MINUTES OF DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENTAL BOARD
Thursday 29 August 2019
New Building Conference Room, Rathgael House

Attendees:
Derek Baker (Chair)
Noelle Buick
John Smith
Gary Fair
Sarah Wilson (NICS HR)
Joan McEwan
Fiona Keenan

In attendance:
Bryan Laverty (Board Secretary)
Paul Wickens & Iggy O’Doherty – Item 3
Derek Kennedy – Item 4
Michelle Anderson & Brendan McLernon – Item 5
Mark Mawhinney & Andrew Webb – Item 8
Sheelagh McBratney – Observer
Angela Morrison - Observer

Apologies:
Fiona Hepper

Cyber Framework Presentation

Paul Wickens, CEO of Enterprise Shared Services & Iggy O’Doherty, Chief Strategy Officer, DoF, provided an update to the Board on cyber security within the NICS, within the context of the NICS ICT Strategy 2017-2021. They explained the current level of cyber threats and outlined the NICS response within the NI Strategic Framework for Action.

They brought to the attention of the Board the National Cyber Security Centre’s ‘Cyber security toolkit for Boards’ which will assist Boards in understanding threats; collaborating with suppliers and partners; and planning a response to a cyber incident.

The Board agreed that the toolkit will be invaluable in helping the Department to approach this area systematically.

Agile Working

Derek Kennedy, SIB, provided the Board with a presentation on the background to, behavioural changes involved in and objectives of Agile working.
The Board noted the presentation and agreed that communication to staff around Agile working will need to be handled carefully, taking into account the points discussed about the ongoing accommodation project.

DE Board Effectiveness Review

Michelle Anderson, Group Head of Internal Audit and Fraud Investigation Services, and Brendan McLernon provided the Board with a presentation on the background to and outcomes of their Department of Education Board Effectiveness Review.

The full report will be tabled at the DE Board meeting in October 2019.

Parental Engagement Campaign & Attendance Campaign

Alison Chambers spoke to her paper and provided an update on:

- The Department’s Parental Engagement Campaign “Give your child a helping hand”;
- Parents’ views on pupil attendance; and
- The work being taken forward on both policy areas.

Alison advised that the Department’s campaign “Give your child a helping hand” has been in place since January 2018. As part of the advertising campaign contract, Ardmore Advertising commissioned an independent survey by “Cognisense” to gauge parental opinions on the issues in order to assess the impact of the campaign.

Parents’ responses to questions regarding pupil attendance suggested that 41% of the parent population do not understand that attendance below 95% would not be considered “good” attendance and significant effort will be needed to change that mindset.

Alison outlined the several key work strands ongoing which are aimed at improving parental engagement and pupil attendance at school.

Noelle Buick highlighted the impact of low levels of parental engagement on particular groups such as the attainment levels of FSME children; and also the impact of Action Short of Strike by the Teachers’ Unions in terms of parents’ evenings not taking place in schools and reports not being provided to parents.

Action Points:

- The Board noted the paper and requested further information on the impact of the campaign on attendance rates when this is available.
People Strategy Commitment to Implement a Mandatory Approach to Support our People Changing Job Roles etc.

Lianne Patterson introduced the paper and advised that:

- The NICS People Strategy Year 1 Implementation plan included a specific action to 'Implement a mandatory approach to support our people changing job roles and knowledge transfer';
- NICS Board at its meeting on 7th June agreed guidance and a checklist;
- DE People Plan 2019/20 includes an objective to improve induction arrangements and an action to develop team training procedure manuals, desk aids and support staff changing job roles through knowledge transfer; and
- A Staff Handover template, based on good practice from other Departments, has been developed which outlines good practice, key roles and provides prompts and a checklist of key areas to be addressed in successful handover.

The Board noted the paper.

Revised Health and Safety Report

Lianne Patterson introduced the paper which provided the Board with a revised copy of the Departmental Health & Safety report for the period April 2018 to March 2019 providing assurance on health and safety management.

Impact of the UK Leaving the EU on Education in NI

Mark Mawhinney and Andrew Webb introduced the paper and updated the Board on preparations for a possible “no deal” EU Exit.

The Board noted the contents of the paper.

DE 2019/20 Corporate Risk Register (CRR) and Risk Management

Lianne Patterson presented her paper which provided the Board with an update on risk management within the Department.

The Board:

- approved amendments to the CRR in the paper, and also;
  - the removal of Risk 15;
  - updating of the actions for Risk 17 to reflect current level of activity;
  - consider the impact of EU Exit across the CRR.
- noted the Department’s current risk profile;
- noted the findings of the annual Directorate Risk Register Alignment exercise.
HR Report

Sarah Wilson presented the HR Report covering:

- promotion and recruitment;
- employee relations;
- Holiday Pay issue;
- Industrial Action; and
- the NICS People Strategy.

The Board noted the paper.

Director of Finance Report

Gary Fair spoke to his paper and provided members with an update on all key financial issues, covering:

- 2018/19 Outturn;
- 2019-20 School Financial Plans;
- Earmarked Allocations;
- Transformation and the Review of the Common Funding Scheme Project;
- 2020/23 Budget Information Gathering Exercise;
- 2019-20 Capital Budget;
- Teaching + non-teaching Pay & Pension pressures;
- Classification status of voluntary grammar and grant maintained integrated schools;
- Annual Accounts;
- Prompt Payments Performance;
- The high risk EA IT Projects.

The Board noted the contents of the paper.

Strule Progress Report

John Smith spoke to his paper and provided the Board with a Programme level update on progress. The Board noted the report.

Non departmental public bodies – verbal update

Derek Baker advised the Board that the EA’s Finance Director has left the organisation and that Liam Ó Flannagáin, CEO of Comhairle na Gaeolscolaíochta, will retire in March 2020.