



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for Justice

### Minutes of Proceedings

29 April 2021

**Meeting Location:** Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

**Present:** Mr Paul Givan MLA (Chairperson)

Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Mr Doug Beattie MLA

Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA

Ms Jemma Dolan MLA

Mr Paul Frew MLA

Ms Rachel Woods MLA

**Apologies:** Mr Gordon Dunne MLA

Ms Emma Rogan MLA

**In Attendance:** Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)

Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Senior Assistant Clerk)

Ms Allison Mealey (Clerical Supervisor)



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**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Clerk)

Ms Sarah Preece (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2:01 p.m. in open session.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the oral evidence sessions 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 22 April 2021.



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### **3. Matters Arising**

#### **Item 1 - Correspondence from the Forum of Insurance Lawyers on the Damages (Return on Investment) Bill**

The Committee noted correspondence from the Forum of Insurance Lawyers regarding the timescale for the Damages (Return on Investment) Bill and the implications of the rate to be set by the Department of Justice by subordinate legislation.

#### **Item 2 - Correspondence from the Minister of Justice on the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme**

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Justice regarding the announcement by the President of the Victims' Payments Board that applications to the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme will open on 30 June 2021.

#### **Item 3 – Correspondence from the Minister of Justice on the Justice Bill**

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Justice and the Department of Justice outlining the position regarding the Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill which is now titled the Justice Bill and providing an advance copy of the Bill and Explanatory Memorandum.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that an oral evidence session with departmental officials on the principles of the Bill would be scheduled following its introduction to the Assembly.

Mr Beattie MLA joined the meeting at 2.02 p.m.

Ms Dolan MLA joined the meeting at 2.03 p.m.



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**Item 4 – Joint Oral Evidence Session on the Proposals for a Secure Care and Justice Campus for Children on the Woodlands/Lakewood Site**

The Chairperson updated the Committee on the position regarding a potential joint oral evidence session with the Committee for Health on the proposals for a Joint Secure Care and Justice Campus for Children on the Woodlands/Lakewood Site.

Ms Bradley MLA joined the meeting at 2.04 p.m.

**4. 2021-22 Department of Justice Final Budget Allocations**

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.04 p.m.

Deborah Brown, Director, Justice Delivery Unit, Department of Justice

Ronnie Armour, Director, Reducing Offending Directorate, Department of Justice

Anthony Harbinson, Director, Access to Justice Directorate, Department of Justice

Julie Harrison, Director of Safer Communities Directorate, Department of Justice

Ms Brown provided an overview of the final 2021-22 budget allocations and the implications for the department and justice organisations.

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

The Chairperson left the meeting at 2.22 p.m. and the Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

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 Deputy Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The Deputy Chairperson advised the Committee that a response on the Department of Justice 2021-22 budget allocations and implications was due to be submitted to the Committee for Finance by 28 May 2021.

Members highlighted a number of issues in addition to those discussed during the oral evidence session for inclusion in the draft response.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that a draft response would be prepared for consideration based on the issues raised during the oral evidence session and the additional areas highlighted, and that Members would advise Committee staff of any further areas they wished to include in the draft response.

### **5. New Three-year Victims and Witnesses Strategy for Northern Ireland and the Establishment of a Victims of Crime Commissioner for Northern Ireland - Proposed Consultation**

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.55 p.m.

Julie Wilson, Deputy Director, Victims Support and Judicial Policy Division,  
Department of Justice

Lesley Cowan, Victims and Witnesses Branch, Department of Justice

Liz Semple, Victims and Witnesses Branch, Department of Justice

Ms Wilson outlined the proposals for a consultation on a new three-year Victims and Witnesses Strategy for Northern Ireland and for the establishment of a Victims of Crime Commissioner for Northern Ireland.

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



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Mr Frew MLA left the meeting at 3.32pm

Departmental officials undertook to consider a number of issues raised by Members during the session.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content for the proposed consultation to take place and to consider the matter further when the results and proposed way forward are available.

### **6. Protection from Stalking Bill - Proposals for Oral Evidence Sessions**

The Committee noted three additional written submissions received on the Protection from Stalking Bill.

The Committee considered proposals for oral evidence sessions on the Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the organisations to be invited to give oral evidence on the Protection from Stalking Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite the Chief Executive Officer of the Scottish Charity Action Against Stalking to meet with it to discuss how the offence of stalking is working from the perspective of practitioners in Scotland.

### **7. CJINI Report on Public Protection Arrangements in Northern Ireland - Update on Progress to Implement Strategic Recommendation Four**

The Committee considered an update provided by the Department of Justice on progress to deliver Strategic Recommendation Four of the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) Report on Public Protection Arrangements in



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Northern Ireland regarding conducting an outcomes review and development of performance indicators.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request further information on a number of issues as part of the update on the implementation of all the report recommendations due to be provided before summer recess.

### **8. Department of Justice Corporate Plan 2019-22 and Draft Business Plan 2021-22**

The Committee considered the Department of Justice Corporate Plan for 2019-2022 and draft Business Plan for 2021-22.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request details of the funding that has been allocated to each action in the Business Plan.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request a progress update on delivery of the objectives and actions in the Business Plan in October 2021.

### **9. Committee Forward Work Programme - May and June 2021**

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Justice requesting a number of changes to the Committee Forward Work Programme including the deferral of two oral evidence sessions and three written briefing papers in May and the inclusion of an additional proposal for a Statutory Rule on the earliest available date.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the changes requested by the Department and to schedule the proposal for a Statutory Rule for consideration at the meeting on 13 May 2021.



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## **10. Correspondence**

The Committee noted the following:

- i. A copy of correspondence from the Minister of Justice to the Assembly Speaker regarding a public petition on “Sanctions for Cyber Bullying” laid in the Assembly on 16 February 2021.
- ii. A copy of a response from the Minister of Justice to the Committee for Health regarding correspondence from ROSA NI on Gender Violence and the right to protest and the policing of events and gatherings during the COVID pandemic.
- iii. Correspondence from the Department of Justice regarding the Director of Legal Aid Casework Reports covering the period 2015/16 to 2019/20 which had been laid in the Assembly on 22 April 2021.
- iv. The Investment Strategy Northern Ireland – Department of Justice’s Procurement Activity Report for April 2021.
- v. Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland Business Plan 2021-22 which including its Inspection Programme for 2021-22 and proposed Inspection Programme for 2022-23.

## **11. Chairperson’s Business**

None.





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**12. Any Other Business**

The recently published Northern Ireland Affairs Committee Report on Cross-Border co-operation on policing, security and criminal justice after Brexit was raised.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request information from the Department of Justice on how the report findings and conclusions will be addressed.

**13. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 6 May 2021 at 2.00 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.59 p.m.

**Paul Givan MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Justice**

**6 May 2021**