



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE**

**Minutes of Proceedings**

WEDNESDAY 18 March 2020

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

**Present:** Mr Colin McGrath MLA (Chairperson)  
Ms Martina Anderson MLA  
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA  
Ms Emma Sheerin MLA  
Mr Christopher Stalford MLA

**Apologies:** Mr Trevor Lunn MLA  
Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr George Robinson MLA  
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA

**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 2.08pm in closed session.*

The Committee agreed to start the meeting in closed session to receive legal advice from the Northern Ireland Assembly Legal Services Office.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms Martina Anderson to her first meeting of the Committee.

**1. Apologies**

As above.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Deputy Chairperson, Mike Nesbitt, offering condolences on the recent death of his mother.

## **2. Historical Institutional Abuse – Legal Advice on Redress Scheme**

A Northern Ireland Assembly Legal Advisor provided legal advice to the Committee on the Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Act 2019.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Interim Advocate for Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse, regarding the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Scheme, and correspondence from Rachel Woods, MLA, outlining the Green Party's position on same.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department asking for consideration to be given to increasing the maximum amount of compensation payable to victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse via a statutory rule, as section 12 of the Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Act 2019, confers upon the Executive Office the power to increase the maximum amount of compensation. The Committee highlighted that it did not want to cause any delay to the current envisaged timeframe for making payments under the Scheme.

*The meeting moved into public session at 2.34 pm.*

## **3. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 4 March 2020.

## **4. Strategic Investment and Regeneration, Equality and the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression, and Urban Villages and Communities in Transition – Departmental Briefing**

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.34pm

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

Orla McStaverick, Director of Infrastructure and Racial Equality, The Executive Office

Siobhan Boderick, Director of Equality, Rights and Identity, The Executive Office

Linsey Farrell, Director of Urban Villages and Communities in Transition, The Executive Office.

*Mr Stalford declared an interest as his constituency office is in a building that was funded through Urban Villages and his landlord received funding under the Social Investment Fund.*

The officials provided an overview of the following policy areas: Strategic Investment and Regeneration, Equality and the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression, and Urban Villages and Communities in Transition.

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

Officials agreed to provide confirmation of whether the Buy Social Unit had carried out an equality impact assessment in relation to recruitment and training.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister to ask that flexibility be exercised in relation to those voluntary and community organisations that are responding to, or are impacted by, the COVID-19 crisis. It was noted that those organisations in receipt of grant funding may not be able to meet their delivery targets or carry out their administrative duties within the timeframes specified in the conditions attached to the funding.

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

## **5. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme for March – April 2020.

The Committee agreed to reschedule the Community Relations Council evidence session due to be held on the 25 March 2020.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Coronavirus Bill was due to be introduced in Westminster on Thursday 19 March 2020. Given that there are provisions relevant to the Executive Office, the Chairperson informed Members that the Committee may need to meet on Monday 23 March 2020 to receive oral evidence from departmental officials in advance of the Legislative Consent Motion to be debated on Tuesday 24 March 2020.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request a departmental written briefing on the relevant provisions. Once received, a decision will be taken on whether an oral evidence session is necessary.

The Chairperson asked Members to return completed Strategic Planning templates to the Clerk.

## **6. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **7. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office providing clarification of the process around the appointment of the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse and details of the current position in relation to Ebrington.
- ii. The Committee noted that a call for applications for funding under the Minority Ethnic Development Fund had been made with applications being accepted from 10 March 2020.
- iii. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office to the Committee's request for regular and timely briefings on budgetary matters.
- iv. The Committee noted a memo from the Clerk to the Committee for Finance regarding the budget process and committee scrutiny.
- v. The Committee considered a memo from the Clerk to the Committee on Procedures advising that the Committee is reviewing the current procedures for Legislative Consent

Motions and the relating Standing Order (42A), and requesting the views of the Committee for the Executive Office.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Clerk should draft a response for consideration at the next meeting.

- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Clerk to the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights advising that Executive Office officials had been invited to brief the Ad Hoc Committee on 23 April 2020.

## **8. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson updated Members on the events and meetings that took place during his visit to Washington D.C. The Chairperson informed Members that a report on the visit will be provided in due course.

## **9. Any Other Business**

Trevor Clarke raised the issue of COVID-19 and its wide-ranging impact. Mention was made of the growing number of daily updates being received from individual departments and the need for MLAs to be kept fully informed.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request that an amalgamated COVID-19 written briefing, to include updates/developments for all Executive departments, be circulated to all MLAs on a daily basis. This briefing should also detail the practical implications of each departmental update/development.

## **10. Date, Time and Place of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 25 March 2020 at 2.00 pm in Room 30 Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 3.37pm.*

**Mr Colin McGrath MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office**