



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2020

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

- Present:** Mr Colin McGrath MLA (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
Mr Christopher Stalford MLA
- Apologies:** Mr Doug Beattie MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- In Attendance:** Ms Marie Austin (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Carla Campbell (Assistant Clerk)
Ms Sarah-Anne McKinley (Assistant Clerk)
Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)
Mr Craig Mealey (Assistant Clerk)

* Members who attended the meeting via video conferencing.

The meeting commenced at 2:03pm.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 21 October 2020, and Wednesday 4 November 2020.

3. Matters Arising

None.

4. Brexit – Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council

The following representatives joined the meeting remotely via StarLeaf at 2:06pm:

Councillor Thomas Larkham, Chair of Governance, Resources and Strategy, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council

Roger Wilson, Chief Executive Officer, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council.

The representatives briefed Members on Brexit issues affecting Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

5. Brexit – Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

The following representatives joined the meeting remotely via StarLeaf at 2:37pm:

Councillor Peter Johnson, Mayor, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Anne Donaghy, Chief Executive, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.

The representatives briefed Members on Brexit issues affecting Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

6. Brexit – Ards and North Down Borough Council

The following representatives joined the meeting remotely via StarLeaf at 3:00pm:

Councillor Trevor Cummings, Mayor, Ards and North Down Borough Council

Susie McCullough, Director of Regeneration, Development and Planning, Ards and North Down Borough Council.

The representatives briefed Members on Brexit issues affecting Ards and North Down Borough Council.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The meeting was suspended at 3:21pm.

The meeting resumed at 3:34pm.

7. Brexit – Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

The following representatives joined the meeting remotely via StarLeaf at 3:34pm:

Councillor Laura Devlin, Council Chairperson, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Marie Ward, Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Mr Colin McGrath declared an interest as Councillor Devlin's employer.

The representatives briefed Members on Brexit issues affecting Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

8. Brexit – Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

The following representatives joined the meeting remotely via StarLeaf at 3:56pm.

Alderman Mark Fielding, Mayor, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

Aidan McPeake, Director of Environmental Services, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

The representatives briefed Members on Brexit issues affecting Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The Chairperson advised Members that a report highlighting the main issues raised by local councils would be drafted for consideration at the meeting on 25 November 2020; a Motion for debate in Plenary would be tabled thereafter.

9. Brexit – UK’s Future Relationship with the European Union: Consideration of Request for Written Evidence from Minister Gove MP

The Committee considered a response from Michael Gove MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, to the Committee’s request for his attendance at a Committee meeting to give oral evidence on issues relating to the UK’s future relationship with the European Union.

Agreed: Given Minister Gove’s refusal to give oral evidence, the Committee to request written evidence on: governance of the Withdrawal Agreement post-transition; the membership and workings of the Joint Consultative Working Group; the process around dynamic alignment with the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol and the means of scrutiny; influencing EU policy and monitoring and communication arrangements; the Common Frameworks process including mechanisms for review and parliamentary scrutiny; compliance with the Protocol and consultation with devolved administrations in relation to treaty and trade negotiations; and, the importance of Inter-Governmental Relations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy the request for written evidence to the Northern Ireland Assembly European Affairs Manager for circulation to other UK legislatures for information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy the request for written evidence to all Northern Ireland Assembly Statutory Committees for information.

10. High Street Task Force – Departmental Written Briefing

The Committee considered a departmental written briefing on the High Street Task Force.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a departmental oral evidence session on the High Street Task Force for 3 February 2021.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme for November to December 2020.

Members were advised that the House of Lords Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee had commenced taking evidence on its inquiry on the common frameworks programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral evidence session with the House of Lords Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee.

12. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Finance regarding the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board and payments made to victims/survivors residing outside of Northern Ireland. The Committee noted that The Executive Office is engaging directly with Treasury in relation to the matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask The Executive Office for an update on discussions and progress.

- ii. The Committee noted a response from the Minister for Communities regarding Covid-19 support for the entertainment sector.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from The Executive Office on a number of Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from The Executive Office providing a copy of the agenda for the Joint Ministerial Committee (European Negotiations) Meeting which was held on 29 October 2020.
- v. The Committee noted: *The Executive Office Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020.*

- vi. The Committee noted a memo from the Northern Ireland Assembly European Affairs Manager providing a copy of correspondence from William Cash MP, Chair of the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee to Luke Hall MP, Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, on the Shared Prosperity Fund and the future of EU structural funds post 2020.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Justice on the Victims' Pension Scheme.
- viii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Communities to The Executive Office on the impact of Covid-19 on local football.
- ix. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Communities to The Executive Office on the future of town centres post Covid-19.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Economy to The Executive Office on the High Street Task Force.
- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Economy to the First Minister and deputy First Minister on issues raised by businesses around the new Covid-19 restrictions.
- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Economy to the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the lack of progress on mutual recognition of professional qualifications.
- xiii. The Committee noted: *Information Strategy Northern Ireland – Investing Activity Report – October 2020*.
- xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from The Community Foundation to the First Minister and deputy First Minister on public participation in post Covid-19 recovery.
- xv. The Committee considered correspondence from Campaign by Survivors of Abuse regarding Committee consideration of the report by the Interim Advocate for Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Executive Office asking officials to respond to Campaign by Survivors of Abuse on the issues raised.

13. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed Members that both he and the Deputy Chairperson had met informally with the First Minister and deputy First Minister on Tuesday 10 November 2020. Issues discussed included: the Executive's response to Covid-19; Brexit; engagement with local councils; the appointment of a Victim's Commissioner; and, the appointment of the Head of the Civil Service.

14. Any Other Business

None.

15. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 18 November 2020, at 2:00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting moved into closed session at 4:27pm.

16. Legal Advice

A Northern Ireland Assembly Legal Advisor provided legal advice to the Committee on the impact of the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill, as introduced, on the legislative competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that further legal advice should be sought when the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill becomes law.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:54pm

Mr Colin McGrath MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office