

Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Council

Minutes of the fifth-sixth meeting of Council, held at 10.00 hours on Wednesday 16 February 2005 in Room 111, 1st Floor, CCEA Offices, BELFAST.

Present

Dr A Lennon (Chairman)	Dr W Mulyrne
Mr B Carlin	Mrs D Black
Dr A Murray	Mr J Ellison
Professor P Roebuck	Ms P O'Farrell
Ms M Watson	Mrs H McClenaghan
Mr J Clarke	Mr D McKee

Ms S McKee, Assessor, DE
Mrs M Cree, Assessor, DEL

Mr G Boyd, Chief Executive
Mr D Mulholland, Director, Corporate Services
Mr N Anderson, Director, Operations

Miss N Kennedy, Manager, Council Secretariat

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr D Thompson; Mr B Turtle; Mr J Collins; Mr D Woods and Mr D McCall.

2 Chairman's business

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting, in particular Mr N Anderson, Director of Operations. He informed members that:

- The Head of Education Services: following 2 unsuccessful attempts to replace Dr Walker, the post was split into 2 : Director of Operations and Director of Policy. Mr N Anderson was appointed Director of Operations in December 2004. The Director of Policy post remains vacant, due to the process being abandoned at the assessment centre stage.

The Chairman congratulated Mr Anderson on his appointment.

The Chief Executive reported that in the interim Mr McCune, Ms Gallagher and Mr Montgomery would report to him on all matters of educational policy. Dr Murray asked that consideration be given to filling the post as early as possible.

- The Top Candidate Event will take place on Tuesday 8 March 2005, members have already been provided with the information.
- The procedures are currently being reviewed on how the administration around Council and Committee meetings is conducted.

The Chief Executive reported that deadlines have been changed to ensure that agendas are agreed in advance with Council/Committee Chairs. Disciplines will be tightened up in this area for future meetings.

- *Freedom of Information Act*

A number of requests have been made regarding the Transfer Test and the use of the Supplementary Tests in a small number of schools. The questions will be answered openly and honestly by CCEA.

The Chairman said it was important from CCEA's point of view to ensure that there is a general awareness of the responsibilities of the Department of Education regarding the Transfer Test, and sought assurances that the appropriate actions would be taken to avoid any adverse publicity.

Mr McKee expressed concern regarding Council minutes being available to the public as it would be highly likely that some comments would be made regarding the Transfer Test. He asked the Chairman and Chief Executive to raise this with the Department.

The Chief Executive said Council minutes had been on the website for sometime and an enquiry has been received from an MLA regarding an issue discussed at Council.

- Management Statement

The Chairman drew attention to the Management Statement, which had been tabled for members to take away. The document outlines:

- Rules of operation of CCEA as determined by the Department of Education (DE);
- Roles and responsibilities of Council members and the Chairman; and
- The role of the Accounting Officer (Chief Executive).

This was discussed briefly at Business Committee on 2 February and we have undertaken to review and update the document with the DE.

The Chairman asked that the Management Statement be included in future induction sessions for Council members.

- PISA

The PISA results for 2003 will be developed into a paper for discussion at the Council meeting in April. This is a study undertaken by the OECD of 15 year olds which looks at reading, mathematical and science literacy.

- EFQM Submission

The Chairman reported that a mechanism would be put in place to obtain contributions from Council member to the various aspects of the organisation, so that this can be reflected in the submission for the UK Quality Award.

- Performance Review

A draft proposal would be discussed by the business committee at its next meeting to set out a suitable framework to reviewing Council members' performance. The Chairman

explained that in reviewing best practice, CCEA do not have a performance review/appraisal system for Council members and stressed that this would be a voluntary process comprising of a 2-way review and not an appraisal. The draft proposal will be presented at a future meeting for Council discussion and approval.

The Chairman reported that a report on the Government's White Paper would be presented to Council at its next meeting.

Finally, the Chairman reported that the Department had set up a Steering Group to address the overspend in the Education and Library Boards. The Chief Executive is part of this steering group.

