

**BOARD MEETING – 22 OCTOBER 2020****SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

Min Ref	Action Description
9.3	<b>EDUCATION COMMITTEE - MEETING HELD ON 8 OCTOBER 2020</b> Position report to be provided on the Strule Shared Education Campus. Consideration to be given to re-establishing the Shared Education Committee within the interim governance arrangements.
9.5	<b>AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE – MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12 OCTOBER 2020</b> Training in areas of audit and risk management, along with individual Director led training, to proceed with new Members.

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF A BOARD MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2020 AT 2.00 PM (by zoom)**

- 1. PRESENT** Ms S O'Connor (Chair)
- |                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Rev A Adams    | Mrs S Kelly        |
| Miss F Boyd    | Sir Gerry Loughran |
| Mr D Cargo     | Mr G Lundy         |
| Mrs P Carville | Mr N McCausland    |
| Mr J Craig     | Dr A McMorrán      |
| Mrs M Culbert  | Mr K Mulvenna      |
| Mr G Doran     | Mr L Ó Flannagáin  |
| Rev R Herron   | Miss R Rainey      |
| Mr M Johnston  | Ms N Toman         |

**2. IN ATTENDANCE**

Ms S Long, Mrs C Duffield, Mr D Hanna, Mrs U Turbitt, Mr S Wade, Mrs P Cooney, and Ms L McCall. Ms P Philpott, Board Room Apprentice, was in attendance.

**3. PROTOCOL FOR EA BLENDED AND REMOTE ATTENDANCE MEETINGS**

All present were observing the protocol.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were reminded of the requirement to declare interests where appropriate during the course of the meeting.

**5. MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING HELD ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

The Board approved the minutes\* (EAB/10/20/4) of the meeting held on 24 September 2020 on the proposal of Miss Rainey and seconded by Dr Dynan.

**6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**7.1 EXPERT PANEL ON UNDERACHIEVEMENT LINKED TO SOCIO ECONOMIC BACKGROUND (7.1.2)**

A Board Member workshop had been held earlier in the day to discuss the information that would be presented to the Expert Panel at five discrete evidence gathering sessions. The five sessions, which were being held between 6 November 2020 and 11 January 2021, would cover the areas of curriculum, trauma informed practice, special educational needs, general discussion, and the Youth Service.

**7.2 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY – WORKSHOP (8.5)**

A Board Member workshop to consider the draft Communications Strategy would be held on 10 November 2020.

**7.3 EXPULSIONS – WORKSHOP (10.1)**

A Board Member workshop to consider the processes in support of the Scheme for the Suspension and Expulsion of Pupils from controlled schools would be held on 26 November 2020.

## **7.4 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2020 (10.6)**

Ms Long advised that a response had been provided to the Member in respect of policies which had been changed as a result of The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

## **8. CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

### **8.1 BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

The Board noted that Dr M Dynan had tendered his resignation from the Board with effect from 31 October 2020.

The Chair paid tribute to Dr Dynan for his substantial and consistent support to EA since its establishment on 1 April 2015. She said that he had been a hugely dedicated and diligent Member of the Board and a valuable contributor to a range of the Board's Committees. She wished him every best wish. Dr Dynan said he was privileged to have worked alongside Board Members. He paid tribute to the Members who he said were genuinely committed to providing the best possible educational opportunities for children and young people.

### **8.2 QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS**

The Chair expressed the Board's congratulations to the following individuals who had received an MBE in the Birthday Honours. She said that she had written to these individuals on behalf of EA to congratulate them on their achievement.

- Miss Anne-Marie Bagnall, Children Looked After Champion, Education Authority for services to education.
- Mr Geoffrey Thomas Cherry, Principal, Pond Park Primary School, Lisburn for services to education.
- Mr James Andrew Stewart Curran, Principal, Harberton Special School, Belfast for services to education and children with special educational needs.
- Mrs Susan Jill Jones, Head of Nursery, Fort Hill Integrated Primary, Lisburn for services to pre-school and primary integrated education.
- Mr Colin Millar, lately Principal, Killard House Special School, Donaghadee for services to education.

### **8.3 INTERIM STAFFING COMMITTEE**

The Board agreed to receive the report from the Chair of the Interim Staffing Committee at the end of the meeting.

