

Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Minutes of the sixty-fifth meeting of Council held on Wednesday 18 October 2006 in the Lisburn Suite, Hilton Hotel, Lanyon Place, Belfast.

Present

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

Mr D Woods, DE Assessor

Mr G Boyd, Chief Executive
Mr N Anderson, Director of Examinations Operations
Mr R Hanna, Business Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Mr J Hamilton, Business Assurance Manager
Mr M Fegan, Finance Manager
Ms AM Duffy, Examinations Manager
Mrs J Scharf, Principal Officer 14-19
Mr C Holmes, Principal Officer, Education for Employability
Mrs M Warren, Primary Programme Manager
Mrs B Kells, Post-Primary Programme Manager

Miss N Kennedy, Manager, Council Secretariat

Introduction

The meeting was chaired by Mr David McKee (Vice-Chairman) in the absence of Dr Lennon.

The Chief Executive reported that Dr Lennon was making a good recovery and would attend the UK Quality Awards Dinner on 25 October. It was hoped that he would chair Business Committee on 21 November and Council on 14 December.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr A Lennon and Mrs M Cree.

2 Chairman's business

The Chairman suggested that as this was a substantial meeting, with various issues for debate, discussions be focussed on the main business.

The following papers were tabled:

- Council minutes – 28 September
- Audit & Risk Minutes – 3 October
- Learning for Life and Work minutes – 6 September
- Information on Review of Specifications

The following officers attended during the course of the meeting :

- Mr Richard Hanna and Mr Mark Fegan from Item 4
- Mr Jeffrey Hamilton for Item 4;
- Mrs Marilyn Warren and Mrs Bernie Kells for Items 5 and 6;
- Ms Anne Marie Duffy and Mrs Jenny Scharf for Item 7;
- Mr Cecil Holmes for Item 8.

Mr Fred McBride and Mrs Rosaleen Murphy were present for the ALTA demonstration (Item 5).

Senior Management Structures

The Chief Executive confirmed that due to vacancy control under the Public Services Commission the posts of Director of Corporate Services and Director of Education Policy would not now be filled. He clarified that the Public Service Commission had been set up by the Secretary of State to ensure minimum compulsory redundancies in the RPA affected organisations

Mr Martin Montgomery retired at the end of September and Ms Carmel Gallagher is due to go on secondment to the University of Ulster. Negotiations continue and it was hoped that the secondment arrangements would be finalised at the beginning of November.

The Chief Executive reported that the business managers met to discuss reassignment of duties between existing business managers. No final agreement had been reached and further discussions would take place in the coming weeks. He confirmed that due to vacancy control there would be no new appointments made at this level.

Mr Thompson asked if there would be an opportunity for additional remuneration for those business managers taking on additional responsibilities. The Chief Executive confirmed that it would be possible to award honoraria provided this was within Treasury Guidelines.

The Chairman asked Council to agree the proposals outlined by the Chief Executive. Council agreed.

The Chief Executive informed members that the NCCA/CCEA Joint Conference would take place before 31 March 2007, and agreed that Miss Kennedy would circulate the dates of the conference once they had been confirmed with NCCA.

3 Minutes of previous meeting held on 28 September 2006

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 September 2006 were proposed as a true and accurate record by Mr Michael Lowe and seconded by Mr Jim Clarke.

Action points

The Chairman confirmed that an e-mail had been sent to Dr Lennon wishing him a speedy recovery on behalf of the Council.

Mr Quinn has taken on board the request to make the forms associated with the administration handbook available on-line.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Fegan, Mr Hamilton and Mr Hanna to the meeting.

4 Finance and Planning

Business Committee report : meeting held on 3 October 2006

Mr Collins chaired the meeting in the absence of Dr Lennon. He advised that the finance items on the agenda for the Council meeting had been discussed in detail. Further discussion was required on capital funding plans and the committee asked for representations to continue to be made for an increase to this funding to enable CCEA to fulfil its core business.