Mr McKee asked when the minutes of the private meeting of Council which occurred on 15 December 2004, without CCEA officers present would be discussed and ratified. The Chairman agreed that they would be dealt with on another occasion.

3 Minutes of previous meeting held on 15 December 2004

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 December 2004 were approved by Council and a copy signed by the Chairman.

Action points

The Chief Executive said that the Early Years, 14-19 project and NI Skills Strategy were on today's agenda for discussion, and reported that the Standing Consultative Forum meetings will be included in the Schedule of Meetings for 2005/2006.

4 Committees

(a) Learning for Life and Work Committee : Engaging with the Community Sub-Group: 12 January 2005

Mr McKee, Chairman of the sub-group, reported that the group had discussed and identified the need for an overarching body to influence strategies and put forward clear recommendations in this area of work.

He stressed the importance of addressing the vacuum created by NIBEP and the need for issues to be addressed.

e-Learning and e-Services Committee : 17 January 2005

Mr Ellison, Chairman of the Committee, reported that the main focus of the meeting was on e-Services. Presentations were received on the draft e-Services strategy, the Click and Buy Pilot (in association with BT), and an overview of the current e-services projects and development plans for 2005/2006.

Members continued to express concern regarding progress with C2K and the Chief Executive agreed to pursue this with the Permanent Secretary.

The issue of internal e-capability was discussed and the preferred Option 2 (tabled for members' information) was agreed by the Committee. It was agreed that Mr Hanna would approach the Department of Education to establish funding.

Mrs Cree informed members that DEL will be launching its Adult E-Learning Strategy in the Autumn, and that DfES in England had launched their e-Learning Strategy on 15 March 2005.

Mrs Watson expressed concern in relation to where this strategy lies in relation to the empowering schools strategy and asked that initial teacher education be included, and all strategies be joined up to ensure coherence from both departments.

Mr Clarke asked that this be included as part of the Model for New Governance for ICT and not as another initiative.

The Chief Executive expressed concern about the lack of progress the Department of Education were making with the Action Plan arising from the New Model for Governance and asked Mr Mulholland to discuss developments with them.

(c) Curriculum & Assessment Committee : 26 January 2005

Dr Mulryne, Chairman of the Committee, wished to place on record his thanks to Ms Gallagher and Miss Kennedy for producing the minutes from a very difficult meeting. He reported that the two main items on the agenda : Early Years and Pupil Profile were discussed in detail by the Committee and the Assessment Arrangements and Pupil Profile would be discussed again at a special meeting to be arranged in March.

Significant concerns were expressed as to how C2K will be able to support the Pupil Profile.

The Committee were happy with the approach taken with Early Years and this will be discussed further by Council.

Primary Modern Languages was also discussed and regular updates will be provided to the Committee.

(d) Business Committee : 2 February 2005

Dr Lennon, Chairman of the Committee reported on :

- Maladministration: is on the agenda for today's meeting.
- Operational Plan was reviewed by exception. This mechanism allows the committee to review the expenditure and progress against projects.
- Finance was discussed in detail. Concern expressed regarding low baseline funding. The Department have agreed to split the baseline and project funding to reflect what we do and the current submissions for budget profiles have acknowledged this.

We are on target to achieve budget at year end (March 2005).

(e) Audit Committee : 2 February 2005

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

- The committee has been through a self-assessment exercise to ascertain its effectiveness and identify improvements. One was the need for the committee to meet with internal and external auditors without officers present – this will be facilitated.

The exercise identified some overlaps with the responsibilities of Business Committee. Audit Committee will continue with these responsibilities from a different perspective. They have also requested Management Letters from the Audit Office.

- Fraud report: has identified small amounts of money around purchasing past papers. The purchase procedures are being reviewed to safeguard against this and monitored carefully.
- Cultural induction sessions have been introduced to all staff.
- Non-compliance: 3 in purchasing. Committee satisfied with the appropriateness of the purchases, however expressed their disappointment that the non-compliance of a purchasing contract happened before.
- Disaster recovery planning continues. A small number of incidences were identified for risk mitigation.

