



Northern Ireland
Assembly

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Annual Report 2009/10



Working for You

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Foreword from the Speaker



The Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, William Hay MLA.

On behalf of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission, I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the 2009 – 2010 Session. It has again been another busy year full of challenges and achievements.

Improving outreach and engagement with the public is high on the Commission's agenda. Our education programme continues to flourish with 516 groups, comprising of 15,544 participants, taking part in the Education Programme within the reporting year. Eighty seven percent of the groups were from Northern Ireland; however, we also hosted groups from other parts of the UK, the Republic of Ireland, Europe and the United States of America. Another exciting area of work has been the development of a Youth Assembly in Northern Ireland. To date a youth panel of thirty 16 to 18 year olds has been recruited to work with the Assembly to develop proposals for the Youth Assembly. The Engagement Directorate hope to receive those proposals in the coming Session. In addition to our Education Programme, Parliament Buildings has also played host to nearly 500 functions during the 2009/10 Session. We also provided 764 tours with a total number of guests reaching over 47,000 for the period.

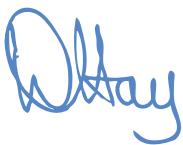
Throughout the year the Secretariat continued to support the key legislative and scrutiny functions of the Assembly. The Business Office supported the 70 sittings of Plenary and nearly 10,000 written and oral questions tabled by Members for answer. The Bill Office handled a substantial amount of new legislation. The Office supported 29 Executive Bills, 13 of which have become Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Committee Office provided support for 505 committee meetings, of which 34 took place outside of Parliament Buildings. On 12 April 2010, the Committee for Justice was established to scrutinise the work of the new Department of Justice. The newly established Committee plays a vital role in advising the Minister of Justice on the development of departmental policies and plans and has a broad work programme considering key issues such as addressing delays in the Criminal Justice system, improving services for victims, Legal Aid reform and, prison issues. As we go forward into the last Parliamentary Session of this Mandate, I wish to pay tribute to the staff of the

Foreword from the Speaker

Secretariat whose hard work, dedication and professionalism has ensured that Members have received an excellent service.

The Commission also continues its commitment to provide the necessary accommodation requirements to meet the needs of an evolving legislature, its staff and visitors. We have agreed an accommodation strategy and have implemented a range of changes within Parliament Buildings and will endeavour to take forward further improvements in the next year.

I would also like to thank all the members of the Senior Management Group who have worked diligently to bring forward a range of projects for our consideration. That has led to an improved corporate infrastructure and has greatly aided the development of a fully functioning legislative Assembly. On a final note, I would also like to pay tribute to past and current Members of the Assembly Commission for their hard work and commitment during the period.



The Speaker, William Hay



Pictured at the Assembly's annual St Patrick's Day event are Baroness Paisley of St Georges, The Lord Bannside of North Antrim in the County of Antrim, and Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, William Hay MLA.

Professionalism

Reflected by a commitment to excellence, team working and a focus on meeting the needs of elected Members and the public whom the Assembly serves.

Integrity

Reflected by political impartiality, honesty, discretion and respect for diversity.

Accountability

Reflected by each member of staff taking responsibility for individual, team and corporate performance, and openness and transparency towards the public.

The Assembly Commission

Membership



Mr William Hay
*The Speaker/
Chair of the Assembly Commission*



Mr Pat Doherty
(14 Sept 2009 – present)



Mr Peter Weir
28 June 2010 – present



Rev Dr Robert Coulter
9 May 2007 – present



Mr Pat Ramsey
24 May 2010 – present



Mr Sean Neeson
9 May 2007 – present

The Work of the Assembly Commission



The Speaker of the Assembly pictured at the Northern Ireland Chinese Welfare Association in Belfast.

The Assembly Commission (the Commission) is the corporate body of the Northern Ireland Assembly, established under section 40 of and schedule 5 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Commission comprises of the Speaker, as Chairperson and five other elected Members. The Commission ensures that the Assembly has the adequate property, staff and services to work effectively. The Commission's purpose is to support the Assembly and its Members in their role as elected representatives and legislators and to facilitate engagement between the Assembly and the public. During the period of this report, the Commission met on 15 occasions to progress corporate matters on behalf of the Assembly. In addition, the Commission also held two planning workshops outside Parliament Buildings to explore governance and strategic matters affecting the efficient and effective operation of the Assembly Secretariat. Arising from the Report by OFMDFM Committee on European matters, the Commission participated in a joint visit to assess how to best support the Assembly in developing its awareness of and influence on European issues. Following on from this, the Commission hope to develop and consider a European Strategy for the Assembly in the coming months.

The Work of the Assembly Commission

The Commission has progressed a number of Human Resource matters during this Parliamentary Session. Following several major recruitment exercises, the Assembly Secretariat was recognised as a fully independent parliamentary service in April 2010. A full job evaluation project was also carried out across the Secretariat during this period, and a composite pay and grading exercise has also been conducted. The Commission also approved a Sustainability Strategy that supports the aspirations of the Commission in becoming an exemplar organisation in respect of sustainable development. In addition to implementing the strategy, the Commission also agreed to take part in the WWF's Earth Hour on 27 March 2010 to highlight global climate change.

Another major element of the Commission's work during this Session has related to taking forward the recommendations arising out of the Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB) Report to progress matters on the salaries, pensions and financial support for Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Commission agreed that an Independent Statutory Body be established to determine Members' pay, pension and financial support. In order to allow for the establishment of the Body, amendment of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 was required. At the Commission's request, the Northern Ireland Assembly Members Bill was passed at Westminster and received Royal Assent in April 2010. Following consultation with Party Leaders, it was agreed that further proposals would be brought forward to deal with a number of outstanding issues arising from the Commission's Report on Pay, Pensions and Financial Support for Members, which was drafted originally in 2009.

Additionally, the Commission gave further consideration to the wider issues arising from problems within the expenses regime in Westminster, the Committee on Standards in Public Life, and matters raised by the Northern Ireland Standards and Privileges Committee. The consensus view was to make progress on the governance, accountability and Independent Statutory Body issues while deferring the future determination of beneficial salaries/allowances to the Independent Statutory Body. The Commission did this by means

The Work of the Assembly Commission

of a Report on the Financial Support and Pensions for Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly, which detailed interim reforms to improving the governance and accountability mechanisms until such time as an Independent Statutory Body was established.

Unfortunately, this Report was not debated by the Assembly, and work continues with Party Leaders in bringing forward interim recommendations relating to strengthening the financial support mechanisms for MLAs. In addition to this work, the public consultation exercise in relation to the establishment an Independent Statutory Body to Determine Pay, Pensions and Financial Support for Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly has proceeded.

The Commission continues its commitment to implement the objectives outlined within the Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan. The Commission within its equality scheme has set out how it would fulfill its statutory obligation and how it would promote equality of opportunity and good relations. The Equality Commission's "Guide to the Statutory Duties" specifies that consultation must take place on the "impact of policies". Public authorities are required to engage in consultation about the likely impact (on the promotion of equality of opportunity) of its existing and proposed policies, and, in making decisions about such policies, it must take consultation into account. The Commission adopted a two-phased approach to consultation on the screening of policies. Phase 1 involved the specification of all policies and their issue to consultees for comment. This allowed stakeholders to make a contribution to the Commission's consideration of policies before any conclusions were reached. Phase 2 of the process involved the production of the consultation paper which proposes conclusions on the screening of policies and the prioritisation of equality impact assessments following consultation comment, and the timetable for the Commission's equality impact assessment programme following consultation comment. The Commission also approved a Good Relations Action Plan on 21 January 2010 and approved the commencement of public consultation. The plan contributes to the corporate objective 'to promote good relations' as stated in the Commission's 2008/2011

The Work of the Assembly Commission

(Revised 2009) Secretariat Corporate Plan. The Commission will now consider the responses received to the public consultation exercise in the new Parliamentary Session.

In fulfilling the obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Commission received 101 Freedom of Information requests up until the end of the Parliamentary Session. The requests covered a wide range of subjects relating to Members' expenses, Committee Business, environmental issues and Human Resource matters.

As the corporate body of the Assembly, the Commission is also responsible for providing the services required for a fully functioning legislature. This unique role is scrutinised in a number of ways, including answering Assembly questions through both written and oral response on the floor of the House. Over this reporting period, the Commission answered 54 written questions relating to governance and accountability matters. The Commission also answered 23 oral questions on the floor of the House. These questions related to a range of issues including accommodation, car parking, human resource issues, environmental issues and equality matters. The Commission continues to operate in an open and transparent manner with all minutes of meetings and other relevant corporate documentation published on the web.

The following sections of this report provide further information in relation to the performance and achievements of the key procedural services within the Assembly Secretariat and by each of the Committees. The report also details information relating to events, our educational service and accommodation requirements of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Commission's Strategic Priorities

The Assembly Commission has developed five strategic priorities to guide its work:

1. supporting Assembly business;
2. engaging the public;
3. supporting and developing our staff;
4. ensuring the effective governance of the Secretariat; and
5. accommodating the Assembly.

In relation to the first strategic priority, the Commission is responsible for the effective delivery and continuous improvement of support for Members in their work in Plenary sittings, Committees, constituencies and as office holders. To support these objectives, there are four key procedural offices in the Assembly Secretariat that offer support for Members in their Assembly work: the Business Office, the Bill Office, the Office of the Official Report (Hansard) and the Committee Office.

The Commission's Key Challenges

The Commission has agreed a number of key challenges to drive its work over the coming Parliamentary Session. Issues include:

- The continued implementation of our Engagement Strategy;
- The continued implementation of our Accommodation Strategy;
- The management of recommendations arising out of the Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB) Report relating to the salaries and financial support for Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Challenges include supporting the establishment of an Independent Statutory Body to set the salaries, pensions and financial support framework for MLAs.
- Making preparations for the next Assembly Mandate in May 2011;
- The continued implementation of our Sustainability Strategy;
- Driving forward our Section 75 and DDA obligations;
- The development of a European Strategy; and
- The implementation of an Information Management Strategy.

Business Office

The Business Office:

- supports Plenary sittings of the Assembly and meetings of the Business Committee;
- provides advice on procedures to the Speaker and Deputy Speakers, and to Members;
- operates tabling processes for motions, amendments and petitions and processes Assembly questions for oral and written answer; and
- manages the laying of documents and Statutory Rules in the Assembly.

The Business Office has two separate sections to carry out these functions:

The **Plenary Section** provides services and support to Assembly Plenary sittings and to the Business Committee. It produces all the Assembly's working papers for each Plenary sitting, including the Order Paper, which sets out the business for the day. The Plenary Section prepares a detailed brief to assist the Speaker to deal with all the business scheduled and provides advice about matters of order and other procedural issues. It also prepares the Minutes of Proceedings of the Assembly, which are the legal record of the Assembly's decisions and make up the *Journal of Proceedings of the Assembly*.

The **Table Section** manages questions for oral and written answer, assists and advises Members about questions, and produces the Written Answer Booklet. The Table Section also provides guidance to Departments on the arrangements for Assembly questions. It also deals with Executive Committee, Private Members' and Committee motions and amendments to motions, together with the list of topics for Adjournment debate as tabled by Members. The section manages the laying of documents, Statutory Rules and other publications in the Assembly.

A Working Assembly

Tabling and Plenary statistics – Session 2009/10

Questions tabled	
Written	8319
Oral	1525
	9844

Motions tabled	
Executive Committee	45
Committee	114
Private Members'	168

Adjournment debate topics tabled:	290
Statutory rules received:	380

Papers presented	
Laid papers	152
Papers presented	235
	387

Plenary statistics	
Plenary sittings	70
Business Committee meetings	38

Bill Office

The Bill Office supports the work of the Assembly in its consideration of primary legislation by preparing and arranging the publication of all primary legislative documents and by providing information and advice on the primary legislative process. The Bill Office also supports Members to prepare Private Members' Bills.

Legislative process

The First Stage of the legislative process begins when a Minister or a Member seeks to introduce a Bill to the Assembly. The Second Stage provides Members with an opportunity to debate the general principles of the Bill. After that debate, the Bill is sent to an appropriate Committee of the Assembly for more detailed scrutiny. The Committee will consider the evidence submitted and the provisions of the Bill before it makes a formal report to the Assembly. Members then have the opportunity to debate amendments at Consideration Stage and Further Consideration Stage of the Bill. The content of the Bill, as amended, is then subject to one last debate, known as Final Stage.

Bills introduced 2009/10 Session

Executive Bills	29
Commission Bills	1
Private Members' Bills	3
Committee Bills	0

Bills that became Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly

During the 2009/10 Session	14
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A Working Assembly

Bills given accelerated passage 2009/10

Rates (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 2/09)
Pensions Regulator Tribunal (Transfer of Functions) Bill (NIA Bill 4/09)
Budget Bill (NIA Bill 8/09)
Budget (No. 2) Bill (NIA Bill 11/09)
Budget (No. 3) Bill (NIA Bill 26/09)

Bills that received Royal Assent 2009/10

Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Bill (NIA Bill 15/07)
Diseases of Animals Bill (NIA Bill 22/07)
Financial Provisions Bill (NIA Bill 6/08)
Housing (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 7/08)
Employment Bill (NIA Bill 9/08)
Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (NIA Bill 10/08)
Forestry Bill (NIA Bill 11/08)
Department of Justice Bill (NIA Bill 1/09)
Rates (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 2/09)
Water and Sewerage Services (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 3/09)
Pensions Regulator Tribunal (Transfer of Functions) Bill (NIA Bill 4/09)
Budget Bill (NIA Bill 8/09)
Budget (No. 2) Bill (NIA Bill 11/09)
Budget (No. 3) Bill (NIA Bill 26/09)

Amendments

Number of amendments tabled	282
Number of amendments made	129
Number of oppositions to Clause/Schedule stand part	12
Number of questions on Clause/Schedule stand part negatived.	6

Office of the Official Report

The Office of the Official Report (Hansard) reports what happens in all Plenary sittings of the Assembly and those meetings of its Committees that consider legislation or take evidence. Each report is essentially a transcript of everything that is said and done, and it lists the names of all the Members who speak and records all the decisions they make.

In the 2009/10 parliamentary year (1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010), Hansard produced 74 Official Reports of 70 Plenary sittings (four of the reports were published in two parts because of the duration of the sittings) and 467 reports of Committee meetings. Indeed, it is worth noting that the sitting on Tuesday 22 September was the longest and latest ever sitting of the Assembly: the House did not rise until 00:50 hrs on Wednesday morning.

The reports of Assembly Plenary sittings are published on the Assembly's website on a phased basis during the day of each sitting and are then published in hard copy format by 8.30 am the next day. Reports published during the 2009/10 year contained over 6.7 million words, and in addition to hard copy reports, the Hansard pages on the Assembly's website received nearly 300 visits every day.

During the year, and after working closely with the Committee Office, Hansard assumed responsibility for publishing the Official Reports of Committee meetings. These are now published on the website within three working days of each meeting, which represents a substantial improvement in customer service (previously, such reports were generally not available until four weeks after each meeting).

After approximately every 10 sittings of the Assembly, a bound volume of Official Reports is published: this is the definitive version of the Official Report, and each volume contains the reports of all the debates, relevant Committee meetings, answers to written questions and written ministerial statements.

It is important to note that the Official Report is not a verbatim transcript; rather, it is an edited version. The proper definition of the

A Working Assembly

report is based on that contained in Erskine May (the parliamentary “Bible”), which has been in use by many Parliaments around the world since 1907. Erskine May states that the report:

“though not strictly verbatim, is substantially the verbatim report, with repetitions and redundancies omitted and with obvious mistakes corrected, but which on the other hand leaves out nothing that adds to the meaning of the speech or illustrates the argument.”

Hansard reports Members in the language that they use. During Plenary sittings of the Assembly, Hansard provides the Speaker and Clerks at Table with a simultaneous interpretation of speeches in Irish or Ulster Scots. The Official Report maintained its membership of the British-Irish Parliamentary Reporting Association (BIPRA) and the Commonwealth Hansard Editors Association (CHEA) and sent representatives to the BIPRA annual conference, which was held in Jersey.

Close working relationships continued to be developed with reporting organisations in other Parliaments and Assemblies, most notably those in the British Isles, but links have also been established with the Plenary Records Office in the European Parliament with a view to a mutual exchange of information, learning and development. In addition, Hansard was represented at the Hansard Association of Canada’s annual conference.

Finally, during the year Hansard started what is probably its most important project since the establishment of the Assembly through a project to replace its existing analogue recording technology with a digital system. The actual procurement exercise for the new system started in June and it is hoped that the new system will be operational during the 2010/11 parliamentary year.

Quick Facts

1

Most meetings of Assembly Committees are held in Parliament Buildings

2

Committee meetings are mainly held in public Session and visitors are welcome to attend

3

The programme of work for each Committee can be viewed on the Assembly website at www.niassembly.gov.uk

Committee Office

The following pages provide an insight into the work of the Assembly Committees. Committees play a key role in policy development, the passage of legislation and in scrutinising and holding the Executive to account.