Annual Accounts – the Annual Accounts 2005/2006 were discussed by both Business and Audit and Risk committees and were on the Council agenda for final approval.

Mr Collins informed members that this was the first time the Accounts had been completed within timetable.

Draft Corporate Plan - the committee received a brief outline of the development of the corporate plan to date. A draft was provided for discussion at the Council meeting.

Business Development

The following reports were received by the committee :

- EFQM Submission 2006: Site visit took place in July. Feedback suggested the visit was successful. CCEA are 1 of 5 finalists in the 2006 British Quality Awards which will take place on 25 October 2006.
- E-developments: a brief presentation was given on the developments in technology supporting high stakes assessment, in particular e-moderation; on-screen marking and GCSE on-line assessment.
- People Services & Equality: provided an update on attendance; restructuring activities and employee development schemes.

Audit and Risk Committee report : minutes of meeting held on 3 October 2006

The minutes were tabled for members' information. Mr Collins, Chairman of the Committee, reported that the committee:

- signed off a review of CCEA's Counter Fraud Policy and its Fraud Response Plan;
- approved work taken forward in respect of the identification and management of new strategic risks and work in progress on risks associated with the Examinations Code of Practice;
- received a presentation on the management of risks in the Assessment and Skills Business Unit; and
- met privately with staff from the NIAO regarding external findings and recommendations.

Annual Accounts 2005/2006 – approval and sign off

C/65/1

Mr Fegan reported that the accounts had been discussed and following minor changes to the Remuneration Report, were approved to come forward to Council for sign-off. Following this the Audit Office will issue a certificate followed by a date for the document to be laid before Parliament.

Mr Clarke sought clarification on the £180K surplus. Mr Fegan clarified that this was a timing issue. The surplus figure is shown on the balance sheet and reduces the small accumulated deficit.

The Chief Executive confirmed that £140K was given back to the Department of Education as the examination fees exceeded budget by £400K. He assured members that the surplus had been allocated for work in 06/07.

The Chairman sought approval from Council. Members approved the 2005/2006 Annual Accounts.

Finance report at end August 2006

C/65/2

Mr Fegan reported an overall underspend of £155K. An overspend of £467K in Baseline related to the phasing of invigilators, examiners and markers fees, staffing costs within the Test Unit and Courier Charges. Projects remain underspent by £628K due to phasing issues and a change in scope of the Pupil Profile Project.

The Chief Executive clarified that significant overspends are being reported in examinations due to the fact that CCEA have paid invigilators, examiners and markers earlier than previous years. He was confident that this overspend would come into line during the year.

Projects

Mr Fegan reported the savings had emerged due to the change of scope in Pupil Project. CCEA had originally budgeted for the procurement of the software and training of teachers.

The Chief Executive clarified that C2K had agreed to train the teachers. However, concern remains regarding their capacity to do so and this would be further discussed with relevant parties. CCEA would release the funding back to DE once responsibilities and capacity issues had been clarified.

Capital

Mr Fegan reported that verbal approval for an additional £145K had been given by DE. This funding would be used for upgrading the AS400 and ICT infrastructure.

A detailed capital funding plan together with explanations of necessity would be drawn up for discussion at the next Business Committee in November.

Draft Corporate Plan 2006-2009

C/65/3

Mr Hamilton drew members' attention to the document and reported that in taking forward the development of the next draft of the Corporate Plan 2006-2009 feedback from Council and Senior Managers had been taken on board and the following changes made:

- DE 3 year strategic plan is now an appendix;
- Main document has been redrafted to ensure links between the 3 sections are explicit; and
- The vision has been rewritten and will be approved by the Chief Executive;

Work continues to ensure :

- The document reflects the 14-19 agenda and DEL (Department for Employment and Learning) activities;
- There is sufficient reference to ICT and technology.

