

Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

COUNCIL

Minutes of the seventy-fourth meeting held on Wednesday 18 June 2008 at 1000 hours in the Boardroom, 3rd Floor, CCEA, Clarendon Road, BELFAST.

Present :

Mr D McKee (Chairman)	Ms M Watson
Mr M Bowen	Mr J Wilkinson
Professor P Roebuck	Mr D Thompson
Dr M Brown	Ms C McKinney
Mrs D Black	Mrs H McClenaghan
Ms P O'Farrell	Mr J Collins
Ms M Crilly	

Mr W Haire (Permanent Secretary, DE)

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 Operations)
Mr M Fegan (Chief Finance Officer)
Mr R McCune (Skills Accreditation & Qualifications Manager)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

Introduction

The Chairman welcomed members, and in particular Mr Will Haire, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education to the meeting. He advised that the Permanent Secretary had agreed to attend for the first part of the meeting to deal with any curriculum issues raised and that the agenda had been re-organised to facilitate this.

On behalf of the Council, the Chairman congratulated Ms C McKinney on her recent award of the OBE.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr J Clarke; Mr N Downing and Ms M Cree.

2 Chairman's business

The Chairman advised that the majority of chairman's business would be taken at the end of the meeting.

Transfer Process

Information has been redacted under s.22 (Intended for future publication) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000).

4 Curriculum & Assessment

Curriculum & Assessment Committee Report : 22 May 2008

The Chairperson of the Committee reported that there were two main items of business discussed, both on the agenda for this Council meeting. She advised that the Council had received two letters from DE requesting advice on a range of issues relating to revised

assessment arrangements and reporting on assessment information to parents. A first draft was discussed by the committee at its last meeting and revised advice has now come forward for Council discussion and approval.

Draft Advice to DE on : Revised Assessment Arrangements & Reporting on Assessment Information to Parents C/74/1

The Director of ES advised that the letters were included as an Appendix to the paper to provide the background and context for the advice. The paper was divided into 3 Sections (A, B and C).

- Section A outlined the initial thinking in the response to requests for advice on assessment arrangements from DE and informs the Council's discussion in response to the requests for this advice by outlining the draft recommendations.
- Section B addresses other issues arising from the request for a 'system check' on assessment; and
- Section C provided for information was an overview of the components for Assessment and Reporting Arrangements.

Members commended the paper for the clarity of the paper. They agreed and supported the recommendations in **Part A**, subject to the following amendments:

- Assessment and reporting arrangements should be child-focussed, manageable for teachers and meaningful for parents.
- A training and support programme is required for teachers.
- Assessment of the cross-curricular skills at the end of Years 3,5,6,8 and 9 to be reported in qualitative terms using the language of the levels of progression and that this be altered to ensure it is easily understood by parents.
- Training on the interpretation of data is also required.

Part B – 'system check'.

The Chairperson of the Curriculum & Assessment Committee said that it was not intended to choose one Option and that the full range would be sent through to DE for them to make a decision.

The Director of ES advised that the options provided possible approaches to the system check and outlines proposals around moderation, a voluntary accreditation scheme and baseline assessment.

He reported that the Committee discussed the options and proposals and agreed that Option C would be the less preferable for the system check as a significant amount of inspection and observation is already carried out in schools. They stressed the importance of :

- standardisation across the system for reporting to parents, teachers, pupils and government;
- continuing with baseline assessment because it is valuable teachers and in showing pupils how they improve and progress; and

- ensuring the measures are child-centred, the outcomes are easily accessible in a language meaningful for all audiences and that this is manageable for teachers and principals.

Council members noted the views of the committee.

The Chairman of the Regulation, Qualifications & Lifelong Learning Committee drew attention to Point 3 in the paper and sought clarification on whether schools who did not participate in the proposed Voluntary Centre Accreditation would be penalised if they chose not to participate.

Members urged caution in that if there was too much accreditation being carried out in schools at present this could have a detrimental effect. The Director of ES clarified that this proposal was very much the sharing of best practice in a supportive way across the system and would be intended to be a type of 'kite'/quality mark.

