

**NOTE OF TWENTIETH MEETING OF THE  
STRATEGIC PLANNING AND POLICY FORUM**

**Thursday 11 February 2016 at 2.00pm**

**EA Offices, Grahamsbridge Road, Dundonald**

**Attendees**

Fiona Hepper	DE	(Chair)
Katrina Godfrey	DE	
La'Verne Montgomery	DE	
Gavin Boyd	EA	
Gregory Butler	EA	
Jim Clarke	CCMS	
Roisin Marshall	NICIE	
Liam O Flannagain	CnaG	
Uel McCrea	CSSC	
Avril Hall-Callaghan	UTU	
Mark Langhammer	ATL	
Harry Greer	NAHT	
Sean Maguire	ASPECT	
Justin McCamphill	NASUWT	
Anne Speed	UNISON	
Elaine Morrison	GMB	
Garth Manderson	DE	(Secretariat)

**Apologies**

Paul Sweeney	DE	
Barry Mulholland	EA	
Shane McCurdy	EA	
Clare Mangan	EA	
Gerry Murphy	INTO	
Helena Macormac	NAHT – Harry Greer in attendance	
Paddy Mackel	NIPSA	
Davy Edmont	UNITE	
John Dawson	GMB – Elaine Morrison in attendance	

**Welcome and introductions**

1. Fiona Hepper welcomed Uel McCrea (CSSC), Roisin Marshall (NICIE) and Liam O Flannagain (CnaG) to their first meeting of the Strategic Forum and thanked Gregory Butler and the EA for hosting the meeting.

## **Minutes of Nineteenth Meeting held on 6 October 2015**

2. The minutes were agreed as an accurate account of the meeting and formally adopted.

### **Update on Future Development of School Staff Work Stream Report**

3. The Minister wrote to Paul Sweeney on 23 November 2015 asking him, as Chair of the Strategic Forum, to relay the Minister's personal thanks to the members of the work stream on the Future Development of School Staff for their insightful report. The Minister's letter was issued to all Forum members on 25 November 2015.
4. In the absence of a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) strategy for non-teaching staff, the Minister understands the Education Authority (EA) is currently looking at the functions and form of the School Development Service (SDS), which will be their main delivery arm when it comes to supporting schools. The Minister will ensure that the EA work closely with his officials to be certain that the service being developed is one that addresses the need for the professional development of the whole school workforce. To this effect, La'Verne Montgomery issued a letter to Gavin Boyd, Interim Chief Executive of the EA on 24 November 2015.

### **Report of the Strategic Forum Working Group on "Inclusion and Prosperity"**

5. Jim Clarke (CCMS), co-chair of the working group, began his report by highlighting his appreciation of the work of Mary McAvoy in the Department and the very assiduous way Mary provided secretarial support to the working group during the process. He also thanked other DE officials who participated in the meetings of the working group and Chris Stewart (DEL) and Nigel Smyth (CBI).
6. Jim Clarke reminded Forum members of the Terms of Reference of the working group, which had four objectives:-
  - To define, in strategic terms, the broad purposes of education for the individual, the economy and society.
  - To consider the effectiveness of current arrangements to this purpose, particularly in relation to competitor countries in these islands and beyond.
  - To reflect on the scope and coherence of Department of Education policies including those related to transfer across key stages, particularly at 11, and make proposals to promote inclusion and prosperity into the future.
  - To make recommendations on future structures and educational provision to deliver improved outcomes for individuals, for society and for the economy.
7. It was confirmed that the report tabled was a draft and therefore subject to change following debate at this meeting.

8. Sean Maguire presented the first part of the draft report headed “System and Effectiveness” (pages 3 to 12) and made the following points:-

### System and Effectiveness

- (a) The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) paper “The Impact of the 1999 Education and Reform in Poland” (2011) highlights the reasons for the impressive rise in reading and mathematics scores in Poland over a six year period from 2000 to 2006. This gives an insight to the effectiveness of system change. Poland is now 9<sup>th</sup> in the world in reading. The clear message emanating from Poland is to postpone the uptake of vocational education until post 15 and then to ensure that the professional and technical studies are delivered in parallel with literacy and numeracy teaching.
- (b) Figures produced in relation to performance at Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) Proficiency Levels – Level 1 and below/Level 5 and 6 confirm the level of underachievement particularly at post-primary level. This is a concern for Northern Ireland because it shows that as a society and an economy, we are neither facilitating the means for young people from all social backgrounds to succeed in and benefit from education and we are not utilising our national resource of talented young people to grow our economy.
- (c) Sir Robert Salisbury, in an address to the Policy Forum for Northern Ireland in December 2015, cited examples of where the achievement gap for Northern Ireland is the widest in Europe. Sir Robert reported that schools in England did not have as poor achievement rates as the lowest achieving schools in Northern Ireland.
- (d) The effect of academic selection at 11, alongside Open Enrolment, is widely accepted as major contributory factors in concentrating lower achieving pupils, often from socially and economically deprived areas, into a small group of 11-16 schools. Gallagher and Smith “The Effects of the Selective System of Secondary Education in NI 2000” states, inter alia, *“This differentiated pattern in Northern Ireland, with a consequent over-representation of low-achieving schools, may be the inevitable consequence of a selective system. Any school system is likely to contain some low achieving schools, but this evidence suggests that a selective system may produce more of these schools”*.
- (e) Low educational achievement leads to low skills base and low wages or unemployment. This is most clearly illustrated in the paper “The Northern Ireland Skills Barometer” by the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) and Ulster University (UU) (2015).
- (f) In England and Northern Ireland the likelihood of being in the top 25% of earners is 15% higher if one’s parents had a tertiary degree (Education at a Glance OECD Indicators 2015). Northern Ireland shows the second largest

difference in likelihood of numeracy proficiency if parents had a tertiary degree, second only to the United States of America.

