

## Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Assessment and Examinations

### COUNCIL

Minutes of the eighty-sixth Council meeting held on Tuesday 16 March 2010 at 1300 hours in Room 226, CCEA Headquarters, Clarendon Road, Belfast.

**Present :** Mrs H McClenaghan (Vice-Chair) Ms M Watson  
Mr J Clarke Mr D Thompson  
Mr J Wilkinson Ms M Crilly  
Ms P O'Farrell Mrs D Black

Mrs K Godfrey (DE Observer)

Mr P Sweeney (Permanent Secretary) – Item 1 only  
Mr G Boyd (Chief Executive Designate, ESA) – Item 1 only  
Mr J McGrath (Deputy Secretary) – Item 1 only

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

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

### Introduction

The Vice-Chair welcomed members and advised that in the absence of the Chairman (*Information has been redacted under s. 40 Personal information of the Freedom of Information Act 2000*) she would chair this meeting.

Mr Paul Sweeney, Permanent Secretary, DE; Mr Gavin Boyd, Chief Executive Designate, ESAIT; and Mr John McGrath, Deputy Secretary, DE would be joining the meeting for the item on Convergence.

### *Meeting with Chief Executive Designate (ESA) and DE : 12 March 2010*

The Vice-Chair and the Acting Chief Executive attended a meeting with the Chief Executive Designate, ESA and DE. CCEA were advised that DE were awaiting a response to the letters of 26 January and 18 February to give an assurance that the issues were currently being actioned. She advised that with the Chairman's agreement a holding letter would be sent to DE.

The following issues were discussed :

- The procedures for awarding tenders : these should be reviewed and discussed by Finance Committee;
- Recruitment of consultants : the need to monitor the need for additional staff and ensure procedures are robust;
- Remuneration Committee : to review the remit and allocate permanent support to this committee;
- Standing Orders : to review and update these in light of the smaller membership of Council;
- Shane McCurdy to be invited to future meetings of the Audit & Risk Committee.

It was agreed that these issues would be progressed and Council updated as appropriate.

## Convergence

The Vice-Chair advised that the purpose of the session on convergence was to hear the views of the permanent secretary on the Convergence Plan, the implications for CCEA.

It was agreed that clarification was required on :

- Vacancy control and the longer-term impact on the organisation.
- Council members were asked to stay on short-term, what arrangements will be put in place medium to long-term?
- The impact of budget cuts on 'business as usual' and staffing.

The Vice-Chair welcomed the Permanent Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Chief Executive Designate (ESA) to the meeting.

The Permanent Secretary thanked members for the opportunity to speak to the Council on the Convergence Plan and indicated that he intended to meet separately to discuss the work CCEA is involved in.

He acknowledged the work of the Council and thanked them for carrying out their roles effectively.

The Permanent Secretary confirmed that ESA is part of the Programme for Government and the Minister continues to work towards its establishment. He wished to make it clear that the existing organisations' statutory responsibilities, accountability and sponsorship arrangements remained unchanged and this also applied to CCEA.

### *Convergence Plan*

The main points were:

- Efficiency Savings: resulting in significant budget cuts across the education sector, in particular reducing management and administration by 10%.
- Voluntary Severance Arrangements: Funding has been secured to bring forward a package to facilitate these arrangements on a spend to save basis.

The Chief Executive Designate (ESA) has developed a business plan which underpins each organisation. CCEA will remain the employer and will put forward a business case for those staff eligible for Voluntary Severance. This will include a risk analysis to ensure statutory responsibilities can be met. A proposal will then be presented to DE for approval.

- Convergence: this will be a collaborative process between the Chief Executive Designate (ESA), his team and the various organisations.

### *Discussion*

Members sought clarification on the following :

- When CCEA would be notified of the extent of the budget cuts to enable prioritisation of core business?

The Deputy Secretary advised that the budget would be released when it has been agreed by the Executive. He recognised that the present situation was not ideal, but hoped that it would be issued by the end of the financial year.

The CFO advised that CCEA has a series of cost saving initiatives to put in place pending notification of the budget.

- How funding would be used to provide the range of qualifications and collaboration arrangements required to fulfil the Entitlement Framework and whether this would be extended to STEM?

The Chief Executive Designate (ESA) advised that the range of issues highlighted were on the agenda for ESA and would be taken forward through the committee structure outlined in the convergence plan. He confirmed that the existing organisations would be included in discussions.

With regard to the new regulatory arrangements coming into effect from 1 April 2010 the Chief Executive of OfQual has stated that she will be paying particular attention to any potential competitive activity of CCEA in the area of expanding qualifications. Further information would be available in due course.

