

NCSE Council Meeting 19th & 20th March, 2019
112th Meeting of the Council

Trim Castle Hotel, Trim

Attendance: Council Members
Joe Hayes (Chairperson)
Don Mahon (Deputy Chairperson)
Anne Tansey
Antoinette Nic Gearailt
Áine Lynch (present items 1- 12)
Peter Archer
Deirbhile Nic Craith
Pat Goff
Eileen Daly
Dharragh Hunt
Clodagh Ní Mhaolchiaráin
Eamon Clavin

Apologies: Carol Cuffe

Also in Attendance: Teresa Griffin, Chief Executive
Mary Byrne, PO
Jennifer Doran, PO & Board Secretary
Mary McGrath, PO
Tadgh O’Leary, PO

1. Member introductions and welcome

The Chairperson welcomed members and invited a brief introduction from each member.

2. Ethics in Public Office, Code of Conduct for Council members & reminder re declaration of interests

The CEO provided a presentation to outline the main issues relating to the Ethics in Public Office Act and the Code of Conduct for members. Members were informed of the need to declare interests at the start of meetings and as subject matters arise, as part of disclosure requirements. There were no items to declare.

New members will be required to complete an Ethics in Public Office declaration form for the previous year and copies were circulated for completion.

3. Chief Executive and Heads of Functions general overviews

The CEO and Heads of Functions provided an overview of the work and role of the NCSE and their respective roles and areas of responsibilities.

Members were notified that the head office is based in Trim but that another small Dublin based head office has recently been established in Dun Laoghaire until a more permanent Dublin location can be established. All Council meetings take place in Trim.

4. 2018 Annual Report

A copy of the draft annual report was circulated to members in advance. Further layout and editorial work will be undertaken in advance of designing. A number of comments were made as set out below.

- The work and progress made in 2018 amalgamating the services into the NCSE should be included in the main achievements. This should also be noted on page 25 under strategic goal 5 noting the challenges to date.
- The section on international work should include the work done to date with regard to Canada, including the photos and the visits and it should note that more of this work may be coming in terms of reviewing international practice as part of developing the policy advice.
- On page 9, the wording of the language should change from '15,000 teachers trained' to 'the number of teachers engaged in professional development and learning' and change 'training days' to 'professional development and learning days'. This change should also be made on page 14 and anywhere else that such reference is made.

Members were given until 2nd April to provide further comments. Council approved the report subject to the above and any additional feedback submitted by members.

5. Outline of Council meetings & key timelines

Council were provided with a summary of a typical Council agenda and also items that feature on agendas at particular times of the year in keeping with reporting or other statutory requirements.

6. Council Committees

6.1 Committees: Finance, Strategy & Policy, Audit & Risk, Research and CEO Performance

The Chair outlined the general business of the five Committees of Council. Council members serving a second term, outlined their experience of working on Committees and the nature of the work and expectations of members on the Committees.

An initial meeting of each of the Committees is scheduled in advance of the start of the Council meeting tomorrow to review terms of reference and the work ahead in more detail.

6.2 Announcement of members and Chairs

Members were informed on the day of the Committees they are allocated to.

6.3 Appointment of external Chair of Audit & Risk Committee

The position of Chair was previously advertised and two applications were received. As members of the ARC were appointed at today's meeting, it was decided that the two applications would be reviewed by two of the Council members previously re-appointed with the executive. Lisa Campbell was recommended as the preferred applicant.

Council approved the appointment of the new Chair.

7. Induction briefing: Council Corporate Governance responsibilities

PWC provided Council with an induction on corporate governance responsibilities. The NCSE corporate governance guide was updated for members and a copy of the guide summarising the main responsibilities and requirements of Council was circulated on the day. A copy of the Statement of Strategy was also provided.

Members requested that if certain agendas were known to be particularly busy, that this should be flagged in advance. Where papers may be available in advance of the 7-10 day timeline to distribute papers for meetings, these can be circulated in advance.

8. Draft Minutes of meeting on 30th January, actions and matters arising

The minutes of the January meeting were circulated and the following updates and matters arising were noted:

- Action 1 re the Assisted Decision Making Act. The application forms and guidelines for SNA support and Assistive Technology have been amended to take account of the requirements of the Act. Consent is now sought directly from students where they are over 18 years; parental consent is still sought as required.
- The third bullet point under item 4 should be removed as it identifies an individual for data protection purposes.
- Action 4: A copy of the research report will be sent to members along with other papers; this was not done in advance of the meeting.
- The actions relating to the Annual Report are under consideration and will be progressed as appropriate.
- Final action – the invitation will be issued when the conference invitations are being issued later in the year.

Council approved the minutes subject to the above clarification.

9. Chief Executive Report

The CEO report was circulated with the papers and additional updates were provided on the day.

