

## Department of Education and Children

### Education Council Meeting Held On 14<sup>th</sup> December 2012 at 2.00pm At the Professional Development Centre, Santon

**Present:** The Hon Tim Crookall, MHK, (Chairperson); Mr J Turner, MLC

Mr R Bankes-Jones; Mrs G Skinner; Mrs M Frankwick; Mrs T Martin; Mr R Smith; Mrs B Brereton; Mrs L Strickett; Mr R Turton; Mrs P G S Allinson-Cook; Mrs M Mansfield; Mr T Bennion; Mrs F Robinson; Mr G Roberts

**Apologies:** Mr T Wild, MLC; Mr S Bevan; Mrs J Pendree

**In**

**Attendance:** Mr S Dobson, Chief Executive Officer; Mr M Barrow, Director of Education; Mr J Gill, Head of Legal and Administrative Services; Mr J Swindlehurst, Manager Legal and Administrative Services; Mrs J Buss – Secretary; Mr Paul Craine, Co-ordinating Adviser, 11 – 19 Education

Item	Business	Action
1.	<p>The Minister opened the Meeting by welcoming Mr Paul Craine, Co-ordinating Adviser, 11 – 19 Education, who provided a feedback session to Members on the Higher Education Offer on Island and the Vocational Education 14+ Survey. Mr Craine gave a presentation, to explain how the data had been put together. At the end of the presentation, there was a brief Question and Answer session. Mr Craine reminded Members that the consultation had taken place one and a half years ago. Since that time, regular meetings had taken place between DED and DEC. Both Departments were now working jointly on issues.</p> <p>The Minister thanked Mr Craine for his contribution.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2012</b> The Minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2012 were subject to additional clarification on a point.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Matters arising from the Minutes not shown elsewhere on the Agenda.</b> RB-J enquired why the first paragraph on Page 4 had not been published on the website. MB explained that the person could be identified, hence that paragraph was omitted. The Minutes were then agreed and accepted by those present as a true record and signed by the Minister.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Questions from the Education Council Members</b> Question (1) raised by Mrs G Skinner - <i>'As the Minister is to brief Tynwald on the annual review of Student Award Regulations, will he similarly brief the Education Council?'</i> – The Minister responded that there was on-going consultation. Tynwald members could meet with both their constituents and students in order to gain feedback from them. The matter was due for discussion at the session of Tynwald to be held on 15<sup>th</sup> January. The Minister was not able to say whether the budgets would be affected, if pressure leads to a postponement in acceptance of the proposed Regs.</p> <p>Question (ii - a) raised by Mrs G Skinner – <i>'Given the recruitment of teachers is at crises point in the secondary schools, other than the recruitment drive in Belfast for teachers required to start in January, please can the Minister outline the measures of support that have been, or will be put in place for secondary schools?'</i></p>	

(ii – b) raised by Mr S Bevan - *'Can the Minister advise what support the Department is providing to aid the recruitment of teachers in subjects such as English and Maths where there appears to be some difficulty in recruiting?'* – MB responded that there were issues with Maths, English and Science recruitment in Secondary schools, but hopefully the requirements for January were now sorted. He added that there is still a market in Northern Ireland to be tapped, with persons trained within the relevant model. The situation with regard to Work Permits for Secondary school teachers was also being looked into, as good candidates were being lost because of the delays in issuing permits. Other options were also being considered, including looking to capture on-Island graduates and the offering of incentives such as a contribution towards accommodation rental costs. MB also stated that the Secondary Heads were being kept well informed of the situation. The Minister and the MLCs had been visiting schools recently and Work Permits was an issue that was frequently raised. A Member asked that if adequate provisions were made in this regard, would the situation then be acceptable. It was confirmed that as Mr T Wild works in Work Permits also, the message is getting through. A Member also enquired if recruitment opportunities were also being missing, through the placement of 'internal only ads'. MB confirmed that through HR, an exemption from normal Government policy had been obtained in respect of Secondary school teachers.

