

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 4 MARCH 2014
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Paul Frew MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Joe Byrne MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA
Ms Judith Cochrane MLA
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Mr Ian Milne MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Ms Michelle McIlveen MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Robin Swann MLA

Apologies: Mr William Irwin MLA

In attendance: Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk
Ms Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk
Mr Mark O'Hare, Clerical Supervisor
Ms Michelle McDowell, Clerical Officer

1.33 p.m. The meeting commenced in Open Session

1. Apologies

The apologies are recorded above.

2. Chairperson's Business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to suspend the meeting at 3.30 p.m. to allow Members to attend the Urgent Oral Question to the Minister for Health and Public Safety in respect of the illegal slaughter houses.

1.37 p.m. Mr Milne joined the meeting.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2014

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2014.

4. Matters Arising

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Press Release in encourage farmers to apply online for their Single Farm Payment subject to a minor amendment.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department and Press Release on the financial assistance offered to fishermen.

5. SR: The Common Agricultural Policy Single Payment and Support Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered the SR: The Common Agricultural Policy Single Payment and Support Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 and has no objections to the rule.

6. Policy Options arising from the Reform of CAP (Pillar 1 Direct Payments): Oral briefing DARD

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 1.42 p.m.

Norman Fulton, Chief Agricultural Economist

Rosemary Agnew, Assistant Secretary

Mark McLean, Senior Agricultural Economist

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

1.49 p.m. Ms Cochrane joined the meeting.

2.01 p.m. Mr Swann left the meeting.

2.17 p.m. Ms Cochrane left the meeting.

2.22 p.m. Mr McAleer left the meeting.

2.25 p.m. Mr McAleer rejoined the meeting.

2.35 p.m. Mr Milne left the meeting.

2.44 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.

2.45 p.m. Mrs Dobson left the meeting.
2.47 p.m. Mr Byrne left the meeting.
2.51 p.m. Mr Milne rejoined the meeting.
2.56 p.m. Mr McAleer left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a letter to the Minister on the issue of entitlements later in the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request figures for the number of farmers in disadvantaged areas and additional information on remote sensing.

3.02 p.m. The meeting suspended.

3.55 p.m. The meeting resumed with the following Members present: Mr Frew, Mr Buchanan, Mr McMullan and Mr Swann.

7. 2013/14 Business Plan Progress Report to 31 December 2013: Oral Briefing DARD

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 3.56 p.m.

Graeme Wilkinson, Assistant Secretary
Tom Rodgers, Principal Officer
Ian Humes, Principal Officer
Elaine McCrory, Principal Officer

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

3.58 p.m. Mr Byrne and Ms McIlveen rejoined the meeting.
4.19 p.m. Ms McIlveen left the meeting.
4.30 p.m. Ms McIlveen rejoined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department on a range of issues in respect of the Business Plan as discussed during the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward any unanswered questions on the Business Plan to the Department for response.

8. Coastal and River Flooding: Oral Briefing Rivers Agency

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 4.32 p.m.

Philip Mehaffey, Director of Operations

David Porter, Director of Development

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a map of the coastal areas for which Rivers Agency has responsibility.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that the Committee has sight of the Business Case currently being considered in respect of a Grant Aid Scheme for home flood defences.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that the Inspection Report is forwarded to the Committee.

5.20 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.

9. SR 2014/23: The Gangmasters Licensing (Exclusions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the regulations until a briefing from the Department in respect of SR 2014/23: The Gangmasters Licensing (Exclusions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 has been received; and clarification on how DEFRA will be implementing them.

5.26 p.m. The Chairperson left the meeting and the Deputy Chairperson took the chair.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to raise the issue of the quality of briefings from officials and the requirement for the most appropriate official to be in attendance.

10. Correspondence

Agreed: The Committee noted the copied correspondence from Redcaps Ltd regarding their proposal to deal with rural crime. The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for comment.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Agriculture and Forestry Greenhouse Gas Implementation Partnership to the launch of their Phase one Report on 26 March 2014.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 20 February 2014 from the OFMDFM Committee in respect of a departmental summary of the Joint Ministerial Council (Europe) meeting on 2 December 2013.

Noted: The Committee noted the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland Investing Activity Report for February 2014 for the Department.

11. Forward Work Programme

Noted: The Committee noted the draft itinerary for the visit to CAFRE on 20 March 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

12. AOB

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a briefing from the Northern Ireland Livestock Auctioneers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a briefing from Severely Disadvantaged Area Farmers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a briefing from the Department on the discovery of illegal slaughterhouses.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft correspondence to the Minister in respect of seeking clarification on entitlements within CAP Pillar 1 Direct Payment Scheme.

13. Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 11 March 2014 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 5.35 p.m.

Paul Frew, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date