

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 14 FEBRUARY 2007 AT 2.30 PM IN THE BOARD ROOM

1. PRESENT Very Rev L M McVeigh (Presiding Chairperson)

Mr P H Aiken	Councillor P P McAleer
Councillor P Brannigan	Mrs C M McCaul
Mrs S R Brownlee	Mr A McCreesh
Rev J Byrne	Councillor J McCrum
Mr M P Campbell	Councillor P McGinn
Dr P Cunningham	Rev Canon J McKegney
Councillor B Curran	Councillor S McRoberts
Councillor F Dawson	Councillor B Monteith
Mr P Gildea	Councillor R Mulligan
Councillor I E B Hanna	Professor P Murphy
Councillor R A Harkness	Mr A G Sleator
Dr M Hollinger	Mr J K Twyble
Mr C Mackin	Councillor Dr P A Weir
Mrs M M Magennis	Mrs E Wright
Mr W Mayne	

2. IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs H M McClenaghan, Dr C Mangan, Mrs K Ryan, Messrs R Bullick, T Heron, P Mackey, Mrs L McCall and for part of the meeting Messrs G P Butler and G Doran.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mrs M E Donnell and Councillor J Feehan.

4. APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS

Mrs McClenaghan drew attention to funding arrangements for posts contained within the report. It was proposed by Mrs Wright, seconded by Dr Cunningham, and agreed that the report** (B/2/07/2) prepared by the Head of Human Resources be adopted.

5. BOARD MEETING : MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 10 JANUARY 2007

On the proposal of Councillor Harkness, seconded by Councillor Hanna, the minutes* (B/1/07/3) of the meeting held on 10 January 2007 were approved as an accurate record and were signed by the Chairperson and the Chief Executive.

6. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

6.1 SCHOOL VISITS

Mr Campbell stated that, in the absence of the Chairperson, Mrs McClenaghan and he had visited seven schools in the Banbridge area on 8 February 2007. He had observed that two of the new school facilities required additional temporary accommodation after only a few years and expressed the hope that the issue of allocating ample provision would receive full consideration by the Education and Skills Authority when new schools were being built.

6.2 PRESS RELEASE : EAGLE ANNOUNCES RECORD SCHOOL FUNDING LEVELS

Mrs McClenaghan advised that the Minister, in a press release dated 24 January 2007, had announced a funding allocation of £1.4b for schools and Education and Library Boards for 2007/08. The £25m boost in schools' budgets would increase the average spending per pupil by £112. The Minister had further announced an additional allocation of £16m to the Children & Young People Fund and a provision of £10m direct to schools to develop the Extended Schools Initiative.

(Councillor Curran and Mr Gildea entered the meeting at 2.45 pm.)

Councillor McCrum referred to the significant growth in primary school pupils in the Banbridge area and enquired if Banbridge High School was entitled to be considered for capital development. Mr Butler reported that the Banbridge area was experiencing a 6.7% growth in pupil numbers. He advised that, as part of an overall consideration for schools in the Banbridge area, officers were currently arranging to meet with principals in the area and had sought guidance from DE on development issues.

Dr Cunningham stated that children attending special schools were increasing at a sustained rate and he drew attention to DE's reluctance to extend special schools in light of the ethos of inclusion. He queried whether a case could be made for an additional special school in the Southern Board's area. Mrs McClenaghan advised that the Minister's announcement for capital funding had not yet been released but she undertook to consider this issue with Dr Mangan.

6.3 MUSIC SERVICE : INVITATION TO MUSICAL SHOWCASE

Members noted an invitation** to attend a Musical Showcase concert to be held on Saturday, 3 March 2007 in the Ulster Hall, Belfast.

6.4 YOUNG PERSON WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Mr Mackin queried the Board's position in relation to a case involving a young person with cerebral palsy known to him. Councillor Monteith drew attention to press coverage in the Dungannon area in relation to the Buddy Bear Trust and considered that the Board should issue a press release in support of the school's continuation and the campaign of parents to keep it open. Mrs McClenaghan advised that a child placed in a special provision was required to carry a statement of special educational needs. The Board made that statement on the specialist advice provided by many organisations and with due care being taken in respect of an individual child's need and the issues of those closely associated with the child. Mrs McClenaghan stated that the Board could not declare that one provision was better than any other in general terms. She asked that she would be allowed time to consider the best approach and advised that she would come back to Councillor Monteith on a personal basis on this matter.

Councillor McGinn enquired whether officers informed parents of support agencies that related to cerebral palsy. Dr Mangan stated that cerebral palsy required early medical attention and therefore parents were already involved with a range of medical specialists by school age. She confirmed that Board officers relied heavily on medical advice for this condition in conjunction with the involvement from parents and other professional advice givers.

