

NCSE Council Meeting 5th and 6th December 2017
102nd Meeting of Council

Trim Castle Hotel, Trim, Co. Meath

Attendance:

Council Members

Eamon Stack (Chairperson)
Sheelagh Drudy (Deputy Chairperson)
Eithne Fitzgerald (in attendance items 4-16)
Helen Guinan
Áine Lynch
Don Mahon (in attendance items 4-16)
Marion Meany (in attendance items 8-16)
Johnny Murphy
Antoinette Nic Gearailt
Tom O'Sullivan
Finian O'Shea
Anne Tansey
Joe Hayes

Also in Attendance:

Teresa Griffin, Chief Executive
Mary Byrne, PO (in attendance items 1-9)
Sé Goulding, PO (agenda items 1- 6 and 8-10)
Ray Jordan, PO (in attendance items 9-12)
Jennifer Doran, PO
John Fitzgerald, Chair Audit & Risk Committee (in attendance item 10.4)

1. Private Meeting of NCSE Council

The items below were discussed by Council during the private session.

1.1 Council Self Evaluation Process

The findings of the Council Self Evaluation process were already circulated. The findings were noted. Some eight main issues arose. It was agreed that the Council Chair would discuss these with the Executive with a view to putting any further discussion required on a future Council agenda. There was general satisfaction with the process itself. To give further consideration to the process it was agreed that the questionnaire on which the evaluation was based would be circulated to Council members again, this time to consider whether any amendments would be appropriate for future evaluations.

1.2 Committee Self Evaluation Process

The findings of the Committee Self Evaluation were already circulated. The process consisted of a questionnaire circulated to members for consideration, followed by reflective discussion at Committee level in private meetings, with subsequent report to Council. Council felt this process worked well.

1.3 CEO Recruitment Process

On behalf of Council, a CEO Appointment Board has been established, consisting of Council Chair and Deputy Chair, with Helen Guinan and Tom O’Sullivan. To date two meetings have been held. At the first of these, papers for the appointment were reviewed and minor amendments incorporated. At the second meeting updates to the process were provided. It was noted that the process is in compliance with the provisions of the 2004 EPSEN Act. The Public Appointments Service (PAS) will conduct the process on behalf of the Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) and one name will be submitted to Council for appointment. The provisional date for advertisement of the post is 12th January 2018.

1.4 CEO Performance Committee Report

The CEO Performance Committee held a meeting before the Council private meeting and reported to Council. The review of performance concluded that the 2017 goals were achieved and that exemplary leadership had been displayed by the CEO at a time of great change in the NCSE. Performance was judged to be satisfactory. The second part of the meeting involved a meeting with the CEO to review the 2018 goals. These too were judged to be satisfactory.

2. **Reminder – Declaration of interests (standing governance item)**

The Chairperson reminded members about declaring interests, as per the Code of Conduct for Council members. There were no items to declare.

3. **Draft Minute of the 101st Meeting and Matters Arising**

The minute of the meeting was accepted. There were no matters arising.

4. **Reflection on Council Self-Evaluation Process**

Council met prior to the Council meeting to discuss the annual self- evaluation process and findings. Members were generally satisfied with the process. There were a number of items arising from the review, which the Chair will discuss with the executive.

Members requested that the evaluation form from the Code of Practice be circulated again to reflect on the questions and consider any alterations necessary for the next review period.

5. **Chief Executive Report**

The CEO report was circulated with the papers. An error was noted on page two regarding sanction for the CEO post which was clarified on page 5. A number of additional updates were provided.

- The Chair met with the Minister in November to discuss the DES 2018 Action Plan. It is expected that a number of additional recommendations included in the NCSE’s 2014 Working Group report would be included in the 2018 Action Plan. These relate to the use and monitoring of special education teaching resources and recording learning outcomes. Gathering such information would require an IT plan for schools to support it and the actions remain under consideration.
- The NDA recently launched its Public Attitudes to Disabilities study. The findings showed an increase in positive attitudes toward students with disability in education compared with the results from the previous survey. However, this was coming from a very low base in the previous survey, which showed a substantial minority opinion that was not supportive of inclusion.

- The deadline for the competition for Specialist Lead for VI and Deaf/Hard of Hearing post has been extended.
- It was noted that the level of applications for SNAs is lower at this point than it was this time last year. However, applications will continue throughout the year.
- Council noted the Civil Service award won by the DES/NCSE on the new model of special education resource allocation to schools. NCSE and DES staff, along with Council members and past Council members involved in the Working Group were congratulated and commended for their contribution to the work.

6. Research Committee Report

The Chair of the Committee provided an update.

- An advisory group meeting on the ITE for Inclusion Project was attended by members of the Committee on 10th November.
- On 13th November the Research Committee met to review tenders on the Review of Education in Adult Day Services. Only one submission was received and the executive are meeting with the bidders next week to discuss the bid further before a decision is finalised.
- The research conference took place on 21st November. The evaluation report is being prepared but members noted that the conference was successful and commended the executive for organising the event.
- The strategy proposed by the guest speaker for teacher education was considered very constructive. It was suggested that she be invited back to engage in discussions with the Teaching Council, the NCSE, the DES and other relevant parties to explore the proposals further. The Strategy & Policy Committee were asked to consider this matter and prepare a proposal around the next steps.

7. Update on NCSE expansion

A number of regional meetings with staff are taking place around the country to discuss how to progress with the new organisational structures and services. The first one took place yesterday and they will continue to roll out over the coming two weeks. There will also be a session with head office staff. A staff survey was undertaken before the sessions were organised to seek views in advance.