(f) Regulation & Qualifications Committee : 9 February 2005

Professor Roebuck, Chairman of the Committee said that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February would be presented at the next Council meeting for members' information. He reported on the following:

- Report on performance of awarding bodies: CCEA continues to perform well. Targets will be tightened up and more challenging questions asked in the future.
- Performance Indicators (PIs) for awarding bodies and compliance within indicators: CCEA performed well in comparison with other Awarding Bodies. Mechanisms have been put in place to measure 6 of the 8 and in 5 out of 6 CCEA fully met the targets and achieved 99% in the 1 remaining. Area will be tightened up going forward. Both reports were reassuring.
- Monitoring of Standards and NI Skills Strategy: on the agenda for discussion.
- Essential Skills Qualification: the proposal for development work in this area was discussed. DEL currently reviewing proposals and are content with direction taken.
- 14-19 Curriculum/Qualifications Development: an update on further work was given. 6 strands have been identified and proposals will be discussed at the next meeting.
- Credit Developments: Launch of the consultation document was very successful. Consultation seminars have been arranged for March and April. Concern expressed that schools had been omitted from the consultation – this has now been addressed.

Mr Clarke welcomed the inclusion of schools in the consultation, but expressed concern regarding no representation from the Education and Library Boards. It was agreed that this would be addressed.

The Chairman wished to place on record his thanks to Mr Will Haire, Permanent Secretary, DEL, for his continuing support for our initiatives in these areas.

- Proposals for rating recommendations and outcomes from GCSE and GCE scrutiny reports were discussed. It was agreed that this proposal be used as a pilot against scrutiny reports and presented at the next meeting of the committee.

- Exception report on the operational plan was tabled. This was provided for the information of the committee.

The Chairman said the exception report of the operational plan was available to all Committee Chairs if they wished to draw them to the attention of their committee.

5 Maladministration : briefing paper

C/56/1

The Chairman drew members' attention to the Ombudsman report and supporting papers and informed members that this had been discussed in detail by the Business Committee (copy the discussion provided with papers). He reported that CCEA had been found guilty of maladministration because of the way in which correspondence was terminated with Mr Friel.

The Chief Executive expressed disappointment in the outcome and indicated that he was embarrassed to bring this report to Council. He outlined the facts of the case and drew members' attention to the recommendations and action points that have been taken on board to safeguard against this happening again. In particular:

- the whole area of special consideration to be tightened up, i.e. accurate recording of minutes in each case and all documentation reviewed;
- review arrangements for training of invigilators.

Members asked that the following comments be taken into consideration:

- providing information to parents on how the examinations are conducted;
- explain appeals procedures to all customers;
- training of invigilators to be made more robust and appropriate recruitment drawn up to ensure good calibre candidates.

The Chairman asked that these be taken on board, particularly the area of special consideration.

6 Curriculum and Assessment

Draft advice on Early Years' Enriched Curriculum Approach to the Foundation Stage

C/56/2

The Chairman welcomed Ms Gallagher to the meeting. He drew attention to the papers sent out in advance to support the findings and recommendations contained in paper C/56/2 and to assist in formulating the advice for the Minister.

Ms Gallagher stressed the importance of setting the advice in a local, national and international context. She reported briefly on the key findings of:

- The Early Years enriched curriculum evaluation conducted by Queen's University;
- The report of the inspection of a sample of Enriched Curriculum pilot schools conducted by ETI; and
- A review of Literacy initiatives to inform advice on the Foundation stage conducted by NFER.

Members discussed the paper and recommendations in detail. The following points were raised :

- Further research was required educational benefits for lower ability children;
- The enriched curriculum needs to be compared to the controlled group;
- More explicit data is required on classroom assistants;
- Investment appraisals to be included;
- Closing the gap remains an issue and further work is required to address this.

