



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

Minutes of Proceedings

3rd November 2021

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:

- Dr Caoimhe Archibald (MLA (Chairperson))
- Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Mr Keith Buchanan MLA
- Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
- Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA
- Mr John O'Dowd MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

- Mr Stephen Dunne MLA
- Mr Peter Weir MLA

Apologies: Ms Claire Sugden MLA



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In Attendance: Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

The meeting commenced at 10:04am in closed session.

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Chairperson's Business

Noted: Members noted an invitation from QUB to an online event on Thursday 11th November at 5pm entitled 'In Conversation with Professor Andrew Heyn', hosted by the Senator George Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice and Public Engagement.

Noted: Members noted the speaking note for the Children's Law Centre from their informal meeting with the Committee on 21st October regarding the High Street voucher.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes from the meeting on 20th October 2021.



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4. Briefing from the Utility Regulator and the Consumer Council

The witnesses joined the meeting at 10:08am

Members received a briefing from:

Ms Noyona Chundur	Chief Executive, Consumer Council NI
Peter McClenaghan	Director, Consumer Council
John French	Utility Regulator
Kevin Shiels	Director, Utility Regulator

Members agreed to move to closed session 11:23am

2. Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill

Assembly Bill Clerks, Aoibheann Baker and Stephanie Mallon, joined the meeting at 11:23am.

The Bill Clerks briefed the Committee on the amendments the Committee had instructed the Bill team to prepare and another option for amendments.

Members discussed the potential Committee Amendments to the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill.

Matthew O'Toole left the meeting at 12.02pm

The Chairperson thanked the Bill Clerks for their attendance.



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Members agreed to move to open session at 12.10pm

Members agreed to invite departmental officials to join the meeting to answer questions in relation to the Bill.

The following officials joined the meeting:

Mr Colin Jack, Director of Business & Employment Regulation, DfE

Ms Kellie Spratt, Employment Relations Policy and Legislation, DfE

Mr Laurence Rogers Employment Relations, DfE

The Officials left the meeting at 12:19am.

Members agreed to move to closed session 12:19pm.

Members discussed the potential Committee Amendments to the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill.

Members agreed to move to open session at 12:28pm.



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Members discussed the Committee Amendments to the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill.

The Committee commenced its informal clause by clause consideration of the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill.

The Chair put the question in relation to each clause **informally**.

Clause 1 –Parental Bereavement Leave

Members indicated that they were minded to amend Clause 1 to provide for application in relation to miscarriage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the amendment as drafted by the Bill Office.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 1 as amended.

Clause 2 –Parental Bereavement Pay

Members considered an amendment to Clause 2 to remove the 26-week eligibility criteria for parental bereavement pay.

There was no consensus on the amendment as drafted by the Bill Office and no vote was called.

Members indicated that they were minded to amend Clause 2 to provide for application in relation to miscarriage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the amendment as drafted by the Bill Office.



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Clause 3: Further Amendments to do with Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay

Members indicated that they were minded to amend Clause 3 to provide for application in relation to miscarriage.

Members considered a draft amendment from the Minister for the Economy to provide for a new Clause 3A.

The Committee considered Clause 3 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 3 as drafted.

Clause 4: Commencement

Members considered amendments on commencement in conjunction with the amendments on the application of miscarriage made to Clauses 1 & 2.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the amendments as drafted by the Bill Office for insertion at page 10, line 24.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the amendments as drafted by the Bill Office for insertion at page 10, line 27.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 4 as amended.

Clause 5 – Short Title

The Committee considered Clause 5 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 5 as drafted.



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Schedule 1- Further Amendments to do with Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay

Members considered amendments in respect of the Assembly procedures applied to the amendment on the application of miscarriage pay made to Clause 2.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the amendments as drafted by the Bill Office.

Members considered amendments in respect of the Assembly procedures applied to the amendments on the application of miscarriage leave made to Clause 1.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the amendments as drafted by the Bill Office.

The Committee considered Schedule 1 as amended.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Schedule 1 as amended.

5. Small-Scale Green Energy Bill

Peter Weir left the meeting 12.34pm

Members discussed the ongoing work in relation to the Committee Stage of the Small-Scale Green Energy Bill.

Noted: Members noted Correspondence from the Bill Sponsor, John O'Dowd, clarifying that the Bill as drafted only allows for a major electricity provider to be defined by their market share, but does not set the market share at 5%.

Noted: Members noted a response from Action Renewables at page 167 to the request for written submissions on the Bill. This will be included as part of the written submissions on the Bill.



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Noted: Members noted a RAISE paper on the Small-Scale Green Energy Bill.

Noted: Members noted a copy of the Hansard of the 20th October.

