

# Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Assessment and Examinations

## COUNCIL

Minutes of the eighty-seventh Council meeting held on Wednesday 21 April 2010 at 1300 hours in Room 226, CCEA Headquarters, Clarendon Road, Belfast.

**Present :** Mr D McKee (Chairman) Mrs H McClenaghan  
Mr J Clarke Mr D Thompson  
Mr J Wilkinson Ms M Crilly  
Ms P O'Farrell Mrs D Black

Mr Brian Morrow (DE Observer)

Mr G Boyd (Chief Executive Designate, ESA, Observer)

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 Qualifications)  
Mr M Fegan (Chief Finance Officer)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

## Introduction

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting, in particular Mr Gavin Boyd and Mr Brian Morrow. Both were attending in an observer capacity. The Chairman advised that Mr Morrow was attending on behalf of Mrs Godfrey.

The Chairman informed members that there would be a closed session of Council at the end of normal business.

## 1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Ms M Watson and Mr J Collins.

## 2 Chairman's Business

The Chairman advised that he had received a letter of resignation from Ms M Watson and an indication from three other members of possible resignations. When Council had been reconstituted from January 2010 a number of members had indicated their intention to serve only for a short period of time. Ms Watson's resignation would come into effect from June 2010.

Members were informed that the original Agenda was re-ordered to take the Qualifications items first followed by Education Strategy. Revised agendas were tabled for members' information.

### *Audits*

*(Information has been redacted under s.41 (b) -, Information provided in confidence – of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 if disclosure of information to the public would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that or any other person.)*

### *Appraisals*

The Chairman advised that appraisal forms had been provided for members' consideration. He asked that, if possible, they be signed and returned after this meeting. However, if members wished to meet with the Chairman to discuss the form they should contact the Manager of the Council Secretariat outside of this meeting.

With regard to the clause *'please indicate whether there have been any instances of failure to adhere to the Principles of Public Life and Codes of Conduct and Accountability'* the Chairman confirmed that he had regarded this as 'NO' in each case as the letter from DE on governance was not received until January 2010.

### *Outstanding Pay Issues*

The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that notification has been received that the 1% cost of living increase has been agreed for staff not eligible for PRP, incentive or retention type schemes. This will be processed in the April payroll.

He advised that discussions were on going with DE in relation to approvals queries for PRP in relation to TMT, Business Unit Managers, Programme Managers and staff put into acting up positions during Vacancy Control.

The ICT and Multimedia Incentive & Retention Schemes have also been challenged and classified as PRP as full payment is linked to satisfactory appraisals.

He confirmed that he was in correspondence with the Deputy Secretary (DE) on a range of pay related issues.

The Chairman informed members that he had met with the NIPSA Union representatives on Thursday 15 April to confirm that discussions were underway with DE. The main query coming from staff was why CCEA's cost of living increase was being delayed when other government departments had been paid.

The Acting Chief Executive wished to place on record his thanks to Mrs Katrina Godfrey and Mr Brian Morrow for their assistance in this matter.

### *Examinations Issue : AS Geography*

The Director of Qualifications (DoQ) informed members that due to the late detection of a rubric violation in GCE A2 Geography Unit 1(winter series), it had been necessary to re-issue the unit marks for 17 candidates (from 11 centres). These candidates had chosen optional questions incorrectly and should not have been awarded marks for all optional questions answered. However, the rubric violation had not been consistently addressed in marking meaning that for these candidates the original unit mark was inflated.

DE and the regulators have been informed.

10 out of the 17 candidates are already re-sitting this unit. However, the remaining 7 had not at this stage indicated an intention to do so. The DoQ confirmed that the first priority was to contact the centres. This was being progressed as a matter of urgency to ensure the candidates and centres have received the correct information to inform their decisions about re-sits in the summer series.

The DoQ stated that this was a quality assurance issue in that 3 of the examiners had failed to carry out their responsibilities to the agreed standard. It was essential to address this rigorously as it was a matter of fairness and equity for all candidates. An

investigation would be conducted and an action plan drawn up to ensure this does not happen again.

The DE Observer thanked the DoQ for providing the information. He informed members that the Minister had been informed and that the Permanent Secretary would be writing to the Acting Chief Executive to seek further details surrounding the issue and the actions necessary to prevent a re-occurrence.

The Chairman confirmed that he had been informed of this issue and a range of options had been discussed. He advised that the examiners in question would be spoken to and a way forward agreed.

The Chief Executive Designate (ESA) expressed concern regarding the number of candidates who had breached the rubric and asked that the style or the setting of the paper be looked at to ensure accessibility for all candidates. The Chairman confirmed that this had also been discussed.

