

Department of Education and Children

Education Council Meeting Held On 22nd June 2012 at 10.00am At the Professional Development Centre, Santon

Present: The Hon David Anderson, MHK, (opening Chairperson); Mr J Turner, MLC (Chairperson); Mr T Wild, MLC

Mr R Bankes-Jones; Mrs H Bradley; Mrs E Godby; Mrs G Skinner; Mr S Bevan; Mrs M Frankwick; Mrs S Kissack; Mrs T Martin; Mr R Smith; Mrs J Pendree; Mrs B Brereton

Apologies: Mrs L Strickett; Mr D Parnell; Mr R Turton; Mr K Woodford

In

Attendance: Mr S Dobson, Chief Executive Officer; Mr M Barrow, Director of Education; Mr J Gill, Head of Legal and Administrative Services; Mrs J Buss – Secretary

Item	Business	Action
1.	<p>The Minister opened the Meeting by welcoming everyone and introducing himself. He explained the circumstances through which he was now at the Department. The Minister also introduced the two new members from the Legislative Council – Mr Juan Turner, MLC and Mr T Wild, MLC. Mr Anderson went on to advise that he would be at the Department in the interim, until such time as a new Minister was appointed. He also stated that some Agenda items may not be fully discussed until the new Minister was in place. He added that the Department would value feedback from the Members. SD confirmed that some letters had been received already.</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Strickett, Mr Parnell, Mr Turton and Mr Woodford.</p> <p>Mr Turner then took the Chair, as Mr Anderson had to leave to attend another meeting.</p> <p>Minutes of Previous Meeting</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2012 were confirmed, following an amendment to initials used in paragraph 2. The Minutes were then agreed and accepted by those present as a true record.</p>	
2.	<p>Matters arising from the Minutes not shown elsewhere on the Agenda.</p> <p>GS raised the long-standing matter of the canopy at Ballacloan School, which was meant to have been installed during TT week. GS expressed her disappointment. JG advised that the canopy was at the manufacturing stage, but would be installed at the school.</p> <p>SB asked if there had been any progress with regard to centralised purchasing and confirmed that he had written to the former Minister in respect of this. SD replied that in some instances, there had been problems with the quality of the goods supplied. He added that a meeting would be held with the Procurement Officer and he will give feedback on progress at the next meeting. This would be a valid point to take forward at future meetings.</p>	

SB also raised the issue regarding the funding of DASH and the impact this would have on schools. SD confirmed that the former Minister had written to Mr Robertshaw about this, but was not aware of a response. SD said he would follow up on this.

At this point, GK the ICT Adviser, addressed the meeting with regard to changes in technology within schools. He stated that there was high quality delivery of IT in schools, both as a subject itself and also within other subjects, in order to learn these in a more persuasive manner. GK said that they needed to ascertain what is required in the workplace for employment, in order to deliver the correct qualification. There is a greater use of mobile technology in the form of ipads/pods, which require less technical support, thus saving some costs. Primarily looking at secondary schools, but might also consider Years 5 and 6 in primary schools. GK explained that would need to ensure the devices are secure and safe within school and that proper procedures were in place. Looking at the introduction of a scheme whereby parents could rent or purchase a device for daily use, with a two year, no excess, insurance warranty. At the end of two years, there would be an option to buy the device. A specific education insurance package would be arranged at a cost of £14.90 per month. From September 2012, students will be invited to bring their devices into school, subject to usage caveats. The way children learn is changing, so the Department must respond to what is known about how they learn. Link a visual and aural source and move towards individualised learning. GK said that two IT staff members had been working as enablers and facilitators in the secondary schools for the last two years to provide support for these changes. Some members felt that students would also require accurate spelling ability and quality handwriting, so it was all a question of balance. GK concluded by saying that IT would be looking into the logistics and permutations of how all this was going to happen, but if any of the Members had any further comments or questions, could these please be submitted in writing.

3. Budget Up-Date

SD commented that this would be incredibly tight this year and the Department was still looking for ways in which savings could be made. However, he advised that the Special Needs area would be running £250,000 over budget. The former Minister had endeavoured to ensure that the school budgets for the year were protected. None had taken a reduction, unless the school numbers were lower. The budgets for secondary schools were tight, but these had been looked at with the individual Headteachers and each had got slightly higher than anticipated.

