

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF A BOARD MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY,
29 JULY 2004 AT 2.30 PM IN THE BOARD ROOM**

1. PRESENT

Mrs M Alexander (Chairman)

Mr P H Aiken
Councillor P Brannigan
Mrs S R Brownlee
Mr M P Campbell
Alderman F E Crowe
Dr P Cunningham
Mrs M E Donnell

Councillor J Hanna
Mrs C M McCaul
Councillor S McRoberts
Very Rev S Rice
Mr J W Saunders
Rev Canon F D Swann
Rev Canon W R Twaddell

2. IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs H M McClenaghan, Mrs K C Ryan, Messrs W Burke, T M Heron, J F Curran, B O'Hara and Mrs L Davidson.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor J Feehan, Councillor I E B Hanna, Alderman G A Hatch, Mr W Mayne, Councillor P P McAleer, Mrs D A McBride, Rev C D McClure, Very Rev L M McVeigh and Mr A G Sleator.

4. APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS

On the proposal of Rev Canon Swann, seconded by Mr Campbell, the report** (B/7/04/2) prepared by the Human Resources Manager was adopted.

5. MINUTES

In relation to minute 12, Mr Campbell pointed out that he had in fact said "employment of additional music teachers" and not "employment of a music teacher". Subject to this amendment, on the proposal of Rev Canon Swann, seconded by Mrs Brownlee, the minutes* (B/6/04/3) of the meeting held on 17 June were approved as an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

6.1 LMS : COMMON FUNDING FORMULA (7.2)

Mrs McClenaghan reported that no response had been received from the Permanent Secretary.

6.2 TEACHERS' PAYROLL (7.3)

Mrs McClenaghan reported that no response had been received from the Minister.

6.3 REVIEW OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING HANDBOOK : DE LETTER 5 JULY (7.4)

Mrs McClenaghan confirmed that there was a timescale for the provision of all three Handbooks. The completion of the Primary and Special Schools Handbooks was planned for March 2005 while the completion of the Handbook for Post-Primary Schools was not expected until mid 2005 at the earliest. In reply to a question from the Chairman, Mrs McClenaghan confirmed that the Handbooks were normally sent out in draft form and the Board would write to the Department to request that sufficient time be given to the circulation of the draft Handbooks for formal responses to be made.

6.4 STRATEGIC ADVISORY GROUP : REPRESENTATION OF ALL FIVE BOARDS – DE LETTER OF 9 JULY (8.4)

Mrs McClenaghan read from a letter received from the Deputy Permanent Secretary confirming that representation from the Education and Library Boards should be two. She said that she would be making it clear at the next meeting that she would not be representing five Boards or Chief Executives but that she would be much happier attending in a personal capacity. She explained that she could not be sure she would get the Board members' views on issues before going back with responses but would keep Board members acquainted with what was going on.

(Councillor J Hanna entered the meeting at 2.40 pm.)

6.5 RECEIPT OF LETTER FROM NIPSA (NORTHERN IRELAND PUBLIC SERVICE ALLIANCE) (8.5)

Mrs McClenaghan reported that a letter had been received from NIPSA and that no industrial action had taken place. Arrangements were being made for a read-across of job descriptions across five Boards which would hopefully convince NIPSA that the Board's position was correct and sustainable.

7. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

7.1 CONSULTANTS' SELECTION PANEL : MINUTES

As Canon Swann was the only Board member present who had attended the Consultants' Selection Panel, the Chairman asked the Board for permission to implement the decisions contained in the minutes. The minutes** (CSP/7/04/5) of the meeting held on 27 July were noted.

7.2 THIRTY YEARS SERVICE AWARDS

Mrs McClenaghan reported that a further celebratory event would take place at Board Headquarters on Monday 4 October from 7.30 – 9.30 pm for employees with thirty years service. Letters of invitation would be sent to Board members.

8. SCHOOL BUDGETS : LETTER FROM THE MINISTER, MR B GARDINER MP

Mrs McClenaghan presented a letter* (B/7/04/6) from the Minister in response to a meeting held with the Chief Executives on 28 June.

