



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE 2020

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Colin McGrath MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Doug Beattie 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: Mr Christopher Stalford MLA

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

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

The meeting commenced at 2.08 pm.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 17 June 2020.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Brexit - Oral Evidence Session with the Junior Ministers on Brexit Issues

The Junior Ministers joined the meeting at 2.10pm:

Gordon Lyons MLA, Junior Minister, The Executive Office
Declan Kearney MLA, Junior Minister, The Executive Office

The Junior Ministers briefed the Committee on Brexit issues.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the Junior Ministers for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson should write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister asking that they deliver an Oral Ministerial Statement in the Assembly on Tuesday 7 July 2020, providing an update on Brexit post the threshold for requesting an extension to the transition period. The Committee was keen that the Statement should provide clarity to businesses on outstanding issues.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed that the First Minister and deputy First Minister should be notified that Members are likely to ask questions on Brexit issues during the oral evidence session scheduled for 1 July 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson should write to the Junior Ministers welcoming their commitment to improve the timing around the provision of papers and responses to the Committee.

5. Executive Committee (Functions) Bill – Departmental Written Briefing

The Committee considered correspondence from the First Minister and deputy First Minister advising of their intention to introduce an Executive Committee (Functions) Bill in the Assembly and seeking the Committee's support for accelerated passage of the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the matter further when the information required under Standing Order 42, in relation to a request for accelerated passage, was provided to the Committee.

6. Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill Consideration of Committee Response

The Committee considered the evidence it had received in relation to Clause 1(2), Clause 2, Clause 3, Clause 4(1) and (2), Clause 5, and Clause 12 of the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed not to come to a view on the relevant clauses of the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to provide the Committee for Finance with a summary of its consideration of the general principles of the Bill, prior to Second Stage, and details of the written and oral evidence it received.

7. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme for June to September 2020.

8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding an Oral Statement Junior Minister Kearney made to the Assembly on the North South Ministerial Council Institutional meeting which was held in Armagh on 11 March 2020.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from The Executive Office on the Minority Ethnic Development Fund.
- iii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Department of Justice to the Committee for Education in relation to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy illustrating the need for partnership to rebuild the economy following the Covid-19 crisis.
- v. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from the Committee for the Economy to the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the Hardship Fund.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister & deputy First Minister supporting the Committee for the Economy's position that any surplus from the existing support funds should be put into a re-opened Hardship Fund with criteria for applications that includes those businesses and sectors which have, so far, not been eligible for support.

- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding the House of Lords International Agreements Sub-Committee Inquiry into UK-US Trade Negotiations.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Communities to the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the Trussell Trust and the increased demand on local food banks during the Covid-19 crisis.
- viii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding the difficulties people with visual impairments face when seeking to

adhere to social distancing measures, and asking that it is shared with the Executive Office.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Executive Office asking that it responds directly to the Committee for Communities.

- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Education to the Executive Office suggesting the introduction of a youth press conference as part of the Executive Office's Covid-19 Communications Strategy.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual relating to Historical Institutional Abuse.
- xi. The Committee for the Executive Office considered the Group Internal Audit and Fraud Investigation Report: *Data Breach Investigation – Office of the HIA Interim Advocate*.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an urgent response to its letter dated 28 May 2020, which was due for response on 11 June 2020, and which requested, inter alia, copies of relevant Data Breach Protocols.

9. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's Business.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 1 July 2020 at 2.00 pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting moved into closed session at 4.03pm.

12. Proposed Change to Sitting Days

The Committee considered correspondence from the Chairpersons' Liaison Group outlining a proposal to change Assembly sitting days from Monday and Tuesday to Tuesday and Wednesday.

The Committee noted that the change would require it to meet on a Monday instead of Wednesday.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairpersons' Liaison Group should be advised that all, bar one Ulster Unionist Party Member, were relaxed about the proposed change to sitting days.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.20pm.

Mr Colin McGrath MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office