

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF A BOARD MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY,
16 JANUARY 2003 AT 2.30 PM IN THE BOARD ROOM**

1. PRESENT Mrs M Alexander (Chairman)

Mr P H Aiken	Councillor G A Hatch
Councillor J F Bell	Councillor W J Martin
Councillor P Brannigan	Mr W Mayne
Mrs S R Brownlee	Councillor P P McAleer
Mr M P Campbell	Mrs D A McBride
Alderman F E Crowe	Mrs C M McCaul
Dr P Cunningham	Councillor W J McIlwrath
Mrs M E Donnell	Councillor S McRoberts
Councillor J Feehan	Very Rev L M McVeigh
Mrs S M B Fitzpatrick	Very Rev S Rice
Mrs E Gill	Mr A G Sleator
Councillor I E B Hanna	Rev Canon F D Swann

2. IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs H M McClenaghan, Messrs W Burke, T M Heron, W B Weir, Mrs C Lavery and for part of the meeting Mr P J A McGee.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Rev J Byrne, Mr C Mackin, Mr P C McAleavey, Rev C D McClure, Councillor P McGinn, Councillor B Monteith, Mr J W Saunders and Rev Canon W R Twaddell.

4. MINUTES

The minutes* (B/12/03/3) of the meeting held on 19 December were approved as an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman. Mrs Fitzpatrick said that she had sent an apology which had not been recorded.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

5.1 MILLINGTON NURSERY SCHOOL (11.1)

Mrs McClenaghan explained that the officers were collating details of funded pre-school places throughout Craigavon but that the information was not yet complete and a full report would be made to the next meeting. Mrs Fitzpatrick said that the review of provision would be complete within one week. In reply to a question from Alderman Hatch about the availability of sufficient places throughout the Board's area, Mrs Fitzpatrick said that the average provision outside Belfast had reached 90%. The Chairman observed that the calculation was based on the assumption that many parents were satisfied with part-time places which generally was not the case.

5.2 FINANCIAL ALLOCATION 2003/04 (16)

Mrs McClenaghan explained that the Chairman and she had hoped to have an opportunity to speak to the Minister at an engagement which had been cancelled. The Minister had been asked by letter to agree to a meeting to discuss the financial needs of the Board.

6. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

6.1 NEW YEAR HONOURS

The Board agreed to send congratulations to Mrs C Sloan, Branch Librarian, Newry Branch Library, on her appointment as an Ordinary Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.

(Mrs E Gill entered the meeting at 2.41 pm.)

6.2 NORTH OF ENGLAND CONFERENCE : REPORT

The Chairman referred to papers** (B/1/03/5) prepared by Mr Aiken, Dr Cunningham, Alderman Hatch, Mrs McBride and herself and invited members to ask questions. Alderman Crowe said that he had not prepared a written report but that he found the conference interesting. He had attended a seminar on partnerships and had noted the enthusiasm for exchange visits involving pupils in Warrington and Northern Ireland. Councillor Feehan was concerned at the lack of any indication that the problem of literacy had been discussed and Mrs Fitzpatrick was concerned at the use of the phrase "problem families" rather than "families with problems". Mrs McCaul asked the Chairman to amplify her paper on Phoneme awareness and Mrs Gill was pleased to note Mr Aiken's report on a seminar on citizenship.

Mr Burke said that the conference had been extremely well organised and that he had been impressed by the involvement of a number of young people, both introducing and linking the various sessions and escorting delegates between events. Among the points he had noted was a recognition of teachers' workloads, steps being taken to combat the shortage of teachers in parts of Great Britain and an acknowledgement of the fact that "league tables" of schools were not a valid measure of their performance.

(During the discussion of this item Mrs M E Donnell entered the meeting at 2.47 pm, Mrs S R Brownlee at 2.54 pm and Very Rev L M McVeigh at 3.02 pm.)

