

Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

COUNCIL

Minutes of the seventy-third meeting held on Thursday 20 March 2008 at 1000 hours in the Boardroom, 3rd Floor, CCEA, Clarendon Road, BELFAST.

Present : Mr D McKee (Chairman) Ms M Watson
Mr J Collins Mr J Clarke
Ms P O'Farrell Professor P Roebuck

Mr N Anderson (Acting Chief Executive)
Mr M Quinn (Director of Corporate Services)
Mr R Hanna (Director of Education Strategy)
Ms AM Duffy (Director of Operations)
Mr M Fegan (Chief Finance Officer)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr J Wilkinson, Mr D Thompson, Dr I McMorris, Ms M Crilly; Ms C McKinney; Mrs H McClenaghan, Mr N Downing, Mrs D Black, Mr M Bowen and Dr M Brown.

2 Chairman's Business

The Chairman welcomed Ms Katrina Godfrey, from the Department of Education, to the meeting. He congratulated Mr Quinn; Mr Hanna, Ms Duffy and Mr Fegan on their recent appoints to Director of Corporate Services (CS), Education Strategy (ES), Operations (Ops) and Chief Finance Officer (CFO), respectively. The Directors would join the Acting Chief Executive as members of the Top Management Team (TMT).

He advised that the agenda had been re-ordered to allow issues requiring clarification from DE to be taken at the beginning of the meeting.

Meeting of Chairs

The Chairman reported that he had met with the Chairs of the Committees and circulated a short paper on Corporate Governance. This is to ensure that when papers and advice are requested from a government department the appropriate procedures are followed and an audit trail is evident. He advised that a further meeting of Chairs and Directors would be organised for early May to discuss and finalise these guidelines.

NCCA/CCEA Joint Standing Committee : 22 February 2008

The Acting Chief Executive drew attention to the tabled paper which outlined the composition and status of the standing committee, areas of work and possible projects. He reported additional meetings would be set up and requested the participation of 2 members of Council to join the standing committee.

It was confirmed that projects which required funding would be difficult to support, however work in areas of mutual interest would be pursued and mechanisms put in place for participation across both organisations.

The Chairperson of the Curriculum and Assessment Committee drew attention to the remit and asked if it would be possible to broaden *Point 3 : English as an Additional Language* to the inclusion and diversity agenda. The Chairman agreed that this would be possible.

The DE representative advised that a structure has been put in place within DE to discuss issues with the South, in particular how to address underachieving and disadvantaged children and young people. She agreed to update the Council at the next appropriate meeting.

General Issues

The Chairman reminded members that they had received an invitation to the Ecoworld Launch on Tuesday 29 April – a joint initiative between CCEA Multimedia and the Consumer Council.

He advised that he had received a letter from DE confirming that his position as Chairman of CCEA would continue until 31 March 2009 and that no further mechanism had been agreed to fill vacant Council positions other than the normal public appointments process.

Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Learning for Life and Work Committee held on 30 January 2008 (Item 6 on the agenda) were deferred to the June meeting.

Enquiries about Results

The Chairman reported that there had been recent media coverage regarding the QCA Annual Joint Report on Enquiries about Results.

The Acting Chief Executive tabled a summary of the report for members' information. The report contains statistics on enquiries about results and the number of grade changes as well as reporting on the range of services on offer to ensure clarity and transparency on the examination results.

The Chairman of the Business Committee asked that the statistics for remarks resulting in changed grades be made available to Council at the next appropriate meeting.

The Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee said that this information was useful as it gave the organisation an opportunity to review the systems and make any necessary changes.

The Acting Chief Executive agreed that these would be produced for the September meeting of Council and assured members that he had every confidence in the systems already put in place and confirmed that in promoting openness and transparency any changes required to enhance this service would be made.

The DE representative confirmed that DE had written to the Acting Chief Executive requesting a report on any improvements which have been identified following this issue being raised through the media.

The Chairman of Council sought clarification on the charges for remarks. The Director of Corporate Services reported that the vast majority of changes made were those which were close to grade boundaries and confirmed that where the grade has moved up the charges were refunded to the centres.

The Chairman asked that research be carried out in to the whole area of Enquiry about Results fees and charges to find out if there are any issues of concern that need to be

addressed. It was agreed that the Director of Operations would investigate this further and report back to Council when the information was available.