A Council member expressed concern regarding the use of the term 'kite' mark. The Chairman said that further thinking was required around this specific proposal and asked that it be brought back to the Committee and Council as appropriate.

A Council member said there were a number of initiatives throughout the province and it would be important to have harmonisation between CCEA and the Boards on these. The Chairman asked that further investigation be carried out with respect to the number and types of initiatives currently ongoing.

The Director of ES agreed that it was important to ascertain what types of assessment were being carried out as well as the statutory arrangements to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach through the system and schools are not overburdened.

The Chairperson of the Committee sought confirmation that Council were happy with the proposed recommendations subject to further work being carried out in those areas where issues were raised.

The Council agreed the recommendations on this basis.

Early Years Enriched Curriculum Evaluation Report : Year 6

The Chairperson of the Committee reported that members had received the executive summary of the Year 6 report at the last meeting. *Information has been redacted under s.22 (Intended for future publication) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.*

Members agreed that this was valuable information, and that if funding was available, there would be value in continuing this through to post-primary school. The Chairperson of the Committee sought clarification on whether there were resources and funding available. The Director of ES confirmed that funding was available in the costed work programme for 2008/09, however, he informed Council that if it was necessary to re-scope the work, then it could have additional cost implications.

The Chairman of Council asked that consideration be given to revising the scope and research specification to allow for further work at post-primary to be carried out.

Clarification was sought on the timescales and when this would be brought back to Council. The Director of ES confirmed that an update on developments would be provided at the Curriculum & Assessment Committee on 11 September and would go forward to Council as appropriate.

Learning for Life and Work Sub-Committee Report : 8 May 2008

The Chairman of the Committee referred to the minutes and reported on the following :

- *Membership of the Committee* : it was agreed that the membership of the committee will be widened to include all of the strands of learning for life and work, ie Personal Development; Citizenship; Home Economics and Employability. New members will be invited to join the committee during the summer months.
- *PMB LLW Sub-Group* : the committee received a copy of the remit and presentation on the purpose of this sub-group. The discussion on this has been reflected in the minutes which members have been provided with.

The Chairman of the Committee welcomed the fact that the Director of ES was now co-chair of the PMB and would be in a stronger position to monitor the work of this group and take the lead in how this work will be rolled out and training delivered.

- *LLW : lessons from pilot activity* : the committee received a report on the education for employability initiatives which have been successfully conducted across the province through partnerships with the Education & Library Boards, Higher Education and Employers.

This has now been broadened into the other strands of Learning for Life and Work and will be taken forward within the Education Strategy Directorate.

- *Support and Implementation of LLW* : members were informed that discussions had taken place with DE regarding the wider LLW programme and a bid for funding had been made.
- *Learning Communities* : members were advised that as these groups were still in the early stages of formation, the LLW team are engaging with individual schools and clusters of schools to gain an insight into their experiences of LLW with a view to building on this going forward.

The Chairman of the Committee advised that there were 31 of these composed of cluster schools who would be taking a substantial amount of the collaborative work forward. He stated that it would be important for CCEA to be involved once these groups were up and running.

The Director of ES reported that he had formed a group specifically to take forward the LLW agenda. He expressed concerns regarding the practical challenges which have been raised by schools and confirmed that he would seek to work in partnership with a range of schools to support and share best practice with them. He advised the Permanent Secretary that he would be seeking approval for the funding from DE to take this work forward through to the remainder of the year.

The Permanent Secretary confirmed that LLW is a keystone of the revised curriculum and that DE was aware of the practical challenges. He commended CCEA on the excellent range of resources for LLW and confirmed that they would be approaching schools to understand the issues raised.

The Chairman of the Committee raised the issues of recruitment of LLW teachers, the impact this is having on Initial Teacher Training and timetabling in schools.