The branding needs of the organisation around the new permanent structure will be considered further as the structure becomes more definitive.

8. Update on Working Group on a Model of Support for Additional Care Needs

An update on the work of the group to date was provided. Council members welcomed the broad direction that the work is taking. A number of points were made as follows.

- It will be important to emphasise that the focus of the review is to ensure that students with additional care needs have access to the right support at the right time in school. It was never intended to be a cost cutting exercise.
- There may be a greater range of in-school support options provided over time.
- The qualification and training needs of in-school personnel assisting in the support of students with additional care needs is being considered by the Group.
- Building resilience is as important as building the independence of students. In terms of student outcomes, wellbeing is a more appropriate term than happiness.

- The new model will not be a deficit or disability based model but will be based on students' identified additional care needs. Supports will be focussed on building schools' capacity to include students with additional care needs.
- The importance of communicating the new model to parents, schools and other relevant stakeholders was emphasised again.
- The report should be aligned with the findings of the report from the working group examining complex medical needs.

9. Finance Committee Report

9.1 2017 Operational budget

Council noted the update provided in the finance report and the expenditure to the end of November as presented.

9.2 Legal matters

Council noted the update on legal matters.

9.3 Procurement

The supply contract for SEAS support has to be re-tendered and Council approved the procurement for the new support service contract for SEAS.

10. End of Year Work Plan 2017 and Draft 2018 Work Plan

The end of year work plan progress report was circulated with the papers and noted by Council.

A draft 2018 Work Plan was also circulated. Comments included:

- While noting much of the work is on-going or of a continuous nature, the executive were asked to include specific timelines where available.
- The text in action 1.1 should remove the second iteration of the word 'allocate'. It was also suggested that the risks be placed after the actions, rather than before.
- It was noted that compliance with the requirements under the new Data Protection legislation is covered under action 5.2.

The draft plan was approved subject to the changes suggested.

There was a discussion on possible new areas for policy advice for Council to consider following the completion of the SNA advice. Special classes and Initial Teacher Education were suggested. The S&P Committee agreed to look at this further.

11. Audit and Risk Committee Report

11.1 Draft Minutes

The draft minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting in November were circulated with the papers and a member of the Committee reported on the main aspects of the meeting. The note of the meeting was noted by Council.

11.2 Internal Audit Plan 2018

The proposed internal audit plan for 2018 as recommended by the Committee was circulated to Council and approved.

11.3 Annual appraisal of A&R Committee Chairperson

The Council Chairperson reported to Council on the outcome of the annual appraisal of the Chairperson of the A&R Committee, which took place on 21st November. The process was conducted in accordance with the procedure agreed by Council at the October 2017 meeting. There were no specific issues arising and the outcome of the appraisal was very satisfactory.

11.4 Chairperson's report

The Committee Chairperson attended for this item and reported on the work of the Committee in 2017 and presented a written report which was circulated in advance. The Committee Chair noted that the NCSE's level of compliance and oversight in terms of governance in the organisation is of a high standard.

12. Communication strategy

The draft revised strategy was circulated with the papers and the rationale for the proposed changes outlined. The following points were made:

- In the first message, the range of outcomes should be described and should be in keeping with those noted in the review of the SNA scheme.
- Resilience should be added to independence in the 4th message.
- On page 5, the list of groups in schools should include therapy staff also.

Council approved the draft pending these changes. Council also wanted to engage in the planning of messages around the launch of the new model arising out of the SNA review.

13. Strategy and Policy Committee Report

The report of the October S&P Committee meeting was circulated in advance. The Chairperson reported on the S&P Committee which had also met directly prior to the Council meeting to review progress on adult education matters:

- They reviewed the draft post-school option leaflets.
- Actions relating to the Comprehensive Employment Strategy were noted as was the engagement with the Consultative Forum on the subject in September.
- An update on the status of the procurement process for the research was provided.
- The Committee considered that it is necessary to quantify and clarify the issue regarding students who do not attend day or rehabilitation services. Various data sources could be reviewed to inform and quantify numbers. It was suggested that research could be conducted to determine who these students are, why they don't attend and what the barriers are to participation. The Research Committee and executive will consider this for 2018.

14. Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA)

The Finance Committee reviewed the draft PDA as circulated at the Council meeting in October. The Committee noted that reporting on the PDA and interactions between the DES and the NCSE on progress should form a regular part of the Council meetings in the CEO report.

It was suggested that on page 8, our role regarding adult education should be included in section 2.2.

Council approved the PDA pending this amendment.

15. DES Review of Corporate Governance

Council noted the actions and issues arising and are satisfied with the actions undertaken to date and proposed. They noted that the NCSE will formally write to the DES with the responses.

16. Dates for Council meetings in 2018

The proposed dates were circulated with the papers. It was decided that a specific additional meeting in January to discuss the final draft of the Working Group paper was required. This date was set for 30th January in the DES in Dublin. The other dates agreed were:

1. 21st Feb
2. 27th April
3. 13th June
4. 6th September
5. 31st October
6. 11th/12th December

It was noted that a meeting to approve the appointment of the CEO will be required towards the end of March and as no date during this month was suitable to all members, this may need to be organised through other means, such as via email or teleconference.

17. AOB

Members thanked the executive for the report of the meeting of the Five Nations circulated at the meeting.

Eamon Stack
Chairperson

, 2018

Teresa Griffin
Chief Executive

, 2018