

## Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

### Council

Minutes of the fifty-fifth meeting of Council, held at 11.10 am on Wednesday 15 December 2004, in the Radisson Hotel, Ormeau Road, BELFAST.

#### Present

Dr A Lennon (Chairman)	Mr J Collins
Professor P Roebuck	Dr W Mulryne
Dr A Murray	Mrs D Black
Ms P O'Farrell	Ms M Watson
Mr D McKee	Mr D Thompson
Mrs H McClenaghan	Mr J Lee

Mr D Woods, Assessor, DE  
Mr D McCall, Assessor, ETI  
Mrs M Cree, Assessor, DEL

Mr G Boyd, Chief Executive  
Mr D Mulholland, Head of Corporate Services

Mr R McCune, Item 5 only  
Ms J Scharf, Item 5 only

Miss N Kennedy, Support Manager to Council

The Chairman apologised for the late start to the meeting.

#### 1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr J Clarke; Mr B Carlin; Mr J Ellison and Mr B Turtle.

#### 2 Chairman's business

The Chairman informed members that :

- The NI Skills Strategy is on the agenda for today's meeting. Roger McCune will give a presentation of the main points arising from the document. A number of background papers have been tabled to enable us to formulate and agree our response.
- The Top Candidate Event will take place on Tuesday 21 December. Members have been invited. The programme starts with lunch and reception at 1.30, the ceremony at 2.30 finishing no later than 4pm.
- The Chief Executive, himself and the Director of Corporate Service had a meeting with the Permanent Secretary (DE) for the 6 monthly Accountability Review Meeting on 30 November. As well as the modernisation programme, budgets and allocation of funding, the implementation of the new curriculum was discussed. We reported that CCEA was currently participating in joint working groups with the ELBs, CASS service, other education partners and interested parties to draw up and agree an implementation plan for the new curriculum. Further discussions will take place in the new year to ensure the Permanent Secretary is fully updated on progress.
- The series of Principals' Dinners with the Secondary and FE Sectors is nearing completion. These have been very successful to date and it is hoped that there will be further opportunities to hear views from these, employers, the grammar and HE sectors in the future. Members will be invited to attend as appropriate.

- The QDS Newsletter has been provided for members to take away; and
- The SCORE Concert CD will be issued to members in due course.

### **3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 October 2004**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 October 2004 were approved by Council and a copy signed by the Chairman.

#### *Action points*

The Chief Executive updated members on the following :

- Contact has been made with the CBI. A meeting has been arranged with Nigel Smith to set up a survey to attempt to address the mismatch of data regarding Literacy;
- A seminar to raise awareness of Council members on internal audit will be arranged for a future Council meeting;
- Special Needs : further discussions have taken place and concerns have been registered with the Department of Education to take forward.
- 14-19 Report is on today's agenda; and
- Year end accounts were approved at Business Committee on 8 December and are on today's agenda for sign-off by Council.

### **4 Committees**

#### *(a) Learning for Life and Work Committee : 4 November 2004*

The Chairman informed members that Mr Ken Irwin and Ms Fiona McKinlay from Carrickfergus Grammar gave presentations on the changes and improvements in the school and on the themes taught at Year 8 and Year 11 on Learning for Life and Work; Citizenship and Employability. Members viewed a DVD of a lesson on Employability.

The committee split into groups to discuss Careers; Enterprise and Entrepreneurship and Engaging with the Community. The main purpose of the groups is to produce ideas for action plans in these 3 areas with a view to trialling in 2005.

#### *Standing Consultative Forum : 16 November 2004*

The Chairman reported that the Standing Consultative Forum held on 16 November had been well attended and supported by Mr Will Haire, Permanent Secretary, DEL, Council Members and various business people and sectors from throughout the province. It was intended to repeat this Forum on an annual basis.

Mr McKee welcomed the address by Mr S Kingon. He said it was extremely interesting and provided a good economic context for the committee's work to move forward.

#### *(b) E-Learning and Services Committee : 10 November 2004*

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr Ellison, the Chief Executive reported that:

- The committee will visit St Pius X, Magherafelt and Holy Cross Primary Schools to view their e-learning facilities in the New Year.

- Considerable debate regarding ICT Governance continues. CCEA has made a submission and have been involved in a series of meetings to review the project plan and check the position of C2K. The Committee were unhappy with the project plan and have asked for representations to be made to the Department. Richard Hanna made a presentation to the Department on 9 December on CCEA's expectations and position going forward.

