

Written Answers to Questions

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Friday 27 May 2011

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Contents

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister1

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure1

Department of Education2

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment5

Department of Finance and Personnel6

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.....6

Department of Justice10

Department for Regional Development.....13

Department for Social Development15

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Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 27 May 2011

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Papal Visit to Northern Ireland

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) for an update on their Department's position on a Papal visit to Northern Ireland, in light of the documentation that was released by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which states that the deputy First Minister had mentioned the prospect of such a visit; and (ii) whether their Department has made any representations to Her Majesty's Government in relation to this matter.

(AQW 92/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): Our Department has no position on a Papal visit and has made no representations in relation to this matter.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Elite Facilities Programme Funding

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the level of financial support she intends to make available to those organisations that provided business cases for the Elite Facilities Programme funding.

(AQW 171/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): The assessment of the Outline Business Cases for the Elite Facilities Programme (now known as the Major Facilities and Infrastructure Programme) broadly coincided with the announcement by the Executive of the draft Budget 2011-2015 and the fact that no capital funding had been made available for any of the applications under this Programme.

I am, of course, conscious of the level of commitment and work put in by organisations and individuals in developing their projects and in bringing all of the bids to the Outline Business Case stage.

However, in line with general and accepted practice for applications for capital funding to my Department and indeed to many other organisations within Government, expenses incurred in making a bid to the Programme were taken "at risk". It was made clear to applicants at various stages throughout the process that this was the case. Under such circumstances there is no financial support available for those organisations that provided business cases for the Elite Facilities Programme.

Department of Education

School Places for Children in Groomsport

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education to detail any plans to allocate Year 1 school places to the three children in Groomsport who no longer have a school nearby.

(AQW 9/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): In accordance with normal procedures for the placement of pupils in primary schools, where a parent has failed to obtain a place for their child in a school of their choice, the relevant Education and Library Board then approaches the parents with a list of undersubscribed schools to seek a further selection for their child.

In the case of unplaced pupils in Groomsport seeking admission to P1 this September, the South Eastern Education and Library Board has advised the parents that over 100 places are available for allocation at two controlled primary schools within reasonable travelling distance of Groomsport at less than 15 minutes by road. As the distance from Groomsport to these schools is more than 2 miles, the children should be eligible for transport assistance.

New Builds for Schools

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to detail the criteria used by his Department in relation new builds for schools.

(AQW 14/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Executive's Budget highlights significant reductions in the capital resources for Education over the next four years, which will have a detrimental effect on the Department's ability to deliver a school building programme.

It will therefore be important to consider how the limited capital funds available should be deployed in a strategic and prioritised basis to address the most pressing needs and to secure maximum educational benefits for children and young people.

This work will be a priority for me and my officials in the coming months.

School Budgets

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how his Department intends to protect schools from having to make teachers redundant as a consequence of current school budgets.

(AQW 15/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: A key priority in agreeing final budget allocations was to drive up efficiency, reduce bureaucracy and eliminate duplication in order to protect frontline services in the classroom as far as possible.

Schools have received their delegated budgets for 2011-12 and under the Local Management of Schools arrangements it will be for each school to decide on their spending priorities, including their teaching and non-teaching complements.

I intend to work with my Executive Colleagues in the months and years ahead to help alleviate the pressures on school budgets.

Teachers in Roman Catholic Schools

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of teachers from (i) a Protestant background; and (ii) a Roman Catholic background currently teaching in Roman Catholic schools.

(AQW 56/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 provides for employers to make annual monitoring returns to the Equality Commission about the composition of the workforce and those applying

for employment. However, this provision does not apply to recruitment as a teacher in a school. Therefore, employers of teachers in Catholic schools do not hold information on their religious background.

Newly Qualified Teachers

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what action he intends to take to ensure that newly qualified teachers are given preference over retired teachers to fill vacancies.

(AQW 57/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is imperative that newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are given every opportunity to fill vacancies, including those of a temporary nature, and to provide substitution cover.

My Department has issued guidance to all employing authorities and schools advising that the NI Substitute Teachers' Register (NISTR) must be used when booking all substitute teachers. NISTR allows schools to identify younger teachers seeking employment as substitutes and employing authorities to mount a more robust challenge where schools employ prematurely retired teachers. From September 2010 my Department has monitored the re-employment of prematurely retired teachers on a monthly basis. Schools and employing authorities are routinely challenged when such employment occurs, and an explanation sought as to why such teachers are being re-employed in preference to NQTs or other non-retired teachers.