(Councillor Dr Weir entered the meeting at 3.02 pm.)

Councillor McGinn queried whether a representative from the Buddy Bear Trust could make a presentation to the Board. Mrs McClenaghan stated that this approach would be unadvisable as the Board had to be seen as impartial. She stated that the Children & Young People's Services Committee could give consideration to receiving information in relation to cerebral palsy.

Dr Cunningham stated that he fully endorsed the right of parents to express their preference to attend a specific school. He added that he had yet to observe a child at the Buddy Bear school whose needs could not have been met in one of the Board's special schools.

(Mr Aiken entered the meeting at 3.12 pm.)

8. FINANCE COMMITTEE : MINUTES

Mr Sleator outlined discussion in relation to the Common Funding Formula Consultation 2007/08, expenditure on TSN funding, school financial plans, the capital expenditure report and the favourable year end forecast position on recurrent expenditure. He also drew attention to the DE letter advising the Board of its recurrent allocations for 2007/08 and to the recommendation for the Board to seek to make additional provision in the five areas detailed in the minutes.

Mrs McClenaghan stated that she had attended a most useful meeting with CCMS officers to discuss the apparent disparity of long term sickness absence between the controlled and maintained sectors. She had observed that while the Board had access to information held by DE about teacher sickness, CCMS did not and she had understood that CCMS would seek comparable access. A suggestion of sharing current Board occupational health arrangements with CCMS had been made.

It was proposed by Mr Sleator, seconded by Mrs Wright, and agreed that the minutes* (F/1/07/6) of the meeting held on 26 January 2007 be adopted.

(During discussion of this item, Councillor McAleer left the meeting temporarily at 3.20 pm and re-entered at 3.27 pm, Dr Cunningham and Councillor McGinn left the meeting at 3.23 pm, Mr Mackin left the meeting temporarily at 3.24 pm and Councillor McAleer and Councillor Monteith left the meeting at 3.30 pm.)

9. DE RECURRENT FINANCIAL SCHEME 2007/08

Mr Heron stated that clarification on the additional SEN monies mentioned in the DE allocation 2007/08 letter had still not been received. He therefore advised that the draft Scheme would be presented to the Finance Committee at its meeting on 23 March 2007. In order to assist Members to understand the overall budgetary position for the incoming year Mr Heron drew attention to the paper attached to the Finance Committee minutes (F/1/07/9) outlining the 2007/08% increase for schools by funding authority, the 2007/08% increase for centre by Board, the SELB like for like increase for schools and at centre and the cost pressures facing schools and services for schools.

(Mr Mackin re-entered the meeting at 3.34 pm.)

Mr Heron advised that the DE allocation letter had been presented to the Teachers' Consultative Committees. Both Committees had noted the financial position outlined for schools and had requested that consideration be given to the following areas in addition to those already identified by the Finance Committee:

- Ethnic minority achievement;
- Continuing professional development and substitute cover; and
- Emergency support.

The Board agreed that, in addition to the areas of investment recommended by the Finance Committee, provision could also be accommodated for the three areas identified by the Teachers' Consultative Committees.

Mr Heron advised that indicative figures for school budgets had been posted on the DE website but these figures were being amended in light of changes to census numbers in another Board's area. He hoped to receive confirmation of the revised figures early the following week.

Mr McCreesh received confirmation that the recurrent budget would be presented in detail to the main Committees for consideration.

10. A CONSULTATION ON SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE : A POLICY FOR SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS

10.1 CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Mrs McClenaghan referred to the consultation document* issued on 23 January 2007 and advised that the deadline for responses was 16 April 2007. She spoke to the paper** (B/2/07/8) entitled "The Bain Review" – Realities and Perceptions which set out to highlight some of the realities contained in the main recommendations from the Report on the Independent Strategic Review of Education and to provide clarity on other issues contained in that Report. She urged Members to encourage Governors, Principals and other interested parties to read the Sustainable Schools' Policy document and to respond.

10.2 PROCESS FOR MAKING A RESPONSE

Mrs McClenaghan drew attention to a paper* identifying a process for eliciting the views of representatives of managers and owners of schools across the management spectrum and the dates on which meetings would be taking place across the Board's area for the purposes of discussing the Sustainable Schools' Policy.

The Board agreed that a Working Party of the Board, whose membership would be as set out in the paper, would be established in order to bring a draft response to the Board by 4 April 2007. Mr Campbell commended the Chief Executive on the inclusion of bodies such as Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education and the Governing Bodies Association within the Working Party.

