

Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Minutes of the sixtieth meeting of Council held on Wednesday 16 November 2005 at 1000 hours in the Boardroom, CCEA Offices, Clarendon Road, Belfast.

Present : Dr A Lennon (Chairman) Dr A Murray
 Mr B Carlin Mr J Clarke
 Ms M Watson Ms P O'Farrell
 Mr D Thompson Mr J Ellison
 Professor P Roebuck Mr J Collins

Mr R Cushnie, DE Assessor
Mrs M Cree, DEL Assessor

Mr G Boyd, Chief Executive
Mr D Mulholland, Director Corporate Services
Mr N Anderson, Director Operations
Mr J Hamilton (Item 2 only)
Mr R Hanna (Item 4 only)
Mr M Montgomery (Item 4 only)
Mr R McCune (Items 4 and 5 only)
Mrs C Gallagher (Items 4,5, and 6 only)

Miss N Kennedy, Manager, Council Secretariat

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr W Mulryne, Mrs D Black; Mr J Lee, Mrs H McClenaghan, Mr D McKee, Mr B Turtle, Mrs B O'Hare, Mr D Woods and Mr D McCall.

2 Chairman's business

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and informed them that Jim Caves, former Deputy Chief Executive of CCEA had died in October. He wished to place on record the Council's regret at this sad news.

He reported that :

- Julie Bell had resigned from Council; and
- The Celebrating Excellence event will take place on Tuesday 20 December 2005, invitations and further information will be issued in advance.

He drew members' attention to the outline programme for the Council workshop scheduled for 21 December. The focus will be on 14-19 Education, however, this will be changed to facilitate any other matters which would require attention, if necessary.

Mr Hanna, Ms Gallagher, Mr McCune and Mr Montgomery would join the meeting following Item 3.

SCORE

The Chairman congratulated officers on the SCORE concert which took place on Friday 15 October. He also thanked those Council members who were able to attend.

Review of Public Administration

The Chairman reported that he and the Chief Executive had met with the Minister to discuss CCEA's RPA submission. He highlighted the main reasons for proposing the 2-body approach, in particular:

- The need to ensure good processes CCEA has in place for examinations were not disrupted;
- The many issues surrounding Pupil Profile; and
- The need to continue with curriculum implementation to the agreed deadlines set by Government.

Mr Cushnie said that Ministers are expected to make an announcement regarding the outcomes of the consultation on the 22 November 2005, but to date this had not been confirmed.

The Chief Executive confirmed that he has made arrangements to speak to all staff immediately following the announcement.

Reconstitution of Council

The Chairman drew members' attention to the letter from the Department of Education. Having raised this at the Accountability Review meeting with the Permanent Secretary, it was confirmed that the Council would be reconstituted on 1 April 2006.

For those eligible for re-appointment an assessment sheet will be completed and forwarded to members for comment. Members may wish to have one-to-one discussions with the Chairman upon receipt of the assessment.

The Chairman confirmed that interviews will be conducted for all. The interview panel will consist of the Chairman, a representative from the Department of Education and an independent third party appointed by the Commissioner for Independent Appointments.

He asked members to let him know directly if they wished to reapply.

Business excellence – progress report

The Chairman welcomed Mr Hamilton to the meeting.

The Chief Executive reported that CCEA had been one of the 8 finalists for the UK Business Excellence Award but did not win an award.

Mr Hamilton informed members that once the Mark of Excellence feedback report has been received it would be necessary to:

- Consider the comments alongside those already received in the UK feedback; and

- Consider the benefits of engaging with staff from the British Quality Foundation/ Centre for Competitiveness to ensure we have a clear understanding of the reports received.

An action plan will be developed and recommendations from the assessors will be implemented only on the basis of what will improve the performance of the organisation.

The Chief Executive stated that the business excellence model was used as a tool for improving performance. Given that this organisation will only exist for a limited period of time consideration would be given to entering for the UK Quality Award for 2006 and the European Quality Award 2006.

3 Minutes of previous meeting held on 28/29 September 2005

The Chairman thanked Dr Murray for chairing the meeting in his absence.

Mr Clarke asked that the following statement be checked in the context of the pupil profile:

'the replacement for the 11+ must be robust, fair and in the interest of the child. It must be promoted confidently by the teacher to the parent. To ensure this the teacher must be adequately trained and fully informed going forward'.

It was agreed that this be checked in the verbatim notes and the record amended if necessary. This was subsequently done and the wording confirmed.

