

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

TUESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2013 AT 2PM

NEELB HEADQUARTERS, ANTRIM BOARD CENTRE

Attendees

Paul Sweeney	DE	(Chair)
Gavin Boyd	ESAIT	
La'Verne Montgomery	DE	
Shane McCurdy	NEELB	
Gregory Butler	SEELB	
Barry Mulholland	WELB	
Jim Clarke	CCMS	
Olwen Griffith	NICIE	(for Noreen Campbell)
Seamus Searson	NASUWT	
Sean Maguire	ASPECT	
Avril Hall-Callaghan	UTU	
Fern Turner	NAHT	
Gerry Murphy	INTO	
Mark Langhammer	ATL	
Peter McMurray	GMB	(for John Dawson)
Anne Speed	UNISON	
Paddy Mackel	NIPSA	
Terry Murphy	CCMS	(Work stream Chair)
John Curran	SELB	(Work stream Chair)
Kathryn Menary	DE	(Secretariat)

Apologies

Clare Mangan	BELB
Tony Murphy	SELB
Micheál Ó Duibh	CnaG
Noreen Campbell	NICIE
John Dawson	GMB
John McGrath	DE

1. Welcome

1.1 Paul Sweeney, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Shane for hosting. He noted apologies, highlighting Tony Murphy's imminent retirement and welcomed those representing colleagues and those attending in their role as work stream chairs. Paul acknowledged the tremendous work undertaken by member organisations over the summer months through the three work streams.

2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting (4 June 2013) were agreed as an accurate account of the meeting and formally adopted. Paul queried whether any requests for sight of minutes had been received from non-members and secretariat confirmed no requests had been received however a new section on the DE website provided

information on the Forum and its work streams including Terms of Reference, notes of meetings and work stream reports.

GTCNI Membership of Forum

2.2 Turning to the action points from the last meeting, Paul reported that he had taken the opportunity, on behalf of Forum, to seek a rationale from GTCNI on the request for membership. Carmel Gallagher's (Registrar) response had been circulated to members in advance. ETUG had been considering the issue and Paul asked Paddy, as Vice-chair (in Seamus' absence), to update the group on thoughts. Paddy advised that ETUG had concluded that, on balance, it was not supportive of the request and believed that the issues that GTCNI could be involved in could be taken forward through their engagement with work streams as appropriate. GTCNI should not be offered full membership as they were not employers.

2.3 Barry declared an interest as a member of the GTCNI Executive, noting that there had always been an ELB Chief Executive on the GTCNI Executive and he currently held that position. He advised that this did not exempt other CEOs from expressing their opinion on the matter. Paul queried whether there was a broad consensus not to invite GTCNI to join Forum and instead to offer ongoing engagement through the work streams as appropriate. In the absence of objections Paul advised that he would formally convey the Forum's decision to GTCNI.

Action 1: GTCNI to be advised of decision re: Forum Membership (DE)

Cyber Safety in Schools

2.4 Paul noted that under AONB at the last meeting, Seamus had raised the issue of cyber safety. Whilst this was not an issue for Forum to delve into in detail, the discussion brought important issues to the fore which Gavin and Barry were to consider in their respective roles. Barry tabled a short paper which set out the security and protections built into the C2K system as part of the new contract which also enforced the provider to ensure that any arising security issues were dealt with. It was agreed that the paper would be circulated electronically to members.

Action 2: C2K Paper to be electronically circulated (Secretariat)

2.5 It was noted that the points that Seamus had raised would be considered at the forthcoming meeting of the ICT Project Board. Seamus suggested the establishment of a think tank to consider the many varied wider issues such as pupils bringing their own ICT (iPads/mobile phones) into the classroom. Barry commented that it was important to separate cyber security issues and other policy related issues which should be considered by JWP. Avril noted that there were other wider issues such as social networking, noting that this was also for JWP to consider. Barry agreed noting that cyber bullying was a further issue.

