



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Minutes of Proceedings

WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2020

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Colin McGrath MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr Trevor Lunn MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Mr George Robinson MLA
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA
Ms Emma Sheerin MLA
Mr Christopher Stalford MLA

Apologies: Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

In Attendance: Ms Marie Austin (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Janet Robinson (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Craig Mealey (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.15 pm in open session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 5 February 2020.

3. Matters arising

The Committee considered a response from the First Minister and deputy First Minister to the Speaker enclosing a Written Statement on the Executive's Legislative Programme.

The Committee noted that the First Minister and deputy First Minister intend to introduce a three-piece legislative package to implement commitments given in the New Decade, New Approach Deal. These will be entitled the Northern Ireland Act 1998 Amendment No 1, 2 and 3 Bills.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission research on the Northern Ireland Act 1998 Amendment No 1, 2 and 3 Bills.

4. T:BUC and Good Relations, Victims and Finance Division – Overview Briefing

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.19 pm

Mark Browne, Director of Strategic Policy, Equality and Good Relations, The Executive Office

Andy Cole, Good Relations and T:BUC, The Executive Office

Gareth Johnston, Equality, Victims, Human Rights and Delivering Social Change, The Executive Office

Peter Toogood, Finance and Corporate services, The Executive Office.

The officials apologised for the late submission of the written briefing paper.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reschedule the briefing on T:BUC, Good Relations and Victims to 19 February 2020 to allow Members to consider the written information provided.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to proceed with a briefing on the Budget Bill and Estimates 2020-21.

The officials provided a briefing on the Budget Bill and Estimates 2020-21.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials agreed to provide further information on the Department's resource requirements for 2020-21 for consideration at the Committee meeting on 19 February 2020. A further briefing on budget issues would follow.

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

5. Historical Institutional Abuse – Departmental Briefing

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.07pm

Mark Browne, Director of Strategic Policy, Equality and Good Relations, The Executive Office
Gareth Johnston, Equality, Victims, Human Rights and Delivering Social Change, The Executive Office
Alison Armstrong, Departmental Official, The Executive Office
Roberta Dalton, Departmental Official, The Executive Office.

The officials provided an overview briefing on Historical Institutional Abuse.

The oral evidence was followed by a question and answer session.

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

6. Historical Institutional Abuse - Interim Advocate for Victims and Survivors Briefing

Mr Brendan McAllister, Interim Advocate for Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse joined the meeting at 3.45pm.

Mr McAllister provided an overview briefing on his work.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked Mr McAllister for his attendance.

Fra McCann left the meeting at 4.15pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek information on the process that would need to be followed to amend the Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Act 2019, to increase the maximum amount payable to Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to highlight the urgent need to fill the vacant staff positions within the Interim Advocate's Office to allow him to carry out his work without impediment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek legal advice on the options available to amend the Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Act 2019.

7. Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill

Fra McCann rejoined the meeting at 4.20pm

The Committee considered correspondence from Mr Jim Allister, MLA, regarding the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Clerk Assistant informing him that it did not wish to carry out the Committee Stage of the Bill. Some Members felt that the scrutiny of the Bill would fit best with the Assembly and Executive Review Committee.

Trevor Clarke left the meeting at 4.27pm

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme for February – March 2020 and a number of briefings to be scheduled or rescheduled.

9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered a memo from the Clerk to the Committee for Finance on the Budget Bill 2020 and departmental resource requirements.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward any information it receives from the Executive Office regarding its resource requirements to the Committee for Finance.

- ii. The Committee noted a letter from the Mid Ulster District Council inviting the Committee to hold one of its meetings at a Council location in Mid Ulster.
- iii. The Committee noted a request from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to brief the Committee on a number of issues relating to the remit of the Committee.
- iv. The Committee noted a request from Pivotal to brief the Committee on its first report: *Moving forward – putting Northern Ireland on track for the future* and its future work.
- v. The Committee considered a request from Rosetta Trust to brief the Committee on the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Scheme.
- vi. The Committee considered a request from Survivors (North West) to brief the Committee on the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that an informal meeting with the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Rosetta Trust and Survivors (North West) should be arranged.

Trevor Clarke rejoined the meeting 4.30pm

10. Chairperson's Business

The Committee considered a memo to the Clerk from the Northern Ireland Assembly EU Affairs Manager regarding the Interparliamentary Forum on Brexit which comprises the Chairs and Convenors of Committees scrutinising EU exit related issues in the House of Commons, House of Lords, Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson should attend the next Forum meeting and offered to host a meeting of the Forum in Parliament Buildings in the future.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 19 February 2020 at 2.00 p.m. in Room 30 Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.33p.m.

Mr Colin McGrath MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office