Mrs McClenaghan advised that the views of Governors and Principals would be brought to the first meeting of the Working Party. She outlined tentative dates as 14 March (am), 20 March (pm) and 23 March (pm).

11. CHAIRPERSONS' COMMITTEE : MINUTES

Mrs McCaul presented the minutes* (C/1/07/9) and the response to the RPA Policy Papers which had taken account of comments made by Governors, Principals, Teachers and staff in addition to the views of Members.

(During the presentation of the minutes and response, Councillor Brannigan left the meeting temporarily at 4.05 pm and re-entered at 4.07 pm, Mr McCreesh left the meeting temporarily at 4.07 pm and re-entered at 4.10 pm, Councillor Dr Weir left the meeting temporarily at 4.10 pm and re-entered at 4.19 pm and Councillor Curran left the meeting at 4.20 pm.)

Mrs Ryan referred to Theme 8 : Future of the Schools' Library Service and stated that she would advise against the comment that staff of the School Library Service should be the employees of the Single Library Authority. She considered that should a situation arise in future where significant financial cuts were required this approach would mean that the Public Library Service would be responsible for redundancy costs. Mr Aiken believed that more insight was required into the circumstances and that legal interpretations could safeguard such an action. He requested that further consideration be given to this matter.

Mrs McClenaghan advised that this matter could be referred back to the Library Committee for further consideration and that if any amendment was required to the Response it could subsequently be advised to the RPA Team.

(Councillor McCrum left the meeting temporarily at 4.24 pm and re-entered at 4.30 pm. Mrs Brownlee left the meeting at 4.30 pm.)

Subject to further consideration of the issue concerning the employment structure of staff within the School Library Service, it was proposed by Mrs McCaul, seconded by Councillor McRoberts, and agreed that the minutes* of the meeting held on 17 January 2007 and the contents of the response be adopted.

Mr Twyble stated that copies of the Policy Papers and response should be made available to schools. Mrs McClenaghan confirmed that the documents had been posted on the Board's website.

12. SCHOOLS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE : MINUTES

The Presiding Chairperson advised that minutes 8, 9 and 10 dealing with Development Proposals Nos 196, 213 and 217 would be considered by the Board at its March meeting. He stated that this decision reflected Government advice in relation to public representation prior to Election to the Assembly on 7 March 2007.

Mrs McClenaghan advised that the Board had reached agreement with the owners of the preferred site for Dromore Primary School and that final contracts were being drawn up. She stated that DE had confirmed that it would provide funding for the site.

With the exception of minutes 8, 9 and 10 dealing with Development Proposals Nos 196, 213 and 217, it was proposed by Councillor McRoberts, seconded by Dr Hollinger, and agreed that the minutes* (SS/1/07/10) of the meeting held on 18 January 2007 be adopted.

Mrs McClenaghan advised that an independent facilitator had been charged with carrying out a research project on the Craigavon two-tier system. This development plan would seek to acknowledge the system's strengths and to examine areas for change and improvement. She paid tribute to the principals involved for their enthusiasm in this development plan.

13. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL NO 215 : PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A NEW GRANT MAINTAINED INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE CLOGHER VALLEY AREA

The Presiding Chairperson reported that a letter dated 30 January 2007 had been received advising that the Minister had approved the establishment of a new grant maintained integrated primary school in the Clogher Valley area for an initial period of three years, at the end of which time the position would be reviewed.

Councillor Mulligan enquired as to the criteria applied by DE to fund this school. Mrs McClenaghan stated that approval was conditional upon the school achieving a minimum of 12 primary one pupils in 2007/08. Councillor Mulligan expressed concern in relation to the Minister's decision to approve this school in light of its impact on existing schools in the Clogher Valley and particularly in light of the recommendations arising from the Report on the Independent Strategic Review of Education.

(Mr Twyble left the meeting temporarily at 4.38 pm and re-entered at 4.42 pm.)

14. JOINT EDUCATION COMMITTEE : MINUTES

14.1 RESIGNATION OF REV J BYRNE

Mrs McClenaghan advised that Rev Fr Byrne had resigned from the Education Committee.

14.2 MINUTES

Mr Campbell drew attention to discussion involving Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, the presentation given in relation to the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland, the Entitlement Framework Plans of Work for 2006/07 and minutes of various meetings submitted to the Committee.

Mr Mayne stated that he had raised concern at the Committee in relation to the approach taken by the Extended Schools' Project Management Board in dealing with applications. He referred to the time spent in assessing bids and the urgency to allocate funding.

(Mr Aiken left the meeting temporarily at 4.48 pm and re-entered at 4.51 pm. Mr Gildea left the meeting at 4.51 pm.)