3 Minutes of previous meeting held on 6 February 2008

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 February 2008 were proposed by Mr J Clarke and seconded by Ms P O'Farrell as a true and accurate record. A copy was signed by the Chairman.

4 Curriculum and Assessment

- *Report on the Curriculum & Assessment Committee meeting held on 14 February 2008*

The Chairperson of the Curriculum & Assessment Committee advised that the committee had expressed concerns regarding the decision that DE representatives would no longer be attending CCEA Council or Committees as had previously been the case. She welcomed the fact that there was a DE representative at the Council meeting and reiterated the importance of continuing dialogue between CCEA and DE on the many issues of Council Business.

The DE representative confirmed that she could be available to attend the Curriculum & Assessment Committee for part of the next meeting in May and would confirm her availability following this meeting.

Revised assessment arrangements

The committee discussed a letter from DE outlining a request for advice on revised assessment. A separate system check and robust moderation and teacher assessment were also included. Members felt that further clarification from DE was required on the specifics around the system check.

Members also asked that DE be made aware of the limitations regarding mapping draft levels of progression with previous levels of attainment and concerns regarding the challenging timescales set out in the letter.

The Committee was also made aware of the cut in project funding from £9.3M to £5.5M and that this work would now have to be prioritised to ensure the main business of the organisation continues.

Key Stage 3 computer based assessments

Members agreed that further research was required in this area to ensure the views of all post-primary schools were taken into consideration and to identify best practice in relation to the use of the assessment data and what the professional development and INSET requirements of schools would be.

The research proposal was on the agenda for discussion at this meeting.

Pupil Profile

The Committee were informed that the Key Stage 3 Pupil Profile exemplar formats were available on the CCEA website for use within schools. Plans are underway for more substantive consultation on these formats and it was hoped that these would be completed by Autumn. 2008. Members asked that the formats be flexible, adaptable and include pupils' comments.

The Committee commended the substantial amount of work undertaken for the Primary Pupil Profile and recognised the need for these principles to be taken forward in the development of the Post-Primary Pupil Profile.

The findings of the Implementation of the Primary Pupil Profile were extremely positive although concerns continue to be expressed regarding number of lap tops; preparation time and sufficient resources.

The chairperson paid tribute to the professionalism of teachers and the commitment of CCEA officers.

Using InCAS computer-based assessments with pupils with Special Educational Needs

Members received a paper which addressed the issues raised regarding the accessibility of InCAS for statemented children. The paper was endorsed by members and commended for the clarity of the layout and information provided.

• **Research proposal for computer-based assessments at KS3** **C/73/1**

The Director of Education Strategy (ES) reported that a small scale trial comprising of the regional pilot schools involved in the new curriculum was conducted in late 2006. As a result of the findings of this trial and other evaluations the Curriculum & Assessment committee felt that in order to provide sound advice regarding the use of a particular assessment tool it would be beneficial for further research be undertaken to ensure that views are sought from all post-primary schools.

He advised that external dependencies, in particular, negotiations with C2K regarding licences on each of the computer-based assessment tools for the trials, could have an impact on the deadlines set out in the proposal.

The research proposal was provided to Council for consideration and approval.

Clarification was sought on :

- how many assessment tools would be trialled?

It was confirmed that the 4 or 5 most widely used tools would be trialled. This objective would be redrafted to be more specific.

- whether the postal survey would be the best way to achieve maximum responses?

The Director of ES confirmed that the use of on-line surveys had proved disappointing to date and required the same amount of follow up as that of the postal survey. However both methods would be used.

The Chairman sought clarification on what the consequences would be if the timescales were not met. The Director of Education Strategy said there was a need to understand fully what the timescales would be from external dependencies and if there was a delay it would be the Autumn before the reports would come through to CCEA.

The Chairperson of the Curriculum & Assessment Committee said that it was important to conduct a good quality trial so that CCEA can provide advice based on sound evidence and good quality feedback. If additional time was required to achieve this, then this should be agreed.

- **Revised Assessment Arrangements**

C/73/2

The Director of ES spoke to the detail of the paper, and drew attention to Annex A and B which set out DE's view of the purpose of assessments and their audiences; and DE's policy framework for the assessment arrangements by Key Stage respectively.