The rules of the Teachers' Pension Scheme also militate against the employment of retired teachers, in that such teachers may suffer a reduction in pension as a result of earnings from employment as a teacher. My Department has strict controls in place to monitor such cases.

My Department has committed to explore the scope for introducing a flat rate of pay, based on the salary levels applicable to NQTs, for prematurely retired teachers who return to teaching. My Department also proposes to make amendments to the Common Funding Scheme for the Local Management of Schools (LMS) which will encourage schools to give preference to newly or recently qualified teachers. These include charging the school's delegated budget for the full cost of employing a prematurely retired teacher as a substitute; and reducing the ceiling for centre reimbursement of teacher substitution costs from point 4 to point 3 on the teachers' main pay scale. My officials are currently considering the responses to formal consultation on these changes, and on an Equality Impact Assessment, which closed on 11 May.

Furthermore, employing authorities are now required to bear the costs of granting premature retirement to teachers. Since 2008 there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of premature retirements, with no teacher granted premature retirement since April 2010. Over time, this will have the effect of reducing the stock of prematurely retired teachers from which schools can draw, and they will, therefore, need to look more frequently to newly qualified and other non-retired teachers when filling vacancies.

New School Buildings in the Hollywood Area

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education to detail any plans his Department has to address the need for new school buildings in the Hollywood area.

(AQW 58/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Executive's Budget highlights significant reductions in the capital resources for Education over the next four years, which will have a detrimental effect on the Department's ability to deliver a school building programme.

It will therefore be important to consider how the limited capital funds available should be deployed in a strategic and prioritised basis to address the most pressing needs and to secure maximum educational benefits for children and young people.

This work will be a priority for me and my officials in the coming months.

You will appreciate, therefore, that I cannot provide you with an update on the potential new build projects for the Hollywood area at this time.

Admissions to P1 in the Bangor Area

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of appeals lodged with the South Eastern Education and Library Board for failure to gain admission to P1 in the Bangor area, in September 2011, broken down by each primary school.

(AQW 79/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The number of appeals together with (i) the number of applications: and (ii) the level of over subscription for P1 primary school places for September 2011 in each primary school in the Bangor area are as detailed in the table below. Further appeals may still be lodged.

School	Total Applications	Approved Admissions	Level of over-subscription	Appeals Lodged to date
Crawfordsburn Primary School	50	32	18	2
Ballyholme Primary School	128	90	38	5
Clandeboyne Primary School	23	78	*U	0
Bloomfield Primary School	65	58	7	0
Grange Park Primary School	80	52	28	2
Kilcooley Primary School	16	81	*U	0
Rathmore Primary School	101	79	22	1
Towerview Primary School	79	46	33	1
Kilmaine Primary School	122	87	35	4
Ballymagee Primary School	82	58	24	0
St Comgall's Primary School	45	41	4	0
St Malachy's Primary School	51	60	*U	0
Bangor Central Primary School	100	87	13	1

*U = undersubscribed

Source: South Eastern Education and Library Board

The total level of over subscription in the Bangor area exceeds the number of vacant places in the three under subscribed schools because a child's application can be considered by more than one school thus one child can be counted several times. Additionally applications are received for children from outside the Bangor area. There are sufficient places in the Bangor area to provide for the number of applicants.

Over-Subscription for P1 Primary School Places

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number of applications; and (ii) the level of over-subscription for P1 primary school places for September 2011 in each primary school in the Bangor area.

(AQW 81/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The number of appeals together with (i) the number of applications: and (ii) the level of over subscription for P1 primary school places for September 2011 in each primary school in the Bangor area are as detailed in the table below. Further appeals may still be lodged.

