



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Justice

Minutes of Proceedings

6 May 2021

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Paul Givan MLA (Chairperson)

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA

Ms Jemma Dolan MLA

Mr Paul Frew MLA

Ms Rachel Woods MLA

Apologies: Mr Doug Beattie MLA

Mr Gordon Dunne MLA

Ms Emma Rogan MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)

Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Senior Assistant Clerk)

Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Clerk)



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In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Sarah Preece (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2:04 p.m. in open session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the oral evidence session and Formal Clause by Clause Consideration of the Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Bill should be reported by Hansard.

1. Apologies

As above.

The Clerk informed the Committee that, under Standing Order 115(6), Gordon Dunne MLA had delegated authority to the Chairperson, Paul Givan MLA, to vote on his behalf and Emma Rogan had delegated authority to the Deputy Chairperson, Linda Dillon MLA, to vote on her behalf.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2021.



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3. Matters Arising

Item 1 – Committee Forward Work Programme - May and June 2021

The Committee noted an updated Forward Work Programme reflecting the changes agreed at the meeting last week.

4. Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders – Summary of Consultation Responses and Proposed Next Steps

The following officials joined the meeting via Starleaf at 2.05 p.m.

Dr Veronica Holland, Violence Against the Person Branch, Department of Justice

Emma Crozier, Violence Against the Person Branch, Department of Justice

Alison Fitzgerald, Violence Against the Person Branch, Department of Justice

Jane Maguire, Family Courts and Tribunals Branch, Civil Justice Policy Division, Department of Justice

Ms Crozier provided a summary of the results of the consultation on proposals for Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders and the Department's proposed way forward.

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

Mr Frew MLA joined the meeting at 2.18 p.m.

The officials agreed to provide further information on several issues discussed during the session.



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The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The Committee noted the results of the consultation exercise, the current policy position following the consultation and the Department's proposed next steps.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it wished to receive periodic updates on how work was progressing to develop the proposals to assist its consideration of the matter further when the proposals for the subordinate legislation are available.

5. Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Bill – Formal Clause by Clause Consideration

The Committee commenced its formal clause by clause consideration of the Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Bill.

Clause 1 - Abolition of preliminary investigations

The Committee considered Clause 1 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 1 as drafted.

Clause 2 - Abolition of mixed committals: evidence on oath not to be given at preliminary inquiry.

The Committee considered Clause 2 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 2 as drafted.

Clause 3 - Consequential amendments and repeals

The Committee considered Clause 3 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 3 as drafted.



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Clause 4 - Direct committal for trial: miscellaneous amendments

The Committee considered Clause 4 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 4 as drafted.

Schedule – Amendments and Repeals: Abolition of Preliminary Investigations and Mixed Committals

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the Schedule before Clause 5, as Clause 5 covers commencement of the Clauses and Schedule.

The Committee considered the Schedule as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Schedule as drafted

Clause 5 – Commencement and transitional provisions, etc.

The Committee considered Clause 5 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 5 as drafted.

Clause 6 – Short Title

The Committee considered Clause 6 as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 6 as drafted.

Long Title

The Committee considered the Long Title of the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Long Title.



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The Chairperson advised Members that the formal clause by clause scrutiny of the Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Bill was concluded.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the draft report on the Bill would be prepared and circulated for consideration before the end of May.

6. Damages (Return on Investment) Bill – Update on Written Evidence

The Committee considered an update on the written evidence received following its Call for Evidence on the Damages (Return on Investment) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the written submissions received from organisations should be placed on the Committee Bill webpage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider proposals for oral evidence sessions on the Bill at the meeting on 13 May 2021 and that Members would provide any suggestions to the Committee Clerk.

7. Proposals for New Offences to Tackle Organised Crime – Summary of Consultation Responses and Proposed Next Steps

The Committee considered information provided by the Department of Justice on the results of the consultation on proposals for new offences to tackle organised crime in Northern Ireland and the additional work it intended to undertake on the issues raised.

The Committee noted the results of the consultation and the issues raised.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the matter further when the Department has completed the additional work and provided further information on the proposals to develop legislative provisions.



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8. Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Seven Year Strategy – Year Six Action Plan and Overview of Progress against the Year Five Action Plan

The Committee considered the Year Six Action Plan for the Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Seven Year Strategy which sets out the programme of work to be delivered during 2021/22 and a Progress Report against the Year Five Action Plan provided by the Department of Justice.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information from the Department on the position regarding delivery of all the actions contained in the Year Five Action Plan for which the Department and Justice organisations were responsible and if any were not completed, the reasons for this and whether they had been carried forward to the Year Six Action Plan.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an update on delivery of the Year Six Action Plan from the Department of Justice at the end of October 2021.

9. NI Audit Office Report on Mental Health in the Criminal Justice System – Update on progress to implement the recommendations

The Committee considered information provided by the Department of Justice on progress to address the findings and recommendations within the Northern Ireland Audit Office Report on Mental Health in the Criminal Justice System, which was published in May 2019.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an update on the work being undertaken on the potential development of a dashboard/indicators to support monitoring of outcomes for offenders with mental health issues and further information on a number of issues relating to the work being taken forward.



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10. Correspondence

Mr Frew MLA left the meeting at 3.06 p.m.

- i. The Committee considered a response from the Director of Public Prosecutions regarding the timescale for the completion of the review of the decision by the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) not to prosecute anyone in relation to the funeral of Bobby Storey and its request for him to attend a Committee meeting.

The Deputy Chairperson declared an interest as she was one of the individuals being investigated.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the attendance of the Director of Public Prosecutions should be scheduled into the Forward Work Programme for a suitable meeting in June and consideration would be given to the arrangements for the session.

11. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson drew Members attention to correspondence from the Chairperson of the Committee for the Economy to the Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee regarding participation in meetings to discuss scrutiny of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

The Chairperson advised Members that while he had been unable to attend the two meetings to date he had read the notes of the meetings and intended to raise the matter at the next Chairpersons' Liaison Group (CLG) meeting with a view to establishing the purpose of the meetings and clarity of the role and parameters for Chairpersons of Assembly Committees when participating in them. He advised the Committee he would provide an update following the discussion at CLG.



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12. Any Other Business

None.

13. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 13 May 2021 at 2.00 p.m. in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.11 p.m.

Paul Givan MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Justice

13 May 2021