



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Transitional Governance Arrangements for the Education Sector
Date:	24 th September, 2010
Reporting Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext 6314)
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Purpose of Report

To advise the Committee of the receipt of correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the nomination of Members to the interim Belfast Education and Library Board.

Background

Members will be aware that it is intended that the five Education and Library Boards should be replaced with an Education and Skills Authority. This requires political agreement at Assembly level and, in the period prior to the establishment of the new body, streamlined Education and Library Boards are being put in place as an interim measure.

At its meeting on 11th December, 2009 the Committee had considered a request from the Minister for Education to put forward, in line with the guidelines published by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, the names of at least eight Councillors who would be willing to sit on the transitional Board. The Committee had agreed to nominate only four Members with the representatives being selected using a one-off d'Hondt process. This resulted in the nominations falling to the SF, DUP, UUP and SDLP groupings, with Councillors Convery, Hartley, Rodgers and Rodway being put forward for selection.

Further correspondence was received from the Minister on 17th February reiterating the need for the Council to nominate at least two persons for each vacancy and requesting that an additional four names be forwarded to her.

This was drawn to the Committee's attention at its meeting on 19th February, when it was decided to affirm the decision of 11th December to nominate only four Members to the four places to which the Council was entitled under the legislation.

The Minister for Education wrote again asking the Council to review its position with a view to providing a total of eight nominees in order to comply with the guidelines of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. In her letter, the Minister explained that she was required to follow the procedures laid down by the Commissioner for Public Appointments and that 24 out of the 25 other councils in Northern Ireland had complied with the request to provide multiple nominees.

The Committee, at its meeting on 21st May, agreed to an additional four nominees, to be provided by the SF, DUP, UUP and SDLP Party Groupings, being forwarded to the Minister for Education for consideration for appointment to the interim Belfast Education and Library Board, on the basis that the Minister would agree that the final selections made by her would entail one selection from each of the four largest Party Groupings on the Council.

This decision was ratified by the Council at its meeting on 1st June. The Democratic Unionist Party Group, however, refused to nominate a second candidate and a letter was sent to the Minister on 9th June supplying seven names, and requesting that the Minister make her selections from that list, whilst ensuring that one Member from each of the four largest Party Groupings on the Council was included.

Key Issues

A further letter has been received from the Department of Education (copy attached at Appendix 1) indicating that two of the seven candidates nominated by the Council (Councillors D. Browne and N. Kelly) have subsequently informed the Department that they no longer wished to be considered for the appointments. Accordingly, the Department has asked for the submission of an additional three names in order to allow the process to proceed.

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to affirm its decision of 21st May that the names of two Members from each of the four largest Party Groupings on the Council be submitted to the Minister for Education. This will mean that the name of a second candidate will be sought from each of the Democratic Unionist, Ulster Unionist and Social, Democratic and Labour Party Groupings on the Council and will be forwarded to the Department requesting that the Minister make her selections from the overall list, whilst ensuring that one Member from each of the four largest Party Groupings on the Council is included.

Decision Tracking

Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager
5th October, 2010

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - Copy of Letter from the Department of Education