Mr Campbell drew attention to ongoing concerns in relation to remaining quorate during the course of joint Committee meetings. He stated that the WELB / SELB Monitoring Committee would consider this matter at its meeting on 5 March.

It was proposed by Mr Campbell, seconded by Councillor Brannigan, and agreed that the minutes* (E/1/07/12) of the meeting held on 25 January 2007 be adopted.

15. JOINT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEE : MINUTES

Mrs McCaul referred to the recommendations relating to the Kinnego Management Committee, the SELB / WELB summer schemes and the recruitment of two hybrid practitioners arising from the Summary Report of Complex Healthcare Needs of Children in Schools' Working Group.

(During the presentation of the minutes, Professor Murphy left the meeting at 4.54 pm and Rev Canon McKegney left at 5.00 pm.)

The Presiding Chairperson referred to the minute relating to the Special Olympics event and stated that the minute should be amended to read “*She advised that the young people who had participated from the WELB area and the SELB area had received commemorations on the day.*” Subject to this amendment, it was proposed by Mrs McCaul, seconded by Mr Mayne, and agreed that the minutes* (CYPS/1/07/13) of the meeting held on 25 January 2007 be adopted.

(Mrs Wright left the meeting at 5.02 pm.)

16. JOINT YOUTH COMMITTEE : MINUTES

Mr Aiken drew attention to discussion relating to the Volunteers Event and to progress made on the Youth Outreach Initiative within rural areas.

Councillor McRoberts advised that she had been present at the meeting although her attendance had not been recorded. Subject to this amendment, it was proposed by Mr Aiken, seconded by Councillor Dawson, and agreed that the minutes* (Y/1/07/14) of the meeting held on 17 January 2007 be adopted.

(Councillor McRoberts left the meeting at 5.06 pm.)

17. AUDIT COMMITTEE : MINUTES

Mr Sleator commended staff on the Annual Accounts 2005/06 being certified in December 2006. He outlined discussion relating to the Internal Audit Progress Report, the Audit Committee Handbook, the Audit Completion Memorandum 2005/06, the School Audit Programme, the Code of Conduct for Board Members and the Accounts Direction and Statement on Internal Control.

Mr Aiken enquired if the completion of the School Audit Programme was mandatory by Principals and Governors. Mrs McClenaghan confirmed that this was the case and would assist Principals and Governors to ensure enhanced school performance. Mr Twyble advised that the Programme had been well received by the Special and Secondary Teachers’ Consultative Committee. Mr Mackin stated that the Nursery and Primary Teachers’ Consultative Committee had expressed concerns relating to an increase in the workload of teaching principals.

As an issue had been raised in the Code of Conduct for Board Members in relation to the circulation of Audit Committee agenda to all Board Members, consideration was given to circulating agenda of all Committee meetings to all Board Members. It was agreed that only the agenda for the Audit Committee would be circulated to all Board Members.

It was proposed by Mr Sleator, seconded by Mrs McCaul, and agreed that the minutes* (A/1/07/15) of the meeting held on 15 January 2007 be adopted.

18. TEACHERS’ STAFFING COMMITTEE : MINUTES

The minutes* (TSC/11/06/8.1) of the meeting held on 10 January 2007 were noted.

(Councillor Harkness, Mr Mackin and Mr Sleator left the meeting at 5.15 pm.)

19. LIBRARY COMMITTEE

The Chairperson welcomed Ms H Grimes and Mr D Harte, representatives of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA), to the meeting.

19.1 THE LIBRARIES (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 2007 AND EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM : CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Mrs Ryan reported that the Library Committee would consider this document* (B/2/07/17.1) at its meeting on 27 February 2007 and present a response to the Board at its meeting on 14 March 2007.

19.2 2007/08 BOARD EXPENDITURE : PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE

Mrs Ryan presented the letter* (B/2/07/17.2) dated 31 January 2007 advising the Board of its 2007/08 resource allocation for the Public Library Service. She reported that the final allocation had been reduced by £9k which meant that the Library Committee would have to revisit areas of proposed expenditure for 2007/08.

19.3 MINUTES

Mr Aiken referred to the receipt of a letter from a local MLA in relation to proposals for Waringstown Library, to an RPA meeting attended by Mr Mayne, Mrs Ryan and himself with DCAL representatives and to the changes in Library charges effective from 1 April 2007. He stated that the Library Committee had given careful consideration over the last few years to the provision and delivery of quality, fit for purpose Library services which had resulted in the recommendations arising from the Library Service Review and Budget 2007-08 as detailed in the minutes.

