

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

Minutes of the sixty-seventh Council meeting held on Wednesday 28 March 2007 at 10.30 hours in the Boardroom, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, CCEA, Clarendon Road, Belfast.

**Present :**

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

Ms S McKee (DE Assessor)

Mr N Anderson (Acting Chief Executive)  
Mr M Fegan, Finance Manager (Item 4)  
Mr R Hanna, Pupil Profile Implementation Manager (Item 5)  
Dr C Sproule, Curriculum & Assessment Manager (Item 5)  
Ms AM Duffy, Examinations Manager (Item 6)

Miss N Kennedy, Manager, Council Secretariat

### **Introduction**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting, in particular Ms Shirley McKee who was attending in place of Mr D Woods (DE). He congratulated Mr McKee on his recent appointment as Chairman of CCEA.

### **1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mr J Collins; Ms M Crilly; Mrs H McClenaghan; Ms C McKinney; Mr D Woods and Mrs M Cree.

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

The Chairman drew members' attention to the revised running order of the agenda and advised that the Finance and Planning items would now be taken first.

The following committee minutes were tabled :

- Learning for Life and Work Committee Minutes – 17 January 2007
- Audit & Risk Committee Minutes – 31 January 2007
- Business Committee Minutes – 15 February 2007
- Curriculum & Assessment Committee Minutes – 1 March 2007
- Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Committee Minutes – 15 March 2007

The following officers attended during the course of the meeting:

- Mr Mark Fegan for Item 4;
- Mr Richard Hanna and Dr Charlie Sproule for Item 5
- Ms Anne Marie Duffy for Item 6.

The Chairman informed members that CCEA had been placed 69<sup>th</sup> in the Times Top 100 Employers List and were the first public sector organisation in Northern Ireland to achieve this status. He congratulated the staff of the organisation on this award.

It was confirmed that CCEA would be entering for the 2007 UK Quality Award.

### **3 Minutes of previous meeting held on 14 December 2006**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 December 2006 were agreed as a true and accurate record and a copy was signed by the Chairman.

#### *Action points*

The Acting Chief Executive updated members on the following :

- NCCA/CCEA Joint Conference: dates have been agreed for 11 and 12 October 2007 and the programme would be agreed by the chairs of both organisations.
- Marking of examinations and the use of technology : an assurance that the integrity of the examinations would be maintained and a large proportion of existing markers were being retained.

All other points were on the agenda for discussion.

The Chairman reminded members that they would be asked to sign off the Operational Plan and make a final decision on the issues surrounding the Pupil Profile.

### **4 Finance and Planning**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Fegan to the meeting.

#### ***Audit and Risk Committee report : 31 January 2007***

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr J Collins, Mr Thompson drew attention to the tabled minutes and reported on :

Item 5 : non-compliance with CCEA's purchasing policy : a new list of signatories would be produced to ensure purchase orders could be signed off in the absence of the main budget holder. Consideration would be given to viewing this non-compliance as a disciplinary offence by SMB.

Clarification was sought on the following:

- Would CCEA's disciplinary procedure cover this type of action? This was confirmed.
- What were the main reasons for the non-compliance? It was confirmed that there were issues that needed to be worked through, however, more robust procedures would be put in place to improve this.

Item 7 : Fraud report : the need for rigorous control was emphasised. An assurance was sought that there were no cases of fraud known to the organisation. This was confirmed.

The Chairman asked that the minutes be redrafted to bring into context the reference made to the '780 cases of fraud' to reflect the true position and avoid confusion and to ensure that members were aware that this was not a reference to CCEA.

Item 9 : ES4 Error : An investigation had been carried out and remedial action taken. A process review would come forward to the next committee meeting.

It was agreed that the complainant would be informed of the outcomes of the investigation.

*On-board Training :*

The Chairman confirmed that on-board training had taken place on 11 and 12 April 2006 and that the majority of Council members had completed this.

***Business Committee report : 15 February 2007***

The Chairman drew attention to the tabled minutes and reported that the Operational Plan provided for Council's approval had not been discussed in detail by the Business Committee.