- (g) The model of education in Finland, which has narrowed educational and social differentials, relies heavily on integrating all social and welfare services into the school system.
  - (h) Teacher education and professional development has been pivotal to the success of those countries that are in the top ten of the OECD tables for high performing education systems.
  - (i) A key question is what steps can the next Programme for Government (PfG) take to reduce the impact of social deprivation on the educational achievement of young people and the subsequent impact on the capabilities of the Northern Ireland economy.
9. Jim Clarke presented the second part of the draft report headed “Scope and Coherence of Policies” (pages 13 to 20) and made the following points:-

#### Scope and Coherence of Policies

- (a) There is the potential to improve pupil outcomes in individual schools but not to “close the gap”, as too many schools exercise their powers to protect the institution rather than meet the needs of the wider community through their control over admissions criteria and a range of other functions.
- (b) There is no legislative requirement to collaborate with other schools or to have any concerns for or interest in the education of young people not enrolled in that school.
- (c) Legislation should require all publicly funded schools to engage fully in processes such as a revised area planning process and in so doing take into account the impact on other schools in the area and/or pupils living in the area not enrolled in that school, when proposing to make changes to the enrolment number, admission criteria, physical capacity or curriculum offer.
- (d) Funding, in policy terms, should be to facilitate the raising of standards for all children and young people through a disproportionate spend to those in greater need in order that every child is supported to achieve their potential.
- (e) The Sustainable Schools Policy was based upon the Bain recommendations but these did not consider the “Entitlement Framework”, which was not in legislation at the time of development. The policies of Sustainable Schools and Funding are in many respects not sufficiently aligned.
- (f) Area planning policy needs to be redrafted to be more specific in its goals and to give prominence to accessing the curriculum either in the host school or through a more structured and formalised range of delivery models under Area Learning Communities (ALC) arrangements.

- (g) The formal school leaving age should be raised to 19 to ensure that all young people who wish to continue in full-time education should be able to do so.
- (h) The Minister's Teacher Professional Learning Strategy is eagerly awaited.
- (i) The importance of collaboration was highlighted and work following an "Area-based Inspection in 2010" by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in West Belfast was held up as a good example.
- (j) The recommendations on pages 21 to 24 of the draft report are a reflection of what is examined in the paper. The paper is intended to give only a snapshot of the high level policy inconsistencies and incoherence in a selected range of policies with a view to constructively addressing this situation.

10. The Chair thanks Jim and Sean for their oral presentations and invited members present to comment on the draft paper. Comments included:-

Mark Langhammer (ATL)

- Made reference to the Apprenticeship Scheme which is due to come in and the work being taken forward by both the Further Education Colleges and the Universities. He also made reference to a QUB report on the influence of parity on achievement.

Avril Hall-Callaghan (UTU)

- Made reference to Governance models.

Katrina Godfrey (DE)

- Priorities for the immediate future need to be identified.
- The need to get children to Level 2 before leaving school to use Apprenticeship Scheme.
- The importance of the destinations of our young people.

Gavin Boyd (EA)

- Congratulated working group members on a very good report.
- Referred to a major campaign to discredit PISA.
- The importance of educational achievement to economic development is the big message.
- The serious need to up-skill.
- Concerned about the argument that grammar school provision and selection improves social mobility. Evidence says it is not the case.
- We are not meeting the needs of the economy.
- Sensitive to how the report is presented. He cannot endorse until the EA membership see it.
- The EA experience on area based planning would be worth considering further. Mr Boyd, along with Gregory Butler, offered to sit down with Jim Clarke to discuss this issue.

### Anne Speed (UNISON)

- The need for Boards of Governors to engage with the business community.
- The education system in Northern Ireland needs to be the subject of human rights consideration.
- We need to be careful with how we treat small schools.

### Fiona Hepper (DE)

- Asked La'Verne Montgomery to circulate the draft report to Directors in DE for comment. Jim Clarke said he would welcome comments from DE Directors
- Circa 41 recommendations too many. There is a need to prioritise with two or three big points being the driver.

11. The Chair again thanked Jim Clarke and Sean Maguire for their presentations and asked for any further written comments to be sent to Jim Clarke by close of play Friday 19 February 2016.

### **Any Other Notified Business**

12. Katrina Godfrey reported that the Children's and Young People's function will transfer from OFMDFM to DE in May 2016, creating a new Department of Education.

### **Venue of next meeting**

13. The next meeting was subsequently arranged for Tuesday 5 April 2016 at 2pm. Justin McCamphill offered to host the meeting at NASUWT HQ, Ben Madigan House, Edgewater Office Park, Edgewater Road, Belfast BT3 9JQ.