He reported that DE had requested detailed advice on new assessment arrangements, in particular :

- Formative and summative assessment arrangements as they relate to the revised curriculum;
- A 'system check' assessment which is distinct from formative and summative arrangements' and
- Eng of key stage assessments.

The Director of ES confirmed that there would be substantial restructuring and re-prioritising of work within the Strategy Directorate to ensure this additional work could be delivered within the budget allocation (given the recent cuts in project funding). He would be discussing milestones and deliverables for the year ahead with DE.

The DE representative confirmed that CCEA would not be asked to take on any additional work that could not be funded. Members welcomed this assurance.

Following discussion members raised the following points. The need to ensure that:

- the system is not overloaded with assessment;
- assessment should be formative/summative so that there is continuity through the pupil profile;
- there is a distinction between teacher assessment supported by CCEA and standardised testing in the classroom;
- there is a consistency in approach in using the tools from one key stage to the next and an integration of same;
- there is further clarification on what is required for the separate system check.

The DE representative confirmed that with regard to the system check DE want a mechanism for checking what improvements/differences the policy interventions, funding and resources provided by DE are making in schools and the education system as a whole.

The Director of ES agreed that he would progress these and other relevant issues with the DE representative outside of this meeting.

7 Corporate

The Chairman welcomed Mr Jeffrey Hamilton to the meeting and commended him for his commitment to CCEA , the tremendous amount of work he had undertaken and for the way in which he had conducted his business over the years.

Members wished to place on record their best wishes to Mr Hamilton on his retirement.

The Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee apologised to members for tabling papers for the Council meeting.

- *Audit & Risk Committee Reports : 17 January 2008 and 11 March 2008*

The Chairman of the Committee reported on discussion which took place at the meeting on 17 January 2008, in particular:

Non-compliance with CCEA's purchasing policy : although this has been a constant issue for discussion by the committee, a mechanism has been agreed where the Chairman and a Committee member meet with individuals who are in breach of the procedures. This provides staff with an opportunity to discuss the causes of the breach and put forward suggestions on how to improve the current system. To date 6 cases have been dealt with. The Chairman of the committee reported that it was now time to return this process to the oversight of line management.

Personal data storage and transmission : although confidence was expressed in CCEA's arrangements for storage of this data, four initiatives had been undertaken to improve practices in this area.

Convergence with ESA : the committee received an update on the actions completed to date and advised that a one item meeting on this issue be scheduled for September 2009.

A Council member sought clarification on whether CCEA had sought central guidance on convergence. The Acting Chief Executive advised that discussions on convergence had been put back to September so that central guidance can be sought.

The Chairman of Council sought clarification regarding discussions with ESA. It was confirmed that the CFO attended meetings on an ad hoc basis.

The DE representative advised that a workstream had been set up in DE under the direction of Mr John McGrath to lead the convergence programme. She suggested that a DE representative be invited to update the Audit & Risk Committee on the current status and advised that detailed guidance would be provided to the affected organisations in due course.

The Chairman of Council asked the Chairman of the Audit & Risk Committee and the CFO to seek central guidance on convergence and progress this issue with DE.

Meeting held on 11 March 2008

Non-compliance with CCEA's purchasing policy : the following agreements were made:

1. The threshold for reporting non-compliant purchases to the Committee was raised to £1,500 (inline with other organisations).
2. Arrangements for 'emergency' purchasing would be devised. The Chief Executive would sign off exceptional and necessary cases.
3. Disciplinary action would be taken as a last resort.
4. The Executive will take over the role of the Chairman and Committee member in conducting the non-compliant meetings.

The Chairman of the Committee reported that the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) had presented a paper outlining proposals for reducing non-compliant purchases. It was agreed that a revised paper would be discussed at the next meeting before coming forward to the next meeting of Council.

Tendering process for internal audit : Deloitte and Touche had been appointed CCEA's auditors for its final year of business.

The Chairman of the Committee commended Ernst and Young for their excellent service during their time with CCEA.