*Project Minerva* : the project was no longer likely to provide benefits for Northern Ireland due to its emphasis on Diploma developments, however, DE have asked CCEA to continue to be involved in this area to ensure Northern Ireland are kept up to date with developments.

With regard to CCEA's need to continue to improve the IT systems and capacity, initial discussions have taken place with DE and budget forecasts put forward for 2007/08.

***Finance report : end February 2007***

***C/67/3***

The Finance Manager reported that all areas were within 4% of budget to date and was confident that the budget would be balanced by year end.

*Income*

A slight shortfall of £200K in examinations income due to policy changes in charges to centres was reported.

A substantial amount of invoices are due to be issued in March which will reduce the negative variance closer to the forecast figure of £7,457K.

Mr Fegan said he was looking at ways of how to improve this process moving forward.

*Baseline*

- Chief Executive's Office showed a slight underspend, however, this should be back on target by year end.
- Education Policy showed a slight savings due to the post of Director of Education Policy not being filled.
- Operations Directorate : the underspend will continue into the new financial year. This was due to change of responsibilities between teams.
- Corporate Services : the underspend of £231K was due the rent being paid earlier than planned. This will be corrected and bring Facilities Management close to budget at year end.

*Project Spend*

The Chairman asked the Finance Manager to outline the underspend in projects which resulted in CCEA handing back over £2M to the Department of Education.

In August 2006 a significant underspend was flagged up due to decisions taken on training and procurement for the Pupil Profile. This was formally returned for reallocation to DE in October 2006.

At the end of December 2006 Curriculum Development was underspent by £1.5M on projects. Following a detailed review conducted by the new managers for Curriculum & Assessment and Pupil Profile in January 2007 a further £1M was uncovered.

The Chairman expressed his disappointment that this had happened as a result of poor management. He sought an assurance that measures were being put in place to ensure this did not happen again. It was confirmed that a project management framework had been drawn up for discussion and approval by the business committee.

Members asked that this framework be sufficiently robust to identify problems at the earliest possible stage and that a challenge function was included to ensure they are both necessary and achievable.

Clarification was sought on whether the additional returned funding had been reallocated. It was confirmed that it was too late in the financial year to reallocate the funding in the education system and that it had subsequently been returned to the Treasury.

#### *Capital*

Capital continued to be managed tightly. Additional in-year bids had been successful and this funding had been spent on improving the mainframe hardware. Clarification was sought on how the budget would be allocated in 2007/08. It was confirmed the same level of funding had been allocated as per previous years, however an action plan would be put in place to deal with this. The plan would be re-prioritised to ensure the most urgent needs are covered at the outset.

#### ***Operational Plan Monitoring – Exception Report at December 2006*** ***C/67/4***

The Finance Manager reported that out of a total of 633 performance measures 605 (96%) were on target with 28 (4%) incomplete. Members were asked to note the detailed exception report.

The Chairman commended officers on a good performance and the clarity of the information provided.

#### ***Draft proposed budget and Operational Plan 2007/07*** ***C/67/5***

A paper showing the revised budget allocation for 2007/08 was tabled. The allocation was summarised as follows :

#### *Overall position*

It was confirmed that the revised allocation for CCEA's total planned expenditure would increase by 2%.

#### *Baseline/Operational expenditure*

A 1% increase in this area as CCEA moves towards ESA. The Finance Manager said he was confident that this allocation was sufficient for the year ahead.

Members asked that managers keep a watching brief on their allocations to ensure core activities continue to be met.

Members expressed concern regarding the capital allocation and asked that this continue to be addressed with DE. This was agreed.

The Chairman said that this was a fair budget given the circumstances. He commended DE on their flexibility and fairness to CCEA in respect of in-year bids. He asked that:

- the process of defining capital needs and putting these forward to DE were improved;
- managers to continue to manage their budgets robustly; and
- representations continue to be made to DE in the area of improving the way CCEA process and deliver its examinations.

Members approved the Budget and the Operational Plan for 2007/2008.

