



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

Minutes of Proceedings

16th February 2022

Meeting Location: Room 30

In Attendance: Dr Caoimhe Archibald (MLA (Chairperson))
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA
Mr John O'Dowd MLA
Mr Stephen Dunne MLA
Mr Peter Weir MLA
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Apologies: Ms Claire Sugden MLA

In Attendance: Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Thomas Armstrong (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Aaron Pakenham (Clerical Officer)



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In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)

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

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes from 9th February 2022.

3. Chairperson's Business

Noted: Members noted an oral statement from the Minister of Finance providing an update on Budgetary Matters.

Agreed: Members noted correspondence from the Economy and Finance Ministers regarding European Social Fund match funding and agreed to write to the Department to seek clarity in relation to match funding for community groups.

Noted: Members noted the slides from Hydrogen NI following the informal meeting on 10th February.

Noted: Members noted the new date for the postponed Inter-Parliamentary Forum on Brexit which the Committee previously agreed would be attended by the Chair.

4. Department and Fibrus Briefing – Project Stratum

Members received a briefing from:



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Jeremy Gardner	Director – Telecoms and Tourism, DfE
Nigel Robbins	Project Director, DfE
Trevor Forsythe	Project Manager, DfE
Conal Henry	Chairman, Fibrus
Dominic Kearns	Chief Executive, Fibrus
Shane Haslem	Programme Director – Project Stratum, Fibrus

Issues discussed included: the progress of the project and roll-out to new customers; levels of customer satisfaction; ongoing monitoring; project funding; environmental impact and value for money.

The witness left the meeting at 11.33am.

5. Employment (Zero Hours Workers and Banded Weekly Working Hours) Bill

Members heard oral evidence from:

Kevin Doherty	Union Services Officer, NIC - ICTU
Patricia McKeown	NIC-ICTU Member, UNISON
Paul MacFlynn	Co-Director, Nevin Economic Research Institute

Issues discussed included: support for the general principles of the Bill; the impact of similar legislation in the Republic of Ireland; the prevalence and use of zero hour contracts; potential loopholes and the practical outworking of the Bill.

Agreed: Members agreed to follow up with the Bill Sponsor in relation to Clause 14 and the potential loophole in relation to banded hours including whether any legal advice has been sought.



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6. RaISe Briefing – Company Law Common Frameworks

Members received a briefing from:

Aidan Stennett Research Officer, RaISe

The briefing covered: a general overview of the background and need for Common Frameworks; the principles underpinning the Common Frameworks; and the impact of other legislation such as the Internal Market Act.

Agreed: Members agreed to respond to the Department highlighting the scrutiny points set out in the RaISe paper and drawing on the issues raised by the Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee.

7. Matters Arising

Members agreed to deal with Agenda item 7 via correspondence due to time constraints.

8. Onshore Fracking (Prohibition) Bill

Members noted that the Committee has invited the Bill Proposer, Aine Murphy MLA and an expert from Geological Survey NI to discuss the Bill and its objectives. A paper has also been requested from RaISe.

Agreed: Members agreed that, due to the significant time constraints, it could not proceed with a survey or consultation on the Bill and the Committee would therefore reserve its position on the Bill.

9. SL1 - Education (Student Support, etc.) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2022

Members considered the SL1 – Education (Student Support, etc.) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2022.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed it was content with the policy intent of the SL1, and agreed to write to the Department regarding the level of funding and access to the Student Hardship Fund.

10. Correspondence

Members agreed to deal with Agenda item 10 via correspondence due to time constraints.

11. Any Other Business

There were no items of business.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 23rd February 2022 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.56pm.

**Dr Caoimhe Archibald MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Economy
23rd February 2022**