



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 29 April 2020

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Colin McGrath MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Martina Anderson MLA
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA*
Mr Trevor Lunn MLA
Mr George Robinson MLA*
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA*
Ms Emma Sheerin MLA*

Apologies: None.

In Attendance: Ms Marie Austin (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)

** Members who attended the meeting via telephone conferencing.*

The meeting commenced at 2.07pm.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 22 April 2020.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Brexit – Departmental Oral Evidence on Brexit Issues

The following officials joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 2.08pm:

Andrew McCormick, Director General, International Relations, The Executive Office

Lorraine Lynas, Deputy Director, EU Future Relations, The Executive Office

Lynsey Moore, Director of European Division and Head of the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels, The Executive Office

The officials briefed the Committee on Brexit issues.

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

The officials agreed to provide further information/clarification on a range of issues.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from Junior Ministers Gordon Lyons, MLA, and Declan Kearney, MLA, on what was discussed and the outcome of the first meeting of the EU-UK Joint Committee which took place on 30 March 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a copy of the briefing paper provided by officials to the First Minister and deputy First Minister in advance of the Specialised Committee meeting due to take place on 30 April 2020. The Committee agreed to consider the paper at its meeting on 6 May 2020.

The Committee considered the impacts of EU exit and the development of Government policy on a range of areas including the development of common frameworks for cooperation in areas of devolved competence. The Committee noted that these policy areas cross NI Executive departmental boundaries and therefore Assembly committees.

Given the range and scope of the issues, the Committee was of the view that the Chairpersons' Liaison Group had a key role in identifying the preferred committee mechanism for the co-ordination of the Northern Ireland Assembly response to EU exit.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Chairpersons' Liaison Group asking for its opinion on the matter.

5. Budget 2020-21 – Consideration of Committee Position on Budget 2020-21

The Committee considered a draft response to the Committee for Finance on the Executive Office Budget 2020-21. A number of amendments were suggested and agreed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a response to the Committee for Finance on The Executive Office Budget 2020-21.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the Committee for Finance for inclusion in its compendium report on Budget 2020-21.

6. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme for April – May 2020.

7. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the Interim Advocate for Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse.
- ii. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence sent to David Sterling, Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, from an individual regarding the Interim Advocate for Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse.
- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the Interim Advocate for Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse.
- iv. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence sent to The Executive Office from SAVIA Lobby Group requesting a meeting to discuss issues relating to the delivery of services and support to victims and survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse.
- v. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence sent to SAVIA Lobby Group from an individual regarding the Interim Advocate for Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence on Historical Institutional Abuse to the First Minister and deputy First Minister asking them to respond directly to the SAVIA Lobby Group and the individuals, and copy the Committee into the responses.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to David Sterling, Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, asking if he is aware or when did he become aware of the conflict of interest/perceived conflict of interest, regarding the Interim Advocate for Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse and to provide an update on the appointment of a Commissioner for Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Childhood Abuse.

- vi. The Committee noted a report from the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels: *Brussels Report January – March 2020*.
- vii. The Committee noted revised guidance from the Chairpersons' Liaison Group for Assembly committees during the current public health crisis.

8. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson raised the issue of social distancing measures, and their success to date, in helping reduce levels of hospital admissions and deaths due to the coronavirus. The Chairperson acknowledged the challenges of social distancing but highlighted the importance of people continuing to remain vigilant during the current public health crisis. Other Members echoed the Chairperson's comments and applauded those who have followed the guidance.

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 6 May 2020 at 2.00 pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.11pm.

Mr Colin McGrath MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office