The Chief Executive agreed that the points would be taken on board. The advice would be formulated to incorporate the views of the C&A Committee and Council and will stress the importance of continuing with research and developmental work in the following areas:

- Programme Integrity : to ensure the same programme is rolled out in all schools across the province;
- Cost benefit : wider impact study be taken into consideration to ensure longer term issues are addressed;
- Quality assurance measures: only proceed when these measures are put in place and an indication of resources requirements to continue with the research has been identified.

Update on Assessment and Pupil Profile

C/56/3

The Chairman welcomed Mr Montgomery to the meeting.

Mr Montgomery said that the paper summarised the issues raised by the Curriculum & Assessment Committee at its meeting on 26 January.

Further clarity has been provided on :

- Relationship between the progress file and pupil profile. A presentation will be given at the next Curriculum & Assessment committee to outline the purpose of the progress file and how it relates to the pupil profile.
- Capability of C2K to deliver – the need for robust service level agreement to be put in place.
- The arguments for and against: Accreditation of Schools and the Use of Levels have been outlined in the paper and will be debated further by the committee.

Dr Mulryne, Chairman of the Curriculum and Assessment Committee, said that further work would be done on these issues and a further draft of the paper would be discussed at an additional meeting of the committee prior to the next Council meeting in April.

7 Regulation and Qualifications

Draft response on NI Skills Strategy

C/56/4

The Chairman welcomed Mr McCune to the meeting.

Mr McCune reported that the draft response had been considered by the Regulation & Qualifications Committee at its meeting on 9 February 2005. The following points were made :

- Further clarification required under the analysis of skills; and
- The introduction of the MASN effect to be made more explicit regarding Graduate Output.

Mr Clarke asked that the analysis of skills be explained in a way that reflects the fact there is no higher level of economy nor high level jobs to attract people back to the province.

The Chief Executive agreed that this would be reinforced in the response.

The Chairman asked Mr McCune to speak to Mr Turtle regarding Level 2 qualifications before finalising the response.

Monitoring of Standards across GCE/GCSE Examinations

C/56/5

The Chairman drew attention to the report commissioned by QCA on examinations standards across the UK.

Mr McCune gave a brief presentation on the findings of the Independent Committee of Examinations Standards.

The following points were raised:

- The need to find a way to track standards over time to assure ourselves that examinations are relevant and fit for purpose;
- The need for currency throughout the UK and be more proactive in maintaining standards and ensure consistency with England and Wales;
- The need for identifying benchmarks going forward.

It was agreed that an approach would be made to open up the debate with the Standing Committee and recommendations be put forward to QCA for further work.

8 Finance

Finance report as at 31 December 2004

C/56/6

Mr Mulholland reported an underspend of £457K with positive variances of £18K against multi-media and £19K against miscellaneous income.

The Project underspend sits at £521K due to a number of projects running behind schedule and the impact of the teacher industrial action. Those projects which have been delayed into next year have been reflected in next year's budget.

Baseline Expenditure shows a positive variance year to date of £24K, this will be used to offset overspends elsewhere or to fund provisions for pension costs, restructuring charges or the expected shortfall in income.

Capital is overspent by £42K year to date, however £53K remains due to the acquisition of the Finance and HR systems and additional capital had been provided to carry out improvements to the mainframe system.

It is anticipated that we will finish on budget at year end.

Budget 2005/2006 Update

C/56/7

Mr Mulholland drew attention to paper C/56/7. He reported that we have been working with the Department to improve all processes regarding finances and budget allocations to ensure a timely formal agreement of budget allocation for 2005/2006. It is hoped that this will be closed out towards the end of February and the budget for 2005/2006 will be presented to Council at its April meeting for final approval.

Miss McKee wished to place on record her thanks to Mr Mulholland and Mr Doherty for their assistance and support throughout the process to date.

9 Any Other Business

Dr Murray sought clarification on the availability of the minutes of the ad hoc meeting which took place on 26 January 2005. The Chairman agreed that these minutes would be available on request.

10 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Council will be in Galway to coincide with the NCCA/CCEA Joint Council which runs from 13-15 April. Further details will be available in due course.

