

## **Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment**

Minutes of the sixty-eighth meeting of Council held on Wednesday 20 June 2007 at 1000 hours in the Boardroom, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, CCEA Offices, Clarendon Road, BELFAST.

Present :      Mr D McKee (Chairman)                      Mr M Bowen  
                 Mr D Thompson                              Dr I McMorris  
                 Dr M Brown                                      Ms P O'Farrell  
                 Ms M Watson                                   Mrs D Black  
                 Mr J Wilkinson                                Professor P Roebuck  
                 Mr J Clarke

Mr D Woods (DE Assessor)

Mr N Anderson (Acting Chief Executive)  
Mr M Fegan (Finance Business Manager)  
Mr R Hanna (Business Manager, Pupil Profile)  
Dr C Sproule (Curriculum & Assessment Business Manager)  
Mr R McCune (Qualifications & Skills Accreditation Business Manager)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

### **1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mr M Lowe; Mrs H McClenaghan; Ms C McKinney and Mr N Downing.

### **2 Chairman's business**

The Chairman informed members that the Learning for Life and Work Committee report would be taken at the end of Chairman's business.

The following committee minutes were tabled :

- Learning for Life and Work Committee : 9 May 2007
- Audit & Risk Committee : 30 May 2007
- Regulation, Qualifications & Lifelong Learning Committee : 7 June 2007

The following officers attended during the course of the meeting:

- Mr Mark Fegan, Item 4
- Mr Richard Hanna, Pupil Profile
- Dr Charlie Sproule, Item 5
- Mr Roger McCune, Item 6
  
- Mr Tim Devine, Head of Sector Developments, DEL, for the Leitch Review.

*Early Years Evaluation Report*

**C/68/4**

The Chairman drew members' attention to this report provided at paper C/68/4. He informed members that this had been redrafted to take account of the comments made by Council in December regarding accessibility to general audiences and the inclusion of an Executive Summary.

### *Council and Committee Papers*

The Chairman expressed concern regarding the background papers which were issued for the recent Curriculum & Assessment Committee and the Council meeting and asked that this matter be addressed.

The Acting Chief Executive agreed that the amount of paper was excessive and that a different approach would be taken to ensure realistic papers are issued.

A Council member suggested that where lengthy documents are being discussed, an executive summary be produced for Council drawing out the key points of the document and issues for consideration.

The Acting Chief Executive said that the schedule of meetings and agendas would be revised to ensure more meaningful meetings for the coming year.

### *Issue of Results*

The Chairman sought clarification from members if they wished to attend a briefing on the morning before the issue of results (Wednesday 15 August). Members confirmed that a briefing would not be necessary but asked for the Press Release to be issued under embargo if possible.

### *Election of Vice-Chair*

The Chairman asked for nominations for a Vice-Chair. Mr Martin Bowen was proposed by Mr Jim Collins and seconded by Mr Jim Clarke.

There were no further nominations.

Mr Martin Bowen was elected Vice-Chair and congratulated on his appointment.

### *Ad Hoc Committee*

The Chairman sought members' views on the formation of an 'Ad Hoc' Committee/Group. This group would be chaired by Mr Thompson and would be open to all members of Council. The intention is to look at issues such as:

- The main business of Council and its committees;
- Frequency and timing of meetings;
- Length and relevance of papers; and
- Any other issues members may wish to discuss.

Members agreed that this would be a useful mechanism for debating such issues. It was agreed that the date of the first meeting would be issued during August to all members.

The Chairman asked members to forward any issues they wish to discuss to Mr Thompson outside of this meeting.

## **7 Education for Employability**

### *Learning for Life and Work Sub-Committee : report of meeting held on 9 May 2007*

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2007 were tabled for members' information.

Mr Bowen, Chairman of the Committee expressed his disappointment at the poor attendance at the May meeting. He reported on the following:

#### *Employability Programme*

- The Dungannon/Cookstown initiative has grown into Belfast, Newry and Mourne with work beginning on a similar model in the North East through the University of Ulster at Coleraine led by the Provost, Professor Alan Sharp.
- Work continues to improve communications and working relations with stakeholders.
- Employability Fest took place from 14-18 May. This was an excellent event.

#### *Literacy and Numeracy Report*

The committee received a report of a survey of employers undertaken by Rhona Reid consulting on adult literacy and numeracy.

It was agreed that the report would be made available to Council members if requested.

A member of Council asked that an update on the 14-19 Strategy be given at a future meeting.

#### *Evaluation of Dungannon/Cookstown initiative – final report*

BDO presented the findings of the final report. Members welcomed the positive content of the report and asked for issues to be addressed and further work progressed as appropriate.