She explained that there were 25 schools falling into the first category which at 31 March 2004 were either underspent by more than 20% or overspent by 20% of their budgets and the objective was to bring them back to 5% within the three-year period. Of these, 8 nursery and 5 primary schools planned for more than 20% of their budgets to be underspent while the remaining 12 primary schools showed deficits of greater than 20%, of which about half were two-teacher schools. Mrs McClenaghan said she would arrange meetings in September for the 4 schools in the controlled sector where it was quite clear that enrolment numbers were so small that budgets could not sustain two teachers and she would report back to the Board in September. Revised three year Business Plans were to be drawn up by 30 September. Any improvements to them would be brought to the September Board meeting.

(Dr P Cunningham entered the meeting at 2.50 pm.)

Mrs McClenaghan reported that 56 schools fall into the category of having underspent or overspent between 5% and 20%.

Councillor J Hanna drew attention to the date of the Minister's letter asking for a response by 30 September when schools are closed during the summer and urged that the Board write to the Minister. The Chairman said that the Board had been lenient in allowing schools to underspend or overspend more than the permitted levels. Mrs McClenaghan advised that at the Chief Executives meeting with the Minister the response date suggested was 1 September but this had now been changed to 30 September as a result of their representations and this should be manageable for schools.

Councillor J Hanna said that the Board did need to respond to the Minister and thought the Board should be moving towards using a rolling budget. He felt that the process was not logical.

Mrs McClenaghan advised that she had invited the Minister to the Board on one of three dates in September and was waiting to hear of his availability.

(Councillor P Brannigan entered the meeting at 3.00 pm.)

Alderman Crowe referred to the way the media totally misrepresented the situation and referred to when LMS was introduced. He believed that the Board had always handled the situation well.

Rev Canon Twaddell expressed concern that the situation in the 4 schools should be handled as sensitively as possible with the Board making an official managed statement. The Chairman felt it was wrong for schools to hear of the Minister's concerns in the local media.

Mrs McCaul asked for a paper for the next Board meeting. She expressed the view that while she had generally no sympathy for schools with large underspends she would be concerned about nursery schools. Mrs McCaul asked about the implications if the Board proceeded with the Minister's recommendations and the implications for the two-teacher schools if the policy of the Board was to retain two-teacher schools.

Mr Campbell referred to the Minister's letter and thought that for some schools the removal of LMS would be the answer and asked if the Board was being asked by the Minister to take a serious look at rationalisation. He felt that this needed to be approached with caution, detail and consideration.

Mrs McClenaghan said there was uncertainty around the situation but there was the prospect of the introduction of the common funding formula. She felt that a sensitive approach was critical and said that more information would be brought to the September Board.

Councillor J Hanna asked about the rolling budget idea and while Mr Heron agreed that this would be a good idea he said that the Department had not advised the Board what the future funding would be. Councillor J Hanna asked if this was an item for a meeting with the Minister and Mr Heron advised that it could be asked for but the process was not in place. The Chairman said that the common funding formula needed to be released first to see what impact it had on schools.

9. PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION : CONSULTATION

The Board noted the document* (B/7/04/7) and Mr Burke referred members to the other three documents which were available at the meeting; a set of maps, one for each Council area and two booklets. He advised the Board that the Sub-Committee had met and had agreed an action plan and he hoped to present a final report to the Board on 21 October. The Department had been asked for an extension of time beyond 15 October in order to make final comments. He further advised that included in the Plan was consultation with nursery schools and principals of schools with nursery classes and a letter would be sent to all primary schools asking them to ensure to respond to consultation. A number of meetings of the Advisory Group have been set up to take this forward.

In reply to a question from Alderman Crowe, Mr Burke said that the Review was not going to have an effect on the allocation of places for the incoming year and that the criteria used this year for access to pre-school needed to be refined. He expected an improvement for next year but until the full Review has taken place access to pre-school would not be clarified. Alderman Crowe stressed the view that it should be an improvement on last year

Councillor J Hanna enquired about the possibility of putting the actual number of places beside the school names or the possibility of combining the maps. Mr Burke advised that too much information would not be clearly displayed.

It was agreed to refer the document to the Pre-School Education Advisory Group and to the Education Committee.

10. INDUSTRIAL TRIBUNAL : REPORT

Mrs McClenaghan presented the report* (B/7/04/8) setting out the background to this item. It was proposed by Alderman Crowe, seconded by Councillor J Hanna and agreed to discuss this item in committee. When the meeting resumed, Mrs McClenaghan reported that the Board had agreed, through its solicitors, to make an offer to resolve this case.

11. WARINGSTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL : REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs McClenaghan explained that as Choir of the Year they have been invited by the BBC to take part in a concert at the Royal Albert Hall on 11 September. In the light of other financial restrictions on the Board, and the previous allocation, it was agreed that £1,000 would be given.

12. THE UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER : REPRESENTATION ON THE COURT

Mrs McClenaghan explained that the Board had been asked to forward a name of a representative of the Board and that Dr Cunningham currently represented the Board. It was proposed by Mr Aiken, seconded by Mrs McCaul, that Dr Cunningham should be reappointed.

13. PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE AS A LEGALLY INDEPENDENT CORPORATE BODY

Mrs McClenaghan presented the paper* (B/7/04/11) explaining the background to this item. The Board agreed to accept the recommendations and to advise DEL accordingly.

14. ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2003/04

Mr Heron presented the draft Annual Accounts 2003/04* (B/7/04/12) and said they were subject to Audit, for completion by the end of October. He explained that they were in a format as prescribed by the Department of Education and the most important Finance document brought to the Board as they contained the true position at the end of the year. He referred to the Statement of Internal Control and the Statement of Board and Chief Executive's Responsibilities which Mrs McClenaghan as Accounting Officer had to sign. He drew attention to the Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31 March 2004, and explained that while in most organisations this page indicated the organisation's financial performance, the Board was different in that it was only allowed to show income to the extent of matching accrued expenditure, except for any movement in provisions or any movement in DCAL.

Therefore the deficit of £236k on the Income and Expenditure Account did not show the full picture. It was necessary to take account of note 5 on page 49 which showed a Funding Commitment of £7381k from the Departments which had not been included as income in the Income and Expenditure Account. This Funding Commitment or End Year Flexibility represented a guaranteed resource which will be added to the Board's approved spending limit in 2004/05.

Mr Heron explained that this Funding Commitment was similar to what was previously known as "carry-over". £4.571m of it related to delegated schools carry-over. £1.646m of it related to the next stage of teacher threshold payments; if employers and unions can agree a scheme for performance by 31 July, this amount will be payable. The remainder of the Funding Commitment mainly consisted of unspent earmarked allocations in relation to asbestos, C2K and furniture and equipment for capital schemes. Mr Heron stated that all of this Funding Commitment of £7.381m was fully committed to these specific areas and the Board had no surplus funds available. He emphasised the very difficult financial outlook which he had outlined at the June Board meeting and stated that while the 2003/04 Annual Accounts demonstrated that the Board had achieved its key financial target of containing expenditure within the accrued limit approved by the Departments, cutbacks will be required to achieve this in the current and future years.

(Rev Canon W R Twaddell left the meeting at 3.35pm.)

Councillor J Hanna expressed concern at the major problems with asbestos when carrying out alterations to buildings when the asbestos surveys are all completed. Mr Heron confirmed that the asbestos carry-over was only in relation to carrying out the surveys.

Councillor J Hanna referred to the new Area Plan and enquired what the true value of the Board's property would be. Mr Heron explained that the Valuation and Lands Agency value the Board's property every 3-5 years and a complete valuation had been carried out last year and the Accounts were based on an indexation of this.

Councillor J Hanna referred to a visit to France and wondered why the Board's primary schools in the countryside were not utilised for events. Mrs McClenaghan said that it was within the competence of Boards of Governors to set letting arrangements and charges for its own property. Councillor J Hanna thought this should be encouraged. The Chairman said that this information was sent out to schools on a regular basis and it was up to schools and Boards of Governors to decide if they wished to let out their premises.

Mr Aiken thought that this issue had been raised as part of the Youth Service Review in the five Boards and when this report comes forward there might be other details to be put on school use in the community.

On the proposal of Very Rev Fr Rice, seconded by Mr Campbell, the Annual Accounts 2003/04 were adopted.

(Alderman F E Crowe left the meeting at 3.50 pm.)

15. WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTS : CONSOLIDATION OFFICER APPOINTMENT – LETTER FROM DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE & PERSONNEL

The Board noted the letter* (B/7/04/13) from the Department of Finance and Personnel.

16. LIBRARY COMMITTEE : MINUTES

16.1 PROPOSED NEW STAFF STRUCTURE (5.2)

Mr Campbell explained that progress has been slow because job evaluation has been one of the contributory factors but further progress made in job evaluations to date will facilitate progress.

16.2 PORTADOWN (6.2)

Mr Campbell explained that what was offered to the Library from the Alexander Walker bequest was his personal reading material.