Subject to this the minutes were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

Action points

The Chief Executive confirmed that the majority of the action points had been dealt with or were on the agenda for this meeting. Members were updated on :

Accounts : a technical accounting point is holding up the process. It is hoped these will be available for sign-off by December 2005.

Regulation & Qualifications: commissioning letter from DE and DEL regarding the 14-19 debate had not yet been received. Mr Cushnie agreed to follow this up as soon as possible.

4 Committees

(a) Regulation & Qualifications Committee : 5 October 2005

Professor Roebuck, Chairman of the Committee, updated members on the following:

GCSE Specification Development: Mathematics and Science

- *Mathematics*: From September 2005, in advance of England and Wales, 70 centres in Northern Ireland are following a new CCEA 2 tier modular specification. All centres will continue to have access to the 3 tier specification.
- *Science*: concern was expressed regarding the proposed changes – the revised content may not be a sufficiently strong base for Science at A level. In addition the

curriculum changes will mean that pupils do not need to take science at Key Stage 4.

It was agreed at the Committee that no changes would be made without further consultation.

Framework for Achievement : Ministers have requested further work on :

- Working towards a continued joint regulation for qualifications across England, Wales and Northern Ireland;
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities of awarding bodies and regulatory authorities in development work linked to the framework for achievement; and
- Maintaining coherence across the NQF/FfA and the Framework for Qualifications in Higher Education (FQHE).

14-19 Curriculum/Qualifications Development

Professor Roebuck drew members' attention to the letter the Chief Executive had written to David Woods setting out areas for further discussion with regard to the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper's proposed changes to 'A' levels in England. Further discussion is required on:

- the need for Advanced Extension Awards given that the system does not value them;
- introducing an extended project to stretch all young people and test a wider range of higher-level skills; and
- providing opportunities for young people to take HE modules in the sixth form.

Developments are being monitored on the Specialised Diplomas pending instructions on how to take this forward in Northern Ireland.

The Chief Executive stated that whilst there are reservations on some of the issues raised it was important to have joined up thinking and manage the interface carefully.

Post Qualifications Admissions: was on the agenda for discussion at this meeting.

Self-assessment plan : good progress continues to be made.

Review of examinations risks associated with Code of Practice : this was reported as early work in progress. Members welcomed this information.

Categorisation of Scrutiny reports : an internal review has been carried out to ensure the categorization is more effective and the system more robust going forward.

European Qualifications Framework : CCEA's submission is broadly supportive. However it will be implemented on a voluntary basis. DfES are collating all of the responses and further developments will be reported as appropriate.

Proposals for Credit Arrangements in Higher Education in England : these proposals relate to England only. However, it is expected that the outcomes of the consultation will influence developments in this area across the UK.

Centre recognition project : proposals have been drawn up by the four regulatory authorities with a view to all awarding bodies using the same process to recognize and approve centres. A consultation seminar has been organized for 1 December by CCEA and QCA (NI).

(b) Business Committee : 19 October 2005

Dr Lennon, Chairman of the Committee, reported that the committee had been updated on the Review of Public Administration and Reconstitution of Council, as well as:

- detailed discussions on the finance reports and annual accounts, specifically around how they would represent a true and fair view;
- information provided on the operational plan mid-year review exception report; and
- presentations on HR issues, in particular absence management; investors in people and restructuring in Education Services.

(c) e-Learning & Services Committee : 9 November 2005

Mr Ellison, Chairman of the Committee, gave a brief update on the following:

Pilot work

- On-Screen Marking had taken place in June across ICT and English Literature Foundation Stage, with 6500 scripts being scanned. 30-40 examiners marked these on screen. Processing was done electronically and the pilot was successful.
- Work is in progress regarding a pilot using electronic submission of coursework; and
- Examiner training for on-screen test authoring provided by Thompson Prometric will commence week beginning 28 November. This pilot will seek to train a small number of examiners to write a range of statistically validated questions.
- Discussions are underway with Electric Paper regarding the on-screen delivery of objective tests, using their simulation environment which will be used as a testing environment for children to carry out tasks on-screen.

The Chairman asked that quality assurance measures (including standards and ensuring consistency) be built in to all pilots, particular on-screen marking.

Provision of training facilities have been identified for officer training and it is hoped that this will be operational from December 2005.

(d) Curriculum & Assessment Committee : 12 and 18 October 2005

In the absence of Dr Mulryne, Chairman of the Committee, the Chief Executive reported that due to the extensive agenda and discussions required around pupil profile an additional meeting had been necessary.