Mr Woods said that the department recognised the importance of the work of CCEA in terms of the new curriculum ICT and e-learning and the need for this to be joined up to ensure maximum coherence. This would be addressed as soon as possible and further discussions would take place between CCEA and the Department.

- The committee raised a number of concerns regarding C2K and the lack of progress made by the Project Board. A number of questions have been raised re : authority limits and the reporting of key performance issues. The Committee opposed C2K's proposal to set up a Software Advisory Panel to advise on software to support the new curriculum, due to a direct conflict of interests. This is currently being discussed with the Department of Education.
- BBC : Richard Hanna has been working with all the Curriculum Authorities (CCEA, QCA, LTS and ACCAC) and the BBC in shaping the Digital Curriculum. Several meetings have taken place and good progress is being made.

*(c) Curriculum and Assessment Committee: 17 November 2004*

Dr Murray (chaired the meeting in the absence of Dr Mulryne) reported that:

- Draft Implementation Plans have been provided by the Programme Management Board to support the implementation of the new curriculum at Key Stages 1,2 and 3 from 2006 onwards. A number of issues were raised by the committee which will be addressed and considered further before being presented to Council.
- Primary Modern Languages : committee received a presentation on the evaluation of the first year pilots and plans for continuation and extension.
- Early Years : Committee received a presentation from Dr Sproule and Professor McGuinness on the findings and outcomes of the evaluation. The report was not available for discussion by the committee. A number of issues were raised and it was agreed that the full report and the inspectorate report would be discussed before being presented to Council.
- Literacy Initiatives : difficulty in accessing comparative data. Committee have requested the full report for discussion before being presented to Council.
- Cohort Study : The committee asked for an overview report from NFER. The report has endorsed all the issues raised by CCEA. The Committee has endorsed the report for publication.

The Chairman reminded members that the reports and a presentation on the Early Years will be discussed at the February meeting to formulate the advice to the Minister.

*(d) Regulation and Qualifications Committee : 24 November 2004*

Dr Mulryne (chaired the meeting in the absence of Professor Roebuck) said that most of the items on the agenda were either interim reports or work underway on :

- Evaluation of pilot qualifications;
- 14-19 Curriculum/qualifications development;
- Development of credit and qualifications framework; and
- Essential/Key Skills Development.

CCEA self-regulatory report was an important initiative. The committee had received 2 substantial documents which outlined evaluations on the quality assurance systems and quality control against the code requirements. The findings have been followed up with detailed action plans. The committee welcomed the report and asked that the exercise be repeated in 2005 and then bi-annually going forward.

Mr McKee expressed concern at the non-attendance of centres at agreement trials. The Chief Executive said a survey has been carried out, the problems have been identified and we will address them going forward. Dr Mulryne confirmed that this had been identified as an area for improvement within the self-regulation exercise.

Professor Roebuck thanked Dr Mulryne for chairing the meeting in his absence. He said that there was a need to formally consult on the development of the credit and qualifications framework. Mrs Cree reported that we have finally got agreement in England, Scotland and Wales. The process has proved very difficult, but it is now back on board and the Northern Ireland interests have been kept intact.

*(e) Business Committee : 8 December 2004*

Dr Lennon, Chairman of the committee reported on the following :

- ALTA agreement is in the final stages and will be brought back to the committee for approval and sign-off.
- Freedom of Information Act – all staff have been brought up to date. A presentation will be given to Business Committee and Council will be invited to attend.
- Annual Accounts have been approved by the Committee and are on today's agenda for sign-off by Council.
- Financial position is positive, we remain within budget. New systems for e-finance and e-HR are being installed to improve processes going forward.
- Discussions continue with the Department to try to improve the process on allocation of baseline funding.
- Operational Plan and Exception report: clear and comprehensive information was presented to the committee on the areas which are behind schedule. Members made several recommendations for improvement which will be brought back to the next meeting.
- HR Issues : early stages of restructuring Education Services. All business units have been approached and identified with new structures being put in place from January to March 2005.

TMT : 16 applications have been received for Director of Operations and 10 for Director of Policy. Interview for Director of Operations will take place on Thursday 16 December.

- E-Services : presentations were given to the committee on changes to the CCEA web-site and the BT 'Click and Buy' Pilot, where we intend to sell services on-line.
- Organisational Effectiveness : committee were updated on plans for improving project management methodology; the introduction of a balanced score card and new business case process.