16.3 REVIEW OF THE ASSESSMENT OF RELATIVE NEEDS FORMULA (ARNE) FOR THE FUNDING OF THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN NORTHERN IRELAND (9)

Mr Campbell drew attention to the issue of funding and expressed concern at £18m spent on consultants' fees and £64m spent during the last four years by the relevant Government Department.

16.4 ANNUAL REPORT 2003-04

Mr Campbell explained that while concern had been expressed at the decrease in book issues, a pleasing factor was the increase in growth of the People's Network with half a million sessions being recorded.

16.5 SERVICE UPDATE

16.5.1 ARMAGH (11.1)

Mr Campbell urged members to visit the AmmA Centre and referred to the technological facilities available to young people. He said it was an excellent Centre and refurbished Library.

On the proposal of Mr Campbell, seconded by Mr Aiken, the minutes* (L/6/04/14) of the meeting held on 22 June were adopted.

17. PREMATURE RETIREMENT ON THE GROUNDS OF VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY

The Board agreed on the proposal of Mr Aiken, seconded by Mr Saunders, to discuss this item in committee. When the meeting resumed Mrs McClenaghan reported that she had given figures in committee. She said that in order for the Library's

restructuring to proceed it was recommended that Mrs M Wall, Team Librarian, Banbridge Branch Library and Mrs M Pender, Co-ordinator, Library Headquarters should be offered voluntary redundancy. Her report was adopted on the proposal of Councillor J Hanna, seconded by Mr Aiken.

Mr Aiken asked about the timescale for restructuring. Mrs Ryan said that until the final issues for job evaluation were complete it was difficult to move forward but she hoped that the first stages would be progressed in August. Mr Aiken referred to the low morale due to the last restructuring and hoped that it would not be a slow process.

18. SERVICES COMMITTEE

18.1 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24 JUNE

Councillor Brannigan drew members' attention to minute 4 in relation to point-to-point microwave radio and said that only four schools in the Board's area had not got broadband.

18.2 SECTION 75, THE NORTHERN IRELAND ACT 1998 (THE EQUALITY DUTIES) : ANNUAL REPORT 1 APRIL 2003 – 31 MARCH 2004 : APPENDIX 5

The Chairman explained that the Report* (B/7/04/16.2) had not been available for the Services Committee but was now available for perusal.

On the proposal of Councillor Brannigan, seconded by Very Rev Fr Rice, the minutes* (S/6/04/16.1) of the meeting held on 24 June were adopted.

19. BEST VALUE COMMITTEE : MINUTES

As Very Rev Fr Rice was the only Board member present who had attended the Best Value Committee, the Chairman asked the Board for permission to implement the decisions contained in the minutes. The minutes* (BV/6/04/17) of the meeting held on 28 June were noted.

20. SPECIAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE : MINUTES

On the proposal of Mrs McCaul, seconded by Mr Campbell, the minutes* (SE/6/04/18) of the meeting held on 17 June were adopted.

21. AUDIT COMMITTEE : MINUTES

The Chairman urged members of the Audit Committee to try to attend future meetings.

Mr Aiken drew attention to minute 6 and to the attached paper (A/06/04/5) and in particular to page 303, and expressed the view that this information could be provided to the Library Committee. This was agreed.

On the proposal of Mrs Donnell, seconded by Mrs McCaul, the minutes* (A/6/04/19) of the meeting held on 17 June were adopted.

22. PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE : MINUTES

On the proposal of Rev Canon Swann, seconded by Councillor Brannigan, the minutes* (B/7/04/20) of the meeting held on 29 June were adopted.

23. TEACHING APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE : MINUTES

The minutes* (TAC/6/04/21.1, TAC/6/04/21.2, TAC/6/04/21.3 and TAC/6/04/21.4) of the meetings held on 11 June, 15 June, 16 June and 29 June were noted.

24. COMMITTEE FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF PERIPATETIC TEACHERS : MINUTES

The minutes* (PT/6/04/22.1, PT/7/04/22.2 and PT/7/04/22.3) of the meetings held on 3 June, 2 July and 19 July were noted.

25. MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE : MINUTES

The minutes* (M/6/04/23) of the meeting held on 17 June were noted.

The meeting ended at 4.10 pm.

CHAIRMAN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DATE

* Paper circulated

** Paper tabled