The Assembly's Standing Orders provide for four types of Committee:

Statutory Committees are established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Belfast Agreement, section 29 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Standing Order 48. Twelve statutory Committees have been established to advise and assist the appropriate Minister on the formulation of policy in relation to matters within his/her responsibility. Specifically, the statutory Committees have the power to:

- consider and advise on departmental budgets and annual plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- consider relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee Stage of relevant primary legislation;
- call for persons and papers;
- initiate inquiries and produce reports; and
- consider and advise on matters brought to the Committee by its Minister.

Standing Committees are permanent Committees of the Assembly. The Standing Orders of the Assembly set out specific roles for each of the standing Committees. There are currently six: the Assembly and Executive Review Committee; the Audit Committee; the Business Committee; the Committee on Procedures; the Committee on Standards and Privileges; and the Public Accounts Committee.

Ad hoc Committees are established, as necessary, to consider specific, time-bound terms of reference that have been set by the Assembly. The Assembly decides the membership of ad hoc

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An Assembly Plenary sitting.

Committees and may direct their method of operation. No ad hoc Committees were established during this reporting period.

Joint Committees are established, as necessary, to consider matters of joint concern. Committees can sit concurrently or establish ad hoc joint Committees for the purpose. No ad hoc joint committees were established during this reporting period. However, there has been one meeting of Committees sitting concurrently. The Committee for Education and the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety sat concurrently to hear evidence from the Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health on its report 'A Flourishing Society: Aspirations for Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Northern Ireland'.

The work of Assembly Committees in 2009/10

During the period of this report, the Committees all delivered extensive work programmes: 505 Committee meetings were held, 34 of which took place outside Parliament Buildings; a total of 39 committee reports were produced on a wide range of issues; 10 Bills passed through Committee Stage; and 226 pieces of subordinate legislation were scrutinised.

On 12 April 2010, the Committee for Justice was established to scrutinise the work of the new Department of Justice. The newly established Committee plays a vital role in advising the Minister

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Northern Ireland's Justice Minister David Ford MLA takes to his feet in the Assembly Chamber.

of Justice on the development of departmental policies and plans and has a broad work programme considering key issues such as addressing delays in the criminal justice system, improving services for victims, Legal Aid reform and prison issues.

Seeking and considering input from stakeholders, both individuals and groups, is a key element of the work of Committees. A wide range of witnesses gave evidence to Committees, and information was also gathered outside formal meetings in a variety of ways, including fact-finding visits, major stakeholder conferences, informal meetings and receptions.

New ways of gathering evidence have been successfully employed during the period of this report. Examples include:

The Committee for Education held a Special Educational Needs public consultation event in Parliament Buildings. The Department of Education presented its proposals on changes to Special Educational Needs policy and took questions from a specialist panel of stakeholders. Attendees were given the opportunity to ask specific questions about the impact of the proposed changes.

The Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development held a Committee meeting and a question-and-answer Session at the Balmoral Show, Belfast. The Committee meeting was attended by

A Working Assembly

over 250 people and the question-and-answer Session was attended by over 900 people. Other Committees, Employment and Learning, Environment, Regional Development, and Enterprise, Trade and Investment, also held events at the Balmoral Show allowing people the opportunity to have their say and raise concerns relevant to the farming and rural community.

As part of European SME (small and medium-sized enterprises) Week the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment held a renewable energy seminar in the Long Gallery. The overall aim of the seminar was for Committee members to gain a better understanding of the issues that the renewable energy sector faces in relation to remaining competitive in the local and national economy; government policy; and the effects of legislation. Approximately 50 organisations were represented at the event.

The Committee for Employment and Learning hosted a discussion forum on Programme Led Apprenticeships. The event brought together colleges, employers, sector skills councils and officials from the Department for Employment and Learning for the first time. As a result, a formalised process of consultation between stakeholders and the Department for Employment and Learning has been established.

These techniques provided increased opportunities for a greater range of groups and organisations to engage with Committee members and put forward their views on a variety of issues.

Further information including minutes of meetings, Committee reports and information on current and future business can be found on the Committee pages of the Assembly website.



Research and Library Services

For the start of this Session, the Service completed a review of structures and grading. This allowed for a better management structure and enabled the appointment of subject specialists to 15 vacant research posts. In addition, a major research recruitment exercise was initiated and completed that appointed 11 Research Officers. A further recruitment exercise to fill the remaining four Research Officer vacancies is now close to completion. With the conclusion of 2009 library recruitment, Research and Library is near to achieving its full complement of staff for the first time since its establishment.

Research and Library's main priority is to provide Members and Committees with a range of information to enhance their debates and scrutiny role, using both traditional paper and electronic formats. It had particular impact in relation to some of the most significant political, economic and social developments during this Session. The mapping of new parliamentary constituency boundaries provided an important overview of NI to candidates prior to the 2009 UK General Election and will be developed further for the 2011 Assembly Elections, which will be based on the new boundaries. Research and Library also produced constituency profiles, including deprivation and population indicators, for all parliamentary constituencies, which saved Members significant time and effort by presenting complex information from multiple sources in an intelligent and intuitive format.

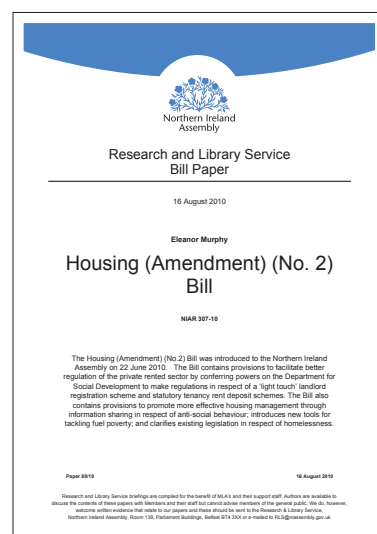
Research and Library's research paper on the economic impact and implications of the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review was completed within 24 hours of the Chancellor's speech, and armed Members with precise information on the likely extent and scale of cuts to the NI budget at a time of great public and media speculation and confusion. The Service also developed crucial research capability and capacity in justice matters to support the devolution of justice powers to NI.



Plinth above the Library Entrance

Research and Library developed and launched 'Horizon', the Assembly's online information awareness service, which provides high-level information on key policy developments and acts as a portal to relevant electronic publications. This has had the effect of significantly reducing the time and effort required to keep Members informed of relevant issues and prepared for their plenary and Committee business. Library staff also visited every Member's constituency offices (140 in total) to promote the service and to better support MLAs by learning about the way in which they operate and demonstrating the value of electronic access to our services. The Assembly is the first UK legislature to have successfully completed such an initiative, and these visits resulted in queries from 22 constituency offices which had not previously accessed Research and Library services, and marked an increase in user 'hits' to the Research and Library website, even during the traditionally quiet summer recess period. The Service has continued to run regular awareness sessions to inform all new and existing Members and Secretariat staff of the support available to them from Research and Library, and this has resulted in a significant increase in the number of registered borrowers and volume of enquiries.

During this period, Research and Library dealt with more than 5000 enquiries. Eighty Plenary Information Packs were produced to inform Plenary debates in the Chamber, covering a wide range of topics from fuel prices to compensation from the Government



Research and Library Service Bill Paper.

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Library Reception Area



Research and Library Service Information leaflet.

of Libya. Nine Committee Information Packs were produced to inform Committees' debates and scrutiny of issues, covering a wide range of topics from Educational Maintenance Allowance to Executive priority measures to deal with the economic crisis. As a new initiative, Visitor Packs were produced to inform and prepare Members and Officials to meet overseas delegations or attend external events. Twenty-five Bill Papers, 81 Research Papers, and 314 Briefing Notes were produced, covering a wide range of topics from tourism to Justice. The value of the support to Assembly business was recognised in the latest Members' Survey, where Research and Library achieved 100% satisfaction for Library enquiries, reading rooms and access to publications, 98.5% satisfaction for research services to Members and 97.8% satisfaction for research services to Committees.

During this Session, Research and Library continued to work in partnerships across the Directorate and the Secretariat to support engagement with the public. It continued to provide effective information support to existing parliamentary partnerships, such as the CPA and BIPA. The expertise and commitment of staff is vital to the quality of support given to Assembly business. During this Session, it made significant progress in the recruitment of permanent staff, and continued to invest in staff development through the new Learning & Development Strategy. It is expected this progress will be maintained and improved upon in the new Session.

STATUTORY COMMITTEES

Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

The Agriculture and Rural Development Committee has carried out a substantial programme of work in this Session.

The Diseases of Animals Bill received royal assent in January 2010. The Committee succeeded in securing the agreement of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to develop a Code of Practice for Searches of Premises under Warrant and in amending Clause 8 of the Bill (which links compliance with bio-security guidance and payment of compensation) to ensure that withholding of compensation would be limited to cases of outbreaks of brucellosis only.

The Forestry Bill received royal assent in June 2010. The Committee took evidence from a wide range of stakeholders and suggested and achieved a substantial number of amendments to the Bill in order to fully support the opportunities for a strategic and enhanced use of the forest estate in Northern Ireland. The Committee also succeeded in securing the creation and maintenance of a woodland inventory, in underlining the use of compulsory acquisition of land as a means of last resort and in preventing the introduction of fees for felling licences.

The Committee approved 43 pieces of secondary legislation including legislation on animal and plant health, organic farming and fishing.

During this Session the Committee published its report into the Dioxin Contamination Incident of December 2008. The report was produced with recommendations in order that the likelihood of a recurrence of such an incident and resultant effects on the Northern Ireland agriculture and food processing industries can be minimised. The report was debated and approved by the Assembly on 15 March 2010.

The committee held a number of one-off evidence sessions with stakeholders including the Ulster Farmers' Union, Northern Irish Agricultural Producers' Association, independent farmers and



The Members are:

Mr. Stephen Moutray (Chairperson) ^{4,9}

Mr. Tom Elliott (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr. PJ Bradley ^{3,7}

Mr. Willie Clarke

Mr. Pat Doherty ¹

Mr. William Irwin

Mr. Kieran McCarthy ⁸

Mr. Francie Molloy

Mr. George Savage

Mr. Jim Shannon ^{2,6}

Vacant (awaiting replacement) ^{5,10}

¹ Mr. Pat Doherty replaced Mr. Gerry McHugh with effect from 21st of January 2008.

² Mr. Edwin Poots replaced Mr. Allan Bresland with effect from 15 September 2008.

³ Mr. Patsy McGlone replaced Mr. PJ Bradley with effect from 29 June 2009.

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- 4 *Mr. Ian Paisley Jnr replaced Dr William McCrea with effect from 4 July 2009.*
- 5 *Dr William McCrea replaced Mr. Trevor Clarke with effect from 14 September 2009.*
- 6 *Mr. Jim Shannon replaced Mr. Edwin Poots with effect from 14 September 2009.*
- 7 *Mr. PJ Bradley replaced Mr. Patsy McGlone with effect from 8 March 2010.*
- 8 *On 13th April 2010 Mr. Kieran McCarthy was appointed as a Member of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development. On 13th April 2010 Mr. Thomas Burns ceased to be a Member of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development.*
- 9 *Mr. Stephen Moutray replaced Mr. Ian Paisley Jr as Chair of the Committee on the 23rd of June 2010, after Mr. Paisley resigned from the Assembly on the 21st June 2010.*
- 10 *Dr William McCrea resigned as a member with effect from 1st July 2010.*

representatives from local action groups. The Committee also held Sessions with An Creagan, on wind turbines; A5, A6 and A8 roads dualling groups in respect to roads issues within the farming communities; Bank authorities on banking issues within the Agriculture industry; with Rose Energy and AFBI on the proposals and studies into alternative uses for poultry litter; with the Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers' Association on the Common Fisheries Policy proposals on quotas; with NIMEA on the pros and cons of VIA of meat carcasses; with Dairy UK on the key issues facing the dairy industry and the WWF on the NI Floods Directive.

The Committee met on seven occasions to consider departmental returns for quarterly monitoring rounds, revised expenditure plans and efficiency delivery plans in areas such as hardship payments and Single Farm Payment Disallowances. This detailed examination of budgets has contributed to ensuring that departmental financial targets have been met.

The Committee held 18 meetings in order to examine the policy relating to the Forestry Bill, Dogs (Amendment) Bill and Welfare of Animals Bill. In addition, the Committee scrutinized policy in respect of 43 pieces of secondary legislation.

The Committee also received 66 presentations on policy issues from DARD and other industry stakeholders during the parliamentary Session, ensuring that the needs of the agricultural industry and rural communities are given priority in the development and implementation of policies.

The Committee held three meetings outside Parliament Buildings – one in Dublin, one in Castlewellan Forest Park, and another at the Balmoral Show.

The Committee carried out six visits within Northern Ireland, one in the Republic of Ireland and two visits to Europe.

The Committee put forward four motions to the Assembly - to extend the Committee stage of the Forestry Bill; for approval of the Dioxins Inquiry report; and for an extension of the Committee stage

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of the Dogs (Amendment) Bill. In addition the Committee put forth a motion for a Prayer of Annulment for S.R. 2010/125, the Eggs and Chicks Regulations (NI) 2010, although this was withdrawn when the Department agreed to Committee changes.

The Committee has a substantial work programme planned for the next Session. Public consultation on the Dogs (Amendment) Bill and on the Welfare of Animals Bill is ongoing throughout the summer period of 2010 and the Committee will take evidence from a wide range of stakeholders on both of these Bills in the autumn. The Committee will publish its reports on both of these Bills by December 2010. Scrutiny of the DARD budget will be ongoing and the Committee will hear from the Department in relation to the planned savings and cuts of the overall budget over the next four years. The Committee will be scrutinising DARD policy in relation to rural development, specifically the Rural White Paper and the concept of Rural Champion in order to ensure that the distinct needs of rural communities are met and anticipated on all future departmental and Executive policy. The Committee will also continue to build on its dynamic and responsive strategy in engaging with the agriculture industry and rural communities across Northern Ireland.



Members of the Committee meeting exhibitors at the Ballymena Show.



Committee Members with the EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Mariann Fischer Boel.



Members of the Committee and hosts preparing for a tour of an incineration plant in the Netherlands.



Members and schoolchildren celebrating the Bramley.



Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

During the 2009/10 Session the Committee held 36 meetings, hosted 10 stakeholder events, and arranged three performances in Parliament Buildings to showcase local musical and acting talent.

The Committee completed two inquiries and one review during this Session: an inquiry into the funding of the arts in Northern Ireland; a review of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure's (DCAL) management of the Northern Ireland Events Company (NIEC) and its other arm's-length bodies; and participation in sport and physical activity in Northern Ireland.

The Committee's Inquiry into the *Funding of the Arts in Northern Ireland* was published in November 2009. The key recommendations of the report focused on improvements to the distribution and overall levels of funding for the arts.

The Committee's review of the Department's management of the Northern Ireland Events Company and its other arms-length bodies was submitted to the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in July 2009. The Department responded positively to the Committee's recommendations in September 2009.

The Committee's inquiry into participation levels in sport and physical activity in Northern Ireland looked at the barriers to participation and also ways of increasing participation levels across the population and among groups with lower than average participation rates. The Committee's report will be published in autumn 2010.

The Committee considered legislation on eel fishing; fisheries regulations; and Waterways Ireland. The Committee also examined and advised the Department on the management of its annual budget (capital and revenue) through quarterly monitoring rounds and the revised spending plans.

The Members are:

Mr Barry McElduff (Chairperson)

Mr Declan O'Loan
(Deputy Chairperson)^{3,7}

Lord Browne of Belmont

Mr Thomas Burns⁷

Mr Trevor Clarke⁴

Mr Kieran McCarthy

Mr Billy Leonard⁶

Mr Raymond McCartney²

Mr David McClarty⁸

Ms Michelle McIlveen⁵

Mr Ken Robinson¹

1 Mr Ken Robinson replaced Mr David Burnside with effect from 18 June 2007.

2 Mr Raymond McCartney replaced Mr Paul Maskey with effect from 10 March 2008.

3 Mr PJ Bradley replaced Mr Pat Ramsey with effect from 29 June 2009.

4 Mr Trevor Clarke replaced Mr Jim Shannon with effect from 15 September 2009.

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The Committee also scrutinised a number of Departmental policies including stadia development; townland names; a draft tourism strategy; the draft language strategy; and the draft museum policy.

The Committee continued to engage with the Department on options for stadia development following the Minister's decision not to proceed with a multi-sports development. The Committee highlighted that the delays in stadia development had resulted in uncertainty over a venue for the World Police and Fire Games and the hosting of any of the events for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Following requests from the Committee, the Assembly Commission and Department of Education agreed to use the townland name of 'Ballymiscaw' in the official address of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Other Government Departments expressed commitments to include townland names in replies to anyone who has used them in their correspondence addresses.

Following the Committee's recommendation that the Department produce a museums policy for Northern Ireland, the Department briefed the Committee on the draft museums policy in May 2010 and awaits the outcome of the consultation in the autumn.

The Minister updated the Committee on the progress of the draft language strategy in July 2010. This followed concerns raised by the Committee that recommendations from the Council of Europe Committee of Experts report on implementing an Irish language and Ulster Scots strategy were not being given a high enough priority.