Question (iii) raised by Mr R Smith – *'What contingency plans are the Department making for the anticipated increase in primary Reception Year numbers from September 2013, in terms of additional resources and attempting to rationalise class numbers?'* – MB advised that a letter had been sent advising parents to register their children. One Member stated that in some cases, parents just turn up with their children on the first day of term. MB said that some Polish speakers had gone out to actively encourage parents to register their children. After Christmas, schools would be asked to 'predict' numbers, in order that the appropriate staffing levels would be in place. MB explained that although not a perfect system, this provided a workable solution, whilst budgets are tight. In the Peel area, where there were several new housing developments, contingency plans had been put in place to deal with any increase in pupil numbers. In response to a Member's question, MB confirmed that Primary school teachers are appointed to the Department and not to the school. SD also confirmed that the pre-school credit returns were being monitored, which could provide a good indication of pupil numbers.

Question (iv) raised by Mr S Bevan – *'Can the dates of the Education Council meetings be agreed at the beginning of each academic year?'* – JG advised these dates as being 22nd Feb 2013; 19<sup>th</sup> July 2013 and 13<sup>th</sup> December 2013, with the meetings taking place at 10.00 am at the Professional Development Centre, Santon.

Question (v) raised by Mr S Bevan – *'Would it be possible for the Education Council to receive a presentation on the work of Services for Children at a future meeting?'* – JG confirmed that this would be possible and Sally Brookes would be contacted to this effect. If there were any particular aspects that are required, these should be advised. SD stated that a Draft Report should be available for the March meeting. Cross Department work had taken place, focussing on the needs of children. The Scottish inspectorate would be coming to the Island in mid-June for the full review. SD said he would contact SB in the interim.

Question (vi) raised by Mr R Bankes-Jones – *'Due to the rigor of the application of the catchment area policy, a number of good well run schools with excellent facilities, will have their intake drop in the coming years by more than 75%. This will lead to movement of staff and near empty facilities where parents want to send their*

	<p><i>children. What is the Department's view and attitude towards this issue?' - The Minister advised that during his visits to schools, every school had mentioned this issue. MB replied that although this was theoretically possible, practically it was not going to happen. In order to make savings and to ensure utilisation of resources as practicably as possible, a micro management approach was being taken. From the 30 appeals that had taken place, only 5 had been overturned, 2 of which were on account of new information coming to light since the original application. A Member asked who sat on the Appeals Panel. It was felt that some Members had not been approached to sit on the Panel. JS explained that a Council Member could not be associated with the schools involved and although some Members had been asked, they had been unavailable on the required date. It was felt that some of the new Members should be invited to sit on the Appeals Panel, in order to gain experience.</i></p>	
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Any other matters of urgent importance</b></p> <p>JG advised that 2 Governors were required for St Mary's RC Primary School. The Members would need to be active members of the Catholic Church. Interested parties were asked to contact JG by e-mail. St Thomas's School also required 2 Governors, who need to be communicative members of the church. Interested parties should again contact JG by e-mail. JG then stated that 5 Council Members would be required to sit on REAC (<b>R</b>eligious <b>E</b>ducation <b>A</b>dvisory <b>C</b>ommittee). The following put their names forward: Fiona Robinson; Tracey Martin; Barbara Brereton; Margaret Mansfield; Roger Bankes-Jones.</p> <p>A Member raised a question as to the safety aspects of transporting pupils in bendy buses. Members were advised that all the necessary safety tests and checks had been carried out on the vehicles. The bendy buses would only be used for certain schools.</p> <p>SD advised Members that rigorous planning had been put in place for the proposed bus strike. Schools would remain open and the safety of children had been prioritised. Following a Risk Assessment, an additional train station – School Hill – and temporary traffic lights and crossing patrol, had been put in place in order that children could get to CRHS safely. SD also said that some start and finish times for schools had had to be altered slightly, in order to fit in with the revised transport arrangements. Electric trams, together with other contingency arrangements, would serve schools in the north of the Island and Sunday Service buses the remaining schools. SD said that up-to-date information could be found on the DCCL, DEC, Government and schools' websites. Children having to use train or tram transportation would be given a safety briefing.</p> <p>SD asked Members to consider for the next meeting, the best way to organise provision for children who have reached 16, in order to broaden vocational and higher education from 2014. SD suggested that Members get together/network informally, in order to come up with a range of ideas.</p> <p>A Member enquired about the circulation of the Minutes. JG responded that as per normal the Minutes would be Drafted and sent out initially to Members for comment, prior to publication on the website.</p>	
	<p>The meeting ended at 3.35 pm.</p>	

Signed .....

Minister for Education and Children

Date .....