

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY 08 DECEMBER 2015
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr William Irwin MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson MLA
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr Kieran McCarthy MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Ian Milne MLA
Mr Robin Swann MLA

Apologies: Mr Joe Byrne MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Edwin Poots MLA

In attendance: Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk
Ms Lynda Conlon, Assistant Assembly Clerk
Mr Mark O'Hare, Clerical Supervisor
Ms Marion Johnson, Clerical Officer

1.38 p.m. *The meeting resumed in Open Session with the following Members in attendance: Mr Anderson; Mr Irwin; Mr McAleer; Mr McMullan; and Mr Swann.*

12. Rural Needs Bill – Informal Clause by Clause

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 1.39 p.m. to discuss issues in relation to the informal clause by clause of the Rural Needs Bill.

Louise Warde Hunter, Head of Central Policy Group
Colette McMaster, Assistant Secretary, Director of Food, Farm and Rural Policy
Astrid Stuart, Head of Rural Proofing Branch

The officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

2.03 p.m. *Mr Milne rejoined the meeting.*

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 1 and agreed to request that the Department bring forward an amendment to substitute “due regard” for “consider” in Clause 1(1).

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 1 and agreed to request that the Department bring forward an amendment to substitute “strategies, plans and budgets” for “strategies and plans” in Clause 1(1)(a).

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 1 and agreed that no amendment was required in connection with the matter of including the word “monitoring” in Clause 1(1)(a).

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 1 and agreed that no amendment was required in connection with the matter of including the words “that affect the” between Clause 1(1)(a) and Clause 1(1)(b).

2.20 p.m. *Mr Swann left the meeting.*

Agreed: The Committee discussed the possibility of amending Clause 1 to compel public authorities to mitigate any adverse impacts identified by the rural proofing process and agreed to request further information from the Department after it has taken legal advice on the issue.

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 1 and agreed to request that the Department bring forward an amendment to include the public bodies listed in *The Draft Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015* on the face of the Bill, whilst retaining the power to extend the statutory duty to other public bodies through subordinate legislation as provided for in Clause 1(3).

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Department should consider an amendment to allow for a review of the public bodies listed on the face of the Bill within an agreed timeframe.

The Committee completed its consideration of Clause 1 and raised no further issues.

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 2 and agreed to request that the Department bring forward an amendment to substitute “will” for “may” in Clause 2.

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 2 and agreed that no amendment was required in connection with the matter of imposing a duty on public bodies to have “due regard” for guidance, advice and information issued by DARD under Clause 2(a).

2.53 p.m. *Mr Swann rejoined the meeting.*

2.54 p.m. *Mr Swann left the meeting.*

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 2 and agreed that no amendment was required in connection with the matter of

substituting “guidance, advice, information and training” for “guidance, advice and information” in Clause 2(a).

3.03 p.m. *Mr Swann rejoined the meeting.*

3.03 p.m. *Mr Anderson left the meeting.*

The Committee completed its consideration of Clause 2 and raised no further issues.

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 3 and agreed to request that the Department bring forward an amendment to require the Minister to make an annual statement to the Assembly on the report prepared by DARD under Clause 3(2).

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 3 and agreed that no amendment was required in connection with the matter of facilitating feedback and information exchange.

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 3 and agreed that no amendment was required in connection with the matter of the quality of compliance by public authorities.

The Committee completed its consideration of Clause 3 and raised no further issues.

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 4 and agreed that no amendment was required to provide further clarity on the proposed cooperation and information sharing arrangements or to include a reference to “good practice”.

The Committee completed its consideration of Clause 4 and raised no further issues.

3.23 p.m. *Mr Anderson rejoined the meeting.*

The Committee discussed Clause 5 and agreed that no amendments were required.

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 6 and agreed to request that DARD provide a Letter of Intent for the meeting of Monday, 14 December 2015, setting out how they intend to develop guidance and provide further clarification of the definitions in Clause 6.

The Committee discussed a number of other issues related to the Bill, but not contained within the provisions of the Bill as Introduced, and agreed that no further amendments were required.

3.36 p.m. *Mr McAleer left the meeting.*

3.42 p.m. *The officials left the meeting.*