

**COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**TUESDAY 09 FEBRUARY 2016  
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

- Present: Mr William Irwin MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Sydney Anderson MLA  
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA  
Mr Declan McAleer MLA  
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA  
Mr Ian Milne MLA  
Mr Edwin Poots MLA  
Mr Robin Swann MLA
- Apologies: Mr Seán Rogers MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Kieran McCarthy 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  
Ms Patricia Casey, Bill Clerk (Agenda Item 6)

*1.39 p.m. The meeting commenced in Open Session.*

**1. Apologies**

The apologies are recorded above.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson advised Members that a small technical inaccuracy in the Report on the Fisheries Bill approved by the Committee on 02 February 2016 was corrected and the Report was re-laid in the Business Office.

### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 02 February 2016**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 02 February 2016.

*1.42 p.m.* *Mr Milne joined the meeting.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment seeking an explanation of the decision to close the renewable heat incentive scheme, information on what assessment of impact on business had been carried out and details of the consultation that took place prior to this decision being taken.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to request their assessment of the potential impact of the closure of the renewable heat incentive scheme on the local poultry industry.

### **4. Matters Arising**

*Agreed:* The Committee noted the Department's response to the issues raised in a research paper entitled 'Comparison of CAP Review of Decision/Appeals Procedures – UK and Republic of Ireland' and agreed to forward the response to the RaISe Research Officer.

*Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Department, dated 29 January 2016, providing (i) details of legal advice which DARD received in relation to Young Farmer's Payment applications; (ii) an update on the Geo-Spatial Aid Application (GSAA); (iii) contact details for a demonstration facility for the Homeowner Flood Protection Grant Scheme; and (iv) an explanation for the closure the DHSSPS RAPHAEL Programme.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Department, dated 29 January 2016, regarding the Minister's efforts to address supply chain issues and agreed to request details of the work undertaken by the Supply Chain Forum to date and any practical solutions it has generated to assist local producers in the immediate and short-term future.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted the Department's response to the issues raised in a research paper entitled 'Overview of Cross Compliance Standards and Inspection Processes utilised by DARD and NIEA' and agreed to forward the response to the RaISe Research Officer.

*Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Department, dated 04 February 2016, clarifying that DARD has not made a contribution to UK efforts to shape delegated regulations and the delivery of such associated with amended Council regulation EC No 515/79.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of the Environment, dated 04 February 2016, providing details of the Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme and agreed to request an update on the outcome of the Business Case submitted to the Department of Finance and Personnel to extend the scheme to businesses and other non-domestic premises.

## **5. Oral Briefing DARD: EU Issues**

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 1.44 p.m.

Norman Fulton, Chief Agricultural Economist, Central Policy  
Seamus McErlean, Central Policy  
Mark McLean, Principal Agricultural Economist, Policy Development Branch  
Ciara Reynolds, DARD Brussels Office

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

*1.54 p.m. Mr McMullan joined the meeting.*

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

*1.55 p.m. Mr Anderson joined the meeting.*

*2.00 p.m. Mrs Dobson left the meeting.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request that the Department provide details of the volume of meat products, red meat in particular, entering the Northern Ireland market from outside the region.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request details of the potential cost of the mandatory charge proposed as part of the Official Feed and Food Controls Regulation (OFCC) to industry in Northern Ireland.

*2.03 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.*

*2.09 p.m. Mr Milne left the meeting.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request details of analysis carried out by the Department in 2005 and 2009 examining the impacts of large

reductions in import tariffs in the context of a WTO trade agreement and how the findings may be applied when considering of the potential impact of TTIP on the agri-food industry in Northern Ireland.

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

2.24 p.m. *The meeting suspended.*

2.28 p.m. *The meeting resumed with the following Members in attendance:  
Mr Irwin, Mr Anderson, Mr McAleer, Mr McMullan and Mr Poots.*

## **6. Oral Briefing DARD: Rural Needs Bill – Position on Amendments**

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 2.29 p.m.

Colette McMaster, Assistant Secretary, Director of Food, Farm and Rural Policy

Astrid Stuart, Head of Rural Proofing Branch

The officials briefed the Committee, informing it that the Minister has not yet obtained approval to the amendments which were subject to the agreement of the Executive and the associated minor amendments i.e. the higher statutory duty in connection with due regard and additional public bodies named on the face of the Bill. The Minister had decided to table, at Consideration Stage, three minor amendments that were not subject to the agreement of the Executive. This was followed by a question and answer session.

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

2.38 p.m. *Mrs Dobson rejoined the meeting.*

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

2.44 p.m. *The meeting moved into Closed Session.*

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

2.57 p.m. *Mr Milne left the meeting.*

2.57 p.m. *Mr Poots left the meeting.*

3.00 p.m. *The meeting moved into Open Session.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to table the amendments relating to due regard, i.e. amendments 1 and 2 drafted by the Department and considered by the Committee on 12 January 2016

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to table the amendments relating to the listing of public bodies on the face of the Bill, i.e. amendments 3, 4, 5 and 9 drafted by the Department and considered by the Committee on 12 January 2016

### **7. Written Briefing DARD: EU Animal Health Regulation**

The Committee noted a written briefing from the Department on the European Commission's proposed regulation on animal health.

*3.02 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.*

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

### **8. Written Briefing DARD: Consultation on DARD's 2nd Children and Young People's Action Plan**

The Committee noted a written briefing from the Department on the outcome of the consultation on DARD's 2nd Children and Young People's Action Plan.

### **9. Written Briefing DARD: Publication of Final Report of FVO Audit of TB Eradication Measures in Northern Ireland**

The Committee noted a written briefing from the Department on the Final Report of Food and Veterinary Officer Audit of TB Eradication Measures in Northern Ireland

### **10. Correspondence**

*Agreed:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, dated 28 January 2016, requesting an update on any scrutiny undertaken in respect of good relations and Together: Building a United Community and agreed to submit a nil response.

*Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel, dated 03 February 2016, forwarding a DFP briefing paper on the Budget Bill (Northern Ireland) 2016 and accompanying Spring Supplementary Estimates (SSEs)

*Agreed:* The Committee noted correspondence from Mr Paul Frew MLA, dated 26 January 2016, forwarding a constituent's concerns about nitrogen level from turkeys and agreed to refer the matter to NIEA and the Department of the Environment.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted correspondence from Michael D. White & Co. Solicitors, dated 18 January 2016, on behalf of Brendan McCormick and agreed to respond advising that the Committee is not empowered to deal with this matter, and referring him to the appropriate bodies.

### **11. Forward Work Programme**

*Agreed:* The following Members confirmed that they wish to attend the visit to Toome to view the sluice gates on 18 February 2016: Mr Irwin and Mr Anderson.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

### **12. AOB**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to establish why Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist (PUL) groups are not eligible for funding under the successor framework to TRIPSI and what work has been done to confirm that additional support for these groups is no longer necessary.

### **13. Date and time of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 16 February 2016 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*3.10 p.m. The meeting adjourned.*

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William Irwin, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

**16/02/2016**

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Date