2.6 A lengthy discussion ensued, which concluded that there were 3 main issues:

- Cyber security
- Specific issues relating to the Elluminate software package
- Wider ICT issues

2.7 Cyber security was dealt with within Barry's paper. The Elluminate product was a form of Video Conferencing (VC) facility which could be used for one-to-one teaching with pupils requiring home tuition for example, classroom-to-classroom

engagement or school-to-school perhaps to share a specialist teacher or programme. A pressure group 'Elluminate our lives' (a group of concerned parents whose children could have benefitted from the software) had been campaigning for the software to be more widely used. Elluminate was currently being piloted by a number of teachers mainly involving older pupils and mostly for home tuition and feedback had been very positive. The issue was now on the JWP agenda and discussions would consider the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the system. For example it provided a helpful new way of reaching pupils who could not attend school or pupils in EOTAS provision however there were concerns about its impact on jobs and about appropriateness for all pupils for example those with Aspergers due to fears that its use could further isolate a child.

2.8 A circular had issued the previous day providing advice on how this product could be used and pointing to the availability of further training. Union members raised concern that they were unsighted and it was agreed this would be circulated electronically. It was also agreed that non-teaching unions had an interest in this issue to represent other adults in the classroom and a method for this engagement would be agreed during the opening JWP discussions. Gavin was asked to reflect on the ToR/membership of the ESAIT strategic group to determine if this group was best placed to identify the wider ICT strategic issues and consider actions required.

Action 3: Circular to be issued to members (Secretariat)

Action 4: ICT Strategic Group to consider role (ESAIT)

2.9 Paddy referred to para 4.5 of the minutes of the last meeting regarding the new School Development Service (SDS). He advised that TUS needed to be engaged in the process of establishing this service, noting that when unions met with John McGrath last winter, further engagement had been promised. Paddy added that he understood this particular service was to be developed in advance of the establishment of ESA and it was vital that TUS was consulted on draft models etc. Paul advised that Gavin was leading on this work.

2.10 Paul provided a short update on the progression of the ESA Bill, noting that the issues were of a political nature in which officials had no remit. The Minister had given officials directions on amendments to be made to the Bill (the key contact for this was Chris Stewart) and the Minister would bring a paper to the Executive at the earliest opportunity to seek agreement to bring the Bill to Consideration Stage.

2.11 Gerry referred to Action 4 of the last minutes regarding a request for TUS representation on the Area Based Planning Steering Group. Paul advised that a number of groups had sought representation and the Minister was considering.

3. Budget/ Common Funding Scheme (CFS) Work stream Update

3.1 Paul invited Seamus Searson to provide an update as Chair of the Budget/CFS work stream. Seamus commended work stream members noting that they had all entered into discussions in good faith on behalf of the Forum and attended meetings diligently. If one message could be passed to the Minister it should be that the group have given careful consideration to the issues and have established an agreed response to the consultation.

3.2 Seamus summarised work to date, noting that the work stream previously met with Sir Robert Salisbury's panel and submitted initial views to the Minister when the independent review was first published. The group met again after the release of the Minister's statement/consultation on the proposed way forward for the CFS. Members were pleased to note that the Minister had taken into account many of the issues raised in their initial response and therefore the work stream did not have any major issues with the consultation document. Members felt that there was value in the breakup of the formula and the work stream's draft consultation response (which was with work stream members for final comment) was generally supportive with only a few additional comments. When signed off by work stream members, it was agreed that it would be circulated to Forum members electronically providing an opportunity for comment prior to the 18 October submission deadline. Unless there were any major objections, the response would be submitted to DE. Seamus added his thanks to DE officials for their support at work stream meetings.

3.3 Gavin commented that the submission of a work stream response did not prevent individual Forum members from submitting their own response to the consultation and Seamus agreed that this was very clear. Answering a query from Paddy, La'Verne explained that in a case where collective agreement was reached except for one or two points in a paper, the Minister would be presented with the paper and officials would highlight any issues/comments that particular member organisation(s) could not stand over.

3.4 Paul thanked Seamus and work stream members for their continued work on this issue commenting that the group would reconvene as necessary to examine wider education budget issues. Paul noted that 2014/15 was the final CSR year and the Executive would soon be anticipating budgets for future years. The Forum would have significant input into DE's argument for a budget of at least the same value if not more. This might be revisited at the December meeting if there is any broad agreement at that stage on how budgetary issues would be taken forward.