Waringstown Primary School choir perform in Parliament Buildings.

- 5 Ms Michelle McIlveen replaced Mr Nelson McCausland with effect from 15 September 2009.
- 6 Mr Billy Leonard replaced Mr Francie Brolly with effect from 7 January 2010.
- 7 Mr David McNarry ceased to be the Deputy Chairperson and Member of the Committee with effect from 12 April 2010. Mr Declan O'Loan was appointed Deputy Chairperson with effect from 13 April 2010. Mr Thomas Burns replaced Mr P J Bradley as with effect from 24 May 2010. Mr P J Bradley replaced Mr Declan O'Loan as Deputy Chairperson with effect from 28 May 2010. Mr Declan O'Loan replaced Mr P J Bradley as Deputy Chairperson with effect from 28 June 2010.
- 8 Mr David McClarty was appointed as a Member with effect from 13 April 2010. Mr Dominic Bradley ceased to be a Member with effect from 13 April 2010.



The Committee on a visit to the Sports Institute at the University of Ulster Jordanstown campus.

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The Committee visits the Cathedral Quarter in Belfast.



The Committee hosts a seminar on townland names at Parliament Buildings.

In June 2010, the Committee received a briefing from DCAL and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) officials on the draft tourism strategy for Northern Ireland. The Committee agreed to write to the DETI Minister to suggest that the Ministerial steering group should meet quarterly and provide a proactive lead on the tourism strategy. The Committee also raised its concerns with the Environment Committee over the detrimental impact of housing developments on the coastline.

Committee for Education

During the 2009/10 Session the Committee held 34 meetings in Parliament Buildings. The Committee concentrated on a number of areas including the Education Bill, the education 2009/10 and 2011-15 budget, the proposed Convergence Delivery Plan, and the Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Inclusion draft policy.

In addition the Committee considered a range of other policy issues, such as primary school and preparatory department funding; the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Review recommendations and implementation; the Literacy and Numeracy Revised Strategy; the Minister of Education's capital projects review, including replacement schools and maintenance backlog; support for nurture education; and Department data security and data protection issues.

The Committee also scrutinised a number of Statutory Rules and undertook scoping work for a possible Committee inquiry into the key characteristics of successful post-primary schools serving disadvantaged communities.

The Committee on 30 September 2009 agreed its Report to the Assembly on the Committee Stage of the Education Bill (NIA 3/08) which considered some of the key Committee concerns, including the request for urgent action to address a number of controlled schools sector issues. A total of 97 amendments and seven oppositions to clauses in the Bill were tabled on the Education Bill in anticipation of the Minister moving the Consideration Stage. In December 2009, the Education Minister acknowledged that because the Education Bill had not reached its Consideration Stage, it would not be possible for the Bill to become operational by 1 January 2010. She outlined plans for 'convergence' which included a reduction in the number of Education and Library Board members. The Convergence Delivery Plan, published in February 2010, was scrutinised by the Committee. The Committee was particularly interested in whether significant savings under the Plan could be delivered in 2010/11. The Department's



The Members are:

Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)

Mr David Hilditch (Deputy Chairperson) ^{1,2}

Mr Dominic Bradley ³

Mrs Mary Bradley

Mr Trevor Lunn

Mr John McCallister

Mr Basil McCrea

Miss Michelle McIlveen

Mr John O'Dowd

Ms Michelle O'Neill

Mr Alastair Ross ⁴

¹ On 13 April 2010 Mr Jonathan Craig ceased to be a Member of the Committee for Education.

² On 12 April 2010 Mr David Hilditch ceased to be a Member of the Committee for Education.

³ On 12 April 2010 Mr Dominic Bradley ceased to be a Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Education.

- 4 *With effect from 14 September 2009 Mr Jonathan Craig replaced Mr Edwin Poots and Mr Alastair Ross replaced Mr Nelson McCausland as Members of the Committee for Education.*

budget briefings to the Committee were routinely extended to include an update on progress with the Convergence Delivery Plan and when it was likely to produce actual savings.

The Committee's ten budget briefing Sessions on the 2009/10 and 2010/15 Education Budgets (including in-year monitoring) reflected the growing financial pressures and the need for savings to be achieved. The Committee continued to press the Minister and her senior officials to clarify the position on major capital projects expenditure.

On 14 January 2010 the Minister wrote to the Committee outlining the Executive's draft revised spending plans for 2010/11 which required savings from the Education Budget of £51.7million resource and £22million capital expenditure, and sought the Committee's input on potential areas where savings could be made. The Committee, following significant scrutiny, agreed a detailed response to the Minister on 5 February 2010.

The Committee received initial briefings from senior Departmental officials on the Department's position on planning for the Education Budget 2011-15. The Committee has demonstrated through its scrutiny of the 2009/10 and 2010/11 budgets that it gave a high priority to its budget scrutiny/advice role and emphasised to the Minister that it will continue to do so in relation to the future Education Budget. In June 2010 the Committee commissioned a briefing paper from Assembly Research on the possible appointment of a specialist budget advisor to the Committee to further enhance the Committee's scrutiny and advice to the Minister.

The Department launched the consultation on its Special Educational Needs and Inclusion policy proposals in August 2009. Due to the level of public interest in this, the period of consultation was extended. In a positive response to the very large volume of correspondence from both stakeholder organisations and from parents of children with SEN, the Committee agreed to host a SEN event on 20 January 2010. Those parents and organisations attending welcomed the Committee's initiative in hosting an event that delivered an effective platform for

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their concerns through a question and answer Session with senior Departmental officials. The Committee made its own detailed written response to the Department's proposals and included many of the stakeholder/parent contributions from the event. The Department, which extended the period of the consultation once again, has been asked to provide the Committee with an analysis of the unprecedented level of consultation responses as well as the Department's proposals on the way forward in light of those responses.

The Committee considered and approved five proposed Statutory Rules including the Education (Levels of Progression for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3) Transitional Order (NI) 2010.

The Committee's top key priorities for the 2010/11 Session will be scrutiny of the future Education Budget for 2011-15 and the closely associated Convergence Delivery Plan. Other key priorities for scrutiny will include the SEN and Inclusion Strategy, the draft Early Years (0-6) Strategy and the Committee's Inquiry on successful post-primary schools that serve disadvantaged communities.



The Committee visits Portadown College.



Committee for Employment and Learning

The Committee for Employment and Learning held 31 meetings during the 2009/10 Session, undertook a number of study visits throughout Northern Ireland, Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland and hosted many events to promote stakeholder engagement.

The Committee began its Inquiry into Young People (16-24) Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) by gathering evidence to better identify young people at most risk of becoming NEET. This enabled the Committee to examine options for appropriate strategies to address the increasing numbers of these young people. The Committee worked closely with the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) to finalise a scoping study and will continue to take further evidence in the 2010/11 Session to reflect the large number of stakeholder organisations that responded to the public consultation. It is intended that the Committee will consider its findings by the end of October 2010.

The Committee reported on the Employment Act 2010 which provides for the greater regulation and inspection of local employment agencies and ensures that they respect and apply minimum wage legislation. The Act also legislates for the membership of, and representation before the Industrial Court. The Act simplifies the process of making appointments to the Industrial Court, allowing for removal or suspension of members of the Court. The Act also provides for legal representation to be extended to all jurisdictions of the Industrial Court, except that which deals with the provision of voluntary arbitration in relation to industrial disputes. The Committee published its Report on the Bill on 6 November 2009; and the Bill passed its Final Stage in the Assembly on 15 June 2010, receiving Royal Assent on 2 August 2010.

The Student Loans (Amendment) Bill 2010 was introduced to the Assembly by the Minister, passed the Second Stage on 8 June 2010,

The Members are:

Mrs Dolores Kelly (Chairperson)¹

Mr Jonathan Bell (Deputy Chairperson)²

Mr Paul Butler

Mrs Claire McGill

Rev Dr Robert Coulter³

Mr Pat Ramsey⁴

Mr William Irwin⁵

Ms Sue Ramsey

Ms Anna Lo

Mr Peter Weir⁶

Mr David McClarty

¹ Mrs Dolores Kelly replaced Ms Sue Ramsey as Chairperson on 12 April 2010.

² Mr Jonathan Bell replaced Mr Peter Weir as Deputy Chairperson on 28 June 2010, and Mr Thomas Buchanan as a member on 1 February 2010.

³ Rev Dr Robert Coulter replaced Mr Basil McCrea on 15 September 2008.

⁴ Mr Pat Ramsey replaced Mr Alex Attwood on 29 June 2009.

⁵ Mr Alex Easton, Mr David Hilditch and Mr William Irwin replaced Mr Nelson.

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McCausland, Mr Alastair Ross and Mr Jimmy Spratt on 15 September 2008.

- 6 *Mr Peter Weir replaced Mr David Hilditch on 13 April 2010.*
- 7 *Mr Alastair Ross replaced Mr Jim Wells on 29 May 2007; Mr Robin Newton replaced Mr Jimmy Spratt as Deputy Chairperson on 10 June 2008; Mr Thomas Buchanan replaced Mr Robin Newton as Deputy Chairperson on 4 July 2009; Mr Trevor Clarke replaced Mr Alex Easton on 14 September 2009; Mr Peter Weir replaced Mr David Hilditch and became Deputy Chairperson on 12 April 2010; Mr Jonathan Bell ceased to be a member on 13 April 2010 and rejoined the Committee on 28 June 2010, as (1) above.*
- 5 *Mr Thomas Buchanan replaced Mr Robin Newton as Deputy Chairperson on 4 July 2009.*



Committee Members with NIE apprentices Stewart McConaghy, David Adamson and Ethan Furphy and their instructor Cathill McCarney during a visit to the NIE training centre at Nutts Corner.



Members and Sir Reg Empey MLA, Minister for Employment and Learning meet with the Governor of North Carolina, Beverly Perdue, at the State Capital in Raleigh NC.

and referred to the Committee on 9 June 2010. The Student Loan (Amendment) Bill proposes to exclude student loan repayment from Individual Voluntary Arrangements in respect of rescheduling debt. A public notice inviting submissions was published on 1 July 2010 and the Committee will continue its scrutiny in the 2010/11 Session, hoping to report on the Bill in early November 2010.

The Committee Stage of the Employment (No. 2) Bill, which will make changes to the way workplace dispute resolution is dealt with and will introduce provisions to allow workers to take time off work to train, began on Tuesday 22 June 2010. On 1 July the Committee published its public notice inviting submissions and it is intended that the Committee will report its findings in early December 2010.

During the Session the Committee considered 14 items of subordinate legislation, sought the views of relevant stakeholder organisations and, where appropriate, referred these to the Department for comment/action.

Scrutiny of the Departmental budget was carried out by the Committee during the Session including the Review of 2010/2011 Spending Plans and the Budget 2010 process. The Committee continues to work with the Department to make best use of the Department's resources.

Whilst the Committee had a scrutiny role in the Welfare Reform Bill 2010, it also scrutinised a number of programmes including Steps to Work/ Step Ahead; Workplace Dispute Resolution; Apprenticeships NI/ Programme Led Apprenticeships; and Success through Skills 2.

The Committee brought forward three motions to the Assembly: widening access to Educational Maintenance Allowance; the call for the Minister to promote the 'Get on Board' programme (encouraging participation in public appointments); and the Committee's concern over the Programme-Led Apprenticeships. All three received the support of the Assembly and provoked lively and useful debate.

The Committee aims to concentrate its attention on a wide and varied range of issues throughout the 2010/11 Session including the scrutiny of the DEL budget and finance; the NEETs Inquiry; Student Loans (Amendment) Bill and the Employment (No. 2) Bill.



Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

During this Session the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee met 32 times. The Committee considered the Debt Relief Bill and the Unsolicited Services (Trade and Business Directories) Bill. By the end of the Session the Energy Bill and the Tourism (Amendment) Bill were going through the Committee Stage. The Committee also took evidence in relation to the Caravans Bill and considered and supported the approval of 18 items of subordinate legislation.

The Committee further considered the outcomes of its credit union inquiry of 2008/09 and pressed for commitment from the Department and Treasury to bring forward legislation. The Committee commenced a renewable energy inquiry on the barriers to the development of renewable energy production and its associated contribution to the Northern Ireland economy. This is due for completion in January 2011.

During the Session the Committee regularly scrutinised and advised on the Department's budget in relation to allocation, expenditure and reductions.

The Independent Review of Economic Policy (IREP) was commissioned by the Department in December 2008 and was very much welcomed by the Committee. The Committee closely followed the progress and findings of the Report, which the Committee considered. Following the Minister's proposals to implement some of the recommendations of the Report, the Committee wrote to the Minister outlining its views.

The Committee will also have a key role in monitoring the Report's implementation over the coming years and advising the Department on the direction the strategic energy framework (SEF) is taking. Department officials have briefed the Committee several times on the development of the SEF. Key issues explored by the Committee included pre-consultation with key stakeholders, planned public consultation on the draft SEF, sustainability and security of supply

The Members are:

Mr Alban Maginness (Chairperson) ¹

Mr Paul Butler (Deputy Chairperson)⁴

Mr Sean Neeson

Mr David Simpson¹

Mr Gregory Campbell²

Mr Paul Frew³

Mr Gerry McHugh

Mr Alasdair McDonnell

Ms Jennifer McCann

Mr Daithí McKay⁶

Mr Leslie Cree⁵

¹ With effect from 14 September 2009 Mr David Simpson replaced Mr Robin Newton.

² With effect from 14 September 2009 Mr Gregory Campbell replaced Mr Jim Wells.

³ With effect from 28 June 2010 Mr Paul Frew replaced Mr Stephen Moutray.

⁴ With effect from the 14 September 2009 Mr Paul Butler replaced Ms Jennifer McCann as Deputy Chairperson.

along with associated cost implications, renewable energy, the environment and the single electricity market.

The renewable energy element of the SEF prompted the Committee to consider how Northern Ireland could further develop in this field, leading to its inquiry into renewable energy. The Committee will continue to monitor the progress of the SEF in the 2010/11 Session and to advise the Department as appropriate.

The Northern Ireland renewable obligations (NIRO) is the main financial support mechanism for encouraging the development of renewable electricity generation in Northern Ireland. It places a legal requirement on electricity suppliers to obtain a proportion of their supply from renewable energy sources. The Committee was dissatisfied by the number of renewable obligation certificates (ROCs) assigned to energy produced by anaerobic digestion in the 2010 NIRO and urged the Department to increase this for the 2011 NIRO. The Department has recently released its consultation on the 2011 NIRO and an increase for ROCs under anaerobic digestion is one of its main proposals.

The Committee was briefed by Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) officials on a draft tourism strategy for Northern Ireland. Members received clarification on the rationale behind the strategy, opportunities for tourism and the next steps in the process. The Committee questioned officials on the strategy's targets, how it contributes to the Department's public service agreements (PSA) for tourism and details of any cross-departmental plans. The consultation of the strategy ended on 20 May 2010 and the Committee will consider the outcomes and provide any additional input in the next Session.

The vision for the social economy enterprise (SEE) strategy is to have an enterprise environment that encourages greater social entrepreneurial activity and is supportive of those SEEs that want, to grow. The Committee noted the draft social economy enterprise strategy in 2008/09 and advised the Department on further requirements. Members received an oral briefing from Departmental officials on the final SEE strategy which included changes to the strategy based on the Committee's advice. The Committee has

5 *With effect from the 31 March 2010 Mr Alan McFarland stood down from membership of the committee.*

6 *On 13 April 2010 Mr Daithí McKay was appointed as a Member of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment.*

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Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (from left to right) Alasdair McDonnell, Paul Butler, Gerry McHugh, Jennifer McCann (Deputy Chairperson), Simon Hamilton, Mark Durkan (Chairperson), Robin Newton, Leslie Cree, Alan McFarland, Sean Neeson.

Not pictured is Jim Wells.

agreed to endorse the strategy subject to the inclusion of financial commitments and clear targets for its implementation. Having considered the 2010/11 SEE operating plan, the Committee agreed to receive updates every six months.

The Department has been updating the Committee on the progress on the telecommunications infrastructure for next generation networks (NGN) since early 2009 and the Committee has been supportive of the Department's approach. The Committee has agreed to receive quarterly updates on the progress of the project to ensure that the target date for operation is met.

Members considered the project plan for the Department's organisational review. Members agreed to request that the project team consult with the Committee in mid-November when they consult with staff and senior management on any proposed new structure.

The Committee brought forward two motions for debate in Plenary. The first expressed concern about continued delays in processing applications for project funding under the European Union INTERREG IVA Programme. The second was a take note debate on the case for a reduced rate of corporation tax in Northern Ireland. As both topics for the motions were cross-cutting issues with the Committee for Finance and Personnel, both motions were co-sponsored by the ETI Committee and Finance and Personnel Committee.

