



Coiste Gairmoideachais Chathair Chorcaí
City of Cork Vocational Education Committee

PAC-R-279

Correspondence 3.1
Meeting – 09/02/2012

T. Owens

Príomairí Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin



01 February, 2012

Dear Ms Lavelle,

I acknowledge your letter dated 19 December 2011 and as requested I enclose a briefing paper for the assistance of the Committee.

The Committee will be aware from the Section 7 report that the events in question gave rise to disciplinary procedures and the conduct of the relevant employees was to be reviewed for a specified period. There have been certain developments in relation to one employee during the period of review. The matter is ongoing and confidential. Accordingly, City of Cork VEC requests pursuant to S.O. 163(7)(a) that the Committee refrains from enquiring in public session or publishing any information regarding this matter.

Yours sincerely,

T. Owens,
Chief Executive Officer

Ms. Eimear Lavelle,
Committee Secretariat,
Committee of Public Accounts,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2.

City of Cork Vocational Education Committee

Briefing Paper for Public Accounts Committee on developments since the publication of the Section 7 Report

Thursday 09 February, 2012

Student Enrolment and subsequent allocation and funding over claims

As outlined in the C&AG Report, the City of Cork Vocational Education Committee has developed and implemented an online application and enrolment management system for the three main PLC colleges under its aegis, designed to streamline the process for applicants, to assist with and reduce the associated administrative load and to ensure accurate and timely submission of statistical (October) returns to the Department of Education and Skills. In effect this means that any applicant who has not completed an online application process and paid a registration fee, or been exempted from same, can be transferred into the database used to generate the October Return. The new online enrolment system has resulted in a timelier completion of the October Returns for the current academic year.

Spot checks have been undertaken to compare roll books with the computerised data in order to verify the actual attendance of registered students prior to the completion of the October returns and these spot checks will continue.

A common class commencement date for the three Further Education Colleges has been introduced.

While a common cut-off date for acceptance of student applications to give sufficient time for the processing and completion of October Returns has not proved feasible, it has been stressed to College Principals that under no circumstances should students who enroll after September 30th be included in the October Returns for allocation purposes. Clear instruction has been given to colleges that applicants commencing after the 30th September are to be returned to the Department by means of an OL8 return, and this is being complied with.

The October Returns are now countersigned by the CEO as well as individual College Principals prior to submission to the Department.

Procurement:

In line with the Audit recommendation, the Committee circulated all staff whose salaries are above the relevant financial threshold with statements of interest and explanatory documentation, requiring that they be completed and returned where such interests occur. These members of staff were also reminded of the Committee's Code of Ethics and the Committee's Regulations regarding external work.

The Committee actively involves itself with the IVEA/VEC Procurement Network and also uses the National Procurement Services' Frameworks wherever possible. While most major purchasing categories are now within these Framework Agreements, the Committee is actively investigating local common purchasing arrangements for all its colleges for minor items.

The Committee has continued with the development of its online "Purchase to Pay System"¹ to ensure that Colleges and Centres adhere to its Purchasing Procedures. The VEC will shortly implement an upgrade which will ensure that any Order being issued to a Supplier who is not a "Preferred Supplier" (i.e. on a Framework) will have to be supported by a "Request for Tender" and all such requests will be available online to the Finance Office.



T. Owens,

Chief Executive Officer

01 February, 2012

¹ The "Purchase to Pay" system is a centralised computer system which tracks purchases from tender stage onwards. It records commitments as well as paid orders and expenditure, rather than payments, against allocated budgets. Orders cannot be written when the budgetary limit has been reached. It also automatically updates the Stock register with relevant purchases. The Finance Office has full oversight of the system.