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Towerview Primary School	79	46	33	1
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Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Wind Farms

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the amount of electricity produced by wind farms in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): The amount of electricity generated by onshore wind¹ since 2006/07 is detailed below, together with the total electricity generated from renewable sources over the same period:

	Electricity generated from onshore wind (GWh ²)	Total electricity generated from renewable sources (GWh)
2010/11	675.4	745.4
2009/10	709.8	754.9
2008/09	583.9	596.6
2007/08	431.7	441

	Electricity generated from onshore wind (GWh²)	Total electricity generated from renewable sources (GWh)
2006/07	335	345.2

Source: NIE

Notes:

- ¹ Onshore wind figure includes electricity generated by wind farms and individual wind turbines.
- ² GWh – Gigawatt hour. One gigawatt equals one thousand megawatts

Presbyterian Mutual Society

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the lessons learned and the changes implemented as a result of the Treasury Select Committee's investigation into the Presbyterian Mutual Society.

(AQW 51/11-15)

Mrs Foster: HM Treasury in collaboration with the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment initiated a review of the legislative framework for both credit unions and industrial and provident societies in Northern Ireland in 2009. In relation to learning lessons from the PMS experience, its Report concluded that the main lesson to be learned related to transparency, that an institution offering shares must tell its members the nature of their investment and that their capital will be at risk; it also concluded that there were no compelling reasons for Northern Ireland's integration into a United Kingdom wide framework for IPS's.

My Department will take forward legislative proposals which will update the current Northern Ireland framework in line with Great Britain, including in relation to improving corporate governance and disclosure, during the mandate of the current Assembly.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Bonus Payments

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) to outline his Department's policy on bonus payments to public service employees; and (ii) whether this policy has been followed by all Departments, including the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and Invest NI.

(AQW 2/11-15)

Mr Wilson (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): The Executive's policy on bonus payments/performance pay for senior officials in the public sector in Northern Ireland is that they should not be awarded unless there is a clear contractual entitlement to such an award. All departments are required to follow this approach for all public sector staff groups that are subject to Government Pay Policy.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Health of Working-Class Communities

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline any plans his Department has to improve the health of working-class communities.

(AQW 7/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Health and wellbeing are influenced by a range of complex and inter-related socio-economic and environmental influences on daily life, as well as factors such as age, sex, hereditary factors and lifestyle. Evidence shows that

the more disadvantaged people's social and economic circumstances, the worse their health status is likely to be.

Improving population health and wellbeing, and in particular reducing health inequalities – the gap in health status between more affluent and disadvantaged communities and population groups - requires long term sustained and collective effort across government and all sectors, and is a major challenge.

I will bring forward plans to ensure that improving health and reducing health inequalities will be a key priority for my department and its agencies.

Counselling Service for Stroke Victims

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if there are any plans to introduce a dedicated counselling service for stroke victims.

(AQW 20/11-15)

Mr Poots: I understand that to date a number of service developments have been taken forward by the Regional Stroke Implementation Group which was established to take forward and to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the Stroke Strategy.

These developments, across all Health and Social Care Trusts, include the establishment of Early Supported Discharge (ESD) teams with a recognised specialist stroke coordinator available to help coordinate all aspects of the discharge process. Counselling is part of the follow up care in the community and is the responsibility of the ESD and community stroke teams. I am advised that the provision of improved psychological support remains one of their priorities subject to the availability of the required investment.

Music Therapy Services

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he intends to review the decision to cut music therapy services to Clifton Special School, Bangor.

(AQW 26/11-15)

Mr Poots: Music therapy services were provided at Clifton Special School in Bangor through the Northern Ireland Music Therapy Trust's (NIMTT) "Arioso" project. That project was supported initially by the Children's Fund, established by the NI Executive, from April 2003 to March 2008. From April 2008 my Department used its own funds to extend those ex-Children's Fund projects which pursued health and safety care activity until March 2011.

Projects were advised that they would be expected to move to a position of self-sustainability over this extended funding period, or secure an alternative funder, as it would be prudent for them to plan ahead on the assumption that funding would not be available beyond March 2011.

Unfortunately, due to other pressures and priorities on my budget I am no longer in a position to provide funding for this project directly.

However, responsibility for the commissioning of services, including music therapy, rests with the Health and Social Care Board in Northern Ireland and, therefore, any issues relating to funding should be directed to the Board.

Autism Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans his Department has to progress the provisions of the Autism Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

(AQW 30/11-15)

Mr Poots: In the first instance I wish to make it clear that I am committed to improving services for those with autism and for their families and carers.

The Autism Act received Royal Assent on 9 May. Among other things, the Act requires my Department to prepare an autism strategy in consultation with other Departments and officials are now commencing discussions as to how this can best be progressed within the timescale set out in the Act.