The top priorities on the Committee's agenda for the 2010/11 Session will be the economy, energy and tourism. The Committee will give a high priority to ensuring that the budget allocation to the Department is distributed across strategies and programmes that reflect the key priorities. The Committee will address its priorities through continual scrutiny of the Independent Review of Economic Policy implementation plan, next generation broadband project, the social economy enterprise strategy, the Northern Ireland tourism strategy and the strategic energy framework. The Committee's role is to ensure that these policies deliver significant benefits for business, consumers and the wider economy. The Committee will further consider the Energy Bill and Tourism (Amendment) Bill during 2010/11.

Committee for the Environment

During the Session the Committee held 40 meetings and hosted two stakeholder engagement events.

The Committee considered eight pieces of primary legislation including the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill; Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill; Local Government (Disqualification)(Amendment) Bill; Local Government (Finance) Bill; the Waste and Contaminated Land (Amendment) Bill; the High Hedges Bill; the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill; and the Caravans Bill.

The Committee produced its *Report on the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill*. The Report's recommendations were accepted by the Department and the Bill amended accordingly.

Following the Committee's Report on the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill, the Department of the Environment (DoE) amended the Bill in accordance with the Committee's suggestions relating to the biodiversity duty and Special Protection Orders and introduced powers that would allow tighter controls on the use of snares.

The Committee considered the Local Government (Disqualification) (Amendment) Bill and produced a report on it after taking evidence Sessions from the sponsor of the Bill, Dawn Purvis MLA, and the Women's Resource and Development Agency.

During the 2009/10 Session, the Committee Stages of the Local Government (Finance) Bill, the Waste and Contaminated Land (Amendment) Bill, the High Hedges Bill and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill commenced. Members held oral evidence Sessions on both the Local Government (Finance) Bill and Waste and Contaminated Land (Amendment) Bill and will begin oral evidence Sessions on the other two Bills in September 2010. The Committee will produce a report on the Waste and Contaminated Land Bill by 5 November 2010 and reports on the other three Bills by 17 December 2010.



The Members are:

Mr Cathal Boylan (Chairperson)⁹

Mr Patsy McGlone (Deputy Chairperson)^{6,9,10,12}

Mr Roy Beggs²

Mr Jonathan Bell^{7,8}

Mr John Dallat⁵

Mr Danny Kinahan^{3,4}

Mr Ian McCrea

Mr Daithí McKay

Mr Alastair Ross¹

Mr Peter Weir

Mr Brian Wilson¹¹

- ¹ On 21 January 2008, Alastair Ross was appointed as a Member and Mr Alex Maskey ceased to be a Member.
- ² On 15 September 2008 Mr Roy Beggs replaced Mr Sam Gardiner.
- ³ On 29 September 2008 Mr David McClarty replaced Mr Billy Armstrong.
- ⁴ On 22 June 2009 Mr Danny Kinahan replaced Mr David McClarty.
- ⁵ On 29 June 2009 Mr John Dallat replaced Mr Tommy Gallagher.

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- 6 On 3 July 2009 Mrs Dolores Kelly replaced Mr Patsy McGlone as Chairperson.
- 7 On 15 January 2010 Mr Adrian McQuillan replaced Mr Trevor Clarke.
- 8 On 1 February 2010 Jonathan Bell replaced Mr Adrian McQuillan.
- 9 On 12 April 2010 Mr Cathal Boylan was appointed as Chairperson and Mrs Dolores Kelly ceased to be a Member.
- 10 On 12 April 2010 Mr Dominic Bradley was appointed as Deputy Chairperson.
- 11 On 13 April 2010 Mr Brian Wilson was appointed as a Member and Mr David Ford ceased to be a Member.
- 12 On 21 May 2010 Mr Patsy McGlone replaced Mr Dominic Bradley as Deputy Chairperson.



Members on a visit to Fife Council, Scotland.



Members and RSPB representatives at the red kite project.

In addition, the Committee took evidence from the sponsor of the Caravans Bill. This Bill was referred to the Committee for Social Development but includes powers for the Department of the Environment to amend the definition of caravans. The Committee reported on the relevant clauses to the Committee for Social Development.

The Committee considered 32 Statutory Rules and requested an oral briefing on the Passenger and Goods Vehicles (Recording Equipment) (Downloading and Retention of Data) Regulations, particularly on the economic impact of these regulations on businesses. The Committee also requested a written briefing on the retrofitting and refilling of mobile air conditioning systems of vehicles which are in service regulations. Members requested further information on regulations to initially allow and eventually require the fitting and use of new illuminated signs and flashing warning lights on school buses to ensure that mechanisms, resources and legislation are put in place simultaneously.

The Committee wrote to the Department in relation to The Solvent Emissions (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2010 with concerns that the regulations were drafted in a rush. The Committee agreed with the Examiner of Statutory Rules' recommendation that the Department needed to look at this further to consider how the amendments of the regulations in question could be set out more clearly. The Committee was satisfied with the Department's response which stated that it fully accepted that this situation should not have occurred and that it will work closely with the Examiner's Office to ensure that it does not reoccur.

The Committee received regular updates on the departmental quarterly monitoring rounds. Members requested further information in relation to departmental bids and questioned underlying policy where necessary in areas such as the redeployment of Planning Service staff, deferred income and overspend in areas such as the electronic planning system, ePIC. The Committee is keeping a watching brief on these ongoing issues.

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Committee visits environmental community projects in Armagh.

The Committee considered 31 proposals for secondary legislation and received briefings from departmental officials where appropriate. The Committee also considered 78 consultation documents and issued responses to consultations on the Department's marine policy proposals, planning reform, several Planning Policy Statements and the Road Safety Strategy 2010/2020.

The key priority for the next Session is to complete Committee reports on four Bills: Local Government (Finance) Bill; Waste and Contaminated Land (Amendment) Bill; High Hedges Bill; and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill. Other key priorities will be the Department's response to the Committee's inquiry into climate change; the Budget process 2011–14; the implementation of the Taxis Act 2008; waste obligations; and the responses to the Department's road safety strategy consultation.



Committee for Finance and Personnel

The Committee met on 33 occasions during 2009/10 and was represented at a number of informal meetings and events. One Committee meeting was held at Bryson House, Belfast and included a tour of Bryson's recycling facility in Mallusk. The Committee considered six Bills, including three Budget Bills; concluded three inquiries; examined a number of Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) policies; scrutinised 19 Statutory Rules, and considered four additional proposals for subordinate legislation.

At the start of the Session, the Committee considered DFP's request for accelerated passage for the Rates (Amendment) Bill. Having made a significant contribution to the Executive's Review of the Domestic Rating System in 2007, and received a number of briefings on the key provisions contained in the Bill throughout the 2008/09 Session, the Committee agreed to support DFP's request. The Bill was introduced to the Assembly on 14 September 2009 and received Royal Assent on 3 November. The Minister subsequently consulted carefully with the Committee on the timing of the introduction of the provision included in the Bill with regard to the rating of empty homes. A number of concerns were raised by the Committee which were taken on board by the Department, and the Minister pointed out that the Committee's valuable input led to a significantly better policy for the rating of empty homes.

As part of its work on the Financial Provisions Bill, the Committee considered amendments proposed by the Minister of Finance and Personnel. These included creating statutory powers for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) to incur expenditure for children and young persons and for sustainable development. The Committee supported the amendments and the Bill received Royal Assent on 12 December 2009.

The Committee published the Report on its Inquiry into Public Procurement Policy and Practice in Northern Ireland in February 2010. The

The Members are:

Ms Jennifer McCann (Chairperson) ⁵

Mr David McNarry (Deputy Chairperson) ³

Mr Jonathan Craig ⁶

Dr Stephen Farry

Mr Simon Hamilton ¹

Mr Fra McCann

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin

Mr Adrian McQuillan

Mr Declan O'Loan

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr ²

Ms Dawn Purvis

Mr Peter Weir ⁴

¹ Mr Simon Hamilton replaced Mr Mervyn Storey as Deputy Chairperson on 10 June 2008.

² Mr Ian Paisley Jnr replaced Mr Mervyn Storey on 30 June 2008 and subsequently left the Committee on 21 June 2010.

³ Mr David McNarry replaced Mr Roy Beggs on 29 September 2008 and was appointed Deputy Chairperson on 12 April 2010.

Inquiry included a stakeholder conference as an innovative way of taking evidence and the subsequent report contained over 40 findings and recommendations directed towards the Executive, the Procurement Board, the Department of Finance and Personnel, Central Procurement Directorate and other departments. These recommendations addressed the three major themes raised by the key stakeholders during the Inquiry including: improving policy and processes; maximising social benefit; and building the capacity of purchasers and suppliers. In April 2010, the Minister stated that the "report will have a major part to play in further developing public procurement policy and ensuring that public procurement expenditure can be used to maximise the outcomes for the people and the economy of Northern Ireland". At the end of June 2010, the Committee took evidence from the Procurement Board on the response to the Inquiry recommendations and related action plan. Work on implementing approximately 30 of these action points is already underway. The Committee will continue to monitor their implementation to ensure that public procurement is used more effectively by the Executive as a strategic policy tool.

The Committee's Report on its Preliminary Inquiry into Public Sector Efficiencies, debated in plenary on 21 June 2010, contained over 25 recommendations for the Executive and DFP. These recommendations focused on a number of key areas including: the need for a strategic approach to efficiency savings; planning, delivering and monitoring efficiencies; improving public sector efficiency in the future; and other related issues.

Following the completion of the first stage of the Committee's Inquiry into the Role of the Northern Ireland Assembly in Scrutinising the Executive's Budget and Expenditure in October 2008, the Committee repeatedly pressed for completion of DFP's Review of the Executive's 2008/11 budget process, which was completed in spring 2010. Members considered the review recommendations in its second Inquiry report and identified a number of key findings and recommendations which are intended to inform the establishment of a regularised budget process. The Second Inquiry Report was the subject of a debate in plenary early in the 2010/11 Assembly Session.

- 4 *Mr Peter Weir replaced Mr Simon Hamilton as Deputy Chairperson on 4 July 2009. Mr Weir ceased to be a member of the Committee on 12 April 2010.*
- 5 *Ms Jennifer McCann replaced Mr Mitchel McLaughlin as Chairperson on 9 September 2009.*
- 6 *Mr Jonathan Craig was appointed as a Member of the Committee for Finance and Personnel on 13 April 2010.*



The Committee is proceeding with the next stage of its Budget Scrutiny inquiry, which is to review the resources available to Statutory Committees and Members in undertaking budget and financial scrutiny. The Committee intends to complete this stage of the Inquiry by the end of the mandate.

The Committee continued to closely scrutinise the quarterly monitoring rounds at both departmental and strategic levels. Additionally, the Committee co-ordinated the response to the review of departmental spending plans on behalf of all Assembly Statutory Committees. In its Report on the Review of 2010/11 Spending Plans for NI Departments, published on 11 March 2010, the Committee was strongly critical of the lack of engagement by a majority of Departments with their Assembly Committees and also raised concerns around the transparency of this “mini-budget” process.

The Committee has also reviewed a number of key policy areas including departmental performance against Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets and the departmental business plan; Enterprise Shared Services; European funding (INTERREG IVA); building regulations; equal pay and Senior Civil Service (SCS) pay and bonuses

The Committee also examined a range of other issues of economic and social importance to the local community. These included the following: the creation of the Republic of Ireland’s National Asset Management Authority (NAMA), including an assurance from the Minister of Finance and Personnel that there would be Northern Ireland representation on the NAMA Board; the case for a reduced rate of corporation tax for Northern Ireland; the cost of insurance in Northern Ireland; the practicalities of providing support to carers through rate relief, and issues surrounding the local financial sector.

A key priority for the Committee during the 2010/11 Session will be the Budget 2010, including the co-ordination of the Statutory Committee responses. Other immediate issues include completion of the Committee Stages of the Construction Contracts (Amendment) Bill and the Damages (Asbestos-Related Conditions) Bill; scrutiny of Enterprise Shared Services; and examining the outcome from the review of SCS pay and bonuses.

Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

During the 2009/10 Session the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety held 35 meetings; one joint meeting (with the Committee for Education); 15 informal lunchtime meetings; three functions for health related groups and an informal meeting with the Dáil Committee for Health & Children. The Committee began the Committee Stages of the Sunbeds Bill [NIA 18/09] and the Safeguarding Board Bill [NIA 25/09] and considered and approved 39 Statutory Rules.

The Report on the Committee's Inquiry into obesity was debated and approved by the Assembly on 16 November 2009. The report contained 24 recommendations on both health and education aspects of obesity and weight management of which 22 were accepted by the relevant Departments.

The Committee scrutinised the departmental budget and took evidence from the Minister, departmental officials, trade union representatives, all five Health & Social Care Trusts and the Health & Social Care Board/Public Health Agency.

The Committee also examined a number of policies including the Department's handling of the swine flu pandemic, a proposed private Members Bill on autism, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) report on hygiene and infection control in the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust, and the RQIA report on intrapartum care in Northern Ireland.

The Committee put forward two motions which were debated by the Assembly. These were the RQIA report on hospital hygiene and the request for the Minister to seek to secure the agreement of the Secretary of State to initiate a time bound public inquiry into the multi agency aspects of the McElhill / McGovern tragedy in Omagh.



The Members are:

Mr Jim Wells (Chairperson) ⁴

Ms Michelle O'Neill
(Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Micky Brady ^{1,13}

Mr Pól Callaghan ^{3,11,14}

Dr Kieran Deeny

Mr Alex Easton

Mr Tommy Gallagher ^{8,10}

Mr Sam Gardiner ²

Mr Paul Girvan ^{9,12}

Mr John McCallister

Ms Sue Ramsey

1 With effect from 20 May 2008 Mrs Claire McGill replaced Ms Carál Ní Chuilín.

2 With effect from 15 September 2008 Mr Sam Gardiner replaced Rev Dr Robert Coulter.

3 With effect from 29 June 2009 Mrs Dolores Kelly replaced Mr Tommy Gallagher.

4 With effect from 4 July 2009 Mr Jim Wells replaced Mrs Iris Robinson.

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- 5 With effect from 14 September 2009 Mrs Iris Robinson replaced Mr Thomas Buchanan.
- 6 With effect from 12 January 2010 Mrs Iris Robinson resigned as an MLA.
- 7 With effect from 15 January 2010 Mrs Carmel Hanna resigned as an MLA.
- 8 With effect from 26 January 2010 Mr Conall McDevitt replaced Mrs Carmel Hanna.
- 9 With effect from 1 February 2010 Mr Thomas Buchanan replaced Mrs Iris Robinson.
- 10 With effect from Monday 24 May 2010 Mr Tommy Gallagher replaced Mr Conall McDevitt.
- 11 With effect from Monday 24 May 2010 Mrs Mary Bradley replaced Mrs Dolores Kelly.
- 12 With effect from Monday 13 September 2010 Mr Mickey Brady replaced Mrs Claire McGill.
- 13 With effect from Monday 13 September 2010 Mr Paul Girvan replaced Mr Thomas Buchanan.
- 14 With effect from Monday 22 November 2010 Mr Pól Callaghan replaced Mrs Mary Bradley.

Key priorities for the Committee during the 2010/11 Session include the Sunbeds Bill, Safeguarding Board Bill, the Private Member's Autism Bill and the departmental budget.



The Committee meets with key stakeholders in Parliament Buildings.



Members of Fire and Rescue Service demonstrate their work at Parliament Buildings.

Committee for Justice

Following the devolution of policing and justice functions and the appointment of Mr David Ford MLA as Minister of Justice, the Committee for Justice was established on 12 April 2010.

The Committee is a Statutory Committee with a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department of Justice. It also plays a key role in the consideration and development of justice related legislation.

Since the establishment of the Committee, it has held 10 meetings in Parliament Buildings. One of these meetings was held in closed Session to discuss with the Minister of Justice and his officials the murder of Mr Bobby Moffett and the ongoing security situation. The Committee has also undertaken two visits. One was to H M Prison Maghaberry, which provided Members with the opportunity to meet staff, managers and prisoners and discuss a wide range of prison-related issues, and the other was to the Probation Board, when Members were briefed on the work of probation staff and the programmes they deliver.

At its first meeting on 22 April 2010 the Committee received a briefing from the Minister of Justice and the Permanent Secretary to establish the key issues and priorities for the Department of Justice over the coming year. The Committee then undertook a series of background information briefings to gain a clear understanding of the role and remit of the Department of Justice and its key agencies, the NI Prison Service and the NI Courts and Tribunals Service. In addition, the Committee met with and received briefings from the Chief Inspector of the Criminal Justice Inspectorate NI and the Attorney General for Northern Ireland.

The Committee has identified tackling avoidable delay in the criminal justice system; improving services for victims; issues relating to the Prison Service including the very high cost per prisoner place; and Legal Aid reform as its priorities.

The Committee has undertaken pre-legislative scrutiny of an extensive range of policy proposals that are likely to feature in the Justice Bill that the Department intends to introduce early in the autumn. These covered Special Measures, Sex Offender Notification, Court Boundaries, Public Prosecution Service Commencement Proceedings, Alternatives to Prosecution, Local Partnership Working on Policing and Community Safety, Offender Levy, Sports Law, Reform of Legal Aid, and Solicitors'



The Members are:

Lord Morrow (Chairperson)

Mr Raymond McCartney
(Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Tom Elliott

Mr Paul Givan²

Mr Alban Maginness

Mr Conall McDevitt¹

Mr David McNarry

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín

Mr John O'Dowd

Vacant³

Vacant⁴

¹ With effect from 24 May 2010 Mr Conall McDevitt replaced Mrs Dolores Kelly.