Members were updated on the following :

- Concerns continue to be raised regarding communication surrounding the Pupil Profile. This has been drawn to the Department of Education's attention.
- Substantial amount of guidance and support materials are currently being prepared in readiness for the implementation of the new curriculum. These will be provided in printed and web-based form and a DVD will be available for all schools in advance of September 2006.
- A meeting had taken place with the management of the Independent Christian Schools regarding the latest RSE guidance. The debate continues.
- The committee agreed the extension of the Early Years Research. However, further work is required on the role of the Classroom Assistant.

The meeting on 18 October was devoted to the pupil profile and proved to be less than satisfactory. Further work would continue internally to progress all the issues on the pupil profile and come forward for further discussion at the Curriculum & Assessment workshop on 7 December 2005.

Progress on pupil profile

The Chairman welcomed Ms Gallagher, Mr Hanna and Mr Montgomery to the meeting.

The Chief Executive reported that a great deal of work had been carried out to date and asked members to take into consideration the amount of changes and adapting that has been necessary.

Primary

Work continues on:

- The manageability of the diagnostic testing and the ability of the teacher to carry out exercises with up to 30 children in a primary classroom;
- Issues still need to be resolved around closure at the end of year;
- The value of the meeting between parents and teachers at the beginning of the year;
- Guidance around interventions during the year; and
- Planning for the following year.

Post-primary

Further work is required on the trialling of the format which needs to be integrated into a reasonable school reporting system, taking account of the many subjects and diversity of teachers.

Dr Murray asked for the most up to date version of the Pupil Profile report and associated documentation to be presented at the workshop on 7 December 2006 and also for Council members at its next meeting in December. The Chief Executive agreed that this would be done.

Members raised the following :

- The need for the pupil profile to be meaningful and fit for purpose taking into consideration that the learning environment changes over the course of education (ie primary to post primary – 6th form);
- The need for clarity of the process to be communicated to ensure a full understanding and inform the debate;
- The need for clear guidance information to be produced for teachers and parents;
- The relationship between the pupil profile and the progress file to be clarified to ensure no overlap;
- How to ensure communication in a meaningful way for all parents and how they are involved in the process;
- The need to ensure that this document assists the process of learning; and
- The need to give guidance and guidelines on best practice;

The Chief Executive sought members' agreement on the use of diagnostic information as a key component of the pupil profile. This was agreed.

Mr Carlin welcomed developments to date and asked for a status report to be prepared stating :

- The key issues that are fixed;
- The key issues that still need to be resolved;
- What the further refinements are likely to be; and
- What the communication issues are and how they can be dealt with.

The Chairman agreed that this would be dealt with, however, reminded members that all development work and advice is confidential until approved by Government. Then it would be possible to inform the wider debate.

The Chief Executive confirmed that a detailed presentation will be made at the next Curriculum & Assessment workshop. This will outline the process and all of our thinking to date. It will then come forward for further debate and approval at the Council on 21 December 2006.

Costings for Implementation of the Pupil Profile

Mr Hanna reported that detailed costings have been provided to the Department of Education around the objective information based on the ALTA provision (numeracy) and INCAS (literacy). Costs are currently £1M for ALTA and £700K for INCAS.

Whilst the CARN software has been customized to meet the needs of Northern Ireland there is less visibility around the SIMS/Capita option. Illustrative costs for CARN would be an initial up front license cost of £600K and an annual recurring cost of £58K.

Members expressed concern about the lack of information regarding hardware costs and the manageability issues in terms of classroom management and machines available to schools.

The Chairman stressed the importance of establishing quality assurance as soon as possible.

It was agreed that further information was required with costs and potential savings clearly identified in order to put a complete package, including advice and recommendations, to the Department.

5 Finance

Finance report and expenditure to end October 2005

C/60/2

Mr Mulholland reported:

- Examinations income : £282K more than budgeted and further increases forecast (DE have given permission for some of the excess income to be used to offset pressures for pension costs to NILGOS);
- Capital expenditure : on target;
- Baseline expenditure : in line with budget at £78K overspent YTD; and
- Projects remain underspent by £429K.

In some areas this is a timing issue with projects being late in starting. However, curriculum development is the largest contributor some of this being timing differences for recruitment. DE is aware of the issues and will be kept informed of developments.

Project planning needs to be improved upon and managers will be instructed to alter financial planning to tie in with the financial year.