Discussions are also underway with Multimedia to improve the design of the document and consider how this can be placed on the web-site and made easily accessible. It is intended to introduce video-clips and other features to make it interesting for readers.

Members made the following suggestions:

- Although the document was more coherent than the previous draft, consideration to be given to reducing the overall size.
- Consideration to be given to introducing additional targets.

The Chairman asked Mr Hamilton to take the comments into consideration and advised that the document could go forward for publication and placing on web-site without coming back to Council.

The Chief Executive reported that CCEA would move to a rolling 3-year Corporate Plan and this would come forward in a different format in 2007.

5 ALTA Demonstration

The Chairman welcomed Mr Fred McBride and Mrs Rosaleen Murphy to the meeting. Mr McBride gave a detailed demonstration of the ALTA Maths application and presented a summary of CCEA findings from the June 2006 evaluation.

Clarification was sought on CCEA's current position with ALTA and where ALTA is within the NI context.

The Chief Executive clarified that CCEA had worked with ALTA on the development of the application with the assistance of funding from Invest to Save Project. The application had been sufficiently developed and proven to be made available to all Primary Schools in Northern Ireland as part of the strategy to improve Numeracy. CCEA has prepared a business case recommending that the Department of Education procure the application.

Members expressed concern regarding the hardware and the digital divide. The Chief Executive said that these issues were not within CCEA's remit but agreed to ask the Department of Education to address this.

6 Curriculum and Assessment

The Chairman welcomed Mr David Woods, Mrs Marilyn Warren and Mrs Bernie Kells to the meeting.

Mr Woods outlined the current position on the Education Order (2006) following last week's political talks and responded to points of clarification from members.

Curriculum & Assessment report : minutes of meeting held on 21 September 2006

Ms Watson, Chair of the Committee, reported that the committee had received and discussed :

- draft recommendations for assessment, recording and reporting of the NI Curriculum. Several concerns were raised, as outlined in the minutes, and it was agreed that due to other priorities CCEA had to deliver, that this would be brought forward at a more appropriate time.

- The interim report from BDO Stoy Hayward on the pupil profile trials. Concern was expressed that the same issues were being raised. Following representations to the Department of Education, it was confirmed that these issues were being treated as high priority. Major issues highlighted were manageability and training of teachers. Hardware and software for implementation were being discussed with C2K, CCEA and DE.
- 14-19 proposals for a qualification to support learning below Level 2. It was agreed that further detail was necessary to debate the proposals fully. These would be brought back to the committee at a future meeting.

PMB Update – a common set of support materials had been developed and these would be made available to all schools in February 2007. Representations were made regarding the allocation of the 5 Baker days to ensure teachers were ready for the new curriculum. It was agreed that this would be taken back and discussed at PMB.

Pupil Profile Update

Draft Interim report : BDO Stoy Hayward – October 2006

C/65/4

Mrs Warren gave a brief presentation on the outcomes of the interim evaluation report and development work and timescales. She reported that:

- given the outcomes of the interim evaluation it was necessary to do a re-trial on the manageability within the classroom and the assessments themselves;
- consideration was being given to phasing in implementation of the computer adaptive tests. Pencil and paper tests could be used as a fall back;
- format and content of the pupil profile have been agreed by the Pupil Profile Management Board and copies will be available for the next meeting;
- the Department of Education have agreed that the Capita report writer tool would be used for the Pupil Profile.

Ms Watson sought clarification on who would deliver the training. She expressed concern at C2K's capacity to deliver this training and sought an assurance that this would be delivered successfully. Mr Hanna said that C2K confirmed they had the capacity and knowledge of the system to provide a training programme for teachers using a cascade model. CCEA have made it clear that cascade training is not appropriate for this report writer.

The Chief Executive confirmed that there is a capacity concern. Cascade training is not appropriate and therefore discussions will take place with DE, CCEA and C2K to ensure the appropriate training is carried out within the budget allocation.

