

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY, 31 MAY 2007 AT 1.00 PM IN THE BOARD ROOM

1. PRESENT Mrs M E Donnell (Chairperson)

Mr P H Aiken	Mrs M M Magennis
Councillor P Brannigan	Mr W Mayne
Mrs S R Brownlee	Mrs C M McCaul
Rev J Byrne	Councillor P P McAleer
Mr M P Campbell	Councillor J McCrum
Dr P Cunningham	Rev Canon J McKegney
Councillor B Curran	Councillor S McRoberts
Councillor F Dawson	Very Rev L M McVeigh
Mr B Doran	Councillor R Mulligan
Councillor J Feehan	Mr A G Sleator
Councillor I E B Hanna	Rev D Somerville
Councillor J Hanna	Mr J K Twyble
Councillor R A Harkness	Mrs E Wright
Mr C Mackin	

2. IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs H M McClenaghan, Dr C Mangan, Mrs K Ryan, Messrs R Bullick, G P Butler, J Curran, P Keating, P Mackey, T Heron, T Murphy and Mrs L McCall. Ms K Godfrey, Ms T McBride and Mr M Gregg attended from DE.

3. WELCOME

The Chairperson welcomed Mrs Caitríona Ruane, the Minister for Education, to the meeting.

4. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr P Gildea, Dr M Hollinger, Councillor B Monteith, Professor P Murphy and Councillor Dr P A Weir.

5. DISCUSSION ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

Members expressed appreciation to the Minister for her attendance. The Minister responded to the following issues as set out below:

1. The future for small rural schools

Mrs Ruane stated that the Bain Report had created great potential for area based planning and collaboration between schools and communities. She stated that the schools' estate required further consideration and demographic trends would be taken on board but would not become a rationale for closing schools. She had great respect for rural schools; however consideration would have to be given to whether the best outcomes for children were provided by a two teacher school or a five teacher school. She stated that all cases would be considered on an individual basis.

2. *A reduction in earmarked funding to ease the administrative burden on schools*

Mrs Ruane stated that she understood the difficulties facing schools in accounting procedures and the additional administrative burdens placed on them. She believed that earmarked funding was necessary in some instances and advised that the Noble Indices would be examined along with objective need. She stated that this issue would receive further consideration.

3. *The need for funding assumptions to be shared with schools at an earlier date*

Mrs Ruane referred to the various models currently used by the educational partners and stated that a more co-ordinated strategic approach would be identified.

4. *The need for planning preparation and assessment time to be built into schedules for teaching principals and the creation of creative and innovative approaches to address such issues, eg employing newly qualified teachers and providing employment to alleviate pressures*

Mrs Ruane drew attention to innovative programmes in Scotland and Wales involving different pathways for teachers and stated that consideration would be given to providing opportunities for teachers and creating flexibility. Mr Campbell commended to the Minister the recommendations contained within the Curran report.

5. *The wide ranging services delivered under the aegis of Children and Young People's Services, the review of special education and the omission of a DE policy paper in this area*

Mrs Ruane advised that the area of special needs was a priority for all the political parties. She drew attention to the importance of the review of special education and stated that the parties would have to find the resources to deal with this area.

6. *The need to create effective links between ESA and local level youth bodies*

Mrs Ruane stated that the role of the youth service and its funding would be explored. She outlined possibilities relating to links with formal education and other types of provision such as youth cafés.

(During discussion Mr Twyble entered the meeting at 2.00 pm.)

6. EDUCATION AND SKILLS AUTHORITY

The document* on the Organisational Design in relation to the second tier structure, as issued by the Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team in May 2007, was considered.

Mrs McClenaghan stated that the document had been issued to the Chief Executives for comment. She advised that, while it was not a consultation document, she had wished the Board to be given the opportunity to consider it. She presented a paper** detailing the views of staff from various sections within the Board in response to the proposed structure.

Members considered the staff response and raised other issues relating to the proposed structure. The Board agreed that the comments raised by Members at the meeting should

be incorporated with the views raised by staff and submitted to the Chief Executive (Designate) of ESA. Mrs McClenaghan advised that comments were required to be submitted by 31 May 2007.

(During discussion of this item Rev Canon McKegney left the meeting at 2.36 pm, Councillors Curran and McAleer left at 2.43 pm, Councillor Feehan left at 2.46 pm and Councillor Mulligan left at 3.10 pm.)

7. BEREAVEMENT

Very Rev Fr McVeigh drew attention to the death of Dr Cunningham's father and extended the Board's sympathy to him and his family circle. It was agreed that Mrs McClenaghan would write to Dr Cunningham to pass on the Board's condolences.

The meeting ended at 3.15 pm.

CHAIRPERSON

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DATE

* Paper circulated

** Paper tabled

1 June 2007

LMcC