The Chairman of Council sought clarification on the impact vacancy control was having on this area of work. The Director of ES confirmed the Employability Team was now part of the

LLW team within his Directorate. *Information has been redacted under s. 40 (Personal Information) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.*

Information has been redacted under section 36 (2) (Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. He (*the Permanent Secretary*) appreciated the role of Council and its officers and said that work of CCEA was central to the education reform which would focus on standards and the curriculum.

On behalf of the Council, the Chairman thanked the Permanent Secretary for his input into the meeting.

The Permanent Secretary left the meeting at this stage.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 March 2008

The Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee asked that the following sentence be added to Page 6 at the end of the Audit & Risk Report :

'The Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee confirmed that he had been and would continue to seek guidance from DE on Convergence.'

With this amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2008 were proposed by Dr Martin Brown and seconded by Mr Martin Bowen as a true and accurate record of the meeting. A copy was signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising

A Council member asked there had been any clarification on the 14-19, Northern Ireland Diploma and Regulation issues. It was confirmed that DE have set up an internal group to progress these areas. The Acting Chief Executive said that the Diploma work was at an investigative stage at present and confirmed that GCSE and A level would continue for the foreseeable future.

Members asked the Chairman to write to DE and DEL seeking clarification on the status of the 14-19 Strategy and the issues around the Diploma and Regulation.

5 Regulation, Qualifications & Lifelong Learning

The Chairman of Council welcomed the Qualifications and Skills Accreditation Manager to the meeting.

Regulation, Qualifications & Lifelong Learning Committee Report : 3 June 2008

The Chairman of the Committee referred to the minutes and reported that the committee had received the following:

Qualifications Development

- An interim report on the Essential Skills School Pilot. Sixteen schools are involved in this pilot which was being used to provide evidence about the appropriateness of Essential Skills for 14-16 year olds. It has been conducted by DE and DEL who are keen to bring greater coherence to skills development. The full report will be available in September and Council will be provided with a copy.
- An update on the Occupational Studies consultation outcomes and draft proposals. These had been well received and the committee were happy with the progress to date. Further work is required in terms of how the Occupational Studies units relate to GCSE and how they can support careers work within the 14-16 year group.

The Chairman of the Learning for Life and Work Committee sought clarification on whether the Occupational Studies qualification would become a full GCSE. It was confirmed that this would not be the case, however it has been fully accredited as Level 1 & 2 Qualifications which are equivalent to GCSE A* to C.

Members expressed concern at the lack of clarity regarding this as schools were under the impression that this would be a full GCSE. The Chairman stressed the importance of putting the correct information out into centres and asked that the status and value of Occupational Studies be made clear to all centres.

- Review of GCE Specifications: 34 specifications had been submitted to QCA for accreditation. The feedback from QCA related to controlled assessment and guidance will be produced to schools on this. The Chairman commended the thoroughness of the process and confirmed that all the deadlines had been met.

Work has now begun on bringing centres back to CCEA and two marketing programmes have commenced. The Director of Operations confirmed that officers would continue to go out into centres with a view to understanding their needs in order to increase market share.

Regulation

- Qualifications & Credit Framework: PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) had completed an evaluation of the test and trial of the framework and a report would be forwarded to Ministers to support the business case submitted for further work in this area.
- Monitoring and Scrutiny Report for 2007 : members noted the recommendations and were happy with the work underway.
- Annual Examinations Assurance Report 2007 : members received the third annual report and noted that appropriate risk management reports were in place. These have been managed effectively and CCEA was performing well against other awarding bodies.

Future Arrangements for Qualifications Regulation in Northern Ireland C/74/2

The Chairman of the Committee reported that this paper had been discussed in detail by the Committee and was now coming forward to Council for further debate.

The Qualifications & Skills Accreditation Manager drew members' attention to page 2 of the paper which outlined the reasons for evaluating the current regulatory arrangements for Regulation in Northern Ireland, in particular:

- The roles of qualifications regulation and the relationship of these functions with DE, DEL and ESA;
- The level of independence of qualifications regulation ; and
- The range of accredited qualifications (general, vocational, applied and occupational) offered to learners.