Security of Data

The Chairman of the Committee drew attention to the tabled papers on Security of Data. He reported that there had been significant progress in addressing the issues outlined in the letter from DE requesting that:

- A review of CCEA's completed self assessment schedule and initiate a 30 day action plan.
- CCEA's Internal Audit function independently reassess the data security arrangements following remedial action; and
- Provide details of areas scored below 5 following the reassessment together with detailed plans for improvements and timescales.

The Business Assurance Director reported that work on some of the actions required had been undertaken, however there was still work to be completed and an assurance could not be given that the deadline of 31 March 2008 would be met, if actions were to be implemented in a meaningful manner.

The Chairman of the Committee sought clarification on whether an extension had been granted following a request made by the Acting Chief Executive to the Permanent Secretary? The DE representative confirmed that she was not aware of this and agreed to follow this up as soon as possible.

The Chairman of the Committee commended the Business Assurance Director and his team for the work carried out in this area.

- ***Revised Budget and Review of Funding Proposal 2008/09***

C/73/5

The Acting Chief Executive advised that the main item for consideration was the budget proposal in the light of the substantial funding cuts notified to the Council earlier in the year, however, the revised allocation of funding letter had just been received from DE.

The CFO reported that in the draft allocation for 2008/09 the final figure was:

Baseline : the revised allocation was £23,602k. This allocation includes a requirement to generate £240K in efficiency savings. The CFO reported that this increase would ease the position regarding increase in pension contributions and the reduced earned income position.

Projects : the final cut in project funding is £1.4M with an allocation of £7,979k for 2008/09. This additional funding will allow the projects within the Education Strategy Directorate to continue. The Director of ES and the CFO will now meet to reprioritise the work to ensure the core objectives will be met.

Capital : the revised allocation was £385K. This funding will be used to invest further in the IT infrastructure to ensure greater efficiency and capacity in the system, including replacing lap tops and printers as necessary.

The CFO reported that further there would be further discussions with DE on some issues and assured members that this would be dealt with as soon as possible.

A Council member sought an assurance that the work relating to the revised curriculum, in particular, learning for life and work, citizenship and pupil profile would continue. The Director of Education Strategy confirmed that he would be looking carefully at the work ahead to ensure that the funding was allocated appropriately.

The Chairman thanked the DE representative for her input into the meeting.

The DE representative commended CCEA officers on the way in which they had completed the budget exercise. This had proved very useful in reaching the amended budget allocation. She confirmed that further information was required in some areas and once this had been received the final allocation letter would be issued. She said that she expected this to link into DE's plan which a clear focus in the areas of Numeracy and Literacy.

The Chairman sought clarification on whether any further work was required on the Transfer Test. The DE representative confirmed that if further work was required in this area these would be discussed separately and direction provided as appropriate.

Action points from previous meeting held on 6 February 2008

The Acting Chief Executive reported that the majority of the actions had been completed and updated members on the following :

- *Item 2 : Chairman's business : Cross-border educational issues* : work was progressing in this area and updates would be provided to Council as appropriate.
- *Item 3 :mechanisms for agreeing responses to consultations outside normal corporate governance* : this item would be discussed at the next Ad Hoc Committee meeting on 9 April 2008.
- *Item 6 : Convergence with ESA* : the Chairman has written to the Chief Executive Designate of ESA. A response has not been received to date.

On the matter of maintaining CCEA brand, the Chief Executive Designate has not given an assurance that this would be the case, but that any change would be managed very carefully.

5 Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning

- *Minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2008*

The Chairman advised that in the absence of the Chairman of the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Committee the minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2008 would be deferred until the next meeting of Council.

A Council member sought clarification on the latest position with regards to the Northern Ireland Diploma. The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that CCEA had written to DE seeking direction on a number of developments, including the Northern Ireland diploma, and as yet had received no response.

Concern was expressed regarding the lack of clarification in this and the 14-19 area. The Chairman agreed that he and the Acting Chief Executive would progress this further to ensure that if asked to do so, CCEA would be prepared to undertake any additional work.

The Chairman advised that he would be looking at the committee structure and terms of reference to ensure the priorities of the organisation were being addressed.

- **Action Plan for future work of the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong learning Committee** **C/73/3**

The Director of Operations reported that paper was discussed in detail at the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong learning Committee at its meeting on 22 January 2008 and sets out the work together with associated milestones for the committee over the next 12 month period. The Action Plan was now coming forward to Council for ratification.