4. School Workforce Review (SWR) Work stream Update

4.1 Paul invited John Curran (Chair) to update Forum on the progress of the work stream. John provided an overview of discussions to date, circulating a synopsis of the main issues raised at the groups' last meeting in August. He highlighted a report by Professor Peter Blatchford of the Institute of Education at the University of London regarding the deployment of Teaching Assistants (TAs). Whilst generally positive about the use of TAs, the report found that the more support children received, the less progress they made, highlighting issues where the TA acted as a buffer between the teacher and the child. Group members had also referenced an increase in the number of disputes between classroom assistants and teachers. Both issues pointed to the need for teacher training in the management of TAs and other staff in the classroom.

4.2 The report would also reference ongoing discussions regarding protection arrangements for support staff affected by school reorganisation. Discussions had also covered curriculum issues such as the introduction of a facility for sharing specialist teachers between schools introducing greater flexibility. This highlighted the difficulties the competitive environment here created. The group also believed it would be helpful to extend the Entitlement Framework into primary schools.

4.3 The work stream had examined systems elsewhere including Finland (on which there was a 4-part documentary on YouTube), where there was no Boards of Governors (BoGs) and the Inspectorate had been abolished. The group believed there could be merit in increasing staff representation on BoGs and upskilling BoGs. In general, the group felt strongly that political leaders must be encouraged to reach a consensus on issues that impacted on education in the best interests of the children. Paul thanked John for a comprehensive update and asked if other members had anything to add.

4.4 Fern commented that management training was required not only for teachers but for other school staff and should focus not only on managing people, but managing finances and systems. From ITE onwards, more operational guidance for teachers was required. Avril agreed commenting that management issues were not considered when DE began mainstreaming children with SEN. She advised that the NITC had submitted a paper to the group which should assist. Mark noted that a common strain throughout that paper was the need to further consider managed autonomy. If primary school A had a good music teacher, they should be shared with nearby primary schools B and C. In addition, secondments / CPD type placements would be very important but could not be achieved under managed autonomy. He added that the unions had visited Scotland and felt that the system created better consensus with less tension – all of the fundamentals were agreed.

4.5 Jim suggested that improving the quality of education might be assisted by a strategic review of the terms of service for teachers and classroom assistants as there was a degree of uncertainty about roles. He stated a belief that managed autonomy was a positive and progressive feature of schools however there was a need to broaden understanding of Area Based Planning to deal with the education / curricular needs of pupils. Technology would also play a massive part of the future and the workforce needed to adjust to that and deal with associated risks. Gerry commented that a review of staff terms and conditions was only one step - the main issue was that the driver of the current system was competition. Fern commented that ESA as a single employer would have at least resulted in one pool of staff. Barry agreed there were around continuing with a system that sponsored competitiveness and noted that if Maggie Taggart was correct then each school becoming their own employer could further add to this issue.

4.6 La'Verne commented that it was clear some wide ranging discussions had taken place and it would be important to ensure that the work stream's Terms of Reference were covered in bringing forward recommendations for wider review. She advised that the governance issue had arisen at the first meeting of the Leadership work stream and members had acknowledged the potential need for a separate work stream on this issue rather than diluting their focus. Paddy agreed it would be difficult to distill down thinking as many issues were inter-related. He advised that relationship issues was a clear theme, noting that his members were not viewed as equal in a school and there was a fundamental issue around how people are treated.

4.7 It was noted that the purpose of the 15 November submission deadline was to provide 2 weeks for Forum to consider work stream papers prior to the 3 December meeting. Seamus commented that it would be better to get it right, if necessary

initial reports could simply make recommendations for future work. John agreed that initial work might result in a rolling programme of more in-depth studies. Paul noted that some media reports indicated greater managed autonomy which could lead to greater competition; however the focus of ESA was on quality education creating the framework to deal with the issues identified. Gavin added that it was vital to reach a consensus on what good quality education looks like – a lot was already in place. Need to deal with the issues in the world we are in. Paul added that it would be better to identify some bread and butter issues that could make a real difference.

