

Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

COUNCIL

Minutes of the seventy-first meeting of Council held on Wednesday 5 December 2007 at 1030 hours in the Boardroom, 3rd Floor, CCEA, Clarendon Road, BELFAST.

Present :

Mr D McKee (Chairman)	Mr M Bowen
Professor P Roebuck	Ms M Watson
Mr J Wilkinson	Mr J Clarke
Mrs H McClenaghan	Mr D Thompson
Ms P O'Farrell	Mrs D Black
Mr J Collins	Ms C McKinney

Mr N Anderson (Acting Chief Executive)
Mr R Hanna (Pupil Profile Implementation Manager)
Mr R McCune (Qualifications & Skills Accreditation Manager)
Dr C Sproule (Curriculum & Assessment Manager)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr M Brown; Mr N Downing; Dr I McMorris; Ms K Godfrey and Mrs M Cree.

2 Chairman's business

DE Assessor

The Chairman reported that he had written to the Permanent Secretary regarding the decision taken by the DE Assessor not to attend CCEA Council meetings. Members agreed that it had been helpful in the past to seek direction from the DE representative on matters of policy.

The Acting Chief Executive said that he had had a number of meetings with the DE assessor and found her supportive in discussions and accessible when issues had arisen which required direction.

The Chairman confirmed that he had asked for a meeting with the Permanent Secretary to discuss this issue and if necessary to seek alternative arrangements to ensure timely direction is given to Council as appropriate.

Other business

The Chairman congratulated the Acting Chief Executive and staff on winning the UK Quality Award. He reported that he had:

- opened the True Colours GCE Art Exhibition in Omagh College on Monday 19 November 2007. A similar event will take place in Belfast on Monday 28 January 2008 (members have received invitations to this); and
- visited 2 Business Units during November : Examinations Administration and the ACETs team. There would be a presentation of the ACETs work at the Council meeting on 20 March.

Mr R Hanna; Dr C Sproule and Mr R McCune attended the meeting and spoke to various items on the agenda.

Forthcoming events

Members were reminded of invitations issued to the following :

- Top Candidate GCE Events : Wednesday 19 December : 2 ceremonies will be held in the CCEA Conference Hall and will commence at 10 am and 1pm respectively.
- SCORE Music Concert : Friday 18 January 2008 in the Waterfront Hall, 7.30 pm.

NCCA/CCEA Standing Committee

It was agreed that an initial meeting take place early in the New Year. Dates are currently being sourced.

Committee memberships

The Chairman advised members that two Chairs had expressed concern regarding attendance at recent committee meetings. Memberships of all committees would be reviewed together with remits, if appropriate, in the New Year.

Members were asked to contact the Manager of the Council Secretariat outside of the meeting if they wished to move from or join another committee.

Examination Appeal : Tuesday 9 October 2007

Information has been exempted under section 40 (Personal information) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Members noted the information provided.

Ministerial announcement 4 December 2007

The Chairman reported that copies of the Ministerial announcement, 4 December 2007, had been issued to members via e-mail.

Audit & Risk Committee : meeting with officers regarding non-compliance

The Chairman of the Audit & Risk Committee reported that he and another Committee member had met with various officers regarding non-compliant purchase orders. The Committee member paid tribute to the way in which the meeting had been handled and said that officers appreciated the opportunity to give their explanations.

A report will be given to Audit & Risk Committee at its next meeting in January 2008.

3 Minutes of previous meeting held on 11 October 2007

Members asked for the following amendments :

Page 4 : Appeal The Chairman of Council (to be included).

Finance report : pension contributions. It was confirmed that the increased pension contributions had been included in the budget planning up until 2008/09 and the wording changed from 15% and 17% to 15% to 17% respectively.

With regard to project spend, the Acting Chief Executive confirmed that a process had been put in place for internal approval of projects. These would then come forward to the Business Committee and Council for ratification.

A Council member asked if committees could have sight of relevant proposed project to ensure they were relevant and appropriate to the core business. It was agreed that this would be taken on board.

The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that each project had been costed out.

Page 5 : Media : The Chairman of the Assembly Education Committee (to be included).

Subject to these amendments, the minutes of the previous meeting were proposed by Mr J Collins and seconded by Professor P Roebuck as a true and accurate record.

Action points

Information has been exempted under section 36 (Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. In the opinion of the qualified person, disclosure of this information would, or would be likely to, inhibit the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation.

The Acting Chief Executive made members aware that a matter of concern was that increasingly the Council have been asked to respond within tight timescales which do not fall into the schedule of Council and Committee meetings and suggested there was a need to find an additional, acceptable procedure for Council responses to come forward for approval outside of the regular meetings. The Chairman agreed that this was a sensible suggestion and it would be discussed at the next Ad Hoc Committee Meeting.

A Council member asked that both the Department of Education and Department for Employment and Learning be contacted with regard to their timescales and the need for them to be more realistic.

Members sought an assurance that mechanisms had been put in place to ensure that all responses are drafted to the highest possible standards and quality assured before submission and that this situation would not arise in the future. The Acting Chief Executive assured members that this would be the case.