#### *Case Study – Special School*

The Committee received a brief overview of the work in the school which included :

- the school leavers' programme, which prepares the children for adult and working life;
- how the employability programme is embedded in the school; and
- community based work placements.

### **3 Minutes of previous meeting held on 28 March 2007**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2007 were proposed as a true and accurate record by Professor Peter Roebuck and seconded by Mr Martin Bowen. A copy was signed by the Chairman.

#### *Action points*

The Acting Chief Executive reported that :

- Improvements to the website for curriculum development and pupil profile continue to be made;
- A series of meetings have been initiated with teachers and unions including the GTC; and
- A letter has been drafted on pupil profile and classroom assistants which will be sent to the Department by the Chairman by 30 June 2007.

#### 4 Finance and Planning

The Chairman welcomed Mr Fegan to the meeting

##### ***Business Committee report : 30 May 2007***

Mr Collins, Chairman of the Committee, asked that every effort be made to issue the minutes in advance of the meeting to give members' the opportunity to read them in advance.

He reported on the following:

- *Management Responsibilities and Structures*

A discussion took place regarding the current arrangements. Concern was expressed regarding the three vacancies at Director level and no plans to recruit. It was agreed that Business Committee reconvene to look at different models to strengthen the Management Team and succession planning bearing in mind that certain recruitment restrictions would be applied.

The Acting Chief Executive reported that at a recent Accountability Review meeting with the DE (DE), he and the Chairman had stressed the importance of reviewing the CCEA Management Structures as soon as possible.

It was agreed that the Acting Chief Executive and the Chairman would meet with the Chief Executive Designate, ESA, to progress these issues as soon as possible.

- *Corporate Plan 2007-2010* - has been redrafted to ensure it is more accessible to all audiences and will be placed on the CCEA website.
- *Examinations* - ICAA – the current contract will be extended between now and 2010.

Clarification was sought on whether the contract with ICAA had been terminated. It was confirmed that the initial contractual agreement had expired but would now be extended to 2010 during which time alternative forms of collaboration with ICAA would be explored.

- *On-screen marking* – members noted that CCEA had not embraced the new technologies as quickly as the larger English Awarding Bodies, in particular Pearson, and asked that progress be reported back on a regular basis.
- *Quality* – members were updated on the progress made during 2006/07 and notified of the forthcoming events for ISO 18001 Health and Safety and EFQM Assessment Team visit in July 2007 to check progress against the 2007 submission for the UK Quality Award.
- *Absence* - members noted the absence figure had increased from 5 to 7 days and asked for a presentation to be given at the next meeting of the committee.

##### ***Audit & Risk Committee report : 30 May 2007***

Professor Roebuck, Chairman of the Committee, drew members' attention to the tabled minutes and reported on the following:

- *Non-compliance with purchasing policy* - members' continued to express concern regarding the worsening trend with non-compliance in this area. Remedial action was

agreed by the committee and an assurance given that the issues would be managed robustly.

- *Fraud response plan* – confirmation was given that there had been no instances of fraud discovered in CCEA. A robust system has been put in place to guard against this.
- *ES400 error* – the committee received a report on the action taken and noted the progress on the recommendations.
- *Audit Activity Reports* – copies of the annual statement were provided for Council members. The report stated that the overall audit opinion for the year for CCEA was “fit for purpose” – the highest possible level of opinion. Members were satisfied with this outcome.
- *Merger/Dissolution of the Council* – the Chairman drew attention to the tabled paper outlining the actions arising from the discussion at the Audit & Risk Committee.

Members expressed concern at the potential loss of staff at Management level and asked that representations be made to the DE to progress these matters. The Chairman confirmed that these and other staffing issues had been raised with the DE at a recent Accountability Meeting. He and the Acting Chief Executive would meet with the Chief Executive Designate of ESA to discuss management structures and other relevant issues in September and report back to the Council at the earliest opportunity.

The DE representative confirmed that the Department was aware of the issues with regard to potential loss of staff and would seek to address these appropriately as they emerge.

#### ***Finance report and expenditure to year end 31 March 2007***

***C/68/1***

The Chairman reminded members that the finance report had been discussed in detail by the Business Committee.

Members were happy with the information provided.

Mr Fegan left the meeting at this point.

## **5 Curriculum & Assessment**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Hanna and Dr Sproule to the meeting.

#### ***Curriculum & Assessment Committee report : 13 June 2007***

Ms Mae Watson, Chairperson of the Committee said that the draft minutes of the meeting were not yet available. She reported on the following:

- The Chairman of Council agreed to send a letter to the Department asking them to address the issues of Classroom Assistants, Funding and Developed Ability.
- *Pupil Profile* – was on the agenda for the Council meeting. The Committee was happy with the progress report on the training and project plan and welcomed the presentation on the support materials.
- *Communication* - the committee expressed concern at the lack of clarity regarding the announcement on the provision of laptops and the transition year.