Preliminary projections for 2006/2007

C/60/3

Mr Mulholland informed members that the initial budget projections for 2006/2007 were based on DE's preliminary budget information of a baseline funding increase of 3%. However, CCEA have taken a more prudent line to ensure:

- efficiency savings of £150K; and
- any increased funding can be applied to salary scale and cost of living increases.

Further discussions with DE will take place to enable CCEA to provide as much as possible, accurate budget assumptions by 30 November 2005.

Members noted the information provided.

6 Regulation & Qualifications

Improving the Higher Education Applications Process

C/60/4

The Chairman welcomed Mr McCune to the meeting.

Mr McCune informed members that proposals for improving application to High Education had been drawn up by Government for consultation UK wide. The deadline for responses to the on-line consultation was 5 December 2005.

Members welcomed the consultation. The following points were made:

- the need for radical changes to the system;
- the need to consider the timeframe for marking and issuing exam results to eliminate 'predicted grades' – this will ensure a much fairer system than at present;
- the need for Universities to consider a change to the starting time of their term and the need to provide flexible solutions;
- the issue of results dates to be looked at in light of any workable proposals;
- the remarking service to be addressed in line with proposed changes to this process;
- the need to consult with the awarding bodies, HE institutions and other interested parties to highlight the main issues of concern jointly;
- the need for schools and examining boards to look at their processes and discuss with universities to reach the best possible solution.

It was agreed that the points raised would be taken into consideration when drafting CCEA's response which would be approved by the Regulation & Qualifications Committee in advance.

7 Curriculum & Assessment

Update on PMB : plans for implementation

The Chairman welcomed Ms Gallagher to the meeting.

Ms Gallagher reported that the Partnership Management Board (PMB) was created :

- to draw up the planning strategy – which was launched on 16 September 2005;
- to devise and submit costings for implementation to the Department of Education;
- to develop plans for each Key Stage;
- to oversee development of support materials; and
- to oversee the training of trainers in order to ensure a shared message be disseminated to all schools.

Costs have been submitted to the Department of Education. It has been agreed that funding would be available for in-service training of teachers but clarification of the nature of funding which would be allocated to the CASS Service is awaited.

Measures have been taken to ensure the 5 training teams set up by the 5 Education and Library Boards report through the PMB to keep them up to date with developments in each board area. This will assist in developing the regional approach.

She stressed that, given the sensitivities around the Review of Public Administration announcement, the group continued to work well.

The Chairman said that CCEA have already made clear its concerns to the Department of Education regarding the implementation of the new curriculum and the issues surrounding the pupil profile, and the need to ensure these two projects move forward and meet their set deadlines. He stressed the need for interim lines of accountability and resources to be put in place as soon as possible.

He expressed concern about the lack of progress with the plans for implementation and asked that they be addressed as soon as possible.

Mr Clarke agreed that this required urgent attention.

Mr Cushnie confirmed that the Department of Education were aware of all of the issues and have met with some of the Senior Education Officers with a view to resolving these issues going forward. He agreed that it was important for these projects to be progressed as a matter of priority and would report this back to the Department.

Early Childhood Interventions and Literacy Development

C/60/5

Ms Gallagher reported that the paper outlines an overview of the findings of CCEA's own and wider research with a view to :

- an optimum approach to the early childhood education of all children ;and
- addressing the particular learning challenges posed by children from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

The paper also highlights interventions that impact on the development of self esteem and sustained educational engagement and the importance of the quality and duration of these interventions and management of same.

The Chairman welcomed the paper and congratulated Ms Gallagher on the progress made to date.

Research Exchange Seminar : 23 January 2006

The Chairman informed members that main researchers from Durham University have been invited to facilitate the exchange of research findings in relation to Literacy, the Enriched Curriculum and Primary Movement at a seminar on Monday 23 January 2006.

It was agreed that as wide a range of audience as possible be invited to this seminar including Council and Curriculum & Assessment Committee members.

Dr Murray sought clarification on the status of the Foundation Stage in terms of the new curriculum. Mr Cushnie confirmed that subject to agreement, the Foundation Stage will be reflected in legislation as a separate Key Stage and that adequate funding and resources were being sourced.

8 Any other business

None identified by the Council.

9 Date of next meeting

The Chairman confirmed that the next meeting would be a workshop, focusing on 14-19 Developments and the Pupil Profile on the afternoon of **Wednesday 21 December 2005**.

Chairman

Date