4. Questions from the Education Council Members

Mr Turner then proceeded to run through the questions, raised by the members.

Question (1) raised by Mrs G Skinner - *'Teaching staff are due for a pay review in September 2013. Will schools and college be expected to fund this from their budgets? There is concern that if this is the case, this would affect frontline services.'*

- in response, the Finance Director confirmed that the stage one figures are currently being prepared for the 2013-14 budgets, as the basis for review and discussion with Treasury. The pay review figures and their impact will be included in the submissions to Treasury, together with other increases in costs. The Department has in the past and will continue in the future, to seek every opportunity to make it very clear to Treasury the impact of budget cuts on the current and strategic provision in the education service.

In addition, SD also stated that the intake for 2013 would be over 100 students more than the census had suggested. More than likely, the influx would occur in an area which was least able to cope. Need to look at non statutory provision areas to see where savings can be made. If free bus travel for students became no longer acceptable, Mr Turner said he would be interested in feedback from Members with regard to a parental

contribution towards bus fares. SD concluded by stating that the Department would be arguing its corner very hard with Treasury in respect of the budget.

Question (ii) raised by Mrs G Skinner – *'When the Education Council is reappointed later this year, is it the Department's intention to keep the same number of Council Members on school governing bodies?'* – JG advised that the Appointments Commission would be placing an advertisement in the next edition of the Isle of Man Courier. Information packs would be available. The main changes would be: three members for Secondary; one for Primary; two for the Isle of Man College of Further and Higher Education and where possible, the members will represent the area they live in. However the quality of the candidate was more important than the geographical spread. The Council would be made up of 15 members. Financial reasons were taken into consideration in making the changes.

Question (iii) raised by Mrs G Skinner – *'What information is available concerning the consultation with DED etc, with regard to the development of an Education Policy for the future needs of the Island?'* – the Director of Education responded by saying that the Department would need political leadership in place before this issue could be progressed. However, discussions concerning the curriculum had taken place with DED, the Chamber of Commerce and other jurisdictions. He was convinced of the need to develop further the 14 – 16 curriculum, where students don't just need a purely academic route to qualifications. Further to Mr Gove's recent comments on future examinations, the Island might well look to other jurisdictions, whose qualifications are acceptable in the employment market.

Question (iv) raised by Mr R Bankes-Jones – *'Can there be an agreed method for confirming the Education Council Minutes before publication?'* – SD responded that these had been discussed with the former Minister. It was not practical to wait until the next meeting before publishing, as some of the items would be historic. It was agreed that future Minutes would be approved by the Chairman and Members would have five calendar days to respond on matters of fact. The Minutes would be e-mailed out to Members for comment.

Question (v) raised by Mr R Bankes-Jones – *'Is there a timetable for the adoption and implementation of the new Dyslexia Policy that has been out for consultation recently? Given the time and effort that has gone into the creation of this policy, will it be widely distributed, read and properly funded, as it has the potential to improve the self esteem and results of scores, if not hundreds of children, which will be in turn of economic benefit to the Island.'* – the Senior Educational Psychologist (Joyce Monroe) provided a written response as follows. We are on track to be able to roll out the new Dyslexia Policy and Guidance at the end of August, so that it is in place for the start of the new academic years, 2012-2013.

At present the feedback received as a result of the public consultation is being considered, and where possible, changes to the documents are being made to reflect the comments made.

The final draft of the policy will go before the Department in July, in order for it to be accepted ready for the start of the new academic year.

Once accepted, the policy and guidance will be sent (e-mailed) out to all schools, Headteachers and SENCos. It will be placed on the DEC Wiki, along with a notice in the press explaining how it may be accessed by any members of the public. The Manx Dyslexia Association will also put a copy of these documents on its website, so

that any members of the public will be able to download them from there.

SfC recognises that there are training implications from the new policy and a training programme for teachers, teaching assistants and parents, is being put together at present. Over half the schools on the Island have already received basic training, which has covered the rationale behind the new approach and ways to enable the dyslexic learner to access a text-based curriculum. In addition, a presentation was given to all Headteachers in January 2012 to raise awareness of the issues.