The Chairman informed members that he had been involved in discussions regarding NDPB corporate best practice. Advice given is that Chairman of NDPBs should be reviewing performance of their board members in a 2-way process. The business committee have been provided with a draft document for comment. This will be discussed at the next meeting and presented to Council for discussion and approval at a future meeting.

## 5 Regulation and Qualifications

### *14-19 Discussion Paper*

**C/55/1**

The Chairman congratulated Mrs Scharf on a very clear paper and welcomed her to the meeting. He reminded members that the Tomlinson proposals apply to England only, however they do relate closely to our new curriculum.

Mrs Scharf gave a presentation on the work done to date and future development work. (A copy of the presentation has been attached to inform the minutes).

Members discussed the paper in detail and raised the following issues for further consideration:

- Keeping the brand names of GCE and GCSE – to move away from well recognised and understood labels would be a high risk strategy and confusing for schools.
- Careers provision is a vital aspect of more flexibility 14-19. Teachers need to be well informed to help young people make the appropriate choices.
- Caution expressed regarding increasing teacher assessment – focus should be on bringing in the curriculum change while watching developments in England.
- Comparability of Standards (ensuring a recognisable Northern Ireland element) with England.
- More flexible approach to criteria in qualification development.
- Breadth – the need to develop and deliver in the 6<sup>th</sup> form. Engagement with local universities to establish requirements.
- Support for Learning for Life and Work at AS/A Level.
- Further work required on vocational/academic and qualifications labels.
- Formal project proposals to be drawn up and put forward to DE and DEL and ask for funding as appropriate.

Members were happy with the direction of the project and asked that these issues be discussed at the next Regulation and Qualifications committee and an update on progress be given at a future Council meeting.

### *Northern Ireland Skills Strategy*

**C/55/2**

The Chairman drew attention to the tabled information for members to take away. He welcomed Mr McCune to the meeting. Mr McCune outlined the headline issues for discussion in formulating CCEA's response, as follows :

- Role of CCEA within the extended remit for the skills task force;
- Life-long learning;
- Essential skills and the focus within the curriculum; enterprise and careers
- Collaboration between schools/colleges;
- Work on vocational qualifications and credit developments.

Members discussed and raised the following issues :

- The need for new skills and flexibilities as demanded by the economy;
- The need to raise the general skills level of the existing workforce;
- The need to create an environment which attracts and retains a skilled workforce in Northern Ireland;
- Special Educational Needs – a wider review of literacy and numeracy issues and how this is going to be addressed in the skills context;
- Dealing with racism in society.

The Chairman suggested that given the tight timescale for responding, a sub-group be set up to formulate a draft response outlining the issues that impact on CCEA and encompass broader issues, including current initiatives being undertaken to improve provision and promote the acquisition of skills.

It was agreed that the response be circulated to members'.

## **6 Finance**

*Finance report as at 31 October 2004*

**C/55/3**

Mr Mulholland reported that the overall financial position year to date is positive. Income and expenditure continues to grow, with a positive variance of £120K to date. The phasing of the annual budget across individual months has remained as it was, however, we continue to work with managers to obtain accurate profiles to ensure a true spend is reflected in the budget going forward.

A number of meetings have been set up to tighten up planning processes for allocating and securing baseline funding. We will continue to work towards January of each year to achieve a formal letters from the Department (DE) and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) outlining the majority of our funding.

Members were happy with the information provided.

*End of Year Accounts 2003/2004*

**C/55/4**

Mr Mulholland reported that the business committee had discussed and made recommendations on the draft accounts. The deadline for 31 July 2004 was met by CCEA but unfortunately due to delays from the Audit Office the final accounts are being presented for sign-off now in December.

Members were asked to note that we were well within our budget. In a deficit in general fund but this has been compensated by the capital account.

With the inclusion of Mr D McCall to the Annual Report, members signed off the Accounts for 2003/2004.

Copies were provided for the Chairman and Chief Executive to sign.

## **7 Any other business**

Mr Mulholland reported that from January 2005 all Council and Committee minutes will be open to public scrutiny under the Freedom of Information Act. He informed members that we have a formal managed process in place and a publication scheme outlining the nature of the work we hold.

Members congratulated TMT on the clarity of the information provided in the Annual Report.

Mr McKee wished to place on record his congratulations to the Media team for providing up to date current information to members.

Ms Watson asked if minutes for committee meetings could be provided in draft form or tabled at the Council meetings.

The Chairman agreed to take this on board.

**8 Date of next meeting**

The Chairman confirmed the date of the next meeting as **Wednesday 16 February 2005**. He wished members a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

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CHAIRMAN

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DATE