S2 Certificate Arrangements

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, under the S2 certificate arrangements, (i) how many people not resident in Northern Ireland received non-emergency treatment here in each of the last five years; (ii) how many of these non-residents were residents of the Republic of Ireland; (iii) what was the cost of the treatment provided to Republic of Ireland residents; and (iv) how much the Republic of Ireland reimbursed the Health Service for these treatments.

(AQW 46/11-15)

Mr Poots: The financial arrangements surrounding S2 certificates are handled centrally by the Department of Work and Pensions on behalf of the UK. All payments and refunds relating to the S2 certificate are made to a central UK budget. S2 figures are not available for each composite part of the UK.

Frontier Workers

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many 'frontier workers' resident in the Republic of Ireland and working in Northern Ireland are (i) registered with a Northern Ireland GP; and (ii) eligible to receive treatment on the Health Service.

(AQW 47/11-15)

Mr Poots: As of 20th May 2011 there are 1503 frontier workers resident in the Republic of Ireland and working in Northern Ireland who have been issued with a medical card in Northern Ireland. Anyone who qualifies as a frontier worker under the provision of EU social security legislation is entitled to the full range of health services in Northern Ireland on the same basis as any Northern Ireland resident.

Physiotherapist to Patient Ratio

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the minimum safety standard in relation to physiotherapist to patient ratio in a rehabilitation ward; and (ii) the current level of qualified physiotherapy staff in each rehabilitation unit in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 55/11-15)

Mr Poots:

(i) Currently there are no minimum safety standards in relation to physiotherapist to patient ratio in a rehabilitation ward.

(ii) The qualified physiotherapy staff in each rehabilitation unit in the Northern HSC Trust is:

Whiteabbey	4.1 WTE (whole time equivalents)
Mid-Ulster	2.5 WTE
Causeway	2.2 WTE

Neurologists

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many neurologists are currently working within the Foyle constituency; (ii) whether these neurologists are based in Altnagelvin Hospital; and (iii) what is the average waiting time for an appointment with a neurologist in this area.

(AQW 64/11-15)

Mr Poots:

i Information on staff working within Northern Ireland Health & Social Care is not available by constituency.

- ii. There are 2 (2.0 Whole-Time Equivalent) Neurologists employed at Altnagelvin Hospital as at May 2011. (Source: Western HSC Trust)
- iii. The median waiting time-band for a first appointment in Neurology at Altnagelvin Hospital at the 31st December 2010, the most recent date for which information is available, was the 9-13 week time-band. (Source: Departmental Return CH3 Parts 1 and 2)

Free Health Service Care

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of whether only those people who are entitled to free Health Service care receive it.

(AQW 68/11-15)

Mr Poots: Entitlement to publicly funded health care services in Northern Ireland is generally based on being ordinarily resident here. There are exceptions to this including emergency treatment for non-UK residents in an A&E Department, residents of countries with which the UK has a reciprocal agreement, and frontier workers.

There are systems in place to ensure medical cards are only issued to those with an entitlement and residency checks are also carried out on patients presenting at hospitals for treatment. As with any system there is the potential for abuse however all possible steps are taken to avoid this and the Counter Fraud and Probity Services within the Business Services Organisation take action wherever possible on identified cases of fraud.

Consultant Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon in the Western Health and Social Care Trust

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many new referrals have had appointments with a Consultant Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon in the Western Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last three years.

(AQW 75/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of new outpatient attendances with a Consultant Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon in the Western Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last three years is outlined in the table below:

Year	No. of new outpatient attendances
2008/09	1,274
2009/10	1,436
2010/11	1,398

Source: Western Health and Social Care Trust

Music Therapy Services

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he plans to review the decision to cut music therapy services for children with severe learning disabilities.

(AQW 76/11-15)

Mr Poots: Music therapy services for children with severe learning disabilities have been provided by the Northern Ireland Music Therapy Trust's (NIMTT) "Arioso" project. That project was initially supported through the Children's Fund, established by the NI Executive, from April 2003 to March 2008. From April 2008 my Department used its own funds to extend those ex-Children's Fund projects which pursued health and safety care activity until March 2011.

Projects were advised that they would be expected to move to a position of self-sustainability over this extended funding period, or secure an alternative funder, as it would be prudent for them to plan ahead on the assumption that funding would not be available beyond March 2011.