Information has been redacted under section 36 (2) (Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that he and officers would be meeting with the Chief Executive Designate of ESA in early July on these issues.

6 Corporate

Business Committee Report : 13 May 2008

The Chairman of the Business Committee referred to the minutes. He reported that the main items of business were the Review of the 2007/08 Financial Year and the Budget for 2008/09.

CCEA had finished the financial year 3/4% within the total budget spend. The Committee commended officers on this performance.

A full report on each area was provided to the committee with the main points being:

- The expected downturn in volume for the winter series in examinations income.
- Other income will be gained from increasing car parking charges and staff paying for personal calls from CCEA mobiles. Both of these have been initiated.
- Baseline expenditure was delivered on budget.
- Projects were underspent by £223K, mainly due to the difficulty in estimating expenditure and timing issues. Measures have been taken to bring forward project spend to earlier in the year.
- Capital finished within budget. 84% more investment funding was allocated to continue with necessary changes to the infrastructure.

Budget 2008/09 : the final allocation of £31,986K represented at 6% increase on last year. This took into account :

- The payroll increases and employer's contribution rate for pensions.
- The funding necessary to cover CCEA's responsibilities in projects within Pupil Profile, further curriculum development and the completion of the implementation of the revised curriculum.

- A rise of 3% for income was allocated to safeguard against CCEA not hitting income targets and having to make up any shortfall.

Members noted the information provided.

Modernisation

At the January meeting of the committee two papers were presented for approval. These were sent to the ESA ICT Programme Management Board and pushed back due to lack of funding. CCEA will continue to make representations to ESA on these issues.

The Chairman of the Regulation, Qualifications & Lifelong Learning Committee sought clarification on the impact of this lack of funding on CCEA's business. The Director of Operations said that CCEA needed to continue to provide the same services as its competitors and the effect of blocking this funding could lead to CCEA not being able to fulfil this and advised that representations should continue to be made.

Irish-medium

The Director of ES updated members on developments since the Business Committee. He reported that work in this area has now begun and CCEA would be advertising for 4 members of staff to support the Irish-medium work within Curriculum & Assessment. There is a significant amount of work to be done and additional funding has been provided by DE.

The Chairman of Council sought clarification on the conflict regarding the Irish Language Act. The Acting Chief Executive said that this Act was much broader than Education and confirmed that CCEA's obligation was to ensure equality of provision in line with English-speaking schools.

The Director of ES clarified that this was a direct request to broaden CCEA's existing provision and expressed concern regarding the timeframe for putting staff in place and commencing the work.

The Chairman asked that progress be reported at the next appropriate meeting.

Approval of Annual Accounts 2007/08

C/74/3

The CFO drew members' attention to the Annual Accounts 2007/08 and reported that :

- All of the work was completed on target by 31 May 2008 and the Audit Office has cleared the accounts for approval by Council.
- The Audit Office has undertaken to give their final sign-off certificate by 30 June 2008 to enable the accounts to be laid before the Assembly before 4 July 2008.

Members noted that the Minister of Education will now review each set of accounts from the Education sector. A draft set of accounts have been set to the Private Office.

The CFO reported the following amendments :

- An assurance has been made on the quality of the accounts and controls, as per a request from the Audit Office.
- An Equal Opportunity Policy has been added.
- A tribute to Michael Lowe included.
- The classification of audits has been changed to 'satisfactory' which means 'fit for purpose'.

The Chairman sought comments/clarification from members. Members were happy with the information provided and approved the accounts to go forward to the Audit Office.

Audit & Risk Committee report : 2 June 2008

The Chairman of the committee referred to the minutes and reported on the following :

Non-compliance : there has been an improvement in this area since measurements have been put in place. This will now be handed over to TMT to manage going forward.

Mobile Phone usage : a software programme will now be used to analyse phone bills to ensure staff are paying for personal calls.

Personal Data Storage & Information : the deadline was amended to allow work in this area to be completed. The Chairman confirmed that this was on schedule.

Risk Management : stewardship report returns have now been made mandatory in that staff should register a NIL return where appropriate.