² With effect from 11 June 2010 the Rt Hon Jeffrey Donaldson resigned as an MLA and therefore no longer a Member of the Committee. With effect from 28 June 2010 Mr Paul Givan replaced the Rt Hon Jeffrey Donaldson.

³ With effect from 25 June 2010 Mr Alastair Ross resigned as a Member of the Committee.

- 4 *With effect from 21 July 2010 Mr. Jonathan Bell (DUP) resigned as a Member of the Committee.*



Lord Morrow speaks in the Assembly Chamber.

Rights of Audience. The Committee recommended a number of changes to the proposals, which have been accepted by the Department and will influence the shape of the Bill. Examples include the introduction of a two-tier offender levy rate for custodial sentences to reflect the greater harm caused to victims by those convicted of serious and violent offences and the extension of the arrangements for dealing with first time petty shoplifting to provide that a fixed penalty could be issued where the individual agreed to replace goods that had been eaten or inadvertently spoiled and not just where goods were recovered in a resaleable condition.

Other key issues the Committee has considered during the period of this report include legal aid reform proposals, tribunal reform in Northern Ireland, police injury pensions and the Department's budget.

The Committee has spent some time scrutinising legal aid reform - in particular criminal legal aid - including proposals for changes to remuneration of defence representation in the Crown Court and assignment of two counsel in the Crown Court. While recognising the need to reduce the legal aid budget the Committee is determined that access to justice will be central to any decisions made in relation to changes. The Committee has taken evidence on the issues from departmental officials, representatives of the Law Society and representatives of the Bar Council and has urged the Department and the two bodies to work together to reach an agree way forward.

The Committee has considered proposals for the Department of Justice to assume statutory responsibility for the administration of tribunals. Following consultation with other Statutory Committees the Committee has indicated that it is content in principle with the proposals.

In relation to police injury pensions the Committee has questioned the Department on delays being experienced by police officers in connection with appeals of payment levels relating to police injury pensions and its role in the appeals process. Following the evidence Session the Committee welcomed the review of the process launched by the Minister and called on him to ensure that everything possible was done to speed up the appeals process.

In preparation for consideration of proposals for the Budget 2010 period, which will set the Department's financial position for the next four years, the Committee was briefed on the Department's budget for 2010/11 including the key elements of spend and potential pressures.

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In June the Committee considered the Department's draft addendum to the Programme for Government. The Committee did not agree the draft and raised a number of issues including the need for the key goals to be revised to ensure that they covered all the priority areas for the Department and the need for some of the targets, particularly those to increase confidence in the justice system, to be more ambitious and challenging. The Minister has accepted the points raised and will provide a revised version for the Committee's scrutiny in September 2010.

The Committee's key priorities for the next Session will be the Justice Bill; the review of prisons announced by the Minister of Justice on 21 June 2010; consideration of actions to be taken by the Department and key justice organisations including the PSNI and the Public Prosecution Service to address the issues raised in the Criminal Justice Inspectorate Report on reducing avoidable delay in the criminal justice system with the aim of improving services to victims and witnesses; legal aid reform; the Department's budget proposals for 2011/15, and mental health issues and prisoners.



Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Over the 2009/10 Session the Committee held a total of 31 Committee meetings.

The main work of the Committee was centred on the Committee's "Consideration of European Issues" Inquiry. The Report made a number of recommendations to the Assembly Commission and to the First Minister and deputy First Minister. The Report also contained a number of actions for the Committee and other statutory Committees in order to improve scrutiny of European issues.

The Members are:

Mr Danny Kennedy (Chairperson)

Dr Stephen Farry (Deputy Chairperson) ³

Ms Martina Anderson

Mr Tom Elliott

Mrs Dolores Kelly²

Mr Barry McElduff

Mr Francie Molloy

Mr Stephen Moutray

Mr George Robinson¹

Mr Jim Shannon

Mr Jimmy Spratt

¹ with effect from 14 September 2009 Mr George Robinson replaced Mr Ian McCrea.

² with effect from 24 May 2010 Mrs Dolores Kelly replaced Mr Alex Attwood.

³ with effect from 29 June 2010 Dr Stephen Farry replaced Mrs Naomi Long.

The Committee followed up on the recommendations within the report and took evidence from a number of key stakeholders. During a visit with the Assembly Commission to Brussels, the Committee met with a number of key stakeholders and other regional parliaments in Europe. The Committee took formal evidence from the Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian Governments in relation to their priorities for the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Committee and the Assembly Commission also met with the three MEPs in the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels.

The Committee scrutinised the Department of Justice Bill and, following consultation, produced its report on 21 October 2009. The Bill paved the way for devolution of justice on 12 April 2010.

The Second Stage of the Commissioner for Older People Bill was debated in the Chamber followed by the beginning of the Committee Stage of the Bill. The Committee took evidence from a number of stakeholders, including the Older People's Advocate, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, the Northern Ireland Ombudsman and Age NI. The Committee will continue with its scrutiny of the Bill in the new Session.

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The Committee considered and agreed a number of Statutory Rules including the Salaries (Assembly Ombudsman and Commissioner for Complaints) Order (NI) 2009, the Fair Employment (Specification of Public Authorities) (Amendment) Order, the Race Relations Order (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 and the Employment Equality (Age) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 and the Census Order 2010. The Committee also considered the Disability Discrimination (Transport Vehicles) Regulations and agreed in principle with the Regulations.

The Committee played a significant role in examining the amendments to the UK Child Poverty Bill and agreed that it was content for the Legislative Consent Motion to proceed. The Committee also provided a detailed information pack for all Members of the Assembly for the Legislative Consent Motion.

The Committee scrutinised in detail and advised the Department on its budget in relation to allocation, expenditure and reductions. The Department also consulted the Committee whenever its quarterly monitoring rounds were completed. The Committee closely examined budget readjustments and reclassifications that were proposed by the Department.

The Committee meets with the President of the Catalan Parliament.

The Committee continued with its review of the gender equality strategy and the accompanying strategy actions plans. The Committee received oral evidence from representatives of the Gender Advisory Panel and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. Following this, the Committee agreed that it was content for the Department to publish the Departmental action plans for the gender equality strategy.

Following on from the Committee's report on child poverty, the Committee was briefed by junior Ministers on what the Department and the Executive were doing on this issue. The Committee was also briefed by junior Ministers on the work of the Executive Sub-Committee on poverty and social inclusion. The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People also briefed the Committee on its work in relation to child poverty.

The Committee met with the Victims and Survivors Commissioners regarding the draft strategy and proposals for a Victims and Survivors Forum and Victims and Survivors Service. It also met with Departmental officials concerning the proposed Victims and Survivors Service a number of times. The consultation and development of the proposed Victims and Survivors Service was a key priority for the Committee in this Session. The Committee now awaits the outcome of the work of the steering and working groups set up by the Department to establish the Victims and Survivors Service.

The Committee has a number of priorities for the 2010/11 Session, including the continuation of its scrutiny of the Commissioner for Older People Bill. The Committee will be considering responses to the Department's consultation on the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration and playing an active role in the development of this Programme. The Committee will continue its scrutiny of the Department's work in relation to children and young people as well as sustainable development and remains committed to improving its interaction in Europe. It is also expected that the Committee will begin the Committee Stage of the Victims and Survivors Service Bill.

Committee for Regional Development

The Committee held 38 meetings during 2009/10 Session. It took forward the Committee Stage of the Water and Sewerage Services (Amendment) Bill; the Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill; and has just begun the Transport Bill. Members considered more than 115 items of subordinate legislation and also moved forward the Committee's Sustainable Transport Inquiry; this work is now nearing completion. The Committee scrutinised the Department for Regional Development's spending, its preparation for Budget 2010 and a varied range of the Department's policies. Members took part in three engagement events, including the Balmoral Show, and met outside Parliament Buildings on three occasions. The Committee also undertook five study visits relating to key issues on its work programme.

During the 2009/10 Session, the Committee scrutinised and reported on two Bills: the Water and Sewerage Services (Amendment) Bill and the Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill; and started work on the Committee Stage of the Transport Bill.

The purpose of the Water and Sewerage Services (Amendment) Bill was to ensure the continued provision of customer subsidy to Northern Ireland Water Limited in the absence of funding through customer charging for water and sewerage services. The Bill was introduced in the Assembly on 21 September 2009 and passed Second Stage on 29 September 2009. The Committee Stage of the Bill commenced on 30 September 2009 and concluded on 6 January 2010. This Bill was largely technical in nature and the Committee agreed to all the clauses without the need for amendment. The Committee did, however, raise a number of concerns during its consideration of the proposals in the Bill. These issues included the cost implications of continued deferral of charging; the reclassification of Northern Ireland Water; VAT treatment of Northern Ireland Water; and the Committee's role in any future decision by the Executive on water and sewerage services.



The Members are:

Mr Fred Cobain (Chairperson)

Miss Michelle McIlveen
(Deputy Chairperson)⁴

Mr Cathal Boylan

Mr Allan Bresland¹

Mr Billy Leonard⁶

Mr Danny Kinahan²

Mr Fra McCann⁹

Mr Trevor Lunn⁷

Mr Ian McCrea⁵

Mr Conall McDevitt^{3,8}

Mr George Robinson

¹ With effect from 15 September 2008 Mr Allan Bresland replaced Mr William Irwin and Mr Alastair Ross replaced Mr Stephen Moutray.

² With effect from 22 June 2009 Mr Danny Kinahan replaced Mr John McCallister.

³ With effect from 29 June 2009 Mr Tommy Gallagher replaced Mr John Dallat.

⁴ With effect from 4 July 2009 Miss Michelle McIlveen replaced Mr Jim Wells.

⁵ With effect from 16 September 2009 Mr Ian McCrea replaced Mr Alastair Ross.

- 6 *With effect from 13 April 2010 Mr Billy Leonard replaced Mr Raymond McCartney.*
- 7 *With effect from 13 April 2010 Mr Brian Wilson ceased to be a Member of the Committee for Regional Development and Mr Trevor Lunn was appointed as a Member of the Committee for Regional Development.*
- 8 *With effect from 24 May 2010 Mr Conall McDevitt replaced Mr Tommy Gallagher.*
- 9 *With effect from 13 September 2010 Mr Fra McCann replaced Mr Willie Clarke.*

Following on from the Committee's pre-legislative scrutiny of the proposed Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill in the 2008/09 Session, the Committee considered the Bill as introduced in the Assembly on 18 January 2010 and, at Second Stage debate on 26 January 2010, spoke in support of the principles of the Bill. The purpose of this Bill was to introduce better authorisation practices, giving local councils the power to close roads for special events on roads, and to introduce a permit scheme to control work on roads.

During the Committee Stage, the Committee sought two amendments to the Bill: the first was for greater Assembly control over the delegated powers in the Bill to create offences; and the second inserted a clearer definition of filming in relation to road closures for special events. The Department accepted and took forward these amendments. The Committee also made recommendations to the Department in relation to the findings of the Public Accounts Committee's report on Roads Openings by Utilities (Report 33/08/09R) in implementing, managing and monitoring the permit scheme that the Bill makes provision for. The Committee also identified the need to keep the scheme under review and, as a result of the review process, to consider the need to amend the Street Works (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

The main purpose of the Transport Bill is to create an effective, efficient and sustainable public transport system for Northern Ireland that contributes to the Executive's transportation, environmental, social inclusion and equality objectives. This will be achieved through the introduction of new service delivery arrangements, enabling the Department to contract with public transport operators while ensuring compliance with EC Regulations. The Bill also includes powers to award contracts for rapid transit. The Department will become responsible for public transport service delivery through the contracting and service permit systems which are proposed in this Bill. The Bill was introduced in the Assembly on 21 June, passed Second Stage on 29 June 2010 and now stands referred to the Committee for Committee Stage, which should be concluded by the end of December 2010.

The Committee continued its work on the issue of sustainability in public transport. The Committee's call for evidence focused around the inquiry's terms of reference which aim to explore and clarify the

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Committee Members visit George Best Belfast City Airport.



Committee Members on a visit to the Belfast sewers project.

social, environmental and economic aspects of sustainable transport; to identify the policies, attitudes and technologies likely to underpin a move to more sustainable transport in Northern Ireland; and to make recommendations to the Assembly in this area. The Committee considered early drafts of its report to the Assembly and agreed drafting directions for its conclusions and recommendations. It proposed to finalise its report in the next Session.

During this Session, the Committee undertook detailed scrutiny and provided feedback to the Minister on the Department's quarterly monitoring round returns. Members remained concerned that funding levels for structural maintenance are seriously inadequate, and that the future funding of water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland must be addressed by the Executive. Members are aware of the challenge faced in this particular budget round, and have expressed the view that investment in infrastructure must continue to provide much needed support to the local economy and to underpin Northern Ireland's economic recovery. The Committee began its work on Budget 2010 which will continue in the next Session.

During this Session, the Committee considered a number of important policy areas. The Committee continued its scrutiny of the Utility Regulator's Price Control 2010/2013 (PC10) process. PC10 is the three year regulatory determination, undertaken by the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (NIAUR), which sets out the costs, expenditures and efficiencies for Northern Ireland Water for the period 2010/13. Northern Ireland Water has rejected the final determination and NIAUR has now referred PC10 to the Competition Commission. The Department, NIAUR and Northern Ireland Water are working to address the issues arising from the PC10 final determination and, during the next Session, the Committee will continue to monitor progress towards reaching an agreed resolution on this matter.

The current Regional Development Strategy (RDS), produced in 2001, needs to be revised to reflect changed social, economic and spatial planning circumstances in Northern Ireland. This revision is being addressed through two mechanisms: a 5-year and a 10-year review.

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The 5-year review took place in 2008 and the 10-year review is now at a position where the Department indicates that it is almost ready to proceed to public consultation. At the end of the 2009/10 Session, the Committee received Departmental briefings on the draft consultation document and impact assessments for the RDS 10-year review.

The Committee will respond to the Department and will then take further briefings on the revisions that have been made, prior to the Department proceeding to consult.

In the 2010/11 Session, the Committee will begin detailed clause-by-clause scrutiny of the Transport Bill. In addition, the Committee will provide input to the Environment Committee on gating of alleys and the relevant parking provisions in the Department of the Environment's Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill. The Committee will continue its work on Budget 2010 and, once the draft Budget has been published for consultation, will hold its stakeholder evidence event and report its views to the Finance and Personnel Committee, the Assembly and the Minister for Regional Development. The Sustainable Transport Inquiry Report will be published in the new Session, and the Committee will continue its work on issues such as connectivity and accessible transport during the final months of the mandate. In terms of policy in development, Members are looking forward to forming a view on the draft Regional Transportation Strategy and the draft Regional Development Strategy.



The Committee hosts a stakeholders exercise in the Long Gallery at Parliament Buildings.

Committee for Social Development

During the 2009/10 Session, the Social Development Committee completed a substantial work programme including 38 meetings. In addition, the Chairperson and Members of the Committee undertook 13 informal meetings with stakeholders.

During this Session, the Committee reviewed the Housing (Amendment) Bill which included provisions to require the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) to produce policy and advice on combating homelessness and anti-social behaviour. The Bill also included amendments to the definition of a house in multiple occupation (HMO). The Minister agreed to all of the Committee's amendments and also agreed to review the common housing selection scheme. The Committee submitted its report on the Bill to the Assembly in November 2009. The Assembly supported all of the Committee's amendments to the Bill.

The Pensions Regulator Tribunal (Transfer of Functions) Bill included provisions to transfer the functions of the Pensions Regulator Tribunal in Northern Ireland to the UK Tribunal Service. As part of its consideration, the Committee took oral evidence from the Pensions Advisory Service and from the Minister. The Committee agreed to support the progression of the Bill by the accelerated passage procedure.

The overall purpose of the Welfare Reform Bill was to amend the existing legislative framework, with particular reference to social security and related areas. As part of the Committee Stage, the Committee took oral evidence from seven key voluntary and advice organisations. The Committee set out its reservations in respect of the mandatory nature of "work for your benefit" schemes and their impact on vulnerable claimants. Following significant debate and discussion, the Committee agreed that, because of parity considerations, there was limited opportunity to amend the clauses of the Bill. The Committee submitted its report to the Assembly in June 2010.



The Members are:

Mr Simon Hamilton (Chairperson) ^{2,5}

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín (Deputy Chairperson) ^{1,8}

Mr Billy Armstrong ³

Mrs Mary Bradley ⁴

Mr Mickey Brady

Mr Jonathan Craig

Mr Alex Easton ⁶

Mr Tommy Gallagher ⁹

Mr David Hilditch ⁷

Ms Anna Lo

Mr Fra McCann

¹ With effect from 20 May 2008 Ms Carál Ní Chuilín replaced Mrs Claire McGill.

