

## Department of Education and Children

### Education Council Meeting

Held On 13<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at 10.00 am

At the Professional Development Centre, Santon Old School, Santon

**Present:** The Hon Tim Crookall, MHK, (Chairperson); Mr D Anderson, MHK; Mr G Corkish, MLC

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

**In**

**Attendance:** Professor R Barr, Chief Executive Officer; Mr G Moorcroft, Director of Education; Mr J Gill, Head of Legal and Administrative Services; Mrs J Buss – Acting Secretary

**Apologies:** Mr T Wild, MLC

Item	Business	Action
1.	<p><b>Apologies for Absence</b> These were received from Mr T Wild, MLC</p>	
2.	<p><b>Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014</b> The Minutes were confirmed as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Minister.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Matters arising from the Minutes not shown elsewhere on the Agenda.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Page 5. The Minister said that a recent Safeguarding Board Meeting which had taken place at the Villa Marina had been very successful and was well attended.</li> <li>2. The Minister advised that the Children and Young Person Strategy document would be taken to Tynwald in April. The Minister intended to give a briefing to Members beforehand.</li> <li>3. The Minister said that following the sale of the Nunnery, the Department hoped to work with the purchasers ICT in order to establish a good infrastructure, so students can benefit from this. Both the CEO and the Minister had been to Chester with Mr Vermulen to see if validation and accreditation can be obtained for ICT. The Minister said that things were still at a very early stage. A credible business plan would be essential.</li> </ol>	
4.	<p><b>Post-16 Collaboration</b> GM provided an up-date. He said that so far, things were very positive in terms of both cost saving benefits and opportunities to be gained from collaboration, in the best interest of students. There may be a few travel and timetabling issues to overcome, but the level of co-operation is encouraging. Members felt that the exposure of students to different environments was good preparation for those taking up places at University.</p>	
5.	<p><b>IT Champion</b> GM explained that funding has been offered by DED and members of the business community to joint fund an 'IT Champion' who would work in schools to support the development of IT skills in order to provide students with the exact skills that</p>	

	<p>employers require. The CEO stated that they were trying to be balanced and measured so they can manage the situation, but were still on a journey with this. A Member stated that there was dependence on the private sector investing in their own staff. Another Member stated that if the concept was MICTA led rather than by the Chamber of Commerce, some of the smaller companies could be left by the wayside.</p> <p>The CEO confirmed that the matter had been discussed with Secondary Heads in regard to Adrian Harrison, to see what value had been gained from the role. Coding Clubs currently aid students in writing programmes, with the aim of enhancing a student's choice in Higher Education and offering more opportunities on the Island in the longer term.</p>	
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>SENCO Release time in Primary Schools</b></p> <p>This item had been raised before. GM advised that previously all schools were allocated £3,000 per year to release SENCO's, despite the size of the school and schools which had been amalgamated had been given two amounts. GM explained that they were now using contextual data supplied by Services for Children, which was fed into spreadsheets, so amounts will be distributed as per a school's need from the beginning of the next academic year. For the remainder of 2014-15 academic year, schools will be given one third.</p>	
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Employability Co-ordinator</b></p> <p>GM advised that as Annette Baker, who was the Co-ordinator one day per week, was now the Headteacher at Ramsey Grammar School, the post is currently to be advertised.</p>	
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Questions from Education Council Members</b></p> <p><b>(i)</b> <i>“While the Go Cards are not the responsibility of the DEC, there are still outstanding safeguarding issues regarding the implementation of these cards. Children have been refused travel home after attending after school sporting activities. Is the Department making any moves to address these safeguarding issues with the DOI and if so what can we expect to see in place which will reassure parents who are now reticent to allow their children to participate in after school activities?” (Mary Frankwick)</i></p> <p>JG responded that he had recently met with Bus Vannin and had raised the Member's query at the meeting. He stated that the system had indicated that no children had been refused travel. JG also advised that cut off times had been altered to accommodate children who took part in after school activities. He stated that the schools could ring Bus Vannin direct to have times amended. However as it was still early days there was a learning curve process.</p> <p><b>(ii)</b> <i>“Would the department please provide statistics on the number of out of catchment applications made to each school last year, both initial application and appeals, and indicate the numbers that were successful.” (Fiona Robinson)</i></p> <p>JG distributed OoC statistics. A Member stated that there was a lack of clarity on this issue, as one school in particular was actively recruiting pupils for next year and a nearby nursery was also stating in its Newsletter that places would be available at the school. The Headteacher had been informed that this information is incorrect. It was generally felt that this issue needed to be strengthened within the new Education Bill.</p>	<p><b>GM</b></p>

GM stated that he would pick up these issues with the Headteacher. Exceptions were taken on a 'case by case' basis and that all aspects of applications are taken into consideration.

JG explained that it is the intention to strengthen the Bill along the lines that an application can be refused if it is detrimental to the catchment school. Last year although there were very few Appeals, some important information had only been made available at that time and not detailed in the initial application. Schools have now been allocated their staffing numbers, so decisions can be given on "in catchment predictions". Some decisions are made to relieve pressure on certain schools. Education Council Members are invited to sit on the Appeal Panel (although one Member felt this was selective), providing they are not involved with either the catchment or requested schools. The Panel must be independent.