It was suggested that in the area of Curriculum Development improvements could be made on:

- how best to get the 'impact of change' message across to teachers and schools in a more accessible manner;
- accessibility of curriculum materials by way of broad summaries, leaflets, website, etc;
- how mechanisms can be used to communicate directly to teachers, through the GTC and other forums.

The Acting Chief Executive agreed to take these into consideration.

#### *Annual Accounts*

The Finance Manager reported that the 2005/2006 Accounts had been laid before Parliament. Members were provided with a copy to take away.

It was hoped that the 2006/2007 Accounts would be laid before Parliament in October 2007. This was dependent on the timetable being on schedule.

## **5 Curriculum and Assessment**

The Chairman welcomed Ms Watson, Mr Hanna and Dr Sproule to the meeting. He drew members' attention to the information on the Pupil Profile and reminded members of the decisions which were required to be made following discussions.

### ***Curriculum and Assessment report : 1 March 2007***

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2007 were tabled for members' information.

Ms Watson, Chairperson of the committee informed members that following the scheduled meeting on 1 March, a further meeting took place on 22 March to discuss in full certain issues around the pupil profile. She assured members that a substantial amount of work had been progressed in these areas and reported on the following :

*Early Years Enriched Curriculum* : concern continues to be expressed regarding the lack of funding for classroom assistants at P2. Members of the committee asked that a further representation be made to the Department of Education. Ms McKee confirmed that schools would be advised of funding allocations in April 2007.

The Chairman reminded members that in CCEA's advice to the Department of Education it stated clearly that in order for the Early Years' Curriculum to succeed it needed to be

supported by Classroom Assistants. Ms McKee confirmed that the concerns had been taken on board by the Department of Education.

*Pupil Profile* : was on the agenda for discussion at this meeting. At the committee meeting concern was expressed regarding what had been achieved to date on the Pupil Profile. Mr Hanna prepared and circulated several documents which gave a clear steer to the committee.

*Curriculum Implementation* : the committee received an update on the feedback from the assessment conferences which took place during January 07. Teachers were generally positive on the format of the pupil profile report and InCAS.

Implementation boxes have been issued to all schools.

### ***Pupil Profile***

***C/67/1***

Mr Hanna drew attention to the pack of papers on Pupil Profile. Papers 67 1a and 1c had been provided for information. Paper 1b outlined the information for parents, draft content and format. A presentation was given on :

- Format – how the outcomes will be represented and shown to the parents at the parent-teacher meeting;
- InCAS content : Reading and Maths
- Developed Ability; and
- Attitudes.

### *Recommendations from Curriculum & Assessment Committee*

- In general the committee agreed that all outcomes of assessments taken by pupils should be reported in writing.
- Content : developed ability was an inappropriate term and an alternative term should be agreed.

All components of reading and maths should be mandatory.

- Format : Ages should be represented in Years and Months.

Graphical information should be provided from Year 2 onwards.

- Attitudes should remain.

Ms Watson confirmed that the outcome of the discussion with the sub-committee was almost unanimous. In discussing the term 'developed ability' it was confirmed by Durham University that a different term could be used which would be more meaningful and useful to teachers, parents and children.

Mr McKee wished to place on record his thanks to Mr Hanna for providing a clear statement on the current position of Pupil Profile.

Following a detailed discussion it was agreed that :

- The advice already given to DE was that the pupil profile would not be used as a selection tool. Further advice would reinforce this position.

- All information available should be shared with parents. This will ensure that the child's best interests are paramount and parents are well informed.
- The assessments should be fit for purpose and further trialling should take place if required.
- There remained a degree of uncertainty around 'developed ability' and it was suggested that further work be done in this area.
- The term 'developed ability' should also be changed to a more meaningful phrase.

### **Council Recommendations**

The Council concurred with the recommendations put forward by the Curriculum & Assessment Committee, however, on Developed Ability the Council recommended that:

- Schools should be encouraged to use the developed ability tests but they should not be made mandatory.
- Formal trialling should be carried out to ensure complete clarity throughout the system.
- A phased approach would be beneficial. This would allow teachers to become more confident in using the computer adaptive tools

Ms Watson wished to place on record her thanks on the huge amount of progress made in a very short space of time since Dr Sproule and Mr Hanna took over the Curriculum, Assessment and Pupil Profile units.

