

Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Assessment and Examinations

COUNCIL

Minutes of the eighty-eighth Council meeting held on Wednesday 26 May 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 Mrs D Black
Ms P O'Farrell Mr J Collins

Mrs K Godfrey (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. He advised that a closed session of Council had taken place before normal business to discuss **Item 8 : Management Issues**.

8 Management Issues

The Chairman advised that he had met with the Permanent Secretary on 20 May 2010 to discuss a range of issues including the imminent loss of two members of the CCEA Top Management Team and proposals for replacing them. A letter from the Permanent Secretary (24 May 2010) was tabled for members consideration.

The Chairman confirmed that the Council had accepted the proposal outlined in the letter and advised the meeting that as an interim measure, Mr Gavin Boyd would assume the role of CCEA's Chief Executive and Accounting Officer. He stressed that this would be in addition to his responsibilities as Chief Executive (Designate) of the Education and Skills Authority. Mr Boyd would also continue with his Department of Education Additional Accounting Officer responsibilities.

The Chairman wished to place on record his thanks to the Permanent Secretary and asked that CCEA be involved in the planning of any communications associated with the agreed interim management arrangements. Mrs Godfrey noted the Chairman's comments.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Ms M Watson and Ms M Crilly.

2 Chairman's Business

The Chairman advised that NIPSA had requested speaking rights at this meeting.

NIPSA

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Alison Millar, NIPSA and Mr Philip Hamilton, CCEA's NIPSA representative to the meeting.

Members received a representation from NIPSA in respect of CCEA's non-payment of PRP.

The Chairman thanked the representatives for their statement and offered to meet them separately. Mrs Millar thanked the Chairman and agreed to set up the appropriate arrangements with the Acting Chief Executive.

The NIPSA representatives left the meeting at this point.

Members expressed concern that a resolution had not yet been found and sought confirmation from DE that these difficulties would be progressed to a satisfactory conclusion.

The Chief Executive Designate (ESA) said it was important that good working relationships were not further damaged and confirmed that DE officials were making progress in some areas with DfP. He asked the Chairman to ensure CCEA Officers worked with DE officials to move these matters on quickly.

The DE Observer confirmed that DE had excellent co-operation from CCEA officers and information requested had been provided. She advised that discussions were ongoing with DfP and DE have been asked to revisit the decision making and approvals process.

The Chairman thanked members for their input and expressed his desire that all pay related issues would be resolved quickly.

General

The Chairman advised that Papers 1 and 4 had been deferred to future meetings of Council and Finance Committee respectively.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 April 2010

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 April 2010 were proposed by Mr John Wilkinson and seconded by Mrs Patricia O'Farrell as a true and accurate record. A copy was signed by the Chairman.

Action points

Updates were provided as follows :

Geography A2 1 : the Director of Operations drew members' attention to the paper which outlined actions taken since the last meeting.

Two negative responses were received. One has been satisfactorily resolved and the other is where a parent has registered concern at the loss of revision time in preparation for the summer examination. Various options were outlined and it was agreed that Council would be briefed on the resolution of all individual candidate issues following the summer examinations.

The Acting Chief Executive undertook to monitor the performance of these candidates to ensure that the appropriate decision is taken for the 7 candidates as a group.

Science Specification : the regulators will meet to review the specification. Work has also been initiated regarding the assessment objectives. A further update will be provided at the next meeting.

Regulation : staffing issues : DEL funding will be withdrawn from CCEA and this will have staffing implications. The DE Observer confirmed that CCEA will retain a regulatory function for general qualifications until it passes to ESA. This function would not be the responsibility of OfQUAL.

Qualifications : 14-19 Agenda : the Chairman confirmed that he would write to both Ministers outlining CCEA's concerns regarding the lack of progress in this area.

2 Chairman's Business continued

ALTA

The Director of Education Strategy (DoES) drew members' attention to the correspondence received from the Chairman of ALTA which cited difficulties in reaching agreement with the CCEA executive on the release of funds for development of the ALTA assessment tool.

The DoES explained that development work on the ALTA assessment tool could not be commissioned in advance of final decisions being made in respect of revised assessment arrangements and in particular levels of progression.

He advised members that the development phase with ALTA ended in 2006. WELB had established a contract with ALTA to provide the assessment tool for use in schools on the C2K managed service. The contract did not include the support or promotion of the assessment tool by CCEA. The contract did provide for development work but only when properly commissioned to address specific and established requirements.

The DE Observer confirmed that the proposals for the revised levels of progression and mechanisms for assessment have been agreed and signed off. The decisions will be communicated to CCEA and stakeholders will be informed. She advised that a copy of the letter would be copied to the Chairman.

The Chairman agreed that he would respond to ALTA to inform them of the current position.

Formation of Council Sub-Group

C/88/1

The Chairman advised that this item required further discussion with TMT and Chairs of Sub-Committees.

4 Revised Standing Orders

C/88/2

The Vice-Chair presented the revised Standing Orders to Council. She wished to place on record her thanks to Mr Thompson and the Director of Corporate Services for their assistance.

