

Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Minutes of the sixty-ninth meeting of Council held on Tuesday 18 September 2007 at 1000 hours in the Boardroom, 3rd Floor, CCEA Offices, Belfast.

Present : Mr D McKee (Chairman) Mr M Bowen
Dr M Brown Ms M Watson
Ms C McKinney Mr N Downing
Mr J Clarke Mr D Thompson
Mr J Wilkinson

Mr N Anderson (Acting Chief Executive)
Mr M Quinn (Examinations Administration & Processing Manager)
Ms A M Duffy (Examinations Manager)
Mrs K Gribbon (Marketing Manager)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr I McMorris; Professor P Roebuck; Ms P O'Farrell; Mrs H McClenaghan; Mr J Collins and Mrs D Black.

2 Chairman's business

The Chairman wished to place on record the Council's sincere regrets at the death of Council Member : Mr Michael Lowe. He informed members that he had written to Mrs Lowe on behalf of the Council thanking Michael for his contributions to CCEA during his time on the Council.

Report of Remuneration Committee

The Chairman reported that the Remuneration Committee met on 6 July 2007 to discuss Performance Related Pay (PRP) for Business Managers and the former Chief Executive. He confirmed that the scheme was consistent for all managers and sought members' approval to adopt this scheme for the payment of PRP for the Acting Chief Executive.

Members agreed with this suggestion and asked Business Committee to progress the process with the People Services Manager.

Report of Ad Hoc Committee (minute previously circulated)

The Chairman reported that the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee had taken place on 7 September 2007. He thanked Mr Thompson for chairing the meeting. Mr Thompson thanked Dr Sproule, Mr Anderson and Miss Kennedy for their contributions. It was agreed that the points raised in the minute circulated would be considered by the relevant officers with a view to ensure the smoother running of future Council and Committee meetings.

Those members present agreed that a consensus had been reached regarding the need to address the flow and efficiency of business.

Mr Thompson reported that the Acting Chief Executive and Manager of the Council Secretariat had discussed and agreed with the Chairman that future meetings of Council would have a particular focus : Corporate and Educational. These meetings would be alternate and agendas agreed to ensure adequate time is given for discussion on major issues.

Standardisation of GCSE Results

The Acting Chief Executive informed members that a consultation exercise with all post-primary schools will be carried out regarding the possibility of standardising the issue of GCSE results. This would be taken forward by the Regulation, Qualifications & Lifelong Learning Committee.

Members welcomed the possibility of results being harmonised.

Management Responsibilities

The Chairman reported that he and the Acting Chief Executive had met with the Permanent Secretary in June to discuss a range of issues, one being the need to strengthen the second tier management. The Permanent Secretary agreed and asked the Chairman and Acting Chief Executive to meet with the Chief Executive Designate of ESA to progress these issues. This meeting took place on 3 September 2007.

The Acting Chief Executive informed members that Directors would be recruited on a fixed-term contract basis for Operations; Policy Implementation and Corporate Services (exact titles to be finalised) up until 31 March 2009. This would be done through the vacancy control mechanism set up for RPA affected organisations.

An economic appraisal is being carried out and a bid will be submitted to DE for funding in 2008/09 for CCEA's baseline budget.

Members were happy for the process to proceed.

It was agreed that proposals would be developed and sent to the Chief Executive Designate of ESA for comment. Following this, further discussions would take place at the Business Committee at its meeting on 27 September 2007.

The Chairman asked that the situation regarding the budget for 2008/09 be clarified at the earliest opportunity.

The Council would receive a further update at its meeting on 11 October 2007.

3 Minutes of previous meeting held on 20 June 2007

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record and a copy signed by the Chairman.

Action points

The Acting Chief Executive drew attention to the status of the actions outlined on the sheet provided. Members noted the information provided.

A Council member sought clarification on the status of the Council's response to the Leitch proposals and the availability of the new Careers Strategy.

The Chairman of the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Committee confirmed that he attended a meeting with DEL on 9 August and had recently received a report on the seminar. A response to the proposals had been drawn up and would be circulated to the Council.

A Council member sought clarification on the current position of the 14-19 debate.

The Chairman confirmed that he would be meeting the Minister for Employment and Learning on 3 October and that this was on the agenda for discussion. He agreed that, if appropriate, he would write to the Minister of Education seeking a meeting to progress this area.

The Chairman of Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Committee clarified that a watching brief continued on developments in England with a view to providing a way forward in Northern Ireland. The committee has been kept up to date on developments.

It was confirmed that the new Careers Policy would be available by the beginning of October. The Chairman reported that he and the Chairman of the Learning for Life and Work Committee had met with the senior officer and the Acting Chief Executive to progress issues in the area of Learning for Life and Work.