Unfortunately, due to other pressures and priorities on my budget I am no longer in a position to provide funding for this project directly.

However, responsibility for the commissioning of services, including music therapy, rests with the Health and Social Care Board in Northern Ireland and, therefore, any issues relating to funding should be directed to the Board.

Northern Ireland Music Therapy Trust's Arioso Project is a regional project and responsibility for its funding lies with the Health and Social Care Board in Northern Ireland and therefore any issues relating to funding should be directed to the Board.

All projects were advised that given the increasing pressures on public expenditure they would be expected to move to a position of self-sustainability, or secure an alternative funder.

Dental Surgeries

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he plans to repeal the legislation that was introduced by the previous Minister which requires dental surgeries to register as independent hospitals with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority on a form which is not designed for use by small businesses; and if he will engage with the relevant dental authorities and organisations on this issue.

(AQW 125/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have no plans to repeal legislation, which from 1 April 2011 provides for the regulation of all dental establishments delivering private dental care, including orthodontics. This legislation will provide assurance to the public, through regular inspection and monitoring by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) that private dental treatment is delivered to a minimum standard.

The registration of private dental practices within the classification of "independent hospital" is a legislative mechanism to facilitate regulation of the sector, but does not mean that they are treated, in terms of regulation and inspection, as hospitals. They are regulated and inspected with respect to the minimum standards for dental services set by the Department.

The registration application procedure, including documentation, is a matter for the RQIA and I understand that application forms and guidance on completion have been issued to all relevant practices.

I am happy to engage with dental authorities and organisations on any issues of concern.

Department of Justice

Super-Injunctions

Mr Allister asked Minister of Justice how many super-injunctions have been (i) sought; and (ii) granted through applications to the High Court of Justice in each year since 2007, up to and including the date of answer.

(AQW 5/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The information as requested is not available. There is no legal definition of the term "super injunction" and it is therefore not possible to determine the number of injunctions that could be classified as 'super injunctions'.

Case Number 11/000893

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the total costs and expenses, including accommodation and travel, for case number 11/000893 in relation to defendant Kehere Arija, broken down by the (i) Public Prosecution Service; (ii) defence; (iii) jury; (iv) PSNI; and (v) interpreters.

(AQW 17/11-15)

Mr Ford: Some of the costs associated with case number 11/000893 are not yet known and not all agencies hold cost information at case level.

The table below sets out the estimated costs associated with case number 11/000893 where available and includes all Magistrates' Court and Crown Court appearances.

ESTIMATED COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH CASE NUMBER 11/000893

Cost Type	Estimated Cost
PPS Prosecution ¹	£1,500
Defence (Legal Aid Costs)	£10,205
Jury	£577
PSNI Prosecution ²	£1,210
Interpreters ³	£3,961
Total	£17,453

- 1 The Public Prosecution Service (PPS) note it is not possible to produce accurate costings for particular decisions since the amount of time required to take individual decisions will vary on a range of factors including the complexity of the case and extent of case papers. Fees paid to prosecuting counsel and witness expenses are included in the estimated total PPS case costs.
- 2 The PSNI costs are based on court attendance by the investigating officer.
- 3 This represents court interpreter costs and includes accommodation and travel.

Prisoner: Devidas Palautis

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice if he can confirm (i) that the erroneously released prisoner Devidas Palautis has been apprehended; (ii) when and where he was apprehended; and (iii) where he is being held at present.

(AQW 18/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) Devidas Paliutis was apprehended in the Republic of Ireland on 29 April.
- (ii) He was charged by the Garda Siochana, in relation to the murder of Dmytro Grysunov in Killeel on 23rd April.
- (iii) Mr Paliutis appeared before the Criminal Court of Justice in Dublin on 5 May 2011, and currently remains in custody in the Republic of Ireland.

Mobile Phones for Community Police Officers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) which District Policing Partnerships have provided mobile phones to Community Police Officers; (ii) the costs incurred in supplying these phones and the call charges to date; and (iii) for his assessment of the effectiveness of this initiative.