The Chairman thanked the group for taking this matter forward and advised that this item would come forward for discussion and, if appropriate, adoption at the June meeting of Council.

5 Correspondence

The Chairman drew members' attention to the various items of correspondence received. He sought clarification as to whether or not this was a good mechanism for keeping members informed on a regular basis. Members agreed that this should continue as appropriate.

6 Finance & Procurement

- **Finance Committee Report : 15 April 2010**

The Chairman of the Committee drew members' attention to the detail of the minutes provided.

He advised that the main item discussed was the presentation on CCEA's procurement processes. This arose as a result of the recent issues with Northern Ireland Water. Members expressed concern that they could be held accountable for procurement and finance matters even if they had no visibility under certain authority limits. This and other issues are currently being addressed and will be presented to the next meeting of the Finance Committee.

An action from the March meeting was clarification on the current situation regarding Vacancy Control. It was reported that a degree of relaxation has been put in place, however CCEA continue to consult with ESAIT on subsequent changes.

Interim Budget Allocation : members noted the interim budget allocation for a 3 month period and were advised that the organisation could operate within this for that timeframe.

The Chairman advised that the Finance Report was on the agenda for this meeting.

Pay Remit : various issues regarding the pay remit and PRP were discussed. The committee suggested that all PRP, retention and incentive arrangements/schemes should either be re-negotiated or withdrawn and it was agreed to review the situation in 2011/12.

Business Development Update

(Information has been redacted 43(2) – Commercial interests – of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.)

InCAS Contract : members were informed that the current contract would expire on 19 July 2010. DE has received a range of options and these were being progressed.

Members noted the information provided.

- **Finance Report as at 31 March 2010**

C/88/3

The CFO advised that CCEA had completed the year within 0.16% of the overall budget. He advised that going forward the expectation is that each category is managed within budget with no overspends. This is to ensure the most efficient use of funding as possible.

He reported that:

Examinations income: completed the year slightly ahead of budget. This was due to additional income from the GCE winter series and the impact of the Multimedia work with the NI Assembly on the DVD website resource.

Baseline : finished slightly overspent. This was due to:

- Writing costs within Examinations for the new GCSE specifications (this needs to be cross-charged to the revision of specifications budget);
- Higher teacher release costs for Key Stage Assessments within Education Strategy;
- Planned work within Corporate Services and the impact of Vacancy Control.

Projects : Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting projects finished ahead of budget, this included additional work carried out in Irish Medium and Assessment. Qualifications projects came in under budget due to a reduced Business Development Programme and recruitment difficulties.

Capital : came in on budget.

Members congratulated the organisation on a good end of year performance and extended their thanks to all staff across the organisation involved.

- **Budget 2010/2011**

C/88/5

The CFO advised that CCEA had received an adequate interim budget allocation. He confirmed that at this early stage of the financial year the organisation was able to operate within this funding.

It was hoped that the budget will be confirmed as soon as possible. Decisions now taken around assessment arrangements will have a significant impact on the project area as this particular project will have to be resourced adequately.

Concern was expressed that the budget had not yet been confirmed, particularly that there was only 9 months left of the financial year for implementation of any potential budget reductions.

Clarification was sought on whether all organisations were affected by budget cuts. The DE Observer confirmed that this was the case. She advised that consideration of CCEA's costed work programme would be clearly linked to DE priorities and would be based on the priorities set out in recent correspondence to the Acting Chief Executive, specifically, Curriculum, Assessment, Literacy and Numeracy, STEM and support for Irish medium. In Qualifications,; the maintenance and accuracy of the qualifications system to deliver the examinations; and work to support the Entitlement Framework.

The Chairman sought clarification on when CCEA could expect confirmation of the budget. The DE observer advised that the work in relation to the new assessment arrangements is being scoped and costed, once this has been completed and included it was hoped that the allocation would be confirmed within the coming weeks.

7 Corporate

- **Internal Audit Report (KPMG)**

C/88/6

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

Revised Terms of Reference : Remuneration Committee

The Chairman tabled a revised ToR for the Remuneration Committee and asked members to consider and approve the document. The DoCS outlined the key elements of the committee:

- the committee would appoint its own Chair;
- the DoCS would act as committee secretary; and
- an annual report would be produced for Council.

Members raised the following points:

- the inclusion of a DE observer at each meeting;
- to ensure that there is no conflict of interests with the suggested committee secretary;
- training to be provided for the committee to establish its functions.

With regard to the committee secretary, it was suggested that if there were any issues requiring closed discussion then the secretary would be asked to leave. This was not accepted.

- **Draft Corporate Plan (process) 2010/11**

C/88/7

(information redacted under s. 22(1) – Information intended for future publication – of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.)

Members noted the information provided.

8 Any Other Business

The Chairman asked that members be provided with the details for the Governance and Accountability Training as soon as possible.

He wished to place on record his thanks on behalf the Council to Mark Fegan for all of his contributions to the work of CCEA and wished him success in his future career.

9 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Monday 28 June at 13.00 hours.

Following this meeting it was agreed that the Council meeting would be brought forward to Tuesday 22 June 2010 at 13.00 hours. Members were subsequently informed of this change.