Gifted and Talented

The Chairman informed members that the guidance on Gifted and Talented would be launched at the Joint NCCA/CCEA Conference on 11 October 2007.

NCCA/CCEA Standing Committee

The Chairman reported that he had raised the possibility of forming a standing committee with NCCA for discussing conference arrangements and criteria for joint initiatives. NCCA would discuss this with their Council and a way forward will be agreed at the next meeting of Council in October.

4 Examinations Summer 2007 Series

The Chairman welcomed Mr Quinn and Mrs Duffy to the meeting.

• Administration and Processing

The Examinations Administration & Processing Manager gave a detailed presentation on the administration and processing aspects of the Summer 2007 Examinations, in particular:

- Entries
- Coursework & Moderation
- Meeting & Centre support
- Processing; and
- Post-results services.

A Council member wished to place on record the huge amount of confidence they have in the processes which run the examinations so efficiently.

The Chairman thanked Mr Quinn and his team for the work carried out this year to ensure CCEA's reputation was maintained. He asked that congratulations be passed on to the team.

Ms Watson left the meeting at this point.

Members raised the following :

- The need to ensure that the building is a safe environment for storage of scripts and find ways of alleviating the pressure on space.

It was confirmed that work was underway to move towards electronic submission of coursework which would, in due course, improve this issue.

- Concern was expressed about succession planning within this unit.

It was confirmed that this was not a training issue and discussions were underway with Top Management Team.

- **Performance and Awarding**

The Examinations Manager reported that this year's delivery of quality of awards had improved from last year. This was due to greater transparency and robust decision making.

A detailed presentation was given on performance and awarding of the summer examinations, in particular :

- Challenges : people and training
- Processes and technology; and
- Innovation

The Chairman thanked Ms Duffy for her detailed presentations. Members wished to place on record their congratulations on the improvements and enhancements made in this business unit this year.

Clarification was sought on the training of temporary staff. It was confirmed that this would continue to be managed and enhanced going forward.

Copies of the presentations have been attached to inform the minutes.

Review of Specifications - A 'Winning them Back' strategy has been devised for those centres who do not take CCEA examinations. 59 centres have been visited by trained officers on a one-to-one basis and feedback to date has been positive with the majority of centres wishing to come back to CCEA.

Ms McKinney left the meeting at this point.

With regard to partnerships CCEA has been approached by BIFHE (Belfast Institute of Further & Higher Education) to partner three colleges in China. This is being progressed.

A Council member sought clarification on whether vocational courses were being developed into a broader range and if Occupational Studies could become a more substantial qualification. It was confirmed that more vocational courses were being developed and work was underway on Occupational Studies.

The Chairman thanked Mr Quinn and Ms Duffy for their inputs into the meeting.

5 Market Share

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Gribbon, Marketing Manager to the meeting.

- **GCSE, GCE and the Wider Portfolio – ACETS**

The Marketing Manager gave a presentation on the top level statistical analysis on Market Share for GCE and GCSE. She reminded members that this was provisional data and that final data would be available in January 2008. She drew attention to :

- Total entries : at GCSE an increase of 2% market share and at GCE an increase of 3% - overall a positive picture for CCEA.
- Targets : To be the No.1 provider of choice in Northern Ireland; to achieve 74% GCSE and 68% GCE market share and to achieve 75% market share in each qualification.

Although the targets have not been met there has been an increase year on year from 2005.

Clarification was sought on the con-activity between CCEA examinations and the revised curriculum. It was confirmed that :

- The new GCSE specifications would be revised to take into account the revised curriculum and the revised Key Stage 3.
- Work will be carried out to ensure progression from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4.
- A series of informal lunches will be hosted for principals, examinations officers and heads of departments to give an opportunity to hear their views on CCEA's products and what we can do to enhance these.

Members raised the issue of communications and the fact that CCEA were being 'blamed' for certain issues that were not its responsibility. The Acting Chief Executive agreed that a mechanism for increasing CCEA's profile needed to be progressed as soon as possible. He pointed out that all of CCEA's material and the most up to date information was available on the web-site and agreed that schools awareness needed to be raised.

The Wider Portfolio – ACETs

The Marketing Manager reported that the following business initiatives continued to be developed, the Management Information Group meets regularly to discuss:

- Subject specific marketing strategies
- Customer excellence programme, including the 'Winning them Back' strategy; and
- Review of Specifications – GCSE

Members welcomed these developments and thanked Mrs Gribbon for her informative presentation.

6 Any other business

None identified.

7 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Thursday 11 October 2007 at 1000 hours in the Manor House, Killadeas, Co Fermanagh, followed by the Joint NCCA/CCEA Conference. Further details on both Council Meeting Agenda and the Conference Programme would be issued in due course.