² With effect from 9 June 2008 Mr David Simpson MP MLA replaced Mr Gregory Campbell MP MLA as Chairperson of the Social Development Committee.

³ With effect from 29 September 2008 Mr Billy Armstrong replaced Mr Fred Cobain.

⁴ With effect from 29 June 2009 Mrs Mary Bradley replaced Mr Alban Maginness.

⁵ With effect from 4 July 2009 Mr Simon Hamilton replaced Mr David Simpson

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MP MLA as Chairperson of the Social Development Committee.

- 6 *With effect from 14 September 2009 Mr Alex Easton replaced Miss Michelle McIlveen.*
- 7 *On 12 April 2010 Mr David Hilditch ceased to be Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development.*
- 8 *On 12 April 2010 Ms Carál Ní Chuilín was appointed as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development.*
- 9 *With effect from 24 May 2010 Mr Tommy Gallagher replaced Mr Thomas Burns.*



Members of the Committee meet representatives from the Triangle Housing Association at a Committee reception held at Parliament Buildings.



Members of the Committee receive a briefing on eco-friendly district heating systems during their visit to the eco village in Lisburn.

The Caravans Bill is a Private Member's Bill which is intended to introduce statutory provisions for those whose main residence is a caravan on an approved site. As part of the Committee Stage of the Bill, the Committee considered evidence from nine key stakeholders including the caravan industry groups; the Department for Social Development; the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Committee for the Environment. The Committee Stage will conclude in the autumn.

The Committee made a submission to the pre-legislative consultation on the Housing (Amendment) (No.2) Bill – expressing support for a light-touch landlord registration scheme; tenancy deposit guarantee schemes; and improved measures to tackle anti-social behaviour.

The Committee also began the Committee Stages of the Housing (Amendment) (No.2) Bill and the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill which are expected to conclude before Christmas 2010.

The Committee made a submission to the Committee Stage of the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill, supporting the abolition of game licences and game dealers' licences as these form part of the Department's responsibility.

The Committee considered 68 proposed Statutory Rules mostly associated with social security, pensions and child maintenance. The Committee rejected a proposed statutory rule relating to increases in stakes and prizes associated with gaming machines. The Committee felt that further liberalisation of gambling would be of no benefit to people in Northern Ireland. Consequently the Department withdrew the proposal.

The Committee began consideration of town centre regeneration in November 2007 and its Report was debated and endorsed by the Assembly in November 2009. The Department accepted many of the Report's recommendations which are expected to be reflected in the new urban regeneration and community development framework. It is understood that in response to the Committee's recommendations, the Department is considering legislation relating to the establishment

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of statutory business improvement districts (BIDs). The Committee also reviewed progress associated with the Belfast Streets Ahead urban regeneration project – visiting the key development locations and seeking assurances on the minimisation of disruption to local traders.

The Committee considered and endorsed aspects of the Department's budgetary submissions made as part of the monitoring round process. Evidence was obtained from Departmental officials and industry stakeholders in support of the Committee's deliberations. The Committee considered in detail proposed revised Departmental Expenditure Plans. Following recommendations from the Committee, the Department revised its plans, abandoning a simplistic approach based on equal reductions for all business areas and focusing funding reductions away from community development programmes.

The Committee scrutinised a number of policies during the Session including: the homeless strategy and its impact on stakeholders; the Department's empty homes action plan; the funding and governance arrangements for housing associations; the performance of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the future of housing in Northern Ireland.

The Committee committed a great deal of its time to the consideration of welfare issues and the alleviation of poverty. The Committee reviewed the success of the Social Security Agency's benefit uptake programme and recommended the targeting of seriously ill cancer patients and householders in rent arrears or facing eviction as a consequence of mortgage difficulties. The Committee also considered the transition of claimants to Employment and Support Allowance, securing important undertakings from the Department in relation to improving the treatment of vulnerable claimants, including those with autism.

The Committee reviewed the Ilex urban regeneration company's revised urban regeneration programme for the North West. The Committee also reviewed progress associated with the Crumlin Road/Girdwood Park developments, seeking clarity about the timing and allocation of planned social housing developments for the Girdwood site.



Members of the Committee meet with representatives from the Edinburgh Community Planning Partnership during a visit to Edinburgh.

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Members of the Committee meet with representatives from the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Following evidence Sessions and as part of its consideration of community development issues, the Committee argued that the relatively low levels of funding provided to the voluntary and community sector (VCS) deliver substantial and disproportionately large benefits and that consequently these funds should be secured. The Committee noted that the Department's revised Departmental expenditure plans for 2010/11 were amended to reflect the Committee's view.

The Committee also made numerous formal responses to DSD and Department for Work and Pensions consultations.

The Committee considered the findings of the Ford Report and the Savills Report on social housing and proposed a motion which was agreed by the Assembly on 8 March 2010. The motion called upon the Assembly to note the findings of the Savills Report and urged the Minister to ensure equity when apportioning support between new social housing and maintaining existing Housing Executive stock. The Committee also called for cuts to Housing Executive maintenance contractors to be limited.

The Committee's priorities for the 2010/11 Session will focus on the legislative programme. The Committee intends to complete the Committee Stages of three Bills before Christmas. The Committee will also devote substantial time and resources to the consideration of the implications of Budget 2010; the revised Supporting People programme; the new fuel poverty strategy; the new urban regeneration and community development framework; the review of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the revised Strategic Guidelines for the Social Housing Development Programme. The Committee also hopes to undertake further work on housing issues particularly the funding of social house-building; the common housing selection scheme and the funding and governance of housing associations.

Standing Committees

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

The Assembly and Executive Review Committee held 27 meetings during the 2009/10 Session, focusing primarily on the devolution of policing and justice matters.

The Committee published its *Second Report on the Arrangements for the Devolution of Policing and Justice Matters* to inform Members of its consideration of relevant matters. This took place on 09 March 2009, prior to the resolution and cross-community vote in the Assembly.

The Committee's Report considered a number of matters including the financial implications of the devolution of policing and justice matters; the role of the Attorney General; the arrangements for the appointment, and removal, of judicial office holders; North/South policing and justice agreements; parading; the Public Prosecution Service; the Justice Minister's relationship with the Assembly; and the Justice Minister's position in the Northern Ireland Executive.

Key priorities for the 2010/11 Session include the matter of dual mandates held by Members of the Assembly; the work of the proposed efficiency review panel; the operation of the Ministerial Code and the power to refer Ministerial decisions to the Executive Committee. The Committee will also consider the Assembly voting system, designations (ie, whether a party belongs to the unionist or nationalist designation) and cross-community voting.



The Members are:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson) ¹

Mr Alex Maskey (Deputy Chairperson) ^{2,9}

Mr Fred Cobain ⁸

Mr Nigel Dodds ⁴

Mr Simon Hamilton ³

Mr Danny Kennedy

Mr Raymond McCartney

Mr Conall McDevitt ¹⁰

Mr John O'Dowd

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr ³

Ms Margaret Ritchie ^{6,11}

⁵ With effect from 15 January 2010 Mrs Carmel Hanna resigned as an MLA

⁶ With effect from 26 January 2010 Mr Declan O'Loan replaced Mrs Carmel Hanna

⁷ With effect from the 31 March 2010 Mr Alan McFarland stood down from membership of the Committee

⁸ On 19 April 2010 Mr Fred Cobain was appointed as a Member of the Committee

⁹ On 13 April 2010 Mr Alex Maskey replaced Mr Raymond McCartney as Deputy Chairperson. Mr Raymond McCartney remained as a Member of the Committee

¹⁰ With effect from Monday 24 May 2010 Mr Conall McDevitt replaced Mr Alex Attwood

¹¹ With effect from Monday 7 June 2010 Ms Margaret Ritchie replaced Mr Declan O'Loan

¹ Mr Jeffrey Donaldson resigned from the Committee with effect from Tuesday, 26 February 2008 and was replaced by Mr Jimmy Spratt on 04 March 2008.

² With effect from 20 May Mr Alex Maskey replaced Ms Carál Ní Chuilín.

³ With effect from 15 September 2008 Mr Simon Hamilton replaced Mr Ian McCrea and Mr Ian Paisley Jnr replaced Mr George Robinson.

⁴ With effect from 15 September 2009 Mr Nigel Dodds replaced Mr Nelson McCausland.



Audit Committee

The Audit Committee oversees the workings of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO), considering and approving its corporate plan.

During this Session the Committee met three times in public and put forward one motion on the salary of the Comptroller and Auditor General which was debated and agreed in the Assembly.

The Members are:

Mr Peter Weir (Chairperson) ²

Mr Samuel Gardiner (Deputy Chairperson)

Dr Stephen Farry

Mr Tommy Gallagher ³

Mr Paul Maskey ¹

NB *Mr Weir ceased being Chairperson w.e.f. 28 June 2010 and was replaced by Mr Jonathan Craig on 3 September 2010.*

- 1 As from 29 September 2008 Mr Paul Maskey replaced Mr John O'Dowd.*
- 2 As from 29 June 2009 Mr Peter Weir replaced Mr Robin Newton as Chairperson.*
- 3 As from 29 June 2009 Mr Tommy Gallagher replaced Mr Pat Ramsey.*

Committee on Procedures

The Committee on Procedures is responsible for considering and reviewing the Assembly's Standing Orders (which are the rules governing the way the Assembly operates) and for holding inquiries and publishing reports.

During the 2009/10 Session, the Committee met on 12 occasions. All meetings were held in Parliament Buildings. The Committee also had 34 motions debated and agreed by the Assembly.

The Committee brought forward matters from the previous year, such as drafting new Standing Orders to deal with the devolution of policing and justice powers to the Assembly. Additionally, as part of its commitment to the ongoing review of Standing Orders, the Committee agreed a work programme that included examining issues such as public and media access to Assembly proceedings.

The Committee also completed its inquiry into Legislative Consent Motions; its report was published on 15 September 2009 and approved by the Assembly on 19 October 2009. This is the process through which the Assembly gives consent for legislation on a devolved matter to proceed through Westminster.

A number of Standing Orders were reviewed during this year including:

- SO69-70 – Standards and Privilege - Amendments were necessary to allow for the implementation of the recommendations in the report of the Committee on Standards and Privileges and the associated Code of Conduct and Guide to the rules relating to the conduct of Members.
- SO9A – Temporary Speaker - This new Standing Order was introduced to make provision for a procedure to ensure that there will always be a Member available to chair plenary sittings of the Assembly and to carry out the other related functions when neither the Speaker nor a Deputy Speaker is available.



The Members are:

Lord Browne (Chairperson) ⁴

Mr Mervyn Storey
(Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Billy Leonard ²

Lord Morrow

Mr Mickey Brady ¹

Mr Paul Butler ³

Mr David McClarty

Mr Adrian McQuillan

Mr Sean Neeson

Mr Thomas Burns ⁵

Mr Ken Robinson

¹ Mr Mickey Brady replaced Mr Willie Clarke from 20 May 2008.

² Mr Billy Leonard replaced Mr Francie Brolly from 11 January 2010.

³ Mr Paul Butler replaced Mr Raymond McCartney from 19 April 2010.

⁴ Lord Browne replaced Lord Morrow as Chairperson from 13 April 2010.

⁵ Mr Thomas Burns replaced Mr Declan O'Loan from 24 May 2010.

- SO66- 68 & 74 – Public and Media Access to Assembly proceedings
- A review of these Standing Orders was needed to ensure that they are clear and concise and that they accurately reflect the powers of the Speaker and Committee chairpersons in relation to the public and the media.
- SO44A, 49A, 49B, 52A – connected to the devolution of policing and justice powers – The Committee spent a considerable amount of time producing Standing Orders which were needed as a result of the devolution of policing and justice powers. These included Standing Orders on filling the office of Minister of Justice and membership of the Committee for Justice. In addition to these some 13 minor, technical and consequential amendments needed to be made.
- SO10 – Extending Sitting Time on Mondays. This amendment provides a facility for plenary meetings to continue after seven o'clock on a Monday in exceptional circumstances which could not have been anticipated and when the impact of not continuing the sitting would be significant.
- SO20 – Oral Questions: Additional Slot – An additional time slot for Question Time on a Tuesday has been provided, largely as a result of the Minister of Justice now taking Assembly Questions and the possibility of the Attorney General answering questions in the Chamber.

The Committee has agreed a work programme for the coming 2010/11 Session which will include working on new Standing Orders relating to Legislative Consent Motions and the non-voting participation of the Attorney General for Northern Ireland in Assembly proceedings.

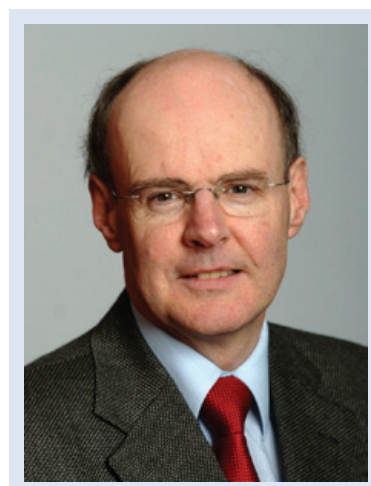
Committee on Standards and Privileges

The Committee held 20 meetings during this Session, 15 of which were either held in closed or part closed Session. This reflects the fact that the Committee considers matters relating to complaints against Members in closed Session. However, it should be noted that when the Committee produces a report on a complaint against a Member, the report always includes as an annex the full report received from the Interim Assembly Commissioner for Standards on his investigation.

During this Session the Committee published a new edition of the Register of Members' Interests. The new Register was required in order to reflect the more extensive registration requirements which had been agreed by the Assembly. The new edition of the Register required Members to register all outside earnings and the time they spent on these activities. It also required Members to register family members who benefit in any way from any Members' Allowance.

The Committee conducted an inquiry on enforcing the Code of Conduct and Guide to the rules relating to the conduct of Members and the Appointment of an Assembly Commissioner for Standards. This inquiry concluded that the Assembly should have its own Commissioner for Standards and that the role and powers of the Assembly Commissioner for Standards should be set out on a statutory basis.

The Committee also carried out a review of the Rules on All-Party Groups. Following the review the Committee published a report setting out new rules. The new rules set out the purpose of All-Party Groups; the means by which these groups should be established; certain rules in respect of how these groups should operate; and details in relation to the support that such groups are entitled to receive. The most significant change to



The Members are:

Mr Declan O'Loan (Chairperson) ^{1, 11, 12}

Mr Willie Clarke (Deputy Chairperson) ²

Mr Allan Bresland

Mr Thomas Buchanan ³

Mr Trevor Clarke ^{4, 5}

Rev Dr Robert Coulter

Mr Micky Brady ^{6, 10}

Mr Paul Maskey ^{7, 8}

Mr Alastair Ross ⁹

Mr George Savage

Mr Brian Wilson

¹ Mr Declan O'Loan replaced Mrs Carmel Hanna as Chairperson with effect from 3 July 2009.

² Mr Willie Clarke replaced Mr Gerry McHugh as Deputy Chairperson with effect from 21 January 2008.

³ Mr Thomas Buchanan replaced Mr David Hilditch with effect from 14 September 2009.

⁴ Mr Jonathan Craig replaced Mr Alex Easton with effect from 15 September 2008.

⁵ Mr Trevor Clarke replaced Mr Jonathan Craig with effect from 14 September 2009.

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- 6 *Mr Billy Leonard replaced Mr Francie Brolly with effect from 11 January 2010.*
- 7 *Ms Claire McGill replaced Mr Gerry McHugh with effect from 28 January 2008.*
- 8 *Mr Paul Maskey replaced Ms Claire McGill with effect from 20 May 2008.*
- 9 *Mr Alastair Ross replaced Mr Adrian McQuillan with effect from 29 May 2007.*
- 10 *Mr Micky Brady replaced Mr Billy Leonard with effect from 19 April 2010.*
- 11 *Mr Pat Ramsey replaced Mr Declan O'Loan with effect from 31 May 2010.*
- 12 *Mr Declan O'Loan replaced Mr Pat Ramsey with effect from 29 th June 2010.*

the rules was that there will no longer be two different types of groups (All-Party Groups and All-Party Assembly Groups). The groups will now be known as All-Party Groups and only MLAs will be allowed to be members of the groups.

The Commissioner received five complaints during this Session. The Committee also referred a matter to the Commissioner for investigation. In addition to these, the Interim Commissioner (Dr Tom Frawley) had five cases to investigate which had been carried over from the previous Session.

The Committee's key priority for next Session is the introduction of a Bill to create an Assembly Commissioner for Standards. In addition, the Committee will carry out a review of privilege and continue to keep the issue of Members' conduct under review and will not hesitate from taking whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the public can have confidence in the integrity of the Assembly and its Members.

Public Accounts Committee

End of Session Report 2009 - 2010

During the 2009/10 Session, the Committee met 36 times and held 13 inquiries.

The Committee has made 137 recommendations to improve financial accountability to the taxpayer. It continues to monitor departmental progress in implementing them. Of these recommendations, 99 were accepted by the Government.