- Council members have been asked to stay on for a longer period than anticipated. This could be for up to 12 months. Clarification was sought on whether there was any support mechanism for the existing Council members.

The Permanent Secretary thanked members for the excellent work they have carried out and for their commitment to CCEA. He recognised that they had added real value and confirmed that the DE was entirely supportive of them and training would be provided if members felt this was necessary.

He stated that governance was of paramount importance and asked that if any member felt they were not being supported or felt that any governance issues were not being dealt with to their satisfaction to raise this with him as appropriate.

- Voluntary Severance : confirmation was sought on how this would be divided up and what the approximate timescale was for commencement.

The opportunity for early releases of staff under Voluntary Severance in the 2008/09 financial year had now passed and the funding had been passed back to treasury. However, a further bid for this funding would be made for 2010/11.

- Clarification was sought on what RRVS scheme applied now that the original start date for ESA had passed.

The Chief Executive Designate (ESA) confirmed that as long as existing organisations were operating within the context of RPA and convergence then the original enhancements would continue to be available. If organisations chose to operate other schemes these arrangements would no longer apply.

He confirmed that he and his team would continue to work with the organisations on business cases to ensure the proposals for Voluntary Severance are consistent with convergence before forwarding to DE for approval.

- Has the Convergence Delivery Plan been looked at in detail with regard to ensuring curriculum delivery and front line services?

The Chief Executive Designate (ESA) confirmed that structures had been identified to deliver what was required going forward. With regard to professional development for the future - the support model will be revised to take account of Every School a Good School, supporting the school community and leadership.

He advised that every effort would be made to ensure savings would come out of middle and senior management rather than impacting on the delivery services.

Other issues including vacancy control, professional development of teachers and school performance were briefly discussed.

The Permanent Secretary advised that all of the issues raised were part of the convergence plan and would be addressed going forward. He asked members to operate within the spirit of the plan as far as possible and confirmed that he would be available for future discussions as required.

The Vice-Chair thanked the Permanent Secretary and his colleagues for their open and honest discussion.

## **Main Business**

### **1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mr D McKee and Mr J Collins.

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

The Vice-Chair wished to place on record her thanks to all of the officers involved in the SCORE concert. It was an excellent, successful event.

She advised that the next meeting of Council would focus on educational issues within Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications.

### **3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 February 2010**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 February 2010 were proposed by Ms Michele Crilly and seconded by Mrs Dorothy Black as a true and accurate record.

A copy was signed by the Vice-Chair.

#### *Action Points*

The Acting Chief Executive updated members on the following:

- *Convergence* : has already been discussed.
- *Internal audit report* : the first draft of the report is near completion and following the normal internal audit process of management review and response will become final. The Chairman of Council will manage the further communication of the report.
- *Council & Committee Structures* : alternate corporate and education meetings will be arranged. If this is not satisfactory it will be reviewed and revised.
- *Voluntary Severance* : the funding available for this financial year was not used and has been returned to the Treasury. Proposals will be put forward to ESAIT for release of staff during 2010/11. It is hoped that progress with Voluntary Severance will be made pending decisions from DE.

## 4 Finance

### ***Finance Committee Report : 9 March 2010***

In the absence of the Chairman the Acting Chief Executive advised that he would report back on the meeting. The minutes have not yet been finalised and will be issued to members once approved by the Chairman.

He advised that Mark Fegan (*Information has been redacted under s. 40 Personal information of the Freedom of Information Act 2000*). He wished to place on record his congratulations and also his personal thanks to Mr Fegan for the support he had given to him and taking on other responsibilities during his time on the TMT.

Members wished Mr Fegan every success for the future.

The Acting Chief Executive reported the following :

- *Finance Report as at 31 January 2010*

Members noted an underspend of £355K at this time. Forecast for year end showed a significant amount of work was required during February and March to bring the budget in on target.

With regard to project spend. Members asked that DE be made aware of the underlying reasons for underspends on important projects to ensure future funding is provided.

- *Balance Sheet as at 31 January 2010*

Two points were drawn to the attention of the committee:

- The reduction in the fixed assets figure was due to CCEA adopting ESA's accounting policies; and
- Debtors : the figure has increased. As a result of the overlap between GCSE old and new specifications the number of examinations has increased as have entries. This will come into line once invoicing has been completed.

- *Budget 2010/11*

Members were advised that DE would not be in a position to release the budget allocation until the last week in March. Budget cuts were expected and would be more significant in the following years. With this in mind TMT were looking at ways to generate savings across the organisation.