The DE representative confirmed that a letter was issued from the Permanent Secretary to all primary principals setting out the issues dealt with at the conference on 24 May 2007. The Chairman asked that the letter be forwarded to Council members for information.

- *Linking pupil profile with progress file developments in post-primary schools* – the committee received an overview on developments and noted the further work required at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- *PMB Update* – The Principals' Forum includes representatives from primary and post-primary. Mr Martin Bowen is the post-primary representative on the Communications sub-group.

The Support programme for 2007/08 will continue to be refined to include inputs from all sub-groups.

- *Communications* – PMB have met with DE representatives to discuss a Communications Strategy.

The Acting Chief Executive informed members that Mr Robert Shilliday had been successful in his secondment to ESA and a sharing arrangement would be put in place until after the Issue of Results.

Members asked that officers continue to make representations regarding communications and the development of a strategy to the DE.

- *Guidance, Advice and Support* - the committee received three substantial research documents :

*Gifted & Talented* : joint guidance with NCCA. This item was on the Council agenda for discussion.

The Committee felt that further work was necessary and proposed that a working group be set up to progress issues raised.

*Draft Guidance on Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties* – the committee agreed the proposal for further work to be undertaken as a project bid for funding had already been submitted to DE.

*Use of English in Irish Medium Primary Schools* – the committee noted the research work done to date.

- *Invitations for Committee members* – the Chairperson asked that invitations to events be extended to committee members on relevant aspects of business as they arise.

A Council member sought clarification on the current situation with regard to preparing for future Transfer Tests. The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that the DE had not yet instructed CCEA to prepare for transfer tests should a delay occur, however, there was still enough time to do so if required.

### ***Pupil Profile***

The Business Manager, Pupil Profile reported that 48 training events had been held during May and June across the province for all Year 5 teachers. An interim analysis of 943 responses from teachers showed a high rate of satisfaction, with few concerns raised.

Clarification was sought on the accuracy of the responses. The Business Manager, Pupil Profile confirmed that this was a true reflection and all 943 respondents had attended the

events during May 2007. A more substantial report would be available once the training had been completed.

Following the ministerial announcement of 24 May 2007 the Pupil Profile website materials were updated on 25 May. This provided stakeholders with the opportunity to view the changes at the earliest opportunity. Members welcomed this development.

The BDO report on the Maths trial together with a short paper on the key recommendations had been circulated to Council members. No issues were arising out of this and members were happy with the information received to date.

#### *Training and Support*

Members received a presentation on the various types of support available through different mediums. The CCEA website is updated on a weekly basis to ensure the latest possible information is available.

Members were happy with the information provided.

Mr Hanna left the meeting at this point.

#### *Gifted and Talented*

The Chairperson of the Curriculum & Assessment Committee wished to place on record that the committee had discussed the Gifted and Talented draft guidance at its meeting on 13 June. Various issues arose which required further work, in particular the content and whether the document was fit for purpose. The Chairman of Council confirmed that these concerns would be taken into account when the item was discussed later in the agenda.

Ms Watson left the meeting at this point.

At this stage in the meeting the agenda was re-organised to facilitate the DEL representative who was in attendance for the item on the Leitch report.

## **6 Regulation & Qualifications**

The Chairman welcomed Mr McCune to the meeting.

### ***Regulation, Qualifications & Lifelong Learning Committee report : 7 June 2007***

Mr John Wilkinson, Chairman of the Committee, drew members' attention to the tabled minutes which were still under review. He reported on the following :

- *Review of GCE Specifications* – all 21 GCE specifications were forwarded to QCA for accreditation on time. Feedback received was not substantial. Officers are working through the issues raised and an assurance has been given that the September deadline will be met.

A copy of the programme of events for launching the specifications will be issued to Committee and Council members once completed.

- *GCSE programme and timescales* – work has begun on the GCSE revision of specifications. Issues were raised regarding changes at Key Stage 3 and the role of ETI. These would be progressed and reported on at the next meeting of the committee.

- *Revised GCSE coursework requirements* – proposals for ‘controlled assessment’ were discussed and a number of focus groups set up to take the work forward. The views of the committee were outlined in the minutes and would be shared with QCA.

Members were informed that the consultation document was available on the CCEA website.

- *Consultation process* – the committee expressed concern regarding the timeframe for the consultation. It was agreed that school principals would be informed of this as soon as possible and reminded again by e-mail and letter in August.
- *Evaluation of Phase 1 tests and trials of qualifications & credit framework* - the committee discussed the interim draft report and key findings. Further work is required on currency, values, structures and linkages between progress file, learner achievement record and records of achievement.
- *Diplomas* – will be phased in as part of 14-19 provision in England from September 2008. CCEA have been monitoring developments with a view to providing advice to DE regarding provision in Northern Ireland. A number of issues were raised for clarification and further debate.

