

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2014
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

- Present: Mr William Irwin MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Joe Byrne MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson MLA
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA
Mrs Joanne Dobson MLA
Mr Tom Elliott MLA
Mr Ian Milne MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr Kieran McCarthy MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Edwin Poots MLA
- In attendance: Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk
Ms Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk
Mr Mark O'Hare, Clerical Supervisor
Ms Alison Ferguson, Clerical Officer
Mr Mark Allen, Research Officer (for agenda item 7)

1.46 p.m. The meeting commenced in Open Session.

1. Apologies

There are no apologies.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised the Committee that he and the Deputy Chairperson had attended an informal meeting with the NI Retail Consortium that morning to discuss their report on "Retail and Agri-Food in Northern Ireland: Investing in our futures".

The Chairperson advised the Committee that he and the Deputy Chairperson are to meet informally with the TB Strategic Partnership Group. Members were asked to advise the clerk if they wished to attend.

3. Minutes of the meeting held 14 October 2014

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2014.

1.47 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.

4. Matters Arising

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel on the NI Audit Office Report on Sick Absence in the Public Sector and agreed to forward it to the Department for comment.

Noted: The Committee noted the monthly update from the Department on Ash Dieback.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 15 October 2014 from the Department on the Executive's Response to Going for Growth. The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that it receives regular progress reports.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 16 October 2014 from the Department in respect of issues raised at the Committee meeting on 30 September 2014.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the RSPB in respect of issues raised at the meeting on 14 October 2014.

5. Oral briefing on Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion: Rural Support

The following representatives of Rural Support joined the meeting at 1.48 p.m.

Marion McCracken, Chairperson
Jude McCann, Development Director
Sam Campbell, Board Member

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

1.54 p.m. Mrs Dobson joined the meeting.
1.56 p.m. Mrs Dobson and Mr McCarthy left the meeting.
1.58 p.m. Mr Elliott joined the meeting.
1.59 p.m. Mr McMullan rejoined the meeting
1.59 p.m. Mr McAleer left the meeting.

Mr Irwin declared an interest that he is a farmer.

2.06 p.m. Mr Buchanan joined the meeting.
2.13 p.m. Mr Byrne left the meeting.
2.30 p.m. Mr Byrne rejoined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request copies of the strategic documents Rural Support had previously forwarded to the Department.

6. Oral briefing Rivers Agency: Reservoirs Bill Financial Assistance Scheme and Consideration Stage

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 2.45 p.m.

David Porter, Director of Development
Kieran Brazier, Head of Bill Team

2.45 p.m. Mr Poots left the meeting.

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

2.48 p.m. Mr McAleer rejoined the meeting.
2.52 p.m. Mr Poots rejoined the meeting.
3.03 p.m. Mrs Dobson rejoined the meeting.
3.05 p.m. Mr McAleer left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Rivers Agency to seek confirmation that the number of orphaned reservoirs has reduced from 6 to 2 and what their risk designation is.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to have a closed session briefing from the Bill Office on 11 November 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to cancel the meeting scheduled for 25 November 2014 as this will be the date for the Consideration Stage of the Reservoirs Bill.

7. Oral Briefing RalSe: Scottish visit

The Assembly Research Officer joined the meeting at 3.28 p.m. and briefed the Committee on a number of papers relevant to the visit to Scotland.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

3.34 p.m. Mr McCarthy rejoined the meeting.

8. SL1: The Seeds (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations NI 2014

Agreed: The Committee considered the Seeds (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations NI 2014 and agreed that it was content with the merits of the policy.

3.55 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.

9. Correspondence

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 13 October 2014 from Historic Royal Palaces in respect of its plans for Hillsborough Castle. The Committee agreed not to seek a briefing at this time.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 14 October 2014 from the Committee for Finance and Personnel in respect of the Departmental Savings Plans up to 31 March 2014.

10. Forward Work Programme

Noted: The Committee noted that the SL1 Rathlin Island Fishing Exclusion Zones Regulations 2014 has been deferred to the next session.

Noted: The Committee noted that invitations to the stakeholder event on the Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Review will issue to a geographical spread of the beneficiaries of the programme. Members were asked to indicate if there are any further groups which should receive an invitation.

11. AOB

There is no other business.

12. Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 4 November 2014 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

3.57 p.m. The meeting adjourned.

3.57 p.m. The meeting moved into closed session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Farmers for Action to advise that it intends to seek legal advice on their proposal for legislation for farm gate prices.

William Irwin, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date