- *Finance & Planning : strong representation to be made regarding the impact pension increases will have on the running of the organisation. :* It was confirmed that the Acting Chief Executive and Finance Manager met with DE in October 2007 in advance of submitting the Operational Plan to discuss these issues. All funding pressures for the current and subsequent financial years have been highlighted.
- *Audit & Risk : convergence with ESA :* it was confirmed that a paper would come forward for discussion at Council on 6 February 2008 following the Audit & Risk Committee Meeting on 17 January 2008.

Members noted the information provided.

4 Learning for Life and Work

- *LFLW Committee report 15 November : minutes attached*

The Chairman of the Committee advised that attendance at the last meeting had been particularly low and welcomed the fact that Committee memberships would be reviewed in the new year.

He reported the committee received an update on current activities within the Employability Programme including the:

- Employability Fest and Best of Fest launch held in May and October 2007 respectively; and
- The extension of the Dungannon/Cookstown initiative to the Coleraine area in partnership with the University of Ulster, the Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise Agency.

Success Through Skills : (on Council agenda). The Chairman of the Committee advised that Michael Maguire, CCEA's Business Person in Residence attended the committee meeting and gave a comprehensive overview of the document and commented from a business perspective.

To ensure Council would have time to consider the response a small working group of committee members was set up to discuss a draft response which was put forward by the Principal Officer, Employability. Views from committee members were sought and the working group drafted the response which has been put forward for Council discussion at this meeting.

Future Events : 800 children through Regional Colleges would participate in a 'taste and see' initiative which would give them a flavour of industry. To date this had proved successful and it was hoped that this would be rolled out during 2008.

Insurance for teacher placements : this issue arose and it was agreed that professional advice be sought in writing to ensure CCEA had a clear position going forward.

The Chairman of Council thanked the Chairman of the Committee for the briefing and drew members' attention to the following point :

'encourage the Acting Chief Executive to press DE hard for the funding required to take forward this work which is at the core of the revised curriculum over the next 15 month period, but in any event the employability team should be kept together'.

He expressed his disappointment and concern if this work was at risk due to budgetary constraints and asked the Acting Chief Executive to make a strong representation to DE to secure funding for this programme particularly in light of the recent Ministerial announcement which stated there was a need to shift more employment into the private sector.

The Acting Chief Executive suggested that formal representation be made in writing to the Department of Education and agreed to take this forward on behalf of the Chairman.

- **Council response to Success through Skills**

C/71/1

The Chairman of Council thanked the Learning for Life and Work Committee for setting up the appropriate mechanisms to ensure that this response was prepared in time for discussion by members at this meeting.

The Principal Officer, Employability highlighted the main issues for discussion in the paper and include the significant role employers have to play in this area. He emphasised the need to :

- embed work related learning into the revised curriculum and for an improved provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance for children; and
- ensure young people have access to impartial, independent advice.

He wished to place on record his thanks to Dr Jim McConnell from the Department of Education for his support and direction in this area of work.

The Chairperson of the Curriculum and Assessment Committee paid tribute to the Principal Officer, Employability on the tremendous amount of work done in this area to date. She informed members that Stranmillis had submitted their response to this document and agreed to share this with the Council.

Information has been exempted under section 22 (Information intended for future publication) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The Chairman of the Audit and Risk Committee asked that the document be carefully quality assured for all grammatical and presentation errors before submission. It was agreed that this would be done.

The Chairman of the Learning for Life and Work Committee asked members to route any comments they wish to be considered to the Manager of the Council Secretariat outside of the meeting. He stressed the importance of the response being inclusive and accepted by all members in order to meet the deadline of 14 December 2007.

The Chairman of Council thanked members for their input into this item.

5 Curriculum and Assessment

• Curriculum & Assessment Committee report : 22 November 2007

The Chairperson of the Curriculum and Assessment Committee drew attention to the minutes which had been provided in advance of the meeting and reported on the following :

Primary Pupil Profile

The committee received an update on the implementation of the primary pupil profile.

- Phase 2 of the training was completed on 22 November, with 37 events and 1400 teachers. Feedback to date has been positive however concerns remain regarding the pressure on computer hardware in 2008 and beyond as the rollout extends to other year groups.
- The first year of statutory computer-based assessment has been successfully implemented and supported and by 2 December 800 schools had received 125,000 assessment outcomes for 21,300 pupils.
- Plans for 2008/09 – Phase 3 of the implementation plan, include support for report writing and face to face training for Year 6 teachers. Information will also be provided at conferences for Principals and assessment co-ordinators.

Pupil Profile Proposals at Key Stage 3

The Committee received proposals for the Pupil Profile at Key Stage 3. The following proposals were accepted :

- Content and format ; and
- Reporting skills and capabilities

The Committee did not accept the proposal that such assessment should not be mandatory and information from these assessments should only be used internally by schools and not shared by parents.