SfC will be supporting the schools during the implementation of the new policy and the schools are being consulted at present about the possibilities of the following:

- One visit from specialist EP each term
- Surgeries held once each half term to which teachers/SENCOs can come for advice – these possibly to be held in each secondary school
- Telephone helpline
- Forum on the Wiki

The ICT Department has arranged for Kurzweil 3000 (text-reading software) to be made available for all school laptops and there will be support for the schools from the ICT Department and the 'Sound Learning' organisation (the suppliers of the software) for any difficulties from using this.

Whilst there is no new money within SfC's budget, we are confident that there are sufficient existing resources that can be prioritised to ensure the implementation of this important policy.

Question (vi) raised by Mr R Bankes-Jones – *'Is means testing an option for determining the amount of support offered to pay Higher Education Fees?'* - in response, the Finance Director advised that in the development of policy options, means testing has and will continue to be considered as a policy option in the provision of HE support, both in terms of the maintenance grants and the payment of tuition fees. Data is being obtained from a wide range of sources for strategic financial modelling purposes, which will be undertaken later this year. SD also stated that there was a broader Government issue. The DSC are currently working on samples of household income indicators, with a graduated scale for needs. This would make the application for means testing more sensitive. Fees would be a decision for the new Minister. Postgraduate and students in year 4 would need to find funding via a Loan Scheme. JG advised that discussions had taken place with banks and although the process had taken some time, it was close to final approval. The Government will certify to the Bank that the student is bona fide and the Treasury will guarantee the loan. In the event of a student failing to pay, the debt would become a civil issue against the student.

Question (vii) raised by Mr Bankes-Jones – *'If further damaging cuts are to be forced on the Department of Education and Children by the Treasury and Legislative Council, I suggest one way of maintaining frontline services would be to streamline the Education Improvement Service and have these specialisms led by staff demonstrating good practice within schools.'* – in response, the Finance Director stated that this was a quality assurance and Education Improvement Services issue. MB would be better placed to respond. It does raise the question as to whether the Council members are fully aware of the value of the service and its activities and the importance of independently verified quality assurance. SD stated that the Department would be entering into negotiations with Treasury and would argue the case strongly. Currently, EIS has five Advisers. They are not just a 'local authority',

	<p>but have a Government function to work across Government in other areas. There is no separate/independent Quality Assurance team, so schools depend on EIS for this function. They act in a Policy and Advisory role. Attempts were made to build in a person with expertise, within the schools, but fulfilling two roles had not proved successful. The EIS team however had set up a review team with the Headteachers and the EIS Senior Secondary Adviser sits in with the secondary Headteachers, so there are links. Review and self-review is in place within secondary schools. EIS team also involved in other issues, such as grievance handling, as an officer of the Department with an education background is required in such matters.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Any other Business</p> <p>A Member raised the matter of Out of Catchment requests for primary schools. He felt it was essential that a review was carried out, as some schools have classroom capacity and building space, whilst others are crowded. JG replied that there was a proactive central approach in place and the current system was working well. An Appeal process was also available. Where an Appeal had been overturned, in most instances it was because insufficient information had been submitted in the first place.</p> <p>A Member raised the issue of re-deployment, which sometimes could slow up the process of offering out a vacancy to other teachers on the Island. It was felt that in some cases, school vacancies had been filled by candidates who didn't fit the post. SD responded that over 100 people had been successfully redeployed and this was not a method of dealing with teaching capability issues.</p> <p>JP asked if Garden Party invitations would be sent out to Members. JG said that he would chase this.</p> <p>A member enquired if this would be the last meeting for the Group. JG replied 'no'. He also advised that there would be compulsory induction training for the new members.</p> <p>The date of the next meeting will be circulated with the Minutes when the new Minister is in post.</p> <p>JG advised that requests for tickets for Tynwald Day should be completed and passed to the Secretary at the close of the meeting.</p> <p>JG asked Members to please respond to the NAMA invitations.</p>	
	<p>The meeting ended at 11.55.</p> <p>The date of the next meeting is to be advised.</p>	

Signed
Minister for Education and Children

Date