.

The Chairman agreed to write to DE.

- *Outstanding Pay Remits 2012/13 and 2013/14 :Ltr from R Hanna (15 August 2013) and L Montgomery response (21 August 2013).*

Members stated that they found the response from DE unsatisfactory and asked the Chairman to follow this up.

Members also asked the Chairman to raise the attendance of a suitable representative at future Council with DE.

#### **5 Governance and Accountability**

The next Governance and Accountability Review meeting was scheduled for Thursday 19 September 2013 at 2.30 pm.

## 6 Education

### **Assessment Arrangements**

**C/107/1**

The Interim Chief Executive advised that CCEA was asked to keep the arrangements under continuous review and carry out an evaluation of the first year of the revised assessment arrangements on how they were operating along with a 'full picture of issues identified by schools'. The Evaluation Report together with an Analysis Report were submitted to DE on 31 July 2013.

The Business Manager, Curriculum and Assessment gave an overview of the main concerns arising from and throughout the evaluation, in particular :

- Increased workload
- Timescales for submission of levels and pupil portfolios;
- Pupils are assessed for end of key stage results too early in the school year'
- The robustness of the new moderation system is not yet evident'
- Use of assessment data by DE and ETI for target setting/benchmarking is inappropriate; and
- Parents do not understand the new Levels of Progression.

She advised that a number of recommendations and options arising from the feedback were prepared for DE's consideration, in particular :

- The need for schools to have time to embed the new arrangements therefore slowing the pace of implementation;
- Consideration of moving the reporting date for outcomes to CCEA from mid-March to May and introduce a different method of moderation to allow different options and approaches to moderation to be considered;
- Defer the introduction of assessment/moderation of Using ICT until the current skills were embedded;
- Use standardised scores from other tests rather than the Levels of Progression for target setting and benchmarking.

The main risk was communication with schools. Given that the school year has already begun, it is essential to inform schools of the arrangements for 2013/14 as soon as possible otherwise they may be unable to implement the new arrangements within the timescales available. It was confirmed that CCEA and DE continue to work together to manage associated risks going forward.

In response to these recommendations DE asked for further clarification on a range of issues to allow them to put forward a submission to the Minister.

Members expressed concern at the delay in informing schools of the new arrangements, however, accepted that this was a Ministerial decision.

A Council member suggested that it would be an appropriate time to consider an evaluation of all of the assessment elements together. The Interim Chief Executive advised that this had been proposed by CCEA in the Review of Qualifications report and in the analysis of the assessment evaluation submitted to DE in July 2013.

## 7 Regulation

### ***Final Draft Report : Qualifications provision for 14-19 Learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN)*** ***C/107/2***

The Regulation & Accreditation Manager advised that the draft findings and recommendations had been discussed at the Education Committee in May.

He confirmed suggestions from members have been considered and incorporated into final draft for Council consideration.

Following clarification on a number of issues Council **approved** the final draft.

The Chairman and Council commended the report and wished to place on record their thanks to the Regulation & Accreditation Manager and his team for the significant amount of work completed.

## 8 Examinations

The Interim Chief Executive advised that this was his first summer examinations series and commended all the staff involved in the different elements of examinations processing. He was delighted to confirm a successful summer series and wished to place on record his thanks for the commitment and significant amount of work carried out during the summer months.

### ***Summer 2013 Examinations Series***

The DoQ gave a detailed presentation on the summer 2013 examinations series.

A copy of the presentation was issued for members' information

The main highlights were :

#### *GCE*

- Strong performance in Mathematics, Chemistry and Modern Languages with the proportion of entries achieving A\*-E grades rising to 98.2% (98.1% 2012).
- Girls continue to outperform boys, however at the highest level the gap has notably decreased this year.
- Traditional subjects remain the most popular choice at A level (top 5 are Biology; Mathematics; Religious Studies; History and English). This year there were 32,836 entries for GCE examinations.
- STEM related subjects were strong with rises in entries in Mathematics, Further Mathematics, ICT, Chemistry and Physics.

#### *GCSE*

- Notable performances in English, Mathematics and Sciences with the proportion of entries awarded A\* to C grades rising : English to 68.8% and Mathematics 63.6%.

- Girls continue to outperform boys across the grades – this year the gap has widened.
- STEM and humanities subjects have increased in popularity with rises in entries in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Design & Technology, Engineering, ICT, Mathematics and Additional Mathematics.

Overall the DoQ was pleased with the increased performances at A\*-C for both GCE and GCSE and with an upturn in the number of GCSE entries in Northern Ireland (since 2007).

Members congratulated the Interim Chief Executive and his team for all of the hard work and commended the success of the 2013 summer series.

The Chairman wished to place on record his thanks to the DoQ and her staff for the significant amount of work completed to a very high standard.

It was agreed that the Chairman would issue an All Staff Communication on behalf of Council.

#### *Malpractice cases*

Members noted the information provided.

## **9 Any Other Business**

#### *Requests for Information*

The Chairman asked members that any individual requests for information (in connection with Council business) be sent through to the Manager of the Council Secretariat.

#### *Outgoing Council Members*

The Chairman wished to pay tribute to Helen McClenaghan, Jim Clarke, Dorothy Black and David Thompson, whose term of office ended on 30 September 2012. He thanked them for their contributions, commitment and support to Council and officers.

He wished to place on record his thanks to Mrs McClenaghan in her role as Acting Chair, Vice Chair and Chair of CCEA's Education Committee.

The Interim Chief Executive, on behalf of members of the Executive and staff expressed his sincere thanks to the outgoing Council members for their commitment and support to the work of the Council over an extended period of time.

Mrs McClenaghan and Mr Clarke thanked Council and CCEA staff for the support they have given them during their time on Council.

## **10 Date of Next Meeting**

The next Council meeting was scheduled for **Wednesday 23 October 2013 at 10.00 am.**

The Chairman thanked members and officers for their contributions to the meeting.