In addition, the Committee published its First Thematic Report consolidating key findings from previous inquiries. The Committee wished, in light of current economic conditions, to recap on lessons learned in the back catalogue of reports it has covered, with the aim of reaffirming crucial messages to improve Government stewardship of public money. The Committee's reports have highlighted flaws which must be guarded against at each stage of a project.

The Committee also published one composite report comprising inquiries conducted by correspondence on five NIAO reports.

The Committee launched an inquiry into the Management of Social Housing Rent Collection and Arrears following a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The Committee heard that as of September 2008 Northern Ireland Housing Executive's (NIHE's) level of serious arrears was £5.6 million.

The Committee heard that NIHE had been tardy in introducing preventative measures to minimise the risks of arrears accruing in the first place, such as the facility to allow tenants to pay by direct debit. The Committee recommended that the Department needed measures to maximise rent collection and prevent arrears from arising; performance measurement and benchmarking as drivers for improvement; and oversight and regulation of the social housing sector. Twelve out of 14 of the Committee's recommendations were accepted in the Government's memorandum of reply of 12 January 2010.



The Members are:

Mr Paul Maskey (Chairperson) ³

Mr Roy Beggs (Deputy Chairperson) ⁷

The Lord Browne ⁹

Mr John Dallat

Mr David Hilditch ⁷

Mr Trevor Lunn

Mr Patsy McGlone ^{2,6}

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin

Mr Stephen Moutray ¹⁰

Ms Dawn Purvis

Mr Jim Shannon

¹ Mr Mickey Brady replaced Mr Willie Clarke on 1 October 2007.

¹ Mr Ian McCrea replaced Mr Mickey Brady on 21 January 2008.

¹ Mr Jim Wells replaced Mr Ian McCrea on 26 May 2008.

² Mr Thomas Burns replaced Mr Patsy McGlone on 4 March 2008.

³ Mr Paul Maskey replaced Mr John O'Dowd on 20 May 2008.

⁴ Mr George Robinson replaced Mr Simon Hamilton on 15 September 2008.

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- 5 *Mr Jim Shannon replaced Mr David Hilditch on 15 September 2008.*
- 6 *Mr Patsy McGlone replaced Mr Thomas Burns on 29 June 2009.*
- 7 *Mr David Hilditch replaced Mr George Robinson on 18 September 2009.*
- 8 *Rt Hon Jeffrey Donaldson replaced Mr Jim Wells on 18 September 2009.*
- 9 *The Lord Browne replaced Rt Hon Jeffrey Donaldson on 19 April 2010.*
- 10 *Mr Stephen Moutray replaced Mr Jonathan Craig on 19 April 2010.*



In January 2006 the Department purchased the SS Nomadic at auction at a cost of £170,000. However with fees and insurance this cost rose to £263,000. Up to December 2008 the Department incurred a further £650,000 on transportation and restoration. The Department told the Committee that it estimates the cost of restoring the Nomadic to be in the range of £5 million to £7 million. The Committee stressed that if the revised business case is viable to take the project forward, the Department and the SS Nomadic Charitable Trust must work together to enable work to commence at the earliest opportunity to enable the paying public to contribute to restoration and relieve the burden on the public purse. Three out of five of the Committee's recommendations were accepted in the Government's memorandum of reply of 12 January 2010.

Following a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General on the Review of New Deal 25+, the Committee launched its inquiry. The Committee's inquiry found that New Deal 25+ brought a number of benefits to the long-term unemployed, but that the overall employment impact of the programme was very limited and often short-lived. The Committee found that, during the later years of the programme, the Department was slow to react to growing problems and that not enough was done to tackle two of the most fundamental problem areas, common to a large proportion of participants – a lack of qualifications and difficulties with basic literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, the Committee considered the employment outcomes for the programme, which were its primary aim, to be very modest – on average, only 18 per cent of leavers found a job. The Committee found this was a poor return for taxpayers' money and made recommendations to improve the design of the Department's new programme, Steps to Work. Ten out of 14 of the Committee's recommendations were accepted in the Government's memorandum of reply of 17 February 2010.

The Committee launched an inquiry following the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on the Performance of the Planning Service, an agency within the Department for the Environment. The Committee's inquiry focused on poor performance of the Planning

A Working Assembly

Service over a long period; the improvements needed to deliver a fit-for-purpose service; and the Agency's failure to deliver a flagship IT system and deficiencies in customer service. In particular, the Committee found that the Planning Service consistently failed to meet its Public Service Agreement targets for processing applications in a timely matter, and that despite welcome, recent improvement, the standard is still not as good as customers have a right to expect. Twelve out of 15 of the Committee's recommendations were accepted in the Government's memorandum of reply of 16 April 2010.

The Committee also inquired into the management of personal injury claims. The Committee's inquiry focused on the Department of Regional Development's role in reducing the number of successful claims; the cost of compensation payments and legal fees; and charging for the services of the Departmental Solicitor's Office. The Committee recommended that the Central Claims Unit (CCU) consult with the Roads Service to clarify what information is required to identify areas of higher claims and that it reviews the operation of its management information system to ensure that information is accurately and consistently provided. The Committee also recommended that Roads Service consider the scope for a more flexible approach to an actionable defect, particularly in busy pedestrian areas of town centres with a history of accidents. Four out of seven of the Committee's recommendations were accepted in the Government's memorandum of reply of 22 June 2010.

Following the Comptroller and Auditor General's report, the Committee launched its Report on the Resettlement of Long Stay Patients from Learning Disability Hospitals. In 1995 the Department's initial target was to resettle all learning disability patients from long-stay hospitals by 2002. However, the Department failed to meet this commitment. While many of those who remain in long-stay hospitals have the most severe disabilities, there are many others who have been assessed as fit to be discharged. The Committee was deeply concerned and considered it totally unacceptable that 15 years after adoption of the resettlement policy, a large number of those who remain in hospital are keen to be resettled into the community and

A Working Assembly

have been assessed as fit to leave. The Committee felt that the role played by family members providing care at home is vital and it is right that the Department supports these individuals by, for example, providing access to respite care. In the past, carers have had difficulty with the limited availability and inflexibility of respite services. The Committee recommended that the Department consults with carers, assesses their needs and then develops appropriately tailored respite services to support them. Six out of seven of the Committee's recommendations were accepted in the Government's memorandum of reply of 9 July 2010.

In addition to the reports illustrated above, the Committee also produced the following reports: *Report on North/South Bodies*; *Report on Transforming Land Registers - The LandWeb Project*; *Report on Public Service Agreements - Measuring Performance*; *Report on Irish Sport Horse Testing Unit Ltd - Transfer and Disposal of Assets*; *Report on the Performance of the Health Service in Northern Ireland*; *Report on a Review of the Gateway Process, the Pre-school Education Expansion Programme and the Report on Combating Organised Crime*. The Committee took the opportunity of a new Justice Committee to refer the Organised Crime Report to it.



Public Accounts Committee taking evidence in the Senate Chamber.

Engagement in the Assembly

Engagement in the Assembly

Engagement is at the core of the Assembly's activities, from Members working for their constituents, debating and voting on important issues to opening Parliament Buildings for public events.

By putting engagement at the centre of the Assembly's strategic activities, the Assembly Commission has approved a number of initiatives to reach this goal. These include increasing the numbers of students and young people hosted by the Assembly, an improved outreach programme and more targeted events to give the public access to their MLAs.

During the 2009/10 Session the Assembly has worked to improve and deepen the understanding of its work.



Agriculture and Rural Development Committee event at the Balmoral Agricultural Show 2010.

Engagement in the Assembly



The award winning choir from Ballyholme Primary School during a special performance in the Great Hall in Parliament Buildings.



The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Arlene Foster MLA and the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Nelson McCausland MLA pictured at the launch of the North West 200 held at Parliament Buildings.



White Ribbon Campaign

Women's Aid publicised their 'White Ribbon' campaign in Parliament Buildings with the support of all MLAs. Here, their representatives are pictured with Chairperson of the Health Committee, Jim Wells MLA, the Speaker, William Hay MLA and Health Minister, Mr. Michael McGimpsey MLA.

Events

The Events Office co-ordinates and manages all the events that take place in Parliament Buildings for the Speaker, Members of the Assembly Commission, MLAs and Ministers.

Since the Assembly's restoration in 2007, the Events Office has had a key role in its engagement activities: facilitating numerous visits, tours and functions in and around Parliament Buildings on behalf of the Assembly, Members and Ministers. This effort continued in the 2009/10 year which saw more events and guests coming to Parliament Buildings.

The type of events held in Parliament Buildings include tours, press and media functions, receptions, concerts and balls and include people from local community and faith organisations, international political and economic delegations, and local sporting and cultural groups.

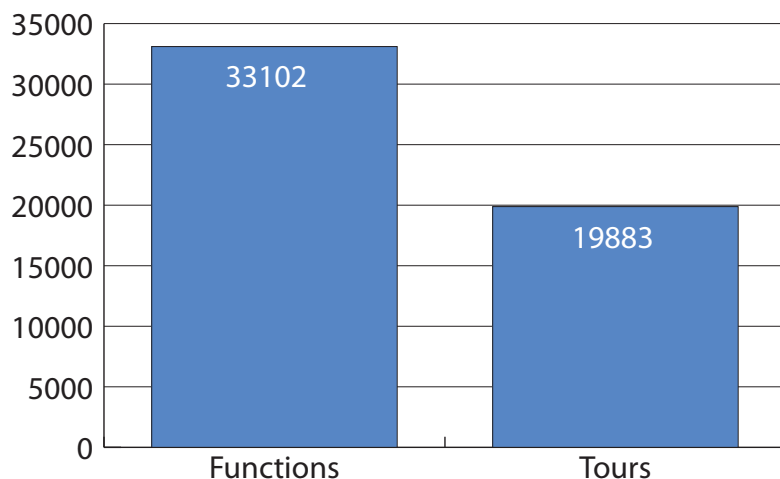
There were 468 functions and 764 tours during the 2009/10 Session.



Dance troupe, The Lions of Zululand performed in the Great Hall – one of the more unusual events held within Parliament Buildings.

Engagement in the Assembly

Guest Numbers 2009/10



Some of the groups which came to Parliament Buildings during this period included:

- The Stroke Association NI
- Foras na Gaeilge
- National Federation of Subpostmasters
- PSNI
- Child Poverty Alliance
- NI Hospice
- Antrim Ladies Gaelic Football Team
- African Children's Choir
- MacMillan Cancer NI
- Belfast Media Group
- GAA Ulster Council
- Life after Loss
- Ulster–Scots Community
- Vietnamese Delegation
- Youth Achievers
- British Heart Foundation
- Older People's Advocate
- NICCY
- The Rainbow Project
- Salvation Army
- Tourism Ireland
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Eisenhower Fellowship
- Child Poverty Alliance
- Club Tyrone
- Women in Business
- Save the Children
- Integrated Education Fund
- Lions of Zululand
- Action Cancer
- Bunscoil Phobal Feirste
- Autism NI
- Omagh – Waterford Peace Choir
- Children in Need
- International Christian Embassy, Jerusalem
- British Red Cross
- International Police Gaelic Games
- Music Therapy Trust
- Northern Ireland schools debating finals and;
- Mock Youth Parliaments.

The service provided by the Events Office continues to prove very popular with individual MLAs and the political parties they represent.

Engagement in the Assembly



Speaker William Hay MLA, greets Prime Minister the Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP and Security Minister Paul Goggins MP on a visit to Parliament Buildings.

Education Service

“Education has the potential to provide the most effective means by which young people can be helped to understand the work of the Assembly and become interested and engaged in the democratic process...”

(Engagement Strategy for the Northern Ireland Assembly, February 2009, p24)

The Education Service provides an educational visits programme in Parliament Buildings, as well as educational resources to support teaching and learning about the Northern Ireland Assembly. The aim of the education programme is to encourage young people and others to learn about the Assembly, understand its relevance to their lives and participate in the democratic process.

The Education Service has developed programmes and resources to suit a wide range of groups, taking account of different ages, ability levels and interests. Although the main focus of the education programme is on schools and young people, it is open to any group wishing to learn about the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Education Service Statistics 01 September 2009 to 02 July 2010

Type	No. of groups	% of groups	No. of participants	% of participants
Schools	405	78.49	12,994	83.59
Youth Groups	25	4.84	498	3.2
Universities	41	7.95	1,048	6.74
Adult Groups	29	5.62	674	4.34
Regional Colleges	9	1.74	191	1.23
Foreign Exchange School Groups	7	1.36	139	0.89
Total	516	100	15,544	100

From September 2009 to July 2010, 516 groups, comprising 15, 544 participants, took part in the education programme.

Engagement in the Assembly

The majority of groups came from Northern Ireland (87%). Groups also visited from other parts of the UK, the Republic of Ireland, Europe and the USA.



A group of young people from the YMCA take their seats in the Senate Chamber with the Education Service programme.

School groups accounted for over 80% of participants and included a range of primary and post-primary students studying citizenship, government and politics, history, and education for mutual understanding. Youth groups included alternative education and youth participation groups.

Visiting universities were from Northern Ireland, England, Sweden, Denmark and the USA. Adult groups included teachers, those working in the voluntary sector and visitors from abroad.

Educational Resources

The Education Service provides educational resources for students and teachers, designed to support the NI Curriculum, including an education website, <http://education.niassembly.gov.uk>. The Education Service is currently working with the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to redevelop and update the education website to take account of the Northern Ireland Revised Curriculum. The new site will be launched in May 2011.



Pupils from Armstrong Primary School in Armagh learn about democracy with the Assembly Education Service.

Engagement in the Assembly

New resources produced in the 2009/10 academic year include 'The Northern Ireland School Assembly' comic and 'A Snapshot of Democracy' DVD, both for the 11-16 age group.



Outreach to St Colman's College, Newry.

Outreach

In line with the Engagement Strategy, the Education Service has begun to develop an educational outreach programme. In May 2010, the Education Service worked with the UK Parliament's Education Service on the planning and delivery of an outreach programme to schools across Fermanagh and Tyrone. Over 200 pupils, from five schools, participated in workshops on the Assembly and the UK Parliament. From September 2010, the Assembly Education Service will offer an outreach service to schools across Northern Ireland, initially targeting those which have not participated in the Education Programme to date.

Also this year, the Education Service participated in Citizenship Day at St Colman's College, Newry, delivered a programme at Hydebank Young Offenders Centre, Belfast and made a presentation to approximately 100 nursing students at Queen's University, Belfast. The Education Service worked with C2K (responsible for the ICT managed service to all schools in NI) to set up video conference meetings

Engagement in the Assembly

between MLAs and pupils from Lurgan College and Lumen Christi College. It is planned to develop this facility in the course of the next academic year.

The Youth Assembly

In September 2009, the Education Service began work on plans to develop a youth assembly in Northern Ireland. After meetings with young people and other stakeholders in October 2009, the plan for the way forward was launched by the Speaker in January 2010. In March 2010, a 30-strong Youth Panel of 16-to-18 year olds was recruited to work with the Assembly to develop proposals for a youth assembly and present them to the Assembly Commission in March 2011. It is envisaged that a youth assembly will meet for the first time in Autumn 2011. Between March and July 2010, the Youth Panel began its meetings with various groups in order to gather a range of views on a future youth assembly. As part of its research into other youth parliament initiatives, a delegation from the Panel met with members and staff of the Scottish Youth Parliament in Edinburgh and attended its annual sitting.



The Assembly Youth Panel, October 2010.

Teacher Seminars

In October 2009, in conjunction with the Westminster Education Service and the BBC, the Education Service organised a seminar for teachers to promote the Assembly and Westminster education services, and to help teachers prepare pupils for the BBC Schools Question Time and Schools Reporting competitions. In June 2010, a conference for Key Stage 3 and 4 citizenship teachers was held. The new DVD, 'A snapshot of Democracy' was launched by the Speaker at this event. The Westminster Education Service and BBC Education also participated in the programme.

Other Education Service Events

The Education Service worked with the Northern Ireland Youth Forum to organise an inter-generational debate in the Senate Chamber in October 2009 and, in March 2010, a YMCA debate also took place in the Senate Chamber as part of a 'Youth in Government' programme.

In May 2010, the Education Service organised craft activities in the Long Gallery for the Stormont Estate Children in Need fun day.



Members of the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee in a video conference with Lurgan College.

Engagement in the Assembly

External Liaison

Outreach

The External Liaison Unit provides an outreach service to voluntary, community and business groups to explain how the Assembly works and to encourage involvement and engagement. During this Session, the Outreach Service delivered roadshows across all 18 constituencies. In addition, the Service provided key elements of the 'Vital Links' programme with NICVA (Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action) to enhance understanding and to promote engagement in the Assembly.

The goals of the Outreach Service are twofold:

- to build contact between the Assembly and the public, with the intention of increasing knowledge about the legislature, and promoting engagement with it;
- to create a consultative forum through which feedback can be channelled directly back into the Assembly.

Work continues to promote the availability of the Outreach Service to groups across Northern Ireland.



The Assembly Road Show in the marquee at the Balmoral Agricultural Show.