## **9. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB-GROUPS**

### **9.1 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES - MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2020**

The Chair of the Committee said that in August, EA had received additional allocations amounting to just over £44m (block grant £2.5m, earmarked £41m, and youth £0.4m). The earmarked budget allocation related to Education Restart (£40.286m), Covid-19 free school meals (£0.527m), and PPE (£0.500m). He said that the August MEMR was reporting an overall estimated funding gap of £70.946m, excluding earmarked and youth, and an estimated block grant funding gap of £70.678m after estimated savings of £17.611m. He advised that the funding gap did not include the estimated pressures identified in respect of Education Restart. He also said that, given the extent of the financial risk, the

Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) had decided, where possible, to pause recruitment in the current year. Posts which were in critical service areas or were deemed to be essential by CLT would be able to proceed.

The Chair of the Committee referred to the report on those VG/GMI schools which had accessed emergency maintenance grant in 2018/19 and 2019/20 and he drew attention to the arrangements which were being put in place by the Directors of Finance & ICT and Education to meet relevant school representatives of those VG/GMI schools. He said the report also set out the arrangements to provide emergency grant funding to VG/GMI schools which were facing cash flow issues in 2020/21 in respect of the teachers' pay award arrears.

The Chair of the Committee referred to the new timetable for Post Primary Admissions for September 2021. He said that consideration had been given by the Committee to the key areas of work that would be required to deliver the admissions process for September 2021 and to EA's ICT capacity to deliver a digital solution for this process. He also reported that the Committee had noted the Annual Report to the Equality Commission outlining EA's compliance with its obligations under Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, as outlined in EA's Equality Scheme.

The Chair of the Committee drew attention to the Committee's recommendations for the Board to approve the tender report and EA's Business Plan\* (EAB/10/20/7.1.2). He advised that the Business Plan aligned to DE's Business Plan, the draft Programme for Government, and DE's draft Children and Young People's Strategy.

A Member referred to EA's Annual Report for submission to the Equality Commission. She said it would be helpful if officers could engage with the Commission on the Commission's new responsibilities relating to EU Exit to discuss the level of resource that might be required in respect of an organisation's reporting requirements going forward. She also asked officers to engage with DE on the Comprehensive Spending Review in the context of putting forward recommendations in respect of Covid-19 related costs across all sectors.

Ms Long said that details around budget structures had not yet been received; however, she would keep Members informed of any emerging information. Mr Wade advised that, at DE's request, EA had contributed to the potential pressures and expenditure assessment exercise for 2021-24. He said that officers continued to work closely with DE officials on the financial position and particularly on transformation and recovery processes.

A Member sought clarity on the process to track Covid-19 specific costs in schools. Mr Wade said that a discrete code had been provided to schools for Covid-19 related costs. Schools were being monitored for these additional costs in term 1 and this information would support the Minister when submitting further bids for terms 2 and 3. He advised that he was reviewing how information on costs incurred by schools relating to Covid-19 could be provided to the Committee within its financial report.

The Board noted that EA continued to operate at significant financial risk.

On the proposal of Mr Doran, seconded by Mr Craig, the Board approved the minutes\* (EAB/10/20/7.1.1) of the meeting held on 6 October 2020 and EA's Business Plan for 2020/21 (EAB/10/20/7.1.2).

## **9.2 MEMBERSHIP AND TEACHING APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE - MEETING HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2020**

The Chair of the Committee provided an update on appointments to Boards of Governors. She referred to the discussion given by the Committee to the use of a private Facebook page by schools to recruit substitute teachers and she outlined the actions which were being taken by officers to increase the effectiveness of NISTR. She said that consideration was also being given to this area within one of the work streams arising from the teachers' pay and workload settlement and through the wider digitalisation agenda and the Education Technology Service specification.

A Member outlined the importance of EA engaging with DE and key stakeholders to consider a more innovative solution in respect of the process to recruit substitute teachers. Mrs Duffield said it was important that EA was aware of the viewpoints of all stakeholders involved in this process. This area would be taken forward through the work stream.

The Board noted the minutes\* (EAB/10/20/7.2) of the meeting held on 6 October 2020, including the principal, vice principal and teacher appointments.