The main priorities for 2008/09 would be :

- 14-19: in particular the implications for GCE, GCSE and Diploma developments;
- GCE: revised specifications;
- Controlled Assessment at GCSE;
- Skills qualifications; and
- The Vocational Qualifications Reform.

The Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee sought clarification on the current status of discussions relating to the Leitch Review. The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that at the last meeting of the Committee the DEL representative made it clear that Northern Ireland would follow the Northern Ireland Skills Strategy. The Chairperson of the Curriculum & Assessment Committee reported that further information had been issued on the Skills Strategy drawing particular attention to the uniqueness of the requirements of the province.

Members were happy with the information provided and agreed the Action Plan for the work of the committee 2008/09.

- **Review of GCSE Specifications** **C/73/4**

The Director of Operations reported that a robust and thorough quality assurance process had been completed. The Acting Chief Executive, Director of Operations and Chairman of the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Committee have met and signed off 33 out of the 34 specifications with 1 yet to be approved.

A number of recurring issues have been highlighted in paper C/73/4, in particular :

- Controlled Assessment : the need for specific guidance to be part of the support package;
- Progression from Key Stage 3 into GCSE; and
- Quality of Written Communication.

All of these are being addressed.

An important part of the quality assurance was the internal approval process. Four groups, each chaired by a member of the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong learning Committee, consisting of committee and Council members met to review on average 8-11 specifications each. These groups were :

- Society, Economy and the Environment – Chair : Mr David Lambon
- Communication and Languages – Chair : Dr Wilfred Mulryne
- Health and the Arts – Chair : Mr Jay Piggot
- Maths, Science and Technology – Chair : Dr Aidan Hamill

The Director of Operations wished to place on record her thanks to the members of the Internal Approvals Panels for their expertise, input and commitment to this process. She added that the Chairman of the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning committee

also wished to place on record his congratulations and thanks to the officers for their sterling work and that he had every confidence in the process.

Members accepted the recommendation that the specifications proceed for accreditation to QCA by the deadline of 4 April 2008.

The Chairman of Council said he was extremely pleased with the professionalism and integrity of the team of officers who had been involved in this programme and asked the Director of Operations to pass on his thanks to them on behalf of the Council.

6 Learning for Life and Work

The Chairman reminded members that this item would be deferred until the June meeting of Council.

Minutes for Ratification – *Business Committee : 31 January 2007*

The Chairman of the Business Committee informed members that the PRP item had been deferred.

He reported on the following:

- *Finance and Planning* : members were assured that the budgets would come in on target for 2007/08.
- *Projects*: at that time project spend was behind budget by £1M, part of this was declared to DE due to the fact that there were not enough substitute teachers available to cover the pupil profile training. The Director of ES assured members that 1500 teachers had been trained on a regional basis and schools either didn't or couldn't use the funding CCEA budgeted for.

A Council member sought clarification on whether DE had provided guidance on the use of the In-Service Training days and 5 additional days/ The Director of ES confirmed that DE had issued a circular advising schools that they were required to set aside days for the revised curriculum and assessment arrangements. He agreed to follow this up with DE.

- *Operational Plan 2008/09* : was discussed in detail. The committee were made aware of the 3 main pressures : vacancy control; static examination sales; and pension fund changes and the challenges ahead. An assurance was also given that CCEA's main priorities would not be impacted upon.
- *Modernisation* : the committee discussed two papers : 'The Qualifications and Assessment Modernisation Strategy' and 'Electronic Script Management Service 2009'. Both were required to go forward to the ESA ICT Management Board for final approval, however, concern was expressed that funding would not be available at this time.
- *Quality and Continuous Improvement* : CCEA has entered for the European Quality Award 2008. The site visit would be conducted in June with the awards ceremony taking place in September 2008.

The Chairman of Council confirmed that the PRP issues had been dealt with.

8 Any other business

None identified by the Secretariat.

9 Date of next meeting

The next meeting was agreed as **Thursday 1 May 2008 at 1000 hours**.

Subsequent to this the meeting scheduled for Thursday 1 May 2008 was cancelled and the next meeting would be Wednesday 18 June 2008 at 1000 hours.