Interim advice would be drawn up for discussion by the Committee at its next meeting before being presented to Council for approval.

- *Leitch Review* – was on the agenda for this meeting.

### ***The Leitch Review of Skills***

***C/68/5***

The Chairman welcomed Mr Tim Devine, Head of Sectoral Developments, DEL to the meeting.

The Qualifications and Skills Accreditation Business Manager gave a brief presentation on the main issues and drew members’ attention to the draft response which focused on CCEA’s role as an awarding body and regulator.

The Head of Sectoral Developments reported that:

- The departmental group formed to co-ordinate the Northern Ireland response has met 3 times to discuss the report.
- Comments will be sought from stakeholders at a consultative meeting in August before the final report goes forward to the Assembly.
- The deadline for DEL to respond to the consultation is October 2007.

Members raised the following points:

- The need to engage various political parties, education bodies; employers and trade unions.
- Discussion of issues unique to Northern Ireland, in particular its economy and how these can be catered for, to ensure they are included in the response.
- A review of the current careers advisory service to ensure a more explicit understanding of the service and what is required for the future.



Members expressed concern regarding the limited timescale for responses and asked that CCEA be invited to the consultative meeting in August. The DEL representative reassured members that DEL and CCEA would continue to work closely together to ensure all of the points raised at the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Committee and Council meetings were included in the response.

It was confirmed that a new Careers Strategy would be announced in the coming months which would take into account the Careers agenda.

It was agreed that the Qualifications and Skills Accreditation Business Manager would draft the response with the Chairman of the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Committee. This response would then be agreed by the Chairman of Council and circulated to members for information.

The Chairman thanked Mr Devine for his input into the meeting.

### ***Guidance for the education of gifted and talented learners***

**C/68/3**

The Chairman reported that further work was required on this draft and informed members that Mr Thompson and Dr Brown had agreed to edit the document for accessibility. It was suggested that small group of Council and Curriculum & Assessment Committee members would be formed to give their views on the next draft. Members were asked to indicate their interest outside of the meeting.

Members, whilst expressing concern that the document should have been brought before Council at an earlier date, agreed that this would be the best way forward.

It was intended that the document would be launched at the forthcoming Joint Conference with NCCA on 11/12 October 2007.

The Curriculum & Assessment Manager gave a brief overview of the document. Colleagues from NCCA and CCEA had jointly drafted the guidance materials and inputs received from ETI and CCEA's SEN Steering Committee.

Members noted that approximately 80% of the document was common however customization and tailoring to suit both Northern Ireland and the RoI needs was required. It was confirmed that this was underway.

The following points were raised by the Curriculum & Assessment Committee at its meeting on 13 June. Further discussion was required on:

- Implications for staff development and how this could be included in the Initial Teacher Training programme;
- Age-related education;
- Whether there was a need to produce different sets of 'leaflets' for different types of 'gifted and talented' children;
- How the recommendations, 'guidance' and school policy could be implemented.

The DE representative sought clarification on the status of the document and asked that officers provide DE with a clear steer on this as soon as possible. He suggested seeking departmental endorsement of the document in advance of the launch.

Members welcomed and endorsed the document, but agreed that further work was required on reducing the length of the document and sharpening the focus to ensure accessibility for a range of audiences.

It was agreed that:

- further consideration would be given to summarizing the document including an executive summary and the provision of different sets of 'leaflets'; and
- once the group had met to discuss the various issues raised, the Chairman of Council and Chairperson of the Curriculum & Assessment Committee would meet to discuss the final draft.

The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that mechanisms would be put in place to ensure that any future guidance would be discussed by the relevant committee and Council at the earliest opportunity.

***Diplomas – new 14-19 qualifications***

***C/68/6***

The Chairman asked members to note the contents of paper C/68/6. He confirmed that officers continued to monitor developments in England with a view to providing timely advice to DE regarding provision in Northern Ireland.

Members noted that Interim Advice would be drafted for discussion by the R, QF&LL Learning Committee and come forward to Council for approval before the early 2008 deadline.

***Update on A\* Awarding at GCE***

This item was deferred to a future meeting of Council.

**8 Any other business**

A member of Council sought clarification as to whether the Education Conference would take place at a later date. The Acting Chief Executive said that a one-day conference concentrating on the Revision of Specifications and Curriculum issues would be arranged and members updated in due course.

**9 Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as **Tuesday 18 September 2007** at 1000 hours. This would not be a normal business meeting but would focus on the Summer Examinations Series 2007 and Market Share.