Ms Watson sought further clarification on what type of training would be given – technical or interpreting and using the information. Mrs Warren confirmed that both types of training would be given. Assessment conferences are being planned for January 2007 and colleagues from Durham will be available to train on the interpretation and use of data.

The Chief Executive stated that the Assessment Conferences would be handled sensitively and he would ensure that, in working with the Department of Education, a clear message is communicated to the audiences.

The Chairman expressed concern regarding the fall back position. Mr Woods confirmed that this should not be necessary. In discussions with C2K and CCEA, the Department of Education had made it clear that all schools were to be provided with sufficient technology and teachers adequately trained to use the computer adaptive test.

He reported that approval of the business case for the refresh programme would be given as soon as possible.

The Chairman thanked Mr Woods for his reassurance on this issue.

Curriculum Implementation Update

C/65/5

Ms Kells updated reported the following developments:

- a Strategic Steering Group, chaired by David Woods (DE) has been set up to ensure the implementation of the revised curriculum and assessment arrangements is taken forward under the direction of the Department.
- A sub-group of PMB met to review the current remit; overall membership and the functions of the sub-groups.
- The revised remit would include communication in particular informing all schools and stakeholders on the curriculum implementation and widening the membership.

Training Programme : the regional training programme for all teachers is well underway and will be supplemented by school link officers. These officers will also provide ongoing support for whole school development.

Members noted the primary and post-primary school roll-out programme which runs from August 2006 – June 2007.

Support Materials : draft copies of the materials have been issued to CASS teams to inform the training. It is anticipated that the complete 'box' of materials will be available to all Primary schools in February 2006.

It is hoped that a similar set of support materials will be developed for Post Primary Schools.

The Chief Executive said that it was necessary to map across all support materials to the legislation and asked that this be done as soon as possible.

The Chairman thanked Ms Kells for her update and advised members that further updates on the curriculum implementation programme would come forward to Council as appropriate.

The Chairman welcomed Ms Anne Marie Duffy; Mrs Jenny Scharf and Mr Cecil Holmes to the meeting.

7 Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning

Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning report : minutes of meeting held on 14 September 2006

Professor Roebuck, Chairman of the Committee, reported on the following :

- *Follow up action on Scrutiny Reports:* the actions identified for improvement had been completed and scrutiny reports circulated to examinations officers to ensure general recommendations were dealt with.
- *Examinations risks and their management:* five areas had been identified for action and these were due for completion by the end of October 2006.
- *CCEA Performance against Regulatory Performance Indicators:* all targets have been met.
- *Quality assurance arrangements for progress file:* a group has been set up to take this work forward and will be chaired by Mr John Eillison. The remit and membership would be agreed at the next meeting.
- *Reform of Vocational Qualifications:* work is underway across the four countries to simplify the vocational qualifications structure. The committee will receive regular updates going forward.
- CCEA response to 'Success through Skills' draft was discussed by the Committee. It was agreed that following comments a further draft would be finalised by the Chairman and Chief Executive.

Stretch and Challenge Update

Mrs Scharf reported that discussions continued on all issues arising on the intention to revise GCEs in order to 'stretch and challenge our brightest students'. A consistent approach has been reached and CCEA is working closely with colleagues in England and Wales.

Stretch and challenge will be designed into examination papers through the use of more 'open ended questions'. Candidates who perform very well will be recognised with an A* grade as in GCSE.

The Chief Executive said that irrespective of developments in England CCEA would move forward in the development of stretch and challenge.

A further update would be provided to members at its next meeting.

Review of Specifications Programme

C/65/6

Ms Duffy reported that there was an extensive programme of work underway and work was on target to have revised GCE specifications in school on time – one year ahead of teaching (September 2007). She demonstrated the Gantt Chart was used for planning.