The Committee's views were :

- All information available should be shared with parents
- There was a need for consistency between primary and post-primary (ie. the use of a common assessment tool);
- A range of tools would be available to allow schools to use more than one;
- MidYIS is widely used in post-primary schools at Key Stage 3; and
- If useful it should be made statutory and demonstrate progression from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.

The Chairperson again stressed the need for consistency between the primary and post-primary pupil profile.

Officers were asked to provide more detail and clarification on the issues raised and as a result of this it would be necessary to have a special meeting of the Curriculum and Assessment Committee to discuss these proposals and ensure a steer clear is given on Key Stage 3 and any other issues which require decisions and recommendations from Council, but also to obtain clarity on trialling and implementation for 2008/09.

It was agreed that this would be organised as soon as possible in January 2008.

Irish-medium pupil profile

The Chairperson sought clarification on the current status of the Irish-medium pupil profile. The Acting Chief Executive asked the Pupil Profile Business manager to update Council on developments.

The Pupil Profile Business Manager reported that the mathematics assessments in InCAS were translated in summer for deployment to schools in the autumn term. CCEA completed and quality assured this work 6 weeks ahead of schedule in September. C2K had carried out testing before making it available on the managed service in late November 2007.

Translation was not appropriate for the literacy components of InCAS and the Minister signalled in May that a more appropriate tool would be identified or developed.

Information has been exempted under section 40 (Personal information) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

CCEA has submitted a bid for funding to support this work – the value is £132K until year end and a further £132K in 2008/09. This is a very challenging project with demanding deadlines but if timely approval for funding can be secured, we anticipate having a working prototype in place in September 2008.

CCEA is working closely with the Irish Medium sector throughout, including the Irish Medium Advisory Group and CnaG.

Members noted the information provided.

PMB Update

The Committee received the NFER summary on the evaluation carried out on the implementation of the Revised Curriculum. The ETI evaluation report would come forward to the next meeting of the Committee.

The issue of communication with ITT trainers was raised and PMB we asked to address issues in this area.

- **Key Stage 3 and GCSE**

C/71/2

The Chairperson of the Curriculum & Assessment Committee introduced this item. She reported that the committee recognised the need to seek clarification from both the Department of Education and Department for Employment and Learning on the current status of the 14-19 Strategy and give some direction on the work required in this area for CCEA to take forward.

She asked the Chairman of Council to formally write to both Ministers.

Members agreed that it was important to seek clarification and direction from both Ministers in this area and asked that in doing so include the need for this to be looked at from a Northern Ireland perspective to ensure the needs of the children are catered for.

The Chairman agreed to write to both ministers on this issue and following clarification and direction would meet with the Chair of the Regulation & Qualifications and Curriculum & Assessment Committees to ensure work in this area is covered from all perspectives.

6 Regulation, Qualifications & Lifelong Learning

- **Regulation, Qualification & Lifelong Learning Committee report : 13 November 2007**

Ms P O'Farrell asked that her name be added to the list of attendees for the above meeting.

The Chairman of the Regulation, Qualification and Lifelong Learning Committee agreed that both committees needed a clear steer on the work to be taken forward, in particular the coherence between curriculum, qualifications and learning for life and work.

He reported on the following :

Committee Action plan: to ensure the committee fulfils its remits and deals with priorities from now until convergence with ESA officers have been asked to draw up an action plan to assist the committee in taking this work forward.

Leitch Review: the committee were informed that this was now an 'ongoing process' linked between the Leitch Review and the Northern Ireland Skills Strategy. This will now be a regular agenda item.

Vocational Qualifications Reform: work continues on strands 1 and 2 of the reform.

Functional/essential skills pilot: A pilot has been proposed for essential skills. Members asked for the views of employers; assessing of oral components and suitability for Northern Ireland candidates to be taken into consideration before the pilots would be conducted.

GCSE Specifications Development

- The committee received feedback from the consultation carried out on subject criteria which focussed on controlled assessment. Issues with Modern Languages were expressed and these would be taken back to the working group.
- Approval for the internal GCSE specifications review process was given by the Committee. This process will be a repeat of the GCE review which was very

successful. The deadline for submission of the specification is 31 March 2008, therefore a brief report on this will be given to Council at its meeting on 20 March 2008.

Regulation : CCEA self-assessment report : The committee agreed that this was a useful report and that it now be conducted on a 2-yearly basis.

- **'Stretch and Challenge' within GCE specifications**

C/71/3

The Chairman of the Regulation & Qualifications Committee reported that the committee had discussed the recommendation on removing the Advanced Extension Award (AEAs) examinations in the context of the introduction of 'stretch and challenge' within the A2 units of GCE specifications.

Confirmation was sought on whether consultation had taken place with centres who take these examinations. The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that any changes would be discussed with centres and replacement with the introduction of 'stretch and challenge' well planned to ensure good relationships are maintained.

The recommendation was proposed for acceptance by Mr M Bowen and seconded by Professor P Roebuck.

7 Any other business

None identified by the Secretariat.

8 Date of next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 6 February 2008 at 1000 hours. This meeting would focus on CCEA's Corporate Business.