Internal audit's annual opinion and report : two issues were raised under this :

- The terms of reference of committees to be reviewed once a year ; and
- Consideration be given to Council members' attendance being published on the website.

The Chairman of Council stated that it was his responsibility to review all Committee Remits, but welcomed the advice given by the Auditors.

The Chairperson of the Curriculum & Assessment Committee reported that at the most recent meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee, the recording and publication of attendance at meetings for individual members had been suggested as something to consider within the Council performance appraisal.

The Chairman of Council said that these issues would be discussed with the Vice-Chairman outside of this meeting.

Convergence : the Chairman of the Audit & Risk Committee confirmed that a meeting has been organised for September and that this would be devoted to convergence. The reason for the meeting in September being that the Audit & Risk Committee would be able to report into Council at its next meeting. The next meeting would take place on 11 September.

The Chairman of Council informed members that the Chief Executive Designate of ESA would be attending the Council meeting on 17 September to talk to the full Council on Convergence. He suggested that the Audit & Risk Committee be postponed until after the Council meeting, however the Chairman of the Committee preferred to keep the meeting date in September as there could be a possibility of a difference between the advice from DE and that from the Chief Executive Designate of ESA.

Clarification was sought on the date of the Curriculum & Assessment Committee. It was confirmed that this was Thursday 11 September 2008.

The Chairperson of the Curriculum and Assessment Committee and the Director of Corporate Services agreed that the Audit & Risk Committee be rescheduled after the Council meeting. The Vice-Chairman of Council stated that he agreed to the September meeting without the knowledge that the Chief Executive Designate would be attending the September Council meeting.

The Chairman of Council sought clarification from the Chairman of the Audit & Risk Committee on rescheduling the date. It was confirmed that the date would be referred back to the committee.

The Chairman of Council advised that he would be writing to the Chairman of the Audit & Risk Committee seeking clarification on the existence of two Terms of Reference for the committee.

2 Chairman's business

The Chairman advised that he would be appointing Vice-Chairs to the committees following discussions with the Committee Chairs. This was to assist in adhering to the schedule of meetings.

A celebratory lunch for Dr Alan Lennon would take place in early September. Dr Lennon was awarded the OBE earlier this year and accepted the award on behalf of CCEA. Members will be notified of the date and venue in due course.

The next meeting of the NCCA/CCEA Standing Committee will take place during the summer and those members who have expressed an interest in attending will be notified once the date has been agreed.

A meeting of Chairs to discuss issues in relation to Corporate Governance affecting the senior officers in the organisation will be organised and TMT will also be invited.

The Chairman sought approval from Council members on approving the change of Job Title of Director of Operations to Director of Qualifications. The main reason is that from a customer perspective Qualifications is more meaningful than Operations. Members agreed to this change.

Finally, the Chairman wished the Director of Corporate services well on his leave of absence during the summer months for active service overseas.

7 Schedule of meetings 2008/2009

An amendment would be made to the schedule of meetings for 2008/09 and issued to members following the meeting.

The Curriculum & Assessment Committee date should read 11 September and not 10 September – all members had been informed of this change prior to the meeting via e-mail.

8 Any other business

Pupil Profile

The Director of ES reported on the feedback from recent focus group meetings with principals and teachers.

He expressed concern regarding the treatment of his officers by principals and teachers at these events. There has been a misunderstanding of the purpose of the focus groups and officers have explained in detail what these are. He said that it would be beneficial if the depth and strength of this feeling in the primary sector could be drawn to the attention of the Department of Education.

The Chairman said he had been aware that there was dissatisfaction in the system and that some principals had commented. He confirmed that he had approached the Permanent Secretary seeking a meeting to discuss these concerns as soon as possible. The Chairperson of the Curriculum & Assessment Committee agreed with this approach.

The Vice-Chairman of Council wished to place on record his congratulations to those staff for their professionalism in conducting the focus groups at this time.

9 Date of next meeting

The next meeting was agreed for Wednesday 17 September 2008 at 1000 hours.