6.3 SOD CUTTING CEREMONIES

6.3.1 TANDRAGEE NURSERY SCHOOL

The Chairman reported that she had attended the ceremony when the Mayor of Armagh City and District Council, Councillor Anna Brolly, had formally cut a sod. Mrs McClenaghan said that it had been encouraging to see a good attendance of local Board members and member of Armagh City and District Council.

6.3.2 NEWRY SPECIAL SCHOOL

The Chairman said that this ceremony would take place at 10.00 am on Thursday, 6 March. Invitations to local Board members would be sent from Rathfriland Hill Special School.

6.4 MONEYMORE PRIMARY SCHOOL : OPENING OF COMMUNITY NURSERY UNIT

Mrs McClenaghan reported that she had attended the opening ceremony on 15 January.

7. DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2003-2006 AND OPERATIONAL PLAN 2003-2004

Mrs McClenaghan presented the Plans* (B/1/03/6) and a timetable** (B/1/03/6) and stressed the importance of Board members being satisfied with the contents of the Plans. She called attention to the 6 corporate objectives which had replaced in simpler form the 8 objectives of the previous year.

Mrs McClenaghan drew attention to the paragraph in Section 2 of the Corporate Plan headed "Our Changing World". Mrs McCaul suggested the need for a reference to the fundamental review of special education. Mrs McClenaghan explained that this was more appropriate to the Operational Plan.

It was agreed that the documents should be amended in the following areas:-

In the Corporate Plan under the heading "Our Changing World" insert a reference to valuing children and amplify "customers" to read "customers and the wider community". Under the heading "Government Policy and Legislation" insert references to "Children's Strategy and Commissioner" and "UN Convention for Children". Under the heading "Finance" insert "Reduction and end of European Funding". Under the heading "Society" insert "Citizenship".

In Corporate Objective 2 insert "Citizenship" and in Corporate Objective 6 replace "role" by "roles".

In the Operational Plan under item 6, identify Health and Social Services Boards as key partners in the light of their involvement in the Bookstart Programme. Under items 5 and 11 identify the Board's Pre-School Advisory Group as a key partner. Under item 15 identify Borough and District Councils and Community Organisations as key partners. Under item 21 mention Absenteeism as a key target.

In Corporate Objective 4 Mr Aiken suggested a reference to human resources but Mrs McClenaghan explained why it had not been mentioned.

When Mr Sleator asked if risk management ought to be included in the Operational Plan, Mrs McClenaghan said that each service development plan would involve risk assessment.

Mrs McClenaghan reminded the Board that each of the key partners had been consulted to ensure that they had no objection to being identified as such. She said that she hoped for a good response from teachers; many schools had access to the internet and copies of the Plans would be sent to other schools.

(During the discussion of this item Councillor I E B Hanna left the meeting at 3.28 pm, Councillor P P McAleer left at 3.29 pm, Councillor J Feehan left at 3.36 pm, Councillor W J Martin left at 3.38 pm, Very Rev S Rice left at 3.40 pm and Councillor J F Bell left at 3.48 pm.)

8. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY BILL : RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Mr Burke presented the draft response* (B/1/03/7) and outlined its contents. He said that the Bill contained much to be welcomed but that in a number of aspects it was unclear and that many of its provisions could not be implemented without substantial increased costs. Dr Cunningham referred to the fact that experience in other parts of the country had shown that the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools was not in the interests of all the pupils and Mrs Fitzpatrick believed that voluntary provision for children with special needs should be mentioned.

(Very Rev L M McVeigh left the meeting at 4.04 pm and Mr W Mayne left at 4.06 pm.)

9. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL AS TO PRIMARY (INCLUDING NURSERY) AND SECONDARY EDUCATION NO 180 (THE DRELINCOURT PRIMARY SCHOOL)

Mrs McClenaghan presented the Proposal* (B/1/03/8) and explained that this school had traditionally catered for pupils in P1 to P3. She had consulted with those schools to which P4 pupils would normally have transferred and had also examined the school's financial position. The present enrolment was 19 of whom 9 were in P3. She had met with representatives of the Trustees who had put forward their views that the school provided a good education for younger pupils, that it had an excellent tradition in Armagh for the past 2 centuries and that there was an educational argument for retaining pupils throughout their Key Stage 1 years. She had informed them that she would bring the Proposal to the Board but that it was her duty to advise it of both sides of the argument.

She explained that in a situation of declining enrolment in Armagh even the retention of P4 pupils would give a long term enrolment of no more than 20. She believed that the teaching staff had no recent experience of teaching P4 or of carrying out Key Stage 1 assessments and because of the small numbers they could offer only limited extra curricular activity whereas the controlled school to which most of the pupils normally transferred had a long tradition of successful extra curricular activity. There were costs to the Board in the maintenance of school premises and a school meals kitchen was also in operation. There would be an effect at Armstrong Primary School in that the loss of even 9 pupils could lead to a further teacher redundancy and the present arrangement whereby there were no composite P3/4 classes might have to change. Mr Sleator asked whether or not, in the context of the education available in Armagh, The Drelincourt was viable. Mrs McClenaghan suggested that in view of the interest in Armstrong Primary School which Mr Sleator had recorded it might be wise for him to withdraw from the meeting before a decision was made.

Rev Canon Swann said that while The Drelincourt was an excellent and long established school its continued existence was educationally indefensible. As a representative of the transferors of schools he had a reluctance to see The Drelincourt close but he had concluded that the Board should express reservations about the Proposal which, because of the large number of pupils in P3, would have a significant benefit to the school for one year only. Councillor McRoberts spoke of the excellence of the education traditionally provided in the school and said that the existence of Saints and Scholars Integrated Primary School had been the real cause of the declining enrolments in Armstrong Primary School.

(During this part of the discussion Mrs E Gill and Alderman F E Crowe left the meeting at 4.18 pm and Councillor W J McIlwrath left at 4.24 pm.)

Mr A G Sleator withdrew from the meeting at 4.24 pm.

The Chairman explained that the Board had been given sufficient information for it to publish the Proposal and the options were to publish it without comment or to publish it with comments based on the Chief Executive's report. Alderman Hatch said that there were two sides to the argument and that Councillor McRoberts had explained that the enrolment at Armstrong Primary School had been largely affected by the position of another school. He believed that since many schools had composite P3/4 classes and some saw it as a positive advantage this was not sufficient reason to submit a recommendation to the Department that the Proposal should not be approved. Mrs Donnell said that there was a considerably greater gap between the teaching of P3 and P4 than between any other years and that for this reason she believed that the Board should recommend that the Proposal should not be approved. Alderman Hatch's proposal was seconded by Councillor McRoberts and when the Chairman called for a vote the following votes were cast:-

For	3
Against	7
Abstentions	2

The Chairman declared the motion lost and said that the comments would be submitted to the Department. It was proposed by Mrs Fitzpatrick and agreed that the points made by Councillor McRoberts about the integrated school should be embodied in the comments submitted to the Department.

Mr A G Sleator re-entered the meeting at 4.32 pm.

10. TEACHING APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE : MINUTES

The minutes* (TAC/12/02/9) of the meeting held on 6 December 2002 were noted.

11. MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE : MINUTES

The minutes* (M/12/02/10) of the meeting held on 19 December 2002 were noted.

12. SPECIAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE : MINUTES

The minutes* (SEN/12/02/11) of the meeting held on 19 December 2002 were adopted.

**13. ASSOCIATION OF NORTHERN IRELAND EDUCATION AND LIBRARY
BOARDS - EXECUTIVE COUNCIL : MINUTES**

The minutes* (B/1/02/12) of a meeting held on 4 December 2002 were noted.

The meeting ended at 4.33 pm.

CHAIRMAN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DATE

* Paper circulated

** Paper tabled

17 January 2003
WBW/LMcC