



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY, 20 OCTOBER 2016

ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Caoimhe Archibald MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson MLA
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA
Mr David Ford MLA
Mr William Irwin MLA
Mr Patsy McGlone MLA
Mr Harold McKee MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Edwin Poots MLA
Mr Robin Swann MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Stella McArdle (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Christopher McNickle (Assistant Clerk)
Ms Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)
Miss Zoe Rogers (Bursary Student)

Apologies: None

The meeting opened in closed session at **10.02 am**

1. Committee Planning

The Committee noted the first draft of the Committee Planning session paper.

10.04 a.m. Sydney Anderson joined the meeting.

10.09 a.m. Robin Swann joined the meeting.

10.24 a.m. William Irwin joined the meeting.

10.38 a.m. Edwin Poots joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request information from the Department on the Committees priority work areas and on the waste management budget.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an informal meeting between the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers to discuss the issue of waste management.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that a finalised plan will be brought back to the Committee for agreement in due course.

The meeting opened in public session at **10.58 am**

10.58 a.m. Caoimhe Archibald left the meeting.

10.58 a.m. Maurice Bradley left the meeting.

2. Apologies

As above.

3. Chairperson's business

There was no Chairperson's business.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 13th October 2016 were agreed.

5. Matters Arising

The Committee noted correspondence from Minister McIlveen in response to issues raised by the Chairperson in relation to the proposed closure of Social Security and Jobs and Benefits Offices and associated rural proofing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Communities and ask that the Committee raise the issue of what rural proofing had been done with its Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a briefing from the Department on rural proofing.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Infrastructure in response to a memo from the Clerk outlining concerns raised by the Committee in relation to the Fish Kill on the Carrigs river. It was further noted that the Committee for Infrastructure will take evidence from Northern Ireland Water on this matter and will raise this issue on the Committee's behalf.

The Committee noted correspondence from Mr David Ford MLA regarding the Department's attendance at the recent British Irish Parliamentary Association Committee meeting.

11.01 a.m. Caoimhe Archibald re-joined the meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an explanation of why the Department was unable to contribute to the British Irish Parliamentary Association Committee Meeting.

11.04 a.m. Maurice Bradley re-joined the meeting

6. Oral briefing from Rural Support – Health and Social Effects of the Agricultural Downturn

11.08 a.m. The following witnesses joined the meeting:

Mr Jude McCann, Chief Executive, Rural Support

Dr Sam Campbell, CEO Ai Services and Rural Support Chairman

Mr David McConaghy, Research Assistant, Rural Support

Mrs Gillian Reid, Farm Business Mentor, Rural Support

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the health and social effects of the agricultural downturn.

11.28 a.m. Edwin Poots left the meeting

11.43 a.m. Edwin Poots re-joined the meeting

Mr William Irwin declared an interest as a self-employed farmer.

12.00 p.m. William Irwin left the meeting

Mr Robin Swann declared an interest as a former Director of Rural Support.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department in relation to the future funding of Rural Support and to enquire whether information on tax credits is routinely enclosed with Departmental correspondence with farmers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to HMRC in relation to the issues faced by self-employed farmers when calculating family income.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information from Rural Support on the number of telephone calls to its helpline.

12.14 p.m. The officials left the meeting

7. Oral briefing from RaISe – Rural Development funding for the rural community – Background and possible Brexit considerations

12.14 p.m. The following official joined the meeting:

Mr Mark Allen, Researcher, Research and Information Services, NI Assembly

Mr Allen briefed the Committee on the background and possible Brexit considerations for rural development funding for the rural community in Northern Ireland

12.15 p.m. Robin Swann left the meeting.

12.15 p.m. Oliver McMullan left the meeting.

12.15 p.m. Sydney Anderson left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the paper to the Department and to seek a response to questions raised in the briefing.

Agreed: Mr Allen agreed to provide further information on Horizon 2020 funding.

12.30 p.m. Mr Allen left the meeting.

8. S.R. 2016/346 The Carlingford Area (Definition of the Mouth of the Clanrye River) Regulations 2016

Agreed: The Committee considered S.R. 2016/346 The Carlingford Area (Definition of the Mouth of the Clanrye River) Regulations 2016 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, has no objection to the rule.

9. Written Evidence – Stakeholders responses to PfG Consultation

The Committee considered written evidence from four stakeholders in relation to the Programme for Government Consultation.

10. Written Briefing DAERA – 2017 Review of Identified Bathing Waters

The Committee noted a written briefing by the Department in relation to a 2017 Review of Identified Bathing Waters

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an update at the appropriate time on the inclusion of three new identified bathing water sites.

11. Written Briefing DAERA – Synopsis of responses to the ‘2015 Review of Shellfish Water Protected Areas’ consultation

The Committee noted a written briefing by the Department in relation to responses to the ‘2015 Review of Shellfish Water Protected Areas’ consultation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an update as appropriate on the designation of Narrow Water.

12. Written Briefing DAERA – Efficient Farming Cut Greenhouse Gases Implementation Plan 2016-2020

The Committee noted a written briefing by the Department in relation to the Efficient Farming Cuts Greenhouse Gases Implementation Plan 2016-2020.

13. Correspondence

The Committee noted correspondence from the Food and Drink Federation UK on the Post Referendum Business Confidence Survey – October 2016.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Marine Accident Investigation Branch, providing a copy of its report (20-2016) on the investigation of the collision between the stern trawler Karen and a dived Royal Navy submarine.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office on briefings on Outcomes-based Accountability Approach in preparation for scrutiny of the forthcoming draft PfG.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee on Procedures on a review of e-petitions.

The Committee noted an invite to the NI Human Rights Commission Annual Statement Launch.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office in relation to the Draft Departments (Transfer of Functions) (No.2) Order (NI) 2016.

14. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed an additional oral evidence session on 01 December in relation to 2016/17 DAERA Business Plan and Mid-Year Progress Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to meet at 9.30 a.m. on 01 December.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to meet on Tuesday 15 November at 12.30pm to consider the draft Budget and the Programme for Government.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an oral evidence session on the 2017 – 2018 DAERA budget for 12 January 2017.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to postpone its forthcoming visit to Dublin to Thursday 02 March 2017.

Ten members indicated that they were available to attend the Committee meeting and visit to Moubouy and Ballykelly on 24 November and the following members indicated that they require an overnight stay on Wednesday 23 November:

Harold McKee, Oliver McMullan, Linda Dillon, Edwin Poots, William Irwin.

15. Any other business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a written briefing from the Health and Safety Executive on farm safety.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an oral briefing from the Department in relation to the defined periods for the spreading of slurry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Committee for Infrastructure to provide the Committee with a copy of the report on 2016 flooding in Lough Neagh when available.

16. Date, time and place of next meeting

The Committee noted that its next meeting will be held at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday 27th October 2016 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

12.50 p.m. The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Linda Dillon MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

27th October 2016