The Chairman thanked the DoQ for bringing this to the attention of the Council and for the sensitive way in which the issue was being handled with centres. He asked for a progress report to come forward to Council at the next meeting.

#### *Revision of GCSE Science Specification*

*(Information has been redacted under s.22(c) – Information intended for future publication and s.43(2) – Commercial interests – of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.)*

The Chairman wished to place on record his thanks to Mr David Thompson, Ms Patricia O'Farrell and Dr Martin Brown for their contributions and to Mrs Esther Martin for the work carried out in this area.

A progress report would be given at the next meeting.

#### *Resignations*

The Chairman advised that :

- M Fegan would take up a Finance Director position with another organisation in June 2010.

The Council congratulated Mr Fegan on his appointment and wished to place on record their thanks for his contributions during his time with CCEA.

- N Anderson has indicated his intention to resign as Acting Chief Executive and was seeking to agree an effective date with the Chairman and Council.

The Chairman paid tribute to all members of TMT for the work they have carried out under the current circumstances.

#### *CCEA Events*

Members were reminded of the following events:

- Celebrating Excellence : Friday 23 April 2010, beginning at 9.30 am
- Celebrating Achievement : Wednesday 28 April 2010, beginning at 12.30 pm

### **3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 March 2010**

Clarification was sought on whether Shane McCurdy would be invited to future meetings of the Audit & Risk Committee or whether this had been extended to the Finance Committee. It was confirmed that the invitation was for the two committees.

With this amendment the minutes were proposed by Mr John Wilkinson and seconded by Mrs Helen McClenaghan as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

#### *Action points*

The Acting Chief Executive reported that Item 4 had been deferred to a future meeting of Council.

He advised that:

- A presentation on the procedures for awarding tenders and recruitment of consultants was given to Finance Committee on 15 April. A range of issues have arisen as a result of this and will be progressed at the next meeting of Council.
- Remuneration Committee and revision of Standing Orders: both of these issues are under discussion.

#### Regulation

The Acting Chief Executive drew members' attention to the letter from the Minister for the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) withdrawing CCEA's pure regulatory functions for Vocational Qualifications.

CCEA would still carry out the non-regulatory advisory and support functions in relation to all Vocational Qualifications including the National Vocational Qualifications. This will be a significant continuing role for the regulatory team within CCEA (and in future DE/ESA) in terms of developing criteria for qualifications to fulfill the Entitlement Framework.

The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that engagement between the CCEA regulatory team and the OfQual office in Northern Ireland was ongoing with the aim of developing a memorandum of understanding to clarify the new regulatory arrangements for vocational qualifications.

This will have implications for DEL funded staff; however, once roles and responsibilities have been clearly defined the appropriate discussions will take place regarding staff deployment.

Members agreed it was important for CCEA to be involved in discussions regarding the 14-19 agenda. The Acting Chief Executive agreed to take this forward with OfQUAL.

The Chairman asked for an update on the impact of funding on roles and responsibilities for the officers within the CCEA regulatory team at the next appropriate meeting.

#### *Standing Orders*

Mr Morrow sought clarification on when the Standing Orders would be reviewed and forwarded to DE for consideration. The Vice-Chair agreed that the existing Standing Orders were no longer appropriate and required amendment.

The Chairman asked for a small group of Council members to review the Orders. The Vice-Chair, Mr Thompson and Ms Crilly agreed to take this forward.

## *General*

The Acting Chief Executive advised that the remaining action points on policy and development would come forward as appropriate to future meetings of Council.

## **6 Qualifications**

### **• SEN Reference Group : Proposals for Consultation**

**C/87/3**

The Director of Qualifications (DoQ) spoke to the detail of the paper. She advised that the SEN Reference Group was formed in response to a request from the SEN sector for external recognition of achievement for SEN learners at Key Stage 4 and beyond.

The SEN Group has put together proposals for consultation and these are now coming forward to the Council for consideration and agreement.

Members asked that specialist teachers and parents be invited to join the group and consideration be given to representatives from FE, Teacher Trainers and Employers. The Chairman urged caution with regard to the inclusion of Employers and suggested that the most effective way to ensure their participation would be during the consultation exercise.

The DoQ agreed to find a way of including these groups in the wider consultation.

Clarification was sought on DE involvement. It was confirmed that DE would be involved at different stages of the consultation and that Sean Ward, ETI is included in the group.

The Director of Education Strategy (DoES) asked for a consistent approach across Curriculum and Assessment and Qualifications in taking this work forward. He asked that account be taken of the work already completed and underway to ensure there is no duplication and that CCEA work closely with DE. The Chairman agreed with this approach.