6. Matters Arising

Agreed: Members considered a response from Tourism NI to the issues raised by an individual in correspondence to the Committee around the impact of flags on tourism and agreed to forward the response to the individual.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Finance Minister to the Committee's letter regarding issues faced by the local airports around the NI Domestic Aviation Kickstart Scheme and Air Passenger Duty.

Noted: Members noted a copy of a written ministerial statement by the Finance Minister regarding the funding made available for Budget 2022-25 on 29 October 2021.

Agreed: Members considered a response from the Department providing clarification in relation to the £40m of Unique Circumstances Funding under New Decade New Approach agreement and agreed to forward a copy to the Finance Committee.

Noted: Members note a copy of correspondence from the Department to the Finance Committee regarding DfE negative capital expenditure outturn numbers in both April 2020 and November 2020.

Noted: Members noted a copy of correspondence from the Department to the Communities Committee regarding the Private Tenancies Bill and links with the Energy Strategy.

7. Correspondence



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Noted: Members noted a copy of the 12-month review of early conciliation which the Department is required to lay under Section 9 of the Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

Noted: Members noted a copy of correspondence from the Department to the Infrastructure Committee in response to issues it raised regarding the lack of HGV drivers.

Noted: Members noted a copy of correspondence from the Finance Committee to the Department seeking clarity in relation to the negative capital expenditure outturn numbers in both April 2020 and November 2020.

Noted: Members noted a copy of correspondence from the Finance Committee to the Economy Minister seeking views on a proposed EU directive on Energy Taxation and details of the Department's scrutiny of the related legislation.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Communities Committee regarding a response from the Department on the UK government's current plans for the introduction of a gas and oil boiler ban on new build homes from 2025.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Speaker to the Chairperson's Liaison Group regarding legislative pressures in the Assembly.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from Rachel Woods MLA offering to brief the Committee on her Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Bill.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Minister for Work and Pensions to the Chair of the NI Protocol Sub-Committee regarding issues raised by the CHEM Trust on the potential impact on trade between Britain and the North.

Noted: Members noted a copy of correspondence from the Lord Mayor of Belfast to the Minister for Education regarding structured education provision for young refugee and asylum seekers who have limited English.



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Agreed: Members noted correspondence from Derry City and Strabane District Council in support of the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill and urging the Committee to extend the legislation to include everyone who is bereaved of a close relative or partner and agreed to include it within written submissions.

Noted: Members noted a copy of correspondence from BEIS to the Chair of the NI Protocol Sub-Committee providing clarification in relation to the application of Article 10 of the Protocol to Regulations regarding certain categories of aid.

Agreed: Members noted correspondence from Logistics NI and the British International Freight Association regarding the implementation of the new Customs Declaration Service and agreed:

- To write to HMRC to see if any mitigations can be implemented as a matter of urgency;
- To write to the Executive Office and the Department to ask what it is doing to address the issue and to raise awareness of the issue across the economy; and
- To write to Belfast Harbour to ensure practical contingency plans are in place on the ground and that any costs to traders are minimised should imports be seriously delayed by the introduction of CDS.

Agreed: Members noted correspondence from a caravan owner regarding the issue of owners being required to purchase new caravans or being forced to leave a caravan site and agreed to write to the Consumer Council to ask for its view on whether there is any intervention that can be made or any form of redress available.

Noted: Members noted a copy of the NI Chamber 3rd Quarter 2021 Economic Survey Summary.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the National Children's Bureau providing a copy of its report on the impact of the pandemic for children and young people with disabilities.

Agreed: Members noted correspondence from an individual making a complaint about Ulster University and agreed to respond to the individual to



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indicate that the Committee is not in a position to intervene, and that the individual should pursue the complaint through the appropriate processes within the Ulster University and/or the NI Public Service Ombudsman.

Agreed: Members noted correspondence from Renewable NI outlining concern around what it sees as the delayed introduction of the Energy Strategy and agreed to forward to the Department asking it to confirm the expected date for publication of the Energy Strategy.

Agreed: Members noted correspondence from an individual regarding a lack of information, support and representation for mature students in higher education and agreed to forward to the Department for a response on the issues raised.

Noted: Members noted a copy of the October Monitoring Statement from the Finance Minister from 1st November.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Chair of the EU Affairs Sub-Committee on the Protocol to the BEIS Minister regarding draft regulations on general product safety.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Chair of the EU Affairs Sub-Committee on the Protocol to the BEIS Minister regarding a Regulation on cosmetic products.

8. Any Other Business

9. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Monday 8th November 2021 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.52pm.



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Dr Caoímhe Archibald MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Economy
10th November 2021