## **9.3 EDUCATION COMMITTEE - MEETING HELD ON 8 OCTOBER 2020**

The Chair of the Committee said that the Committee had received an updated report on a range of issues facing schools within Education Restart. He advised that work was taking place to develop an interactive dashboard relating to Covid-19 cases in schools. Also, information had been provided on weekly pupil and workforce attendance data. He paid tribute to the tremendous amount of work taking place by officers to support schools and this was receiving positive feedback from the school community. He drew attention to the additional funding (£11.2m) which had been provided directly to schools from DE to support implementation of the Engage Programme.

The Chair of the Committee said that EA was currently consulting on the Special Schools' Area Planning Framework and the Framework for Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools. Both consultations were due to close on 11 December 2020. He reported that the Committee had also approved a pilot scheme for specialist provision in mainstream schools and this pilot would run in parallel with EA's area planning frameworks.

A Member referred to DE's publication on workforce attendance data which stated that, on 6 October, 92% of the workforce had been on site. He expressed concern that this figure had been based on a return of 63% return from schools.

A Member sought an update on the position regarding the ongoing suspension of the Main Works Contract at the Strule Shared Education Campus (SEC).

*Dr Dynan and Mr Lundy declared an interest in the Strule project.*

Ms Long advised that, in light of the interim governance arrangements, a position report on Strule SEC could be presented to the next meeting of the Education Committee. The Chair of the Board suggested that the lead officer in DE should be asked to attend the Committee meeting to update Members.

The Chair of the Shared Education Committee asked for arrangements to be facilitated to accommodate a meeting of the Shared Education Committee to consider the Strule SEC, the CASE Peace IV Project, and other matters concerning shared education. It was agreed that this matter would receive consideration.

On the proposal of Rev Herron, seconded by Mr Lundy, the Board approved the minutes\* (EAB/10/20/7.3) of the meeting held on 8 October 2020.

***Action:** Position report to be provided on the Strule Shared Education Campus. Consideration to be given to convening a meeting of the Shared Education Committee within the interim governance arrangements.*

#### **9.4 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE - MEETING HELD ON 8 OCTOBER 2020**

The Chair of the Committee said that the Committee had noted the NIAO Report on the Impact Review of Special Educational Needs (dated 29 September 2020). She advised that the Chief Executive and the Acting Director for Children and Young People's Services had attended a meeting of the Northern Ireland Assembly Public Accounts Committee on 15 October 2020 to give evidence on the NIAO Report. She also advised that the Chair of the Board and Dr A McMorran had provided a SEN briefing, in closed session, to the Assembly's Education Committee on 21 October 2020.

The Chair of the Committee referred to the consideration that had been given by the Committee to the Statutory Operations Improvement Plan. She drew attention to progress in the work streams and to improvements in the performance data which was tracked against a number of datasets. She advised that the Committee had received a presentation on statutory assessment timeframes. It was noted that the implementation of the new SEN Framework would reduce the statutory assessment timeframe to 22 weeks and that further resources applied to the right model would be necessary to meet the demands of the new framework. She said that the Committee had again highlighted the importance of working with Health to promote and enhance early interventions and that training was crucial for school leaders and SENCOs in order to identify Stage 3 supports before a child progressed to Stage 5 of the Code of Practice.

A Member referred to the work taking place on a cross departmental basis to deliver an action plan in preparation for implementation of the new SEN Framework. He also commended officers for the work being taken forward through the Statutory Operations Improvement Plan. Mrs Turbitt outlined officer engagement with DE and Health through the respective groups and partnering arrangements.

A Member drew attention to a number of legislative aspects which were impacting on EA's performance ability. She also drew attention to practices in place in Scotland and England concerning special educational needs.

The Chair of the Committee commended staff on the tremendous amount of work taking place to support families through the statutory assessment process.

The Board noted that statements of special educational needs had been approved by the Committee.

On the proposal of Mrs Carville, seconded by Mr Mulvenna, the Board approved the minutes\* (EAB/10/20/7.4) of the meeting held on 8 October 2020.