5. Leadership in Schools Work stream Update

5.1 Paul invited Terry Murphy (Chair) to update Forum on the progress of the work stream. Terry advised that since its inaugural meeting on 22 May, the group had been fortunate to have numerous fruitful meetings, including a series of learning seminars with various key stakeholders including the ETI, RTU and GTCNI who had been given a brief to focus their presentations on the work stream's set objectives. Nominated representatives were also currently consulting with each of the 5 HEIs and would report back to the full group shortly. A wide range of research papers (local, international and global) had been considered and members were tasked with pulling out key points of relevance to the work stream's objectives.

5.2 Terry advised that the key emerging issues to date were:

- Need for a competency framework from early ITE throughout careers;
- Importance of multiple pathways and need for accreditation;
- Funding issues – the need for free CPD / courses provided by HEIs;
- Where or how CPD should take place e.g. secondments, mentoring etc.
- Need to ensure that development opportunities create more effective leaders;
- Need to free up leaders to focus on leadership issues around learning; and
- Need to identify leaders at an early point in their career and move them through pathways effectively.

5.3 Terry advised that a workshop with Principals and Vice-principals had been arranged for 12 September. Smaller phased groups would have discussions in the morning and nominate one person to report back to the work stream in the afternoon, enabling engagement with a fairly large number of school leaders. In addition, in the last week of September, the group planned to bring over Professor Peter Earley from the Institute of Education, University of London to provide an international perspective on school leadership issues. There was a potential for both work streams to benefit from this presentation. Meetings were scheduled for 7 and 26 October to bring together the information gathered and prepare a paper to present to Forum in good time for the 15 November deadline.

5.4 Sean commented on the restrictiveness of current leadership pathways and the level of diversity between them. HEI programmes focused mainly on research and the PQH route was aimed at gaining practical experience – in reality a combination of both was required. More cooperation between schools was required to develop leaders and many small things could be actioned quickly to make a real difference. Jim urged caution to view leadership as something that should be challenged but also must be supported. The current system often brought young inexperienced leaders into the most challenging roles. Recruitment methods must be given due consideration. Jim commented that funding must be directed into this

area or training would be driven by what was currently already available. He added that practice based experience, such as acting-up into a principal role, should form part of the training. He added that it would be helpful to draw together the two work stream reports to determine what future work/actions should be taken.

5.5 John suggested that secondments could help to break down barriers in the system including secondments to schools, ESA, DE or ETI. Fern advised there was an issue with how to assess effective leadership through the value added. If a challenging school is seen to be failing due to poor results, why would a credible leader risk their career by going into that environment. It was important to be realistic about tasks set, outcomes, how these are assessed and how leaders are rewarded and acknowledged. Barry noted that the same issues had been raised for years but employers had never seen proposals on how this could be addressed. There was a need for creative approaches and proposals offering something new.

5.6 Gavin commented on the need for a combination of both good quality development and experience and to consider whether this should be self-funded or funded from the centre given the competitive nature of HEIs. The challenge would be around what could be done to address the issues raised. Gerry commented that football scouts selected premiership players at an early age – there was a need for early identification and development of potential leaders. Gavin added that other systems directed people down the management/administration route much earlier, after three years of teaching; however care should be taken to cherish and retain successful teachers. Anne commented on the need to pursue good leadership traits in all staff. Avril added that everyone had a role - the Employing Authorities needed to identify good practice, BoGs need to choose the right people etc.

5.7 Paul advised that he was engaging with NAHT on leadership issues on 10 September and was struck by the points made about moving forwards and focusing on what a product might look like. It would be most useful if the critical thinking of the two work streams could be converted into product – an identification of practical actions that could be taken. Terry advised that his work stream intended to develop a set of recommendations stating the actions that should be taken. It was agreed that, whilst there was no set template for work stream reports to follow, it would be most helpful if concluding recommendations included action points. Paul asked that the work streams endeavour to have their agreed reports ready at least a week in advance of 3 December to provide Forum members with sufficient time to read and consider.

6. Any Other Notified Business

6.1 There was no other notified business.

7. Venue for next meeting

7.1 The next meeting was scheduled for 2pm, 3 December. Gavin offered to host the meeting at Forestview. It was agreed that, given the substantial agenda, the meeting would commence at the earlier time of 1.15pm, with a light lunch from 1pm. The meeting closed at 4.20pm.