Inward Visits

The External Liaison Unit develops tailor-made programmes to meet the needs of the many national and international delegations visiting the Assembly. During the 2009/10 Session, the Assembly hosted approximately 60 visits by presidents, ministers, ambassadors, political delegations and students from around the world. This includes countries such as Latvia, Brazil, Australia, Bosnia, Canada and Mongolia to name but a few. The Assembly continues to receive a large number of requests from delegations wishing to visit the Assembly – many from countries emerging from a period of conflict, as well as students of politics wishing to discuss and share experiences with Northern Ireland politicians.



The Speaker, Mr. William Hay MLA pictured with delegates visiting Northern Ireland during the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference.

Parliamentary Bodies

In June 2009 Leslie Cree MLA and John Dallat MLA attended the British Islands and Mediterranean Regional (BIMR) conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), held in Guernsey. The theme of the conference was 'The International Economic Downturn—The Responsibilities of Parliamentarians'. During the conference delegates heard presentations exploring

Engagement in the Assembly

the characteristics of the global financial system, the reasons for its collapse and the impact of the crisis on the global economy.

In February 2010, the Northern Ireland Assembly Branch of the CPA, co-hosted an International Parliamentary Conference on peacebuilding. Over 85 delegates from 35 countries attended the two-day conference during which delegates had a chance to meet MLAs and visit community projects and integrated schools.

Commonwealth Day 2010 took place during March. The theme was "Science, Technology and Society". Invited guests included the Honorary Consuls from Commonwealth countries who are based in Northern Ireland; tutors and students from the science and technology faculties in the universities and colleges in Northern Ireland and businesses in the science and technology field. Seven local businesses who export to Commonwealth countries or have won awards recognising their technological innovation were also given the opportunity to showcase their products during the reception.

During February 2010, Members of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly were invited to a Plenary Session in Cavan. The purpose of these Plenary Sessions is to bring together Members of the participating legislatures (UK Parliament, the Houses of the Oireachtas, the Scottish Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Welsh Assembly, the High Court of Tynwald (Isle of Man) and the states of Guernsey and Jersey) to consult on a wide range of non-legislative parliamentary activities and to contribute to a mutual understanding. David McClarty MLA, Barry McElduff MLA, Alastair McDonnell MLA, Sean Neeson MLA and Jim Wells MLA represented the Northern Ireland Assembly in Cavan.

Bursary Programme

Early in 2009, the Assembly Commission established a Student Bursary Programme in conjunction with Queen's University Belfast (QUB) in support of a new Masters Degree in Legislative Studies and Practice. This exciting and innovative MA offers selected graduates the opportunity to experience working in the Assembly while gaining a highly sought-after qualification. The first intake of seven students began their studies at QUB and worked in the Assembly during September 2009. The students are based permanently in one business area and undertake work that provides them with exposure to key areas of business of the Assembly. During their placement, the students undertook original research, which assisted with the development of their dissertations.

Work Experience Programme

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission offers students the opportunity to experience the work of the Secretariat through its Work Experience Programme. The programme is aimed at 16-18 year olds who are obliged to find a placement as part of their course of study, and is tailored to the requirements of each individual for a period of up to one week. The students shadow a member of staff in each designated area in order for them to gain an understanding of what the job entails and how it contributes to the smooth running of the Assembly. Nineteen students from across Northern Ireland completed the work experience programme in 2009/10 and very positive feedback was received from each of them.

Engagement in the Assembly

Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust

The NIABT has flourished during the past 12 months and this period has seen a vast increase in business membership from 24 to 37. More importantly, there has been a significant increase in the number of events held and the number of attendees at these events.

There was a relaunch of the NIABT Fellowship Scheme at the start of the parliamentary year in September. This scheme provides an opportunity for MLAs to visit and get a detailed insight into local businesses. As a result, several MLAs declared an interest in participating in fellowships with a number of business members and follow-up work progressed to facilitate these programmes throughout the year.



President's Dinner

The guest speaker at the NIABT's President's Dinner was US Economic Envoy to Northern Ireland, Declan Kelly. Mr Kelly is pictured with the Chair of the NIABT, Sean Neeson MLA and the President of the NIABT and Speaker of the Assembly, William Hay MLA.

The Trust hosted an educational event for new business members of the NIABT at which a number of MLAs and business members spoke about the benefits of NIABT membership. A "Digital Age" breakfast

Engagement in the Assembly

seminar for MLAs and business sector representatives was promoted by the Trust and hosted and delivered by British Telecom.

Parliament Buildings was the setting for an NI Assembly educational day event in October. This was attended by business members and constituency staff and provided an overview of Assembly business.

Danny Kennedy MLA participated in a Fellowship Programme with Stratagem. Jim Shannon MLA and PJ Bradley MLA both participated in a Fellowship Programme with Rooney Fish. This followed an earlier educational visit to the Kilkeel factory.

Paul McAlister Architects in Portadown hosted a sustainable housing seminar in November and Mid Ulster and Lagan Valley MLAs attended this event.

The NIABT AGM was held in mid December and was followed by a panel debate. An expert panel comprising Ministers, Committee Chairs and the Chairman of Invest NI were present to answer questions from the business audience. Business people from a wide variety of local concerns attended and the event was chaired by a local journalist.

In January 2010 Alastair Ross MLA participated in a fellowship with the Belfast International Airport and Simon Hamilton MLA took part in a fellowship with Royal Mail.

The new year saw the launch of a series of NIABT breakfast briefings by Committee Chairs and local businesses on a wide range of topical business areas. These included Danny Kennedy MLA, Chair of the Committee for the Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister delivering a briefing on the Committee Report on the Consideration of European Issues and Jennifer McCann MLA, Chairperson of the Committee for Finance and Personnel delivering a briefing on the Public Procurement Process in Northern Ireland.

An NIABT delegation, consisting of business members and political parties also visited Brussels to participate in a European education programme. During this programme, the NIABT participants received

Engagement in the Assembly

briefings from Northern Ireland MEPs, the Northern Ireland Executive's Office and other relevant organisations based in Brussels. The programme also included a visit to a local biogas plant near Brussels.

The annual NIABT President's Dinner was held in March in Parliament Buildings. Keynote speakers at the dinner were Declan Kelly, US Economic Envoy to Northern Ireland and Sir Reg Empey MLA, Minister for Employment and Learning. The dinner was attended by a mixture of MLAs, existing NIABT business members and selected businesses from outside of the NIABT.

The NIABT held a joint breakfast event with the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee for small and medium-sized traders at this year's Balmoral Show. This breakfast was held on the opening day of the Show and presented an excellent opportunity for local businesses to celebrate their talents. The NIABT President, Speaker of the Assembly, William Hay MLA, opened the event. Alban Maginness MLA, Chair of the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee opened the event with Edward Haughey from Norbrook Laboratories giving the closing address.



The NIABT brought MLAs out to a local business to see it in action. PJ Bradley MLA and Jim Shannon MLA are pictured during their visit to Rooney Fish.

Engagement in the Assembly

The NIABT also held a seminar on small and medium-sized enterprises in the Northern Ireland Assembly Marquee at the Balmoral Show. The panel comprised MEPs Bairbre de Brun, Dianne Dodds and Jim Nicholson along with Tina Sommer, Chair of the Federation of Small Business EU and International Affairs.

The local economic consultant, John Simpson addressed a breakfast briefing in June on the economy. The large audience found this event insightful and it stimulated much debate by those attending.

An NIABT delegation visited the Wright Group in Ballymena for a seminar on the evolution of the company and innovation. Following the seminar, the group were provided with a detailed factory tour.

The NIABT new business member introduction lunch was also held in June. New NIABT business members attended this event during which they received an address from the NIABT President, William Hay MLA and Sean Neeson MLA, NIABT Chair. The guests received a detailed overview of the work of the Trust and its benefits by existing NIABT business members and MLAs.

All in all, a very productive year and one which will be built upon in the 2010/2011 Session.

Supporting the Assembly

Supporting the Assembly

The Resources Directorate is a “business support” entity that provides a range of services to the Assembly Secretariat and, in some cases, directly to Assembly Members. Therefore, the Directorate is service-driven in support of the Assembly’s strategic and corporate plan objectives.

The Directorate played a key role in helping to deliver three of the Assembly’s 5 strategic priorities namely **Strategic Priority 1 - Supporting Assembly Business**, **Strategic Priority 3 - Supporting and Developing our Staff** and **Strategic Priority 4 - Ensuring the Effective Governance of the Secretariat**.

The Directorate is made up of four discrete Business Areas which employed 71 full-time members of staff.

The Finance Office

The Finance Office administered the Assembly’s annual budget of approximately £50 million. The Finance Office also administered the payment of a range of allowances to Assembly Members.

The Finance Office is organised along functional lines with one notable exception. There is a dedicated team that deals with the payment of salaries, another that looks after transaction processing and financial accounting (including financial reporting) for the Secretariat, a section that undertakes budgetary monitoring and control – a more management accounting focus – and, finally, a stand alone section dedicated to dealing with all aspects of Assembly Members’ financial matters such as the payment of allowances. The Finance Office also manages business travel for staff and Members.

The Human Resources Office

The Human Resources Office is responsible for a wide range of functions such as recruitment, staff training, equal opportunities, attendance management, terms and conditions of service, pensions and the maintenance of personnel records.

The HR Office underwent a process of restructuring during the year. Previously, the Office’s functions were performed by separate teams covering areas such as recruitment (for all Secretariat staff); training & development (for all Secretariat staff); pensions (for all Secretariat staff and

Supporting the Assembly

Members); attendance management and what was known as the HR Core team (dealing with terms and conditions of employment for Secretariat staff).

These functions have been brought together into two distinct entities that each deal with the full range of HR issues.

The Information Systems Office

The purpose of the IS Office is to develop and support the computer systems used by the Assembly. The main work of the IS Office can be broken down as follows:

- Provision of standard computer equipment (hardware) and software;
- Provision and support of Assembly computer network;
- Business/Information analysis;
- Development of customized computer applications;
- Computer training;
- IS Service desk; and
- Computer security;

The IS Office provides IT-related services to both the Secretariat and also to Members and their staff.

The Procurement Office

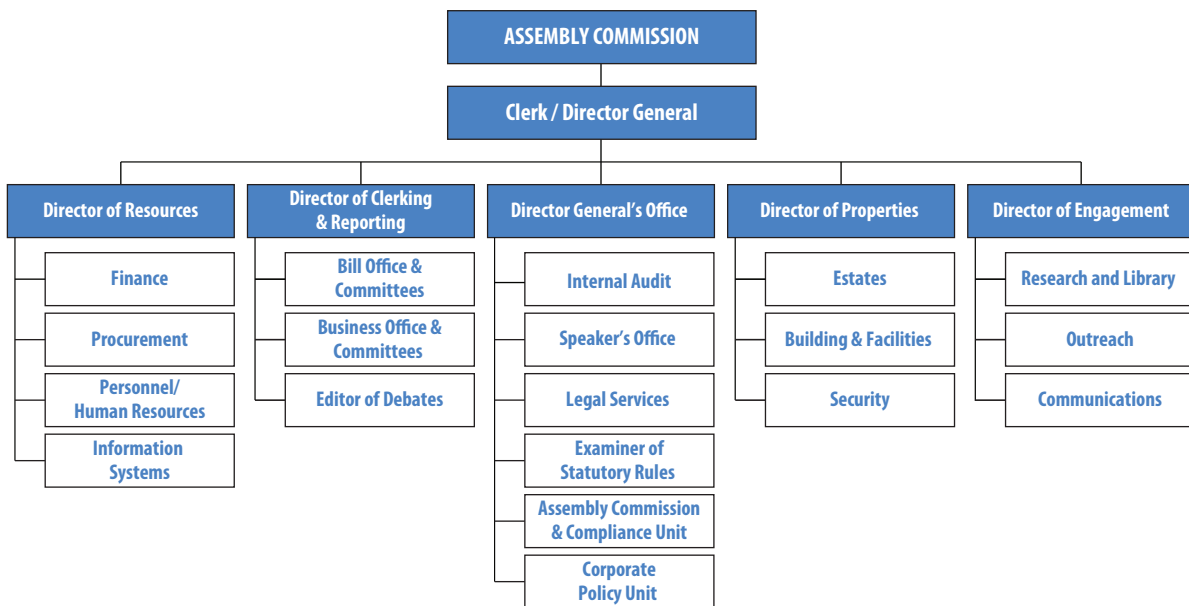
The Procurement Office provides professional purchasing expertise to the Assembly Secretariat. This includes advice and direction on good procurement practices to ensure compliance with legal obligations but it also includes the efficient and effective use of Assembly resources. The Office is responsible for the development and implementation of procurement policies and procedures across the Secretariat and interpreting, negotiating and purchasing contracts over £25,000 in value. The Procurement Office also monitors and reviews supply and service contracts to ensure quality and value for money.

An Evolving Assembly

An Evolving Assembly

During this period, the Assembly Commission completed its goal of instituting an independent Secretariat for those working in the Northern Ireland Assembly. From April 1 2010, this independent parliamentary service separated from the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

It is expected that the structures already in place, including the four directorates, will be developed over time. In addition, the Assembly Commission will be undertaking a pay and grading review to ensure that appropriate levels of skills and remuneration are available, so that the Assembly is properly supported.



Accommodating the Assembly

Accommodating the Assembly

Parliament Buildings, which opened in 1932, is one of Northern Ireland's most iconic buildings and is home to the Northern Ireland Assembly. It is a grade B+ listed building and attracts considerable interest due to its history, location and purpose.

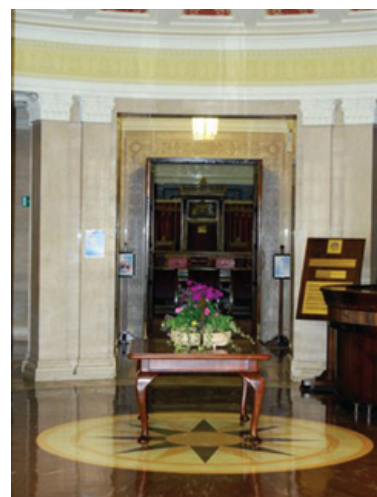
The Assembly Commission is determined to provide an environment which all stakeholders can be proud and one which supports the operational and statutory requirements of a working legislature.

During the summer of 2008, a major refurbishment of the Assembly Chamber was undertaken to upgrade the facilities for Members, improve accessibility and to facilitate better engagement with the public.

In 2009, a strategic review of accommodation was carried out with a view to identifying opportunities to improve public engagement facilities, upgrade Committee room functionality and better utilise the existing space.

Some of the recommendations from the review have already been carried out, including the creation of a new Committee meeting room with full broadcast functionality, the creation of an additional room for use by the Education Service, and the creation of additional office accommodation in a former storage area.

During summer recess 2009/10, further improvements have been carried out, including the creation of a further Committee meeting room, upgrading existing Committee facilities and modifications to existing toilet accommodation to create additional rooms at ground floor level.

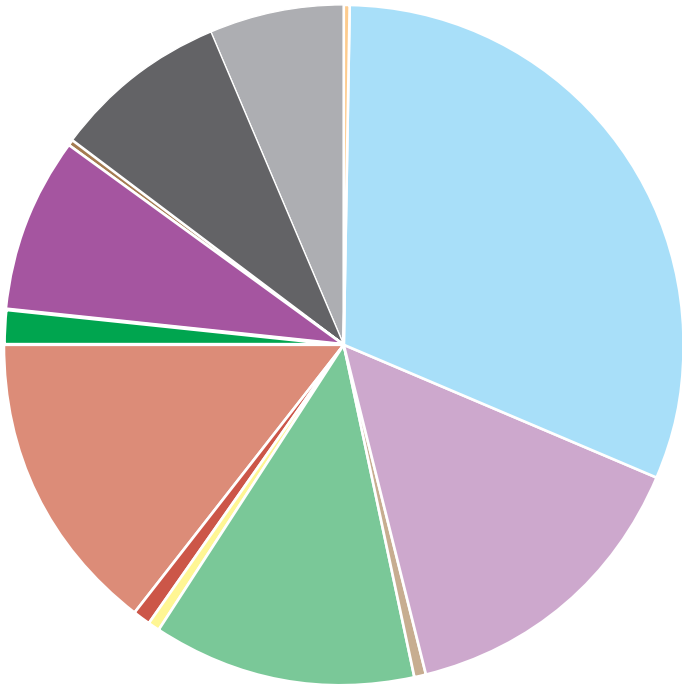


The entrance to the Senate Chamber in Parliament Buildings.



The West Door in Parliament Buildings leading to the Assembly Chamber.

Operating Cost Statement April 2009 – March 2010 (£'m)



- Secretariat Staffing (£15,344,185)
- Party Allowances (£783,827)
- Secretariat GAE (£7,416,457)
- Depreciation and Impairment (£4,196,934)
- Secretariat Consultancy (£341,357)
- Notionals (£41,400)
- Members Salaries (£6,932,416)
- Notional Cost of Capital (£4,067,864)
- Members Costs (£393,901)
- Provisions (£3,509,106)
- Members Travel & Subsistence (£312,261)
- Income (-£51,955)
- OCA (£7,526,091)

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