Four sub-groups have been established from the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Sub-Committee who will sign off the final drafts for presentation to Council before proceeding for accreditation to QCA in March 2007. Training has been arranged for the four Chairs of the sub-groups and Professor Roebuck, Chairman of the Committee will also be involved in this training.

GCSE specifications will be a major review and will require a much longer timeframe.

Members raised the following points:

- The need for a proper package to go into the system for GCSEs and sufficient time has to be allocated for this.

- The revised GCSEs have to match the revised curriculum and the new learning process at Key Stage 3. Consideration to be given to moving towards 2010 to coincide with the new Key Stage 3 children moving in to new GCSE.

Ms Duffy expressed concern that if CCEA waited until 2010 the English awarding bodies would already have their new specifications in the market place. Mr Woods said that English specifications would not be a particularly good fit for the new Northern Ireland curriculum and stressed the need for Key Stage 3 to dovetail with GCSE syllabuses.

It was agreed that it was important to have alignment between curriculum and qualifications.

The Chief Executive emphasised the need to have cohesion between the new Northern Ireland curriculum and the new GCSE syllabuses. He confirmed that no new specifications would be introduced against an old curriculum.

The Chairman sought an assurance that the use of technology would be embedded in the new specifications. Ms Duffy confirmed that this was being addressed.

8 Learning for Life and Work

Learning for life and work report : minutes of committee meeting held on 6 September 2006

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr Holmes reported that the committee received an update on :

- Progress on all of the work undertaken since May 2006;
- New staff have taken up post in the Education for Employability unit; and
- The evaluation of the Dungannon/Cookstown initiative – which will be carried out by BDO Stoy Hayward.

The committee discussed a proposal to Invest NI on a technology resource for employability. INI have agreed to consider funding for this resource.

BDO Stoy Hayward gave a detailed presentation on the outline plans of work for the evaluation. The plans were discussed by the committee and concern expressed regarding the number of components of the evaluation. It was agreed that further discussions regarding the scope of the evaluation would take place and the consultation document agreed by CCEA officers in advance.

The interim evaluation report would be available for the next meeting of the sub-committee.

Draft Strategic Plan 2006-2009

C/65/7

Mr Holmes reported that the sub-committee had discussed and commented on the draft plan. The comments have been incorporated into this draft which was presented to Council for further discussion.

He commented on the success of the Dungannon/Cookstown initiative and that this had now extended to Belfast and Newry, however, there remains the need to consolidate structure in a cost effective way to take this forward.

Mr Clarke asked that consideration be given to circulating elements of the document to a wider audience and that the policy group (referred to in the plan) should take the

thinking forward to find ways of creating greater links between education and employers.

The paper should be amended with the reference to the Policy Group at the start and have a more strategic focus.

Dr McMorris sought agreement to disseminate the document with colleagues from CBI. The Chief Executive asked members to bear in mind that this was a Draft strategic plan for discussion at this stage. He agreed that a paper would be developed and disseminated for discussion.

Mr Woods welcomed the drawing together of a number of strands, however, further work was required before the plan could go forward to DE and DEL as a draft strategy for discussion.

The Chief Executive agreed that the paper would be put forward to the Departments for consideration and encouraged Council members and colleagues to make contributions in this area in an effort to move forward.

Dr McMorris stressed the importance of taking this forward as effectively as possible and suggested that his CBI colleagues could feed into future discussions. The Chief Executive agreed that this would be helpful.

The Chairman emphasised that the teaching of careers in schools remained unsatisfactory and the developments Mr Holmes suggested in careers were in line with the needs of the new curriculum and the world of work.

It was agreed that a discussion paper would be developed and distributed to Council members for comments.

9 Any other business

The Chairman thanked members and officers for their input during the course of the meeting and hoped that Dr Lennon would be available to chair the next meeting in December.

10 Date of next meeting

The next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 14 December 2006 beginning with lunch at 12.15 pm.

Further details regarding the Council Christmas Dinner would be circulated nearer the time.

CHAIRMAN

DATE

