

## ISSUES RAISED AT THE SPECIAL JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM MEETING:

- ➔ Representatives of the Ulster Unionist Party had met the Secretary of State and raised their concerns about the planned cuts in education services.
- ➔ NICEM highlighted a press release it had issued regarding English as an Additional Language support. The drastic cuts threatened to destroy the infrastructure built up over many years to meet the needs of ethnic minority pupils.
- ➔ NICEM reiterated its opposition to the policy change, whereby funding for EAL support will be paid directly to schools through the new Common Funding Scheme.
- ➔ NIPSA indicated its opposition to the proposed cuts and gave notice that it would continue to campaign against them and would vehemently oppose any compulsory redundancies.
- ➔ MENCAP expressed their concern that cost cutting would be most acute in “soft areas” where those affected had little voice. They went on to state that if this happened it would run contrary to the statutory equality duties and would be challenged.
- ➔ MENCAP suggested that greater care was required when talking about areas where costs had significantly increased e.g. special educational needs, to ensure that recipients of the service were not portrayed as the cause of the problem.
- ➔ Equality Commission representative advised that they had received a number of enquiries from EAL teachers who had been placed on notice.

A number of the organisations asked that the Boards consider how and when more detailed information could be made available on the draft Financial Plans. They also expressed their disappointment that the Department of Education was not represented at the meeting.

## EQUALITY CONSIDERATIONS




A number of the organisations present expressed the view that all policy changes which emanated from the revised draft Financial Plans needed to be considered in the light of the Boards’ statutory equality duties.

It was noted that the Boards’ equality representatives were scheduled to meet after Easter to consider what action was required in regard to the fulfillment of these duties.



## CURRENT POSITION

All five Education and Library Boards have now submitted draft Financial Plans to the Department of Education by 31 March 2005. However, Board members had expressed grave concerns at being forced to agree spending plans which incorporate savings of such a magnitude.

## AT A GLANCE.....

Board	Website	Total savings required	Summary of cuts to services	
	<a href="http://www.belb.co.uk">www.belb.co.uk</a>	£6.864m	Maintenance	£1,000k
			Efficiency Measures	£1,410k
			CASS	£1,022k
			Special Education	£668k
			Transport	£194k
			School Catering	£178k
			Price increase	
			/costs recovery	£909k
			Other	£1,483k
	<a href="http://www.neelb.org.uk">www.neelb.org.uk</a>	£6.052m	Maintenance	£3,277k
			Efficiency Measures	£830k
			CASS	£115k
			Special Education	£770k
			Transport	£85k
			School Catering	£200k
			Price increase/	
			costs recovery	£250k
			Other	£525k
	<a href="http://www.seelb.org.uk">www.seelb.org.uk</a>	£7.527m*	Maintenance	£810k
			Efficiency Measures	£1,450k
			CASS	£761k
			Special Education	£1,542k
			Transport	£686k
			School Catering	£271k
			Price increase/	
			costs recovery	£540k
			Other	£1,467k

\*These figures are inclusive of some elements of savings already implemented in 2004/05

Board	Website	Total savings required	Summary of cuts to services
 Southern Education and Library Board <b>www.selb.org</b>	£7.049m	Maintenance	£3,500k
		Efficiency Measures	£740k
		CASS	£270k
		Special Education	£408k
		Transport	£638k
		School Catering	£97k
		Price increase/ costs recovery	£493k
		Other	£903k
 WESTERN EDUCATION & LIBRARY BOARD <b>www.welbni.org</b>	£5.701m	Maintenance	£1,485k
		Efficiency Measures	£1,370k
		CASS	£461k
		Special Education	£86k
		Transport	£100k
		School Catering	£54k
		Price increase/ costs recovery	£1,107k
		Other	£1,038k

More detailed information on each Board's draft Financial Plan is available on their website.

At least 32 councillors have resigned from the Boards in protest at the reductions. The ICTU, which represents 11 unions with members working in the Education Boards, launched a campaign on 22 March entitled 'Protect Education, Protect Children, Protect Frontline Services'.

At the time of writing this leaflet the Department of Education had issued only provisional approval to the Boards' Financial Plans.

### FEEDBACK

The equality representatives have prepared a briefing note and questionnaire (copy to follow). We would like to hear your views. All comments will be considered carefully.



# Quarterly Update

**UPDATE ON SPECIAL MEETING**  
 A special meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum was held on 22 March 2005

### PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

At the Steering Group meeting on 26 January 2005 the Boards explained how their budgets are allocated and given the current under-funding of the five Education and Library Boards, the likely financial impact of:

- the 2.5% efficiency savings to be achieved on a cumulative basis over the next 3 years; and
- the projected under-funding of the Education and Library Boards' services over the next 3 years.

The Boards agreed that a special meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum would be convened after they had received their budget allocation from the Department of Education and formulated their proposals.

### SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Allocation of Budget from Department of Education	14 February 2005
Submission of Boards' Resource Allocation Plans to Department	11 March 2005
Scheduled meeting of Joint Consultative Forum	22 March 2005
Extension of deadline for submission of draft Financial Plan	week beginning 21 March 2005

At the time of the Joint Consultative Forum meeting only one board, the South Eastern, had met to approve its draft Financial Plan.