- *Cost of living increase and PRP*

Members noted that the pay remit for 2009/10 had not yet been approved and the cost of living increase remained outstanding for 2008/09.

PRP : the main issue outstanding is the legal position on payment of PRP. It is anticipated that this will not be resolved until April/May 2010.

- *Non-financial performance targets*

Members were advised all targets would be achieved this year with the exception of 2 :

- Examination Team re entry level qualifications : work has begun however decisions will fall into the 2011/12 financial year;
- Achieving 700+ in relation to EFQM. A decision was taken that this initiative be dropped.

### *Contracts and Partnerships*

FM Contract : members asked that the 3 year tender process be investigated in line with advice from the ESAIT team.

NI Assembly Partnership : the committee agreed a proposal with the NI Assembly to produce a web-based resource for primary and post-primary schools.

Members were content with the information received.

- ***Finance Report as at 28 February 2010***

***C/86/1***

The CFO drew members attention to the summary report and advised that the underspend had been reduced to £329K with a significant amount of work to be completed during March.

He assured members that CCEA was in a strong position to achieve its budget at year end.

*Earned Income* : is on target. The forecast shows that the income from the winter series will realise the budget at year end.

*Baseline* : is running slightly ahead of budget, however cross charging from projects to baseline will bring this into line at year end.

*Projects* : £400K underspent. This is due to a large proportion of materials (100 items) for printing. Managers are working with Multimedia to complete this work to allow the budget to come in largely on target at year end.

*Capital* : will come in on budget at year end.

A Council member sought clarification on whether all of the projects were essential. The Director of Education Strategy confirmed that all of the planned projects fell within core priorities going forward and all non-essential projects had either been cut or put on hold. He clarified that the profile of this budget meant that the majority of the spend takes place in the last 4-8 weeks of the financial year.

Council members sought clarification that all projects were commissioned by DE following discussions at relevant committees, recommendations and advice. The Director of Education Strategy confirmed that this is part of regular of discussions with DE and that funding had been secured through the appropriate mechanisms. He gave an assurance that none of these were 'nice to do'. He also assured members that all priority items had been discussed by the Curriculum & Assessment Committee and will now go through the proper governance process with Council.

Clarification was sought on whether staffing costs for project and core staff would be split. The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that a report to clearly show the full cost of staff working on Projects will be included in future finance reports.

To ensure members fulfilled their challenge function with regard to a shared understanding of the projects and other priorities it was suggested that the schedule of meetings be reviewed to allow for full discussion on education issues as required.

The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that it was intended to have alternate Education and Corporate meetings going forward.

## **5 Projects and Priorities 2010/2011**

**C/86/2**

### *Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting*

The Director of Education Strategy gave an overview of the planned activity for the year ahead. These included :

- Assessment development and implementation (including the new assessment arrangements);
- InCAS : including contractual arrangements 2010;
- Irish medium : ongoing provision of support resources;
- Baseline activity: including end of key stage assessment operations for KS1 & 2; ICT accreditation and Records of Achievement and Progress file.
- Non-statutory assessment for Early Years, Foundation Stage and SEN; and
- Curriculum support to include Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities; SEN; Financial Capability; STEM/LLW and World Religions.

With regard to the InCAS errors which occurred in October 2009, DE established a working group to evaluate the extent of the impact of these and have put confidence building measures in place. The KPMG report has now been received and the recommendations have either been implemented or plans have been put in place to progress these.

The Director of ES confirmed that details on individual projects were available to members on request.

Members sought an assurance that the appropriate resources were allocated to projects and managed accordingly. The Director of ES confirmed that where a dedicated resource was employed to work on a particular project – once the project had come to an end and funding withdrawn from DE the officer concerned returned to their previous employment.

With regard to substantial pieces of work, i.e. taking forward the new assessment arrangements, the staff involved in this also worked on other projects.

The Director of ES confirmed that all projects and associated resources were being tightly managed.

A Council member sought clarification on whether schools were consulted on their needs and are they taken into consideration. The Director of ES confirmed that engagement with practitioners is carried out at an early stage and in most cases evaluations have been built in to the project.

CCEA is not in a position to comment on whether DE consults with schools on any of the projects it commissions.

The Director of ES wished to place on record that due to the current position regarding the InCAS contract for 2010 it was extremely likely that development work on Irish Medium developed ability would be deferred to 2011. CCEA are currently awaiting DE direction on this.

## Qualifications

The Director of Qualifications gave an overview of the project work plan for 2010/11. This included :

- Market Developments: particularly on the Revision of Specifications.
- Qualifications Developments: The Entitlement Framework – expansion of the Applied Portfolio through New Applied GCE and Vocational Qualifications.
- Examinations and Assessment Modernisation : several initiatives are underway in this area, in particular e-moderation; on-screen marking and e-QPD;
- e-GOML systems : updating of software to accommodate new specification and unit structure aligned to the QCF.

