

**RPA Stakeholders' Group
2nd Meeting
Lagan Valley Island Centre, Lisburn
26th June 2006**

Attendees:

Will Haire (DE)
 Eddie Rooney (DE)
 Chris Stewart (DE)
 Liam Barr (DE)
 Joan Cassells (DE)
 Eve Stewart (DE)
 Tina Gamble (DE)
 Karen McClay (DE)
 Irene Knox (SEELB)
 Helen McClenaghan (SELB)
 Barry Mulholland (WELB)
 Gordon Topping (NEELB)
 Lorna McAlpine (NICIE)
 Jim Clarke (CCMS)
 Richard Hanna (CCEA)
 Mary Field (Youth Net)
 Revd Robert Herron (TRC)
 Janine Turner (IEF)
 Frank Bunting (NITC)
 Sean O Coinn (CnaG)
 Liam McEntegart (Catholic Trustees)
 Pauline Leeson (CiNI)
 Finbar McCallion (GBA)
 Tom Hesketh (RTU)
 Tom Gillen (NIC/ICTU)

Apologies

Donal Flanagan (CCMS)
 Gavin Boyd (CCEA)
 David Cargo (BELB)
 John Darcy (ANIC)
 David Guilfoyle (YCNI)

No.	Description	Action
1.	Welcome and Update	
a.	Will Haire welcomed new representatives to the Group and those deputising. He also introduced DE officials Eve Stewart and Tina Gamble, who will be taking forward work on the legislation.	
b.	A Communications Strategy has been approved by the	DE

	<p>Communication Steering Group and a copy will be issued to members shortly. Will Haire will be writing to stakeholders shortly offering the opportunity for the RPA Team members to come out and talk to groups of staff. This will be organised over the next couple of weeks.</p>	
2.	Minutes	
a.	The members stated that they were content with the minutes of the previous meeting.	
3.	Interface between schools and ESA	
a.	<p>Chris Stewart gave a brief overview of the paper and stated that it is work in progress and focuses on one particular set of issues. The paper has attempted to provide some link to a Vision for education and outlines principles underpinning this vision.</p> <p>Following on from the previous meeting, there has been a movement away from the concept of 'bands' in place of a 'continuum of autonomy'. However the revised model will still allow for a high level of support for those schools which require it.</p> <p>At this point NITC requested DE to take account of the fact that schools were for the teaching and learning of pupils and that any new arrangements should be 'workloaded and bureaucracy' proofed, along the lines of the Scottish model whereby professional administrators rather than voluntary governors facilitated the administrative needs of schools.</p>	
b.	<p>Principles</p> <p>A discussion took place regarding the priority of the principles which should shape the new arrangements. There was general acceptance that the first 4 principles should be included and should have overall priority. However there was general agreement that the principle in relation to 'A Shared Future' should be given highest priority as a key method of promoting equality.</p>	
c.	It was felt that the two principles in relation to simplifying the administrative arrangements and creating a single administrative system could be merged but it would be important to recognise that a range of schools' needs must be met.	
d.	It was felt that a challenge function would be important under the new arrangements.	
e.	Ethos	
f.	Some of the members were pleased to see priority being given to ethos in the principles. However there was broad agreement that, rather than 'protecting' ethos, the aim should be to develop or foster ethos, thereby capturing the evolutionary nature of ethos. It was felt that ethos should not be regarded as divisive	
g.	There was also discussion about the distinction between sectoral ethos and individual schools' ethos. It was felt that the latter is much more subtle and can vary from school to school and can change over time which can	

	have implications if consideration is being given to the management of groups of schools.	
h.	It was also felt that ethos can be a reflection of the community and it has to be responsive to community needs. There is also a need to look at ethos in the context of what the schools' estate can actually provide.	
i.	Chris Stewart asked members to consider the administrative arrangements that will support and encourage the development of ethos.	
j.	The point was made that once consideration is given to sectoral ethos, there is a need to consider the idea of 'champions' for the specific ethos. New arrangements will need to allow for 'champions' to support/encourage/promote ethos within the sector.	
k.	Supported autonomy	
l.	Members were asked to comment on the issue of what are the range of core services that ESA would deliver which would assist supported autonomy.	
m.	There was some discussion about the importance of starting with schools and considering what we want to entrust/empower them to do. Schools are places of teaching and learning and it is important to reduce the bureaucratic burden.	
n.	It was stated that Irish medium schools would wish to avail of all services which ESA could provide.	
4.	Interface between DE and ESA	
a.	Joan Cassells gave a brief overview of the paper regarding the relationship between DE and ESA.	
b.	In relation to the relationship between the Permanent Secretary in DE and the CEO of the new ESA, it was felt that there will be a need for clear identification of areas of responsibility, especially since the Board of ESA will not be in place for a full year after the CEO designate is appointed.	
c.	There is also a need to add to this relationship, the dynamic of the expectations of local politicians and there is a need for clarity on the issue of community planning. ESA will be required to participate in the community planning process.	
d.	The following principles were discussed – there should be no accountability without responsibility; there should only be one direct line of accountability i.e. whoever is responsible in ESA should be responsible to DE; ESA should have a relationship with only one department. ESA should have maximum autonomy supported by DE and should have an accountability framework which works on outputs. It should only be accountable to DE, not to District Councils	
5.	AOB	
a.	The next meeting of the Group will be held in September and the RPA Division will confirm the date shortly.	DE

	Meetings will continue to focus on broad issues with more specific detail being put forward on the outworkings of the different projects e.g. more clarity re the Employing Authority, employer role.	
	Meeting concluded at 16.00	