- The 2019/20 SNA application process closed on 8th March. 7,283 applications were received – up 22% on the number of applications received at this time last year. If this demand is considered valid, it is likely that the NCSE will need to seek additional posts from DES and DPER.
- Advertisements for the new Consultative Forum will occur in the next few weeks and agencies will be provided with a three week response timeline. The Strategy and Policy Committee will consider the nominations in advance of the Council meeting.
- The PDA agenda item has been deferred to the June Council meeting. The NCSE/DES meeting to finalise it was postponed.
- €4.75m was made available to the NCSE in the 2019 budget allocation to commence the roll out the new School Inclusion Model (SIM) in September. A Steering Committee and associated Working Group has to be established and agreement on how to progress the model is needed between DEPR, Departments of Health, Children & Youth Affairs, Education and Skills and the HSE and NSCE.
- The 75 schools in CHO Area 7 currently taking part in the therapy demonstration project will be asked to continue in this project and become part of the SIM. The schools will be supported by two fully staffed local teams including SENOs, OTs, SLTs, Behaviour practitioners, Visiting Teachers and advisors. NEPS is being expanded to provide a greater level of support to the SIM schools. On a national basis, there will be a nursing support service to support children with complex medical conditions. In addition, a national training programme will be provided for SNAs to upskill SNAs to support a variety of additional care needs. The DES is hosting a press launch of the SIM demonstration project on 27th March and will also be engaging with stakeholders on the roll out of the SIM and the next steps.
- The re-profiling of schools and revised SET allocations was determined by the Education Research Centre two years on from the model's original introduction. It is intended that the proposed frontloading of SNAs under the SIM will largely be based on the SET allocation model and DES/DPER will be evaluating this proposal to ensure it is the appropriate basis for front-loading SNAs to schools.

- The timely notification of schools' SNA allocation is important. The NCSE, however, can only issue these allocations when the authorisation is received from DES/DPER. DES is proactively engaging with DPER to minimize the potential for procedural delays.

10. Performance Delivery Agreement

This item was removed from the agenda, see above.

11. Policy advice update on special schools and classes

A presentation on the status of the policy advice on special schools and classes and the work to date was provided.

Council views were sought on the school visits to be organised as part of the development work. It was agreed that each visit should include a post primary and primary school, (with and without, special classes) and a special school. In this way all participants will have an opportunity to visit these three school types in one day. It was suggested to include a Gaelscoil in the visits. Areas suggested included Dublin, west of Ireland and the midlands.

The NCSE will provide a set of questions for Council members to explore while on the visits and a detailed plan will be circulated to members in advance. The visits will be scheduled for 14th May to coincide with the May Council meeting, should the meeting be required.

12. The Canadian system and the journey to full inclusion- presentations by delegates from Canada

Three delegates from Canada presented on the inclusive education system in the state of New Brunswick.

A number of issues were raised following the presentations.

- As New Brunswick (NB) is a small state, the ability to practically transfer such a system into a larger province/country was queried. It was noted that per capita, NB is not spending more than other states on special education. The presenters noted that running a system that has separate special schools as well as mainstream schools is also costly.
- Every school has an Education Support Services team, which is made up of the Principal, a Deputy Principal, a Resource teacher and a Guidance Counsellor. A teacher makes a referral to the team and a referral may then be made by the team to the school district. Speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists are on the school district teams. The therapists may guide the practice of the class teacher to work with the students rather than providing direct intervention.
- A lot of professional learning took place to build capacity of the schools and teachers, particularly when the new system was first introduced.
- When a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach was brought into the system, only 8-9 % of students required Individual Education Plans (IEPs), whereas before, up to 25% of students needed IEPs. UDL helped to reduce paperwork in schools.
- School funding is based on population variables – and not linked to standardised assessment or diagnosis; However, NB is now considering a more needs based approach to funding based on the needs of staff to support the needs of students and with a view to providing funding to build staff capacity.
- Legislation was needed to change practices regarding the sharing of electronic information to ensure the protection of privacy and data.

13. Current & future priorities for NCSE

The CEO presented on some of the top issues for the NCSE.

13.1 Special schools and classes

Information under this item/point relates to an ongoing deliberative process and is thus not being published at this time.

13.2 The new School Inclusion Model

This is now a priority and is due to be up and running by September. A significant amount of work is required to have the service ready by September for the 75 schools that will be invited to participate and the timeframe is very tight.

13.3 Adult services and transitioning after school

In 2020, Part 2 of the Disability Act will commence for young people who turn 18 years in June 2020. Upon commencement, the NCSE will have a number of additional statutory functions. These functions and the NCSE's role is still unclear and under review. The DES has sought legal advice on what this means and the NCSE continue to engage with the DES on the matter.

13.4 Development of Innovative Practice

With the additional services now as part of the NCSE, the NCSE is looking at innovative practices in terms of delivery and practice. Future CPD, in-school and on-line support and services are being considered and how best to design NCSE training, guidelines and resource materials. Quality assuring what we provide and putting in place the required IT support is an important aspect of this.

13.5 Development of One NCSE Support Service

In developing the structures to support the one NCSE service, issues such as funding, recruitment, logical management arrangements and training are being reviewed. The change management systems and processes to build these structures will take time to implement.

14. NCSE Work Plan 2019

The Work Plan for 2019 was circulated with the papers. The POs outlined what will be in place as per the Work Plan by year end and the progress made to date.

It was noted also that there is a shortage of special school and special class places in north Dublin and the Cork area. The NCSE is aware of this and have engaged with the DES on this in the context of the UN Convention and the findings that separate provision is contrary to the principles and rulings of the UN from a policy perspective.

15. AOB

15.1 Members were reminded of the remaining dates for meetings for 2019: 15th May (optional if required), 26th June, 11th September, 30th October, 11th & 12th December.

15.2 Members were reminded that the annual Research Conference is on the 19th November in Croke Park conference centre and that there is a dinner with the speakers and Council members the evening before the conference on 18th November.

15.3 Members were asked if they were happy to share email addresses and contact details with other members and all consented to this request as required.

15.4 All Council communication will now be sent to members via their NCSE email address. A notification will go to existing email addresses to alert members to the NCSE emails.

15.5 Members were reminded that there may be a requirement to get approval on matters via emails as permitted under the Council Standing Orders due to the long time between meetings.

Joe Hayes
Chairperson
26th June 2019

Teresa Griffin
Chief Executive
26th June 2019