#### **9.5 AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE – MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12 OCTOBER 2020**

The Chair of the Committee referred to the consideration given to the Corporate Risk Register (CRR), including the Head of Internal Audit and Assurance's Independent evaluation of the CRR. He reported that the CRR now incorporated 9 key risks and had been revised in line with EA's 2020/21 Business Plan. He referred to a particular query

raised at the meeting by the DE representative in respect of a risk and said that this matter would receive further consideration by the Corporate Leadership Team. He also said that the Committee had noted the progress made on implementing priority 1 recommendations. Four areas remained outstanding and these related to the development of a Disaster Recovery Strategy, and an Emergency Preparedness Plan and related continuity plan. He reported that the Committee had given focus to the significant demands placed on ICT services at the current time and whether appropriate resource was being made available in this area. He said the Committee had therefore agreed that this matter should be referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee in the context that greater priority should be given by EA to ICT provision.

The Chair of the Committee referred to the consideration given to the Internal Audit Plan. He said the Committee had sought and received assurance that the Plan would provide the Accounting Officer with sufficient assurance at year end to set out an overall satisfactory opinion in respect of EA's systems and processes.

The Chair of the Committee said that, following a review of EA's financial governance arrangements relating to fraud, new arrangements had been put in place to provide for greater segregation of fraud oversight and fraud investigative work. He advised that the Director of Finance and ICT was now responsible for co-ordinating EA's fraud oversight arrangements and that the Head of Internal Audit and Assurance would continue to be responsible for fraud investigation.

A Member referred to the matter raised by the DE representative at the Committee meeting in respect of the CRR adequately reflecting the risk associated with delays in the preparation of business cases by EA. He referred to the major capital works tracker report which was presented to the Education Committee on a regular basis setting out information on the progression of these works from announcement to project delivery and he queried if EA was monitoring the reasons and timeframes around delays in business cases. Ms Long said that to date EA had not monitored the timeframe for turnaround of business cases following submission. Arrangements were in place however to record timeframes internally. Mr Hanna said that full tracking of business cases would now be incorporated into EA's performance framework.

A Member paid tribute to the Committee and the Head of Internal Audit and Assurance on the robust practices in place to manage risk.

A Member asked to receive training in the areas of risk management and preparation of business cases, which would include engagement with key stakeholders. This training would be facilitated. It was noted that the wider training programme for new Board Members had been impacted by the out-workings of Covid-19. However, training led by individual Directors would proceed. A Member said that a formal induction programme for new Board Members should be devised.

The Chair of the Board thanked Dr Dynan for his services to this Committee during the past five years.

On the proposal of Mr Lundy, seconded by Miss Rainey, the Board approved the minutes\* (EAB/10/20/7.5.1) of the meeting held on 12 October 2020 and noted the Corporate Risk Register – Quarters 1 and 2 (EAB/10/20/7.5.2).

**Action:** *Training in areas of audit and risk management, along with individual Director led training, to proceed with new Members.*

## 10. DISCUSSION IN COMMITTEE

*Ms S Long, Mrs C Duffield, Mr D Hanna, Mrs U Turbitt, Mr S Wade, Mrs P Cooney, and Ms P Philpott withdrew from the meeting.*

On the proposal of Mr Craig, seconded by Mr Johnston, the Board agreed to discuss the following matters in committee.

### 10.1 SEN BRIEFING TO ASSEMBLY'S EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Chair and Dr McMorrان provided a report on their meeting with the Assembly's Education Committee on 21 October 2020.

*During discussion of this item, Sir Gerry Loughran left the meeting at 3.40 pm.*

### 10.2 INTERIM STAFFING COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Interim Staffing Committee provided a report on two confidential matters.

*During the receipt of this report, Miss Rainey left the meeting at 3.56 pm and Rev Adams left at 4.00 pm.*

On the proposal of Mr Craig, seconded by Mrs Carville, the Board agreed to resume the meeting.

While in committee, the Board had noted the report of a meeting involving the Chair and Dr McMorrان with the Assembly's Education Committee on 21 October 2020 in closed session. The Board had also noted a high level progress report on two matters which were being taken forward by the Interim Staffing Committee.

The Chair expressed appreciation to Dr McMorrان for accompanying her to meet the Assembly's Education Committee.

## 16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on 26 November 2020.

The meeting ended at 4.04 pm.

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**Chair**

\*Paper issued with agenda

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**Chief Executive**

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**Date**