



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Date:	Friday, 19th February, 2010
Subject:	Transitional Governance Arrangements for the Education Sector
Reporting Officer:	Mr.Liam Steele, Head of Committee and Members' Services (extension 6325)

Purpose of Report

To determine a response to correspondence received from The Minister for Education regarding the transitional governance arrangements for the education sector.

Background

Members will recall that, at the meeting of the Committee in December, 2009, a report was submitted concerning correspondence which had been received from the Minister for Education on 8th December inviting the Council to make nominations to the transitional Board of the Belfast Education and Library Board, pending the establishment of the new Education and Skills Authority.

The Minister, in order to comply with the Code of Practice of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, had requested that two nominees be put forward for each of the four places to which the Council would be entitled. The names of the eight nominees were to be sent to the Department by 16th December.

Members were given two options to consider. The first option was to determine the Council's representatives using a one-off selection process based on d'Hondt which resulted in the undernoted choice sequence:

SF choices 1, 5 and 7
DUP choices 2,6 and 8
UUP choice 3
SDLP choice 4.

The second option was to take the view that the Council had already nominated 14 representatives to the Belfast Education and Library Board using the d'Hondt process and if the Minister wished to reduce this figure from 14 to 4 she should make her selections from that pool of Councillors.

The decision of the Committee on 11th December, 2009 was:

' That the Committee agrees to nominate only four Members to the Belfast Education and Library Board and that, based on the use of a one-off d'Hondt selection process, these comprise one Member from each of the four main Party Groupings on the Council, that is, Sinn Fein, the Democratic Unionist, the Ulster Unionist and the SDLP Party Groupings.'

A letter advising the Minister of the Council's decision and the names of the four nominees, Councillors Convery, Hartley, Rodgers and Rodway, was emailed to her office on 14th December.

Key Issues

Further correspondence from the Minister has been received by the Council on 17th February. In her letter the Minister reiterates the need for the Council to nominate at least two nominees for each vacancy claiming that to do otherwise may hold up the selection and appointment process. She has requested that the names of four further nominees be forwarded to her by 19th February.

The Committee has two options to consider. Firstly, it can decide to confirm its original decision to nominate four Members only or secondly it can agree to provide four additional nominees based on the next four choices under the one-off d'Hondt process which had been run in December. This would result in two further nominees from each of the Sinn Fein and DUP Party Groupings, that is, choices 5 and 7 for Sinn Fein and choices 6 and 8 for the DUP.

Recommendations

To consider the options put forward and to take such action thereon as may be determined.

Decision Tracking

The Committee's decision will be conveyed to the Minister by the Head of Committee and Members' Services following the meeting.

Key to Abbreviations

N/A