(AQW 21/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) The Northern Ireland Policing Board has confirmed that the following District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) provided mobile phones to Community Police Officers.
- Armagh DPP provided Community Police Officers with six mobile phones in the financial year 2008/09.
 - Craigavon DPP provided four mobile phones to Community Police Officers in the financial year 2009/10.
- (ii) **Armagh DPP** purchased six phones at a total cost of £200.00 with no contribution to the running costs or call charges thereafter.
- Craigavon DPP** purchased four pay-as-you-go phones at a total cost of £98.92. There were no additional costs thereafter.
- (iii) DPPs and the police locally report that the community contact numbers have increased accessibility of Community Police Officers within the districts concerned. This is in line with the PSNI Policing With the Community Strategy 2020, which identifies the need to increase the amount of time spent by officers on patrol by increased use of mobile data devices increasing visibility and accessibility.

Attorney General for Northern Ireland

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the Attorney General for Northern Ireland's intention to expand his remit by acquiring supervision powers for the Director of Public Prosecutions. **(AQW 22/11-15)**

Mr Ford: Arrangements for governance of the Public Prosecution Service are founded on the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 and came into effect on the devolution of justice matters. Some concerns have been expressed about those arrangements from a number of sources, and the First Minister, deputy First Minister, Attorney General and I have therefore agreed that the Department of Justice will lead a consultation on governance/accountability arrangements for the Public Prosecution Service. The consultation will consider options for the future and invite views.

Posts of Lord Chief Justice, the Attorney General for Northern Ireland and the Director of Public Prosecutions

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the impact on his commitment to a shared future if the posts of Lord Chief Justice, the Attorney General for Northern Ireland and the Director of Public Prosecutions are held by people exclusively from one tradition. **(AQW 24/11-15)**

Mr Ford: Appointment on merit is fundamental for all positions within the justice system. The perceived background of any person within the justice system has no bearing on my commitment, and that of my Department, to building a shared future for all the people of Northern Ireland.

Appointment of a Director of Public Prosecutions

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice if he has made any representations to the Attorney General for Northern Ireland about the delay in the appointment of a Director of Public Prosecutions. **(AQW 38/11-15)**

Mr Ford: The Attorney General for Northern Ireland is responsible for appointing the Director of Public Prosecutions. I have not made any representations to him concerning the appointment process.

Roman Catholic Church: Child Abuse Cases

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice what representations he has made, or intends to make, to the Roman Catholic Church highlighting that when dealing with child abuse cases, responsibility lies with

the PSNI and does not belong 'in the first place to bishops' as stated in a recent letter issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and circulated to Roman Catholic clergy.

(AQW 53/11-15)

Mr Ford: None. Under the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967 anyone with information about the commission of a crime such as child abuse has a duty to bring this to the attention of the Police Service Northern Ireland.

Department for Regional Development

Road Surfacing Programmes

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail any new road surfacing programmes identified for the (i) Donaghadee; and (ii) Bangor areas in this financial year.

(AQW 8/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): My Department's Roads Service has advised that there are currently no road resurfacing schemes planned for Donaghadee in this financial year, but that a provisional programme of carriageway and footway resurfacing schemes, as outlined below, has been developed in anticipation of the finalisation of financial allocations.

Carriageway and Footway composite resurfacing schemes:

- Demesne Road, Holywood;
- Brook Street, Holywood;
- Gransha Road, Bangor – Ring Road to Cranley Road;
- Maryville Road, Bangor;
- Maryville Park, Bangor;
- Ballymacconnell Road South, Bangor; and
- Perry Road, Bangor – Ballycrochan Road to Briarwood Drive.

Footway resurfacing schemes:

- Kilmaine Road, Bangor;
- Innisfayle Drive, Bangor; and
- Seahill Road, Craigavad A2 to Craigowen Road.

Road Schemes

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail all the road schemes which have received funding for the development of plans or for construction, as a result of Ministerial direction, since 1998.

(AQW 10/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it is not aware of any major road schemes which have received funding for the development of plans or for construction, as a result of Ministerial direction, since 1998.

Dualling of the A26 Between Ballymena and Ballymoney

Mr Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the dualling of the A26 between Ballymena and Ballymoney.

(AQW 13/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As Minister for Regional Development, I would like to see improvements across the Strategic Road Network which will enhance safety, reduce journey times and provide value for money.

My Department's Roads Service has advised that the Investment Delivery Plan (IDP) for Roads, which was published in 2008, identifies the dualling of the A26 between Glarryford and the A44 Drones Road junction during the plan period 2008 – 2018.