The Chairman asked that CCEA write to the Department of Education outlining these recommendations.

### ***Curriculum Implementation Update***

#### *Assessment Conferences*

- RTU have carried out an evaluation of the conferences and the report has been completed. Initial feedback has been positive. The report will be available for members in due course.
- 301 schools did not attend the conferences. Additional events have been planned to ensure all schools, including Nursery, Teacher Training and ETI receive the briefing.
- Funding and levels of progression were raised as issues of concern. CCEA continue to raise the funding issue with DE and have started work on the levels of progression.

#### *Other issues*

- PMB Training : Concern was expressed about the quality of training provided. These issues are currently being addressed.
- Communication : DE statutory orders have been posted on the website and support materials have been issued.

Concerns have been expressed regarding the need for better communication in getting the key messages regarding the revised curriculum and how this will be rolled out.

It was agreed that an overall communications strategy be drawn up for discussion at the Curriculum & Assessment Committee before coming forward to Council at a future meeting.

The DE Assessor reported that DE had commissioned an audit of all communications. It was intended to use this as a baseline for those issued to date. Feedback would be presented to the Departmental Board who would discuss with PMB on a way forward.

It was important to communicate the information to principals and parents at the right time and in a clear, concise manner.

Members asked that the following issues be addressed:

- Communication mechanisms for parents and the wider public;
- Multiple levels of communication using innovative methods to be progressed;
- Information should be accessible to all audiences in clearly understood language.

The Chairman asked that in doing so the appropriate procedures were adhered to and protocols checked with the DE to ensure any impediments can be resolved.

It was agreed that the Northern Ireland Teachers Council be added to the list of stakeholders.

*At this point in the meeting the Chairman advised members that following the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong learning Committee update and Review of Specifications item the remainder of the agenda would be deferred to the next meeting of Council.*

## **6 Regulation & Qualifications**

The Chairman welcomed Ms Duffy to the meeting.

*Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Committee report : 15 March 2007*

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

- *Vocational qualifications reform* : Strand 1 : Sector Developments and Strand 2 : Framework Developments were discussed by the committee. Both are highly complex but vital to the success of the overall framework. This would be a standing item on the agenda and all sub-programmes would be discussed by the committee as appropriate.
- *Leitch Review of Skills* : the committee discussed this item at length and the points raised by the committee (Pages 4/5 of the R&QF minutes) would be discussed by the Council in due course.
- *Stretch and Challenge* : the committee received a short presentation on the findings of the main UCAS report.

Members noted the information provided.



- **GCE Review of specifications**

**C/67/6**

The Chairman of the Regulation & Qualifications Committee wished to place on record his thanks to Ms Duffy, her colleagues and members of the sub-committee for the substantial amount of work undertaken throughout this very robust process. All 21 specifications have been approved.

The Chairman of Council added this thanks and congratulations on the way in which the review had been managed and completed within the timeframe.

The Examinations Manager thanked members of the Regulation, Qualification and Lifelong Learning Committee for bringing their expertise and assisting with the process.

Those members of Council who took part in the review commended the officers on the structure and robustness of the process and asked that this be carried forward to the GCSE Review.

### **Recommendation**

Members agreed that the GCE Specifications could proceed to QCA for accreditation on 1 May 2007.

## **8 Any other business**

Mr McKee informed members that appraisal forms would be issued to them for completion in due course.

On behalf of members of Council, Mr McKee the incoming Chairman of CCEA, wished to place on record his thanks to Dr Lennon, who had served as Chairman of CCEA during the past 10 years, for his commitment and determination to turn CCEA into the highly respected and reputable organisation it has become.

Dr Lennon thanked members of Council and his colleagues on the sub-committees for all of the work that had been undertaken and for the support he had been given during his time as Chairman.

## **9 Date of next meeting**

It was confirmed that the next meeting of Council would take place on **Wednesday 20 June 2007 at 1000 hours** in the Boardroom, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, CCEA Offices, Belfast.

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**CHAIRMAN**

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**DATE**