**(iii)** "Do we know why the draft agreements for the transfer of services ie catering, care taking etc have still not been signed? We are now eight months down the line and there is still confusion." (Barbara Brereton)

The CEO confirmed that these are being actively progressed by Heather Christian at the DEC, in respect of IT, catering, caretaking etc and confirmed that these are in Draft form. Although the DEC is supportive of and has engaged with Shared Services, it is unhappy with any further moves until the Service Level Agreements have been put in place.

A Member stated that there might also be issues with Lettings, as to where monies will go, as one of the High Schools had been informed that all their lettings money for this year would be going to DOI. JG replied that no decision had yet been made so this information was incorrect. The Minister said he would look into this matter to clarify.

TC

The Minister stated that this was not an ideal situation to be in, but it was better not to sign the SLA's until after the Review of Shared Services had taken place, which would possibly be after TT week. It had been envisaged that the introduction of Shared Services would lead to cost savings, but there was concern amongst Members that this is not in fact the case.

A Member also raised a concern in respect of the current standards of catering in schools. The CEO stated that the best nutritional standards need to be maintained and current prevention strategies would indicate this.

**(iv)** "Can the suggestion that wrong suppliers are being paid by Treasury be explored. This should not be happening." (Barbara Brereton)

Members were informed that codings are not working well in Treasury, resulting in a payment going to the wrong supplier (estimated at £50,000) which a school Bursar had had to sort out.

The CEO stated that there had been difficulties and errors were being uncovered as the financial year end approaches, but most of these had now been unpicked. He confirmed however that new codes were going to be implemented. The CEO asked Members to feedback any circumstances as 'facts', so they can be investigated. Currently the DEC is aware of a number of IT issues in schools and these are being addressed constructively with GTS.

**9. Any Other Matters of Urgent Importance**

A Member again raised the issue of the role of the Education Council and if any further thoughts had been given as to how it could be utilised more. JG responded that such details would be built into the new Education Bill, but as an example, Members may be required to assist at Appeals for the National Sports Centre. It was agreed that there should be better ways of using such a good resource.

The CEO suggested that the Director of Estates, Richard Collister, be invited to attend a future meeting to up-date Members on future Capital spending. The CEO stated that he hoped the Council would act as a useful focus group and this session would provide a better perspective of how monies were going to be spent.

**JB**

A Member stated that the Council had previously put forward ideas but had not heard anything more about them. Could some of the suggestions made previously be implemented now? The drafting of the Education Bill would not be completed until the legislative year 2015/16, by which time the term of office for the Members would be up. This being the case, JG stated that the term of office may need to be looked at. A Member suggested a 'staggering' of membership, so that there is not a total collapse of the Council. The Minister said he would look into this. Selection however is made by the Appointments Commission and is therefore out of the DEC's hands. The Appointments Commission is aware that the term of office is up and would begin the recruitment process in June. A Job Description would be provided to them. The Minister said once he had considered an extension to the term of office, there would be another scheduled meeting of the Council before the recruitment process starts.

**TC/JG**

Members were advised that Nursery School leases were being extended for one year. The Tender document was ready and would be going to Treasury on 25<sup>th</sup> March. This would be based on the quality of provision and not costing. Contracts would be for 3 years, with provision to extend for 2 more years, if required.

A Member asked when the new Education Bill would come into force. The Minister advised that there was no date set as yet, although ideally it should be before the next election. It may be that the services of an outside drafter are used.

A Member asked if there was a complaint concerning a medical professional operating a drop-in service out of a school, who should deal with – Education or Health? The response was the GP's practice.

A Member expressed concern about the number of 'Legal High' issues, which were almost at epidemic level. JG stated that he had invited a member of the police force to attend today's meeting, as he had been asked what the views of the police were, but unfortunately no one was able to attend. The CEO stated that he was happy for a briefing session to take place as this was a very serious issue. The following were put forward as suggestions: Drug and Alcohol Service; Mal Keary; DASH; Motivate, to provide the address to Members. It was agreed that an informational training session on the subject of Legal Highs should take place before the next scheduled meeting.

**RB**

The CEO advised that budgets had been set for next year and that the Department would have a slight underspend in this financial year, due to a smaller uptake on Student Awards. He also stated that an increase of 1% on salaries could be absorbed. However some serious challenges lie ahead in terms of a proposed increase in employer NI contributions, so some creative thinking would be required as to how to cope with these challenges.

The CEO also stated that a review of the Music Service in terms of funding, current charging policy etc was being undertaken by Mr Andrew Cole, former Headteacher at Castle Rushen High School. A similar exercise had also recently been carried out by the Youth Service and it was the intention to look at other Department services as well.

A Member enquired if it would be possible to use secondary schools as a venue for Council Meetings. It was felt that there may be logistical difficulties in doing this, eg lack of car parking, but it may be feasible during exam study leave periods.

A Member raised a question over the Jobtrain System. GM replied that there had been initial problems with the programme and that on-line completion of forms by applicants could be onerous, repetitive and often irrelevant to Education. However some modifications had already been made. Members can request access to the system from St Andrew's House.

Before the meeting concluded, JG reminded Members that as the end of the financial year was approaching, all expenses claims needed to be received by 7<sup>th</sup> April latest.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 11.45 pm.

### **Future Meetings**

The dates and times of future meetings of the Education Council are as follows:

Training Session on 'Legal Higs' to be arranged prior to the scheduled June meeting  
10.00 am Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2015  
10.00 am Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015

The Meetings will take place at the Professional Development Centre, Santon.

Signed .....  
Minister for Education and Children

Date .....