Unfortunately, the funding levels within the current budget do not allow for construction to start before 2014/15 at the earliest.

The timing of delivery will be dependent on the allocation of finances beyond the Budget 2011-15 period. However, in the meantime, Roads Service will continue to develop the scheme through the normal statutory processes.

Abbey Road, Millisle

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to resurface the Abbey Road, Millisle.

(AQW 29/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it plans to carry out a resurfacing scheme on the urban section of Abbey Road, Millisle, during the current financial year.

On-street Car Parking

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the introduction of on-street car parking for town centres.

(AQW 31/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In response to the potential impact on retail trade, I intend to review the policy of introducing new on-street parking charges in towns throughout Northern Ireland.

A2 Upgrade Project in East Antrim

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he intends to review his Department's spending plans and whether the A2 upgrade project in East Antrim will be a priority.

(AQW 32/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As Minister for Regional Development, I would like to see improvements across the Strategic Road Network which will enhance safety, reduce journey times and provide value for money.

I intend to consider proposed investment across my Department, including the impact of Budget 2010 on the strategic roads programme, and explore opportunities for bringing forward schemes such as the A2 Shore Road, Greenisland project.

Car Parking Charges

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister for Regional Development if he intends to implement car parking charges in towns.

(AQW 72/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In response to the potential impact on retail trade, I intend to review the policy of introducing new on-street parking charges in towns throughout Northern Ireland.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 5315/11, in relation to his Department's response to each of the five Freedom of Information requests, how many, in the first

instance, included the draft letter prepared by the former Permanent Secretary, Paul Priestly, for Mr Peter Dixon regarding the Public Accounts Committee hearings of 1 July 2010.

(AQW 117/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Four of my Department's responses to the Freedom of Information requests referred to, included a copy of the draft letter prepared by the former Permanent Secretary, Mr Paul Priestly, for Mr Peter Dixon regarding the Public Accounts Committee hearings of 1 July 2010.

Coleraine to Londonderry Railway Line

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he intends to bring forward the date of 2014 for the relay of the Coleraine to Londonderry railway line, given that the new rolling stock will be in service from 2011.

(AQW 122/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The original plans for the Coleraine to Londonderry Track relay project would have resulted in the completion of the project by 2013 to coincide with the introduction to service of all 20 new trains. The budget, approved by the Executive, makes provision for the commencement of the track relay in 2014. This reflects capital availability of only £20m in year 4 of the budget period. Given the budget outcome, it is not possible to start the work earlier than 2014.

Translink are currently identifying interim measures to be undertaken to ensure the continued running and safety of the line up until 2014. Funding has been provided for this purpose.

Department for Social Development

Pensioners' Bungalows in the Bloomfield Estate, Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to outline when the pensioners' bungalows in the Bloomfield Estate, Bangor, will be renovated.

(AQW 6/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The pensioners' bungalows in the Bloomfield Estate had initially been programmed for a Multi Element Improvement scheme that would have seen significant work undertaken to upgrade homes in the area. However due to pressures across the housing budget, this scheme, along with all other Multi Element Improvement schemes, are now being reviewed.

Part of this review will include looking at what improvements may be possible as part of the Housing Executives ongoing revenue improvement work. I will also want to evaluate the recent pilot undertaken in Rinmore that may also provide an alternative method of delivering these sorts of improvements that are long overdue for residents.

Flats in the Kilcooley Estate, Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development when he intends to complete the refurbishment of the flats in the Kilcooley Estate, Bangor, as part of the Neighbourhood Renewal Scheme.

(AQW 28/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I understand that 17 of the 24 flats in question are currently vacant and have become increasingly hard to let. These vacant properties are adding to the blight in the surrounding area and are now attracting an element of those who would use them for anti social behaviour.

I have asked a senior official within Housing Division to meet with the Housing Executive as a matter of urgency to identify how the future of these flats can be addressed taking account of the significant concerns already expressed by the community and I will be happy to update the member once that way forward has been identified.

New Social Housing

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development what new social housing the Housing Executive intends to provide over the next four years.

(AQW 33/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The recent budget settlement will provide for approximately 6,000 new homes over the next four years. In addition to this, I want to look at how we can make our budget go even further, for example through more collaborative working and procurement.

A draft three year programme outlining where this housing could be delivered over the next three years will be published shortly and I will advise the member of that when available.