With the exception of minute 8 dealing with the Library Service Review and Budget it was proposed by Mr Aiken, seconded by Mr Mayne, and agreed that the minutes* (L/1/07/17.1) of the meeting held on 23 January 2007 be adopted.

Mrs Ryan stated that, in arriving at the eight recommendations within minute 8, the Library Committee had given consideration to the budget, modernisation of the service, managing ad hoc closures of Branch Libraries and pressures on staff. She confirmed that the proposals had been discussed with the Trade Unions and that she had undertaken to provide a copy of the Equality Impact Assessment arising from the recommendation to improve the opening hours at Cookstown and Lurgan Libraries to the Trade Unions. She advised however that this copy had not been furnished to the Trade Unions on account of staff absence and she wished therefore to defer consideration of the first recommendation until this action had been undertaken.

The Presiding Chairperson invited the NIPSA representatives to address the Board.

Mr Harte thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak. He wished to highlight various issues arising from the recommendations as follows:

Item 1: Opening Hours at Lurgan and Cookstown Libraries

Although this item was being deferred NIPSA was opposed to this proposal and would welcome the opportunity to address the Board on this item at a future meeting.

(Mr Twyble left the meeting at 5.30 pm.)

Items 2 & 3: Increase staffing by four FTE staff and reorganise staff rotas

Item 2 - NIPSA welcomed this recommendation and acknowledged the pressures placed on Library staff. It had concerns as to how the additional resources would be utilised to ensure protection of the service and prevent ad hoc closures.

Item 3 - NIPSA had no fundamental objection to item 3 although the detail for individual staff members would be important which would be led by public demand. Other factors to be considered would be family friendly policies and efficiency of the service. NIPSA had concerns in relation to how public demand and opinion would be garnered.

Item 4: Rationalise Mobile Services

Acknowledgement of funding pressures. NIPSA was aware that the cost associated with the removal of the vehicle was in the region of £45k.

Item 5: Close Waringstown Library

NIPSA was opposed to this proposal. It believed that the proposal was to transfer staff to Lurgan Library. NIPSA believed that the funding required to manage a mobile library in Waringstown had not been taken into consideration and requested that a decision on this item be deferred.

Item 6: Reduce Children's Team

Acknowledgement of funding pressures.

Item 7: Reduce Maintenance budget

Acceptance of proposal.

Item 8: Moneymore Library

NIPSA was agreeable to the proposal. Issues to be addressed in the six month review period related to cover for current maternity leave absence, the Board's commitment to promote the Library within the community in that period and how the Board intended to evaluate the results.

Councillor Brannigan requested that consideration be given to the housebound service. He understood that two employees had been made redundant in that service. He considered that a review should be carried out in relation to mobile library coverage and the savings to be effected through the rationalisation of mobile services. Mr Aiken confirmed a review of the mobile library service was to be carried out.

(Councillor Hanna and Councillor Mulligan left the meeting at 5.46 pm.)

It was proposed by Councillor Dawson, seconded by Councillor McCrum, that Waringstown Library would remain open during the first part of 2007-08 and that the situation would be reviewed after six months, in line with the proposal for Moneymore Library.

The Presiding Chairperson called for a vote on the amendment which resulted as follows:

For 3 Against 4 Abstentions 5

The Presiding Chairperson declared the amendment lost. A vote was therefore taken on the substantive motion to close Waringstown Library (item 5) and the other recommendations as follows:

Item 5

It was proposed by Mr Aiken, seconded by Mr Mayne, that Waringstown Library be closed.

For 8 Against 3 Abstention 1

The Presiding Chairperson declared the motion carried.

Items 2 & 3

It was proposed by Mr Aiken, seconded by Mr Mayne, and agreed that staffing would be increased by four FTE staff and staff rotas would be reorganised.

Item 4

It was proposed by Mr Aiken, seconded by Mr Campbell, and agreed that the proposal to rationalise mobile services be adopted.

Item 6

It was proposed by Mr Aiken, seconded by Mr Campbell, and agreed that the proposal to reduce the Children's Team from three members of staff to one be adopted.

Item 7

It was proposed by Mr Aiken, seconded by Mr Campbell, and agreed that the proposal to reduce the maintenance budget be adopted.

Item 8

It was proposed by Mr Aiken, seconded by Mr Campbell, and agreed that the proposal concerning the arrangements for Moneymore Library be adopted.

20. BEST WISHES

The Presiding Chairperson extended the Board's best wishes to Mrs Donnell on a speedy recovery.

The meeting ended at 5.55 pm.

CHAIRPERSON

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DATE

* Paper circulated

** Paper tabled

16 February 2007

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