



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for the Economy

## Minutes of Proceedings

15<sup>th</sup> December 2021

**Meeting Location:** Room 30, Parliament Buildings

**Present:** Dr Caoimhe Archibald (MLA (Chairperson))  
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA  
Mr Peter Weir MLA  
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA  
Mr Stephen Dunne MLA  
Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA

**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr John O'Dowd MLA  
Ms Claire Sugden MLA

**In Attendance:** Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Thomas Armstrong (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)



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The meeting commenced at 10:05am in open session.

**1. Apologies**

As noted above.

**2. Draft Minutes**

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes from 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

**3. Chairperson's Business**

**Noted:** Members noted that the Interparliamentary Forum on Brexit meeting last week was cancelled and that the Chair did not travel to London.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to write to the Department to raise a number of issues around the High Street Voucher Scheme.

**4. Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Bill - Briefing from RaISE**

Members received a briefing from:

Orla Drummond	Research Officer, RaISE
Michael Scholes	Research Officer, RaISE
Niamh McHugh	Research Officer, RaISE

**Agreed:** Members agreed to follow up on a number of issues raised by RaISE with the Department and to follow up with RaISE on additional research.

The witness left the meeting at 10.54am



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**5. Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Bill – Oral Evidence from Women’s Aid Federation and Men’s Advisory Project**

Members received a briefing from:

Sonya McMullan	Regional Services Manager, Women’s Aid Federation NI
Rhonda Lusty	Co-Ordinator, Men’s Advisory Project (NI)

The witness left the meeting at 11:54am

**6. Matters Arising**

**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Department regarding the ARIA Bill and the potential impact of any changes to Article 10 of the Protocol.

**Noted:** Members noted clarification from Jemma Dolan MLA regarding her briefing at the last Committee Meeting.

**Agreed:** Members noted correspondence from Derry City & Strabane District Council regarding the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill and agreed to write to the Council indicating the Committee’s amendments to the Bill, the timescale involved which limited further work, and the Committee’s recommendations that further work is undertaken in the new mandate.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of the Hansard on the ARIA Bill.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of a letter from the Department of Finance regarding the Committee’s enquiry whether a windfall tax on conventional energy generators and VAT related interventions to offset the current fuel price crisis.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of a letter from the Department of Communities regarding the Energy Price Crisis.



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**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Department regarding Covid Passports and whether the Engagement Forum on Covid-19 has been re-established.

**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Department regarding Project Stratum.

### **7. Small-Scale Green Energy Bill**

Members noted a response from the Department for Communities regarding a RaISE scrutiny point on an estimate of the proportion of NI households at risk of falling into fuel poverty.

Members noted a RaISE briefing note regarding microgeneration support schemes in other jurisdictions.

Members noted a copy of the Hansard from the Utility Regulator briefing.

Members noted a copy of the Hansard of the NIE Networks Briefing.

Members agreed to move to closed session 12.10pm

### **14. Small-Scale Green Energy Bill**

Members discussed the evidence received in relation to the Small-Scale Green Energy Bill.

Members agreed to move to open session 12.35pm

### **8. Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Bill**

Members noted a copy of the Hansard from Committee meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021.



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Members noted a copy of Neath Port Talbot County's Domestic Abuse Workplace Policy and agreed to include the policy as an example of guidance in the Committee's Bill Report.

Members noted a copy of South Ayrshire Council's Safe Leave Policy and agreed to include the policy as an example of guidance in the Committee's Bill Report.

Members noted a written submission on the Bill by Northern Ireland Women's European Platform and agreed to include the submission in the Committee's Bill Report.

### **9. Draft Budget**

Members noted a copy of the Written Ministerial Budget 2022-25.

Members noted a copy of the draft Budget.

Members noted a copy of the Finance Minister's oral statement to the Assembly.

### **10. Departmental Written Briefing – January Monitoring**

Members noted a copy of January Monitoring Stage 1 Briefing Paper.

### **11. Correspondence**

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of the Written Ministerial Statement from the Minister of Finance on the RHI Disciplinary Process.

**Agreed:** Members noted a copy of correspondence from the Education Committee regarding questions for the Department about the Period Products (Free Provision) Bill and agreed to forward the questions to the Department.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of a letter from the Committee for Communities to the Department of Economy regarding funding for the Utility Regulator.



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**Noted:** Members noted a copy of a letter shared by the Committee for Finance from the House of Lords European Affairs Sub Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury regarding a proposed EU Directive and the interaction of the Protocol the Emissions Trading Directive.

**Agreed:** Members noted a copy of a letter shared by the Committee for Finance from the Department of Finance providing an update on the Department's consideration of the Financial Services Union suggestion relating to a banking forum and suggest that it engages in this regard with the All Party Group on Fair Banking and Finance and agreed to respond to that Committee indicating that the Committee awaits the finding of the report.

**Noted:** Members noted the NIAO report on the Small Business Support Grants Scheme.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of South West Regional College's 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of Northern Regional College's 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of Belfast Metropolitan College's 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of North West Regional College's 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of Southern Regional College's 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of South Eastern Regional College's 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of NIHRC Annual Statement 2021.

**Agreed:** Members noted correspondence from the Apparó restaurant in Draperstown regarding the introduction of vaccine passports and agreed to forward to the Department as the owner indicates she is seeking a response from the Minister for the Economy.



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**Noted:** Members noted a copy of a letter from the Department of Finance regarding the Monthly Outturn Round 7 October.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of a letter from the Committee for Finance regarding the lack of clarity surrounding the Governance of the City Deals programme.

**Noted:** Members noted a Departmental Briefing regarding the Review of the Financial Process Update.

**Noted:** Members noted a letter from the Minister for Disabled People, Health & Work to the House of Lords Chair of Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland regarding the classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures.

**Noted:** Members noted a letter from BEIS to the Chair of EU Sub-Committee on the Protocol regarding radio equipment.

**Noted:** Members noted a letter from BEIS to the Chair of EU Sub-Committee on the Protocol regarding state aid.

**Noted:** Members noted a letter from BEIS to the Chair of EU Sub-Committee on the Protocol regarding toys.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of NI Chamber/Invest NI Report – Brexit, one year on.

**Agreed:** Members noted a letter from the Workspace Group to prevent the loss of £20million of funding from the European Social Fund is not lost to the North and agreed to pass these concerns onto the Department.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of the NIAO Report on the Contract Award and Management of Project Stratum.

**Noted:** Members noted a letter from an individual regarding regulation of the NI University Sector.

**Noted:** Members noted a letter from an individual regarding value for money in the NI University Sector.



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**12. Any Other Business**

**13. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

**The meeting was adjourned at 12.49pm.**

**Dr Caoímhe Archibald MLA  
Chairperson, Committee for the Economy  
12<sup>th</sup> January 2022**