A Council member sought clarification on the status of the SEN Reference Group consultation. The Director of Qualifications confirmed that this has been on hold since November 2009. The paper will come forward to Council at its April meeting.

A Council member expressed concern that it appeared from the list of projects that there were insufficient qualifications to fulfil the Entitlement Framework and asked that if this was not the case that it be reflected in the detail of the project.

The Acting Chief Executive clarified that the majority of the work in relation to the Entitlement Framework was core funded and not project based.

It was suggested that qualifications policy be discussed alongside qualifications development at the next available opportunity.

## 6 Audit & Risk

### ***Audit & Risk Committee Report : 11 March 2010***

The Chairperson of the Audit & Risk Committee advised that the minutes had not yet been finalised as the meeting had taken place very recently.

She advised that as this was a newly constituted committee, members had received training from KPMG.

She reported on the following :

*Minutes of previous meeting* : the minutes of the previous meeting were noted but not signed. As this was a newly constituted committee the membership has changed and no-one from the former committee was present. In this instance it was agreed that the Acting Chief Executive would ratify the minutes and they would be endorsed by Mr David Thompson.

- *InCAS errors* : members noted the work undertaken by the Director of Education Strategy and his team in connection with these errors. The KPMG report has been received and the recommendations are underway.

The Director of Education Strategy would be invited to the next meeting to report on the progress in relation to the recommendations identified in the InCAS review.

- *Corporate Risk Register* : members noted the revised risk register, in particular the risks associated with convergence.
- *Operational Plan* : KPMG reported on the revisions to the internal operational plan. The committee approved the plan for 2009/10.



- *External audit strategic plan.* Members received an overview of the plan in particular the areas where external audits would be conducted throughout the year.

A copy of the plan is available for Council members on request.

Members noted the information provided.

Ms Mae Watson advised members that she had written to the new Permanent Secretary in response to his letter of 25 January 2010. She received a reply in which it asked that CCEA review its quorums within its Standing Orders.

A Council member sought clarification on the extent to which the risk lies with CCEA regarding the InCAS errors and whether this was a shared responsibility between CCEA, C2K and the WELB. The Director of ES advised that he had met with the Deputy Secretary (DE) to discuss the way forward in light of the KPMG report. One of the recommendations arising was the need for the relationship between relevant parties to be clearly defined. DE is taking this forward.

## **7 Voluntary Severance**

**C/86/3**

The Acting Chief Executive reported that the paper provided set out the difference between voluntary severance and compulsory redundancy.

He advised that he would be meeting the HR representative from ESAIT to progress the issues around voluntary severance and this would come back to Council when further information was available.

## **8 Any Other Business**

### ***Regulation***

The Acting Chief Executive reminded members that DEL undertook a consultation on regulating vocational qualifications. CCEA's response was that there should be one regulatory function for all qualifications.

He advised that DEL were proceeding with a proposal for 2 regulatory functions, one for vocational and one for general qualifications.

A review of the outworkings of the DEL decision will take place in September 2010. The decision to extend Ofqual's remit for regulation of Vocational Qualifications in Northern Ireland will have implications for CCEA and the funding currently provided by DEL for 4 staff.

Members asked the Acting Chief Executive to seek clarity from DEL on the current situation to enable the Council to make appropriate decisions with regard to the Entitlement Framework.

The Director of Qualifications reported that initial work has begun on mapping vocational and academic qualifications and gaps have been identified. Proposals will come forward to Council, however, the CCEA regulators have advised that CCEA develops its own criteria for qualifications accredited and delivered only in Northern Ireland.

Members expressed concern regarding CCEA developing qualifications with currency only for Northern Ireland and asked that further advice be obtained from QCA/OfQUAL on ensuring consistency with qualifications criteria in other regions.

It was agreed that this issue be brought back to the next appropriate meeting of Council for full discussion, including :

- *(Information has been redacted under s.36 (2) (b) (ii) Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 where disclosure would, or would be likely to, inhibit the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation.)*
- Should awarding bodies withdraw qualifications, then CCEA need to be in a position to fill the gaps.

The Vice-Chair agreed that there was a need for debate around basic principles for the whole range of qualifications, including the Qualifications Credit Framework and what constitutes a course.

It was agreed that a suitable date would be arranged to take these issues forward.

## **9 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 21 April 2010 at 1300 hours.

The Vice-Chair thanked members for their contributions to the meeting.