### **• Meeting the Entitlement Framework**

**C/87/4**

The DoQ drew members' attention to the detail of paper C/87/4 which outlined the progress made to meet the Entitlement Framework. This will be fully implemented in schools by September 2013. She advised that a significant amount of work was underway in this area, in particular:

- Marketing strategies running alongside consultations
- Mapping exercises to identify gaps (highlighted in Appendices 3 and 4)
- A wide ranging consultation including all stakeholders
- An information day for principals followed by a series of launches

The main challenges are:

- Ensuring qualifications developed provide progression from the current options available at GCSE
- Identifying the appropriate pathway for the development of Applied General and Vocational subjects
- Engaging with the organizations CCEA is consulting with to seek assistance in writing the specifications (as appropriate)

A Council member sought clarification on what was being done to ensure readiness in schools. The DoQ confirmed that there would be a significant communications exercise

carried out by CCEA to try to ensure schools were ready for receiving the new specifications.

It was suggested that additional stakeholders, particularly those who promoted the Skills Agenda in Northern Ireland should also be approached to ensure that the economic needs are also included.

Whilst Council recognised that the paper provided a strategic overview of the work necessary to fulfill the framework, they expressed concern that there was still no clarity on the position of a 14-19 strategy and asked that representations be made to the relevant departments concerning same.

A Council member suggested that clarification be sought on the vocational offerings provided by City and Guilds and BTEC in Northern Ireland to ensure there was no duplication going forward. The Chairman asked the DoQ to ensure that this was progressed.

The DoQ assured members that a mapping exercise had been carried out which identified the gaps, however, she confirmed that the QCF (Qualifications Credit Framework) allowed awarding bodies to mix and add on components to enable flexibility of choice.

The Chairman sought clarification on whether it would be appropriate to write to the Minister(s) regarding the lack of clarity on the 14-19 agenda.

The Chief Executive Designate (ESA), in his capacity as Observer, said that it was clear that a number of members had concerns regarding the 14-19 agenda and suggested that the Chairman set these out in writing to the Minister(s).

## **5 Education Strategy**

- ***InCAS Contract***

***C/87/1***

The DoES drew members' attention to paper C/87/1 and advised that this represented a factual account of the current status of the contract. It is hoped that the negotiation phase will be completed by the end of April 2010 with CEM. A contract should be in place following this.

The Chairman sought clarification as to whether or not InCAS would continue as the chosen assessment tool.

The DoES said that he could not confirm this was the case, however, should a decision be taken to change then a procurement process would begin for drawing up a specification to replace InCAS. This would be a competitive process.

- ***Transitional Assessment Arrangements***

***C/87/2***

The DoES confirmed that the regulations state that the existing level descriptions for English and Mathematics should be used as interim 'levels of progression' for the cross-curricular skills of Communications and Using Mathematics. Schools will continue to operate the end of Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 tests for existing levels.

Although there is no longer any Primary expertise on Council, members were assured that there had been significant engagement with this sector and feedback taken into consideration.

Mr Morrow confirmed that DE had been engaging with CCEA over a lengthy period and new levels of progression had now been considered. A set of proposals would be put forward to the Minister and it was hoped that decisions would be made as soon as possible. Following this, there would be a lead-in time set for schools to prepare for the new levels.

With regard to the InCAS consultations, the DoES confirmed that the largest ever evaluation had been conducted over the last 3 years. An enormous amount of feedback has been collated and the views have been used to inform thinking and discussions with DE.

Following on from the issues that arose from InCAS in Autumn 2009, the DoES advised that the KPMG audit report has provided a comprehensive overview of the circumstances and is currently with DE. Additionally, the InCAS working group (set up by the Minister) has produced its report and recommendations. These were currently being progressed by the Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting team.

- ***Levels of Progression in Communication through Irish***

The DoES drew members' attention to the commissioning letter from DE seeking additional advice around the levels of progression in communication through Irish. (Deadline 5 May 2010).

He advised that this work has been completed through engagement with the sector and is entirely in Irish but made available to Members of Council on request. He sought Council approval to submit the advice to DE.

Members sought an assurance that the Irish-medium sector had been involved in the decision making and were content with the proposed recommendation. The DoES confirmed that this was the case.

Members agreed the advice.

Ms O'Farrell asked for a copy of the relevant documentation.

## **7 Any Other Business**

The Chairman advised that a number of issues had been discussed by the Finance Committee at its meeting on 15 April 2010, one of which was Vacancy Control. These issues would be discussed at the next meeting of Council.

## **8 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 26 May 2010 at 1300 hours in Room 226, CCEA Headquarters, Clarendon.

The Chairman thanked members for their contributions to the meeting.

A Closed Session of Council took place following normal business.