Minimum Price for a Unit of Alcohol

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development whether he plans to introduce legislation to set a minimum price for a unit of alcohol.

(AQW 39/11-15)

Mr McCausland: A joint DSD/DHSSPS consultation document on the minimum pricing of alcohol was published on 7 March. In addition to seeking views on the introduction of a minimum price for a unit of alcohol, the consultation also seeks views on other possible pricing interventions including banning below cost selling and VAT and duty rises. The consultation ends on 26 June after which time I will discuss the outcome with the Health Minister before agreeing the way forward.

Campsie Neighbourhood Renewal Scheme

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how many properties were part of the Campsie Neighbourhood Renewal Scheme; (ii) whether any complaints about the Scheme were received from residents; (iii) whether the quality of the work which was carried out on the Campsie Scheme has been evaluated; and (iv) how much Neighbourhood Renewal Scheme funding has been allocated to the Omagh Group Repair Scheme in each of the last three years.

(AQW 50/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I assume the Member is referring to the Omagh Group Repair scheme. In relation to:-

- (i) 47 properties at Campsie Avenue and Campsie Crescent, Omagh were included in the Omagh Group Repair scheme.
- (ii) No formal complaints were received under the Housing Executive's formal complaints procedure. However, 24 owners raised issues with the Housing Executive including workmanship, length of time to complete the works and alleged damage caused by the contractor to their property.
- (iii) All matters raised were investigated and responses given to the owners of the properties concerned. During the course of the scheme the work was checked by the Housing Executive's Clerk of Works and by the Contract Administrator (an external Consultant who had been appointed by the Housing Executive) and Practical Completion Certificates were issued in 2009. Building Control officers also inspected the work. Three owners however denied access to the Technical Officers to inspect the work at the end of the six month defects period and these properties are currently the subject of legal action initiated by the owners against the contractor, the consultant and the Housing Executive.
- (iv) The Omagh Group Repair Scheme was not financed from Neighbourhood Renewal Area funding. Funding for the scheme totalling £350,000 in 2008/09 and £69,000 in 2009/10 was provided by the Housing Executive and no payments were made on this scheme during 2010/11.

Written Answers Index

Department for Regional Development	13	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	6
A2 Upgrade Project in East Antrim	14	Autism Act (Northern Ireland) 2011	7
Abbey Road, Millisle	14	Consultant Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon in the Western Health and Social Care Trust	9
Car Parking Charges	14	Counselling Service for Stroke Victims	7
Coleraine to Londonderry Railway Line	15	Dental Surgeries	10
Dualling of the A26 Between Ballymena and Ballymoney	13	Free Health Service Care	9
Freedom of Information Requests	14	Frontier Workers	8
On-street Car Parking	14	Health of Working-Class Communities	6
Road Schemes	13	Music Therapy Services	7
Road Surfacing Programmes	13	Music Therapy Services	9
		Neurologists	8
Department for Social Development	15	Physiotherapist to Patient Ratio	8
Campsie Neighbourhood Renewal Scheme	16	S2 Certificate Arrangements	8
Flats in the Kilcooley Estate, Bangor	15		
Minimum Price for a Unit of Alcohol	16	Department of Justice	10
New Social Housing	16	Appointment of a Director of Public Prosecutions	12
Pensioners' Bungalows in the Bloomfield Estate, Bangor	15	Attorney General for Northern Ireland	12
		Case Number 11/000893	11
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure	1	Mobile Phones for Community Police Officers	11
Elite Facilities Programme Funding	1	Posts of Lord Chief Justice, the Attorney General for Northern Ireland and the Director of Public Prosecutions	12
		Prisoner: Devidas Palautis	11
Department of Education	2	Roman Catholic Church: Child Abuse Cases	12
Admissions to P1 in the Bangor Area	4	Super-Injunctions	10
New Builds for Schools	2		
Newly Qualified Teachers	3	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	1
New School Buildings in the Holywood Area	3	Papal Visit to Northern Ireland	1
Over-Subscription for P1 Primary School Places	4		
School Budgets	2		
School Places for Children in Groomsport	2		
Teachers in Roman Catholic Schools	2		
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	5		
Presbyterian Mutual Society	6		
Wind Farms	5		
Department of Finance and Personnel	6		
Bonus Payments	6		



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