

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY 03 NOVEMBER 2015
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr William Irwin MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson MLA
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson 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)

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

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

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

1. Apologies

The apologies are recorded above.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised Members that he met with the Minister to discuss the timescale for the passage of the Rural Needs Bill.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2015

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2015.

4. Matters Arising

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from DARD dated 20 October 2015 providing further details of the EU targeted aid package for dairy farmers and an indication of when payments will be made.

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from DARD dated 20 October 2015 providing details of French measures to assist dairy farmers and agreed to request an update on the outcome of a meeting with the Minister for Finance and Personnel to encourage the Chancellor of the Exchequer to give further consideration to the difficulties faced by the dairy sector.

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from DARD dated 20 October 2015 providing details of the two working groups established by Secretary of State Liz Truss to assist the dairy industry and agreed to request an update on the work of these groups.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from DARD dated 21 October 2015 confirming the Department's decision to backdate the proposed change in the missing ear tag threshold to 01 January 2014.

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from DARD dated 21 October 2015 outlining the implications of the deferral of the October Monitoring Round and agreed that they should be updated on the situation when DARD officials provide a briefing on the January Monitoring Round.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from DARD dated 27 October 2015 advising the Committee that the Forest Service aims to have a pilot Plant Health risk register established by mid February 2016.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from DARD dated 27 October 2015 providing details of the amount of "waste" silage used in anaerobic digesters.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from DARD dated 27 October 2015 informing them that the Department intends to provide a further presentation on the Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Eradication Scheme Order (NI) 2015 before Christmas recess.

5. Oral Briefing Sainsbury's: General Purchasing Policy

The following representatives joined the meeting at 1.44 p.m.

Damien Drumm, Public Affairs Advisor, Sainsbury's
Nicola Heaslip, Category Manager for Dairy, Sainsbury's

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

1.55 p.m. Mr McMullen left the meeting.

Mr Irwin declared an interest that he is a farmer.

1.56 p.m. Mr McCrea left the meeting.

1.59 p.m. Mrs Dobson joined the meeting.

2.16 p.m. Mr Swann joined the meeting.

Mrs Dobson declared an interest that her husband is a beef and cereal farmer.

2.31 p.m. Mr McMullen rejoined the meeting.

2.40 p.m. Mrs Dobson left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Sainsbury's to request details of the price (pence per litre) paid by Sainsbury's to milk producers in Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request clarification of Sainsbury's banking arrangements in Northern Ireland.

2.50 p.m. The Sainsbury's representatives left the meeting.

2.55 p.m. The meeting moved into Closed Session.

6. Committee Discussion: Rural Needs Bill

The Committee discussed a number of key issues in respect of the Rural Needs Bill.

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

7. Oral Briefing DARD: Rural Needs Bill

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 3.12 p.m.

Louise Warde Hunter, Deputy Secretary
Colette McMaster, Assistant Secretary, Director of Food, Farm and Rural Policy

Astrid Stuart, Principal Officer, Head of Rural Policy Branch

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

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

3.27 p.m. *Mr McCarthy left the meeting.*

3.34 p.m. *Mr McCarthy rejoined the meeting.*

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft work programme for the Committee Stage of the Rural Needs Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request oral evidence in respect of the Rural Needs Bill from the list of organisations proposed by the Clerk, with all oral briefings to be scheduled for the Committee meeting of 24 November 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request written evidence from the list of organisations proposed by the Clerk, as amended, on the Introduction of the Rural Needs Bill, with a deadline of 23 November 2015 for written submissions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the oral briefings currently scheduled for the meeting of 24 November 2015 be postponed to the meeting of 01 December 2015.

8. Oral Briefing DARD: Role for Veterinary Staff at Meat Plants

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 4.02 p.m.

Robert Huey, Chief Veterinary Officer

Michael Hatch, Senior Principal Veterinary Officer.

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

4.05 p.m. *Mr McCrea rejoined the meeting.*

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

Mr Irwin declared an interest that he is a farmer.

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

4.33 p.m. *Mr McMullen left the meeting.*

9. Oral Briefing DARD: Departmental Restructuring

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 4.34 p.m.

Graeme Wilkinson, Deputy Secretary
Joe Cassells, DAERA Formation Project Director

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

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

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

10. Written Brief RalSe: Comparison of CAP Review of Decisions Procedures in UK and Republic of Ireland

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reschedule this agenda item at the earliest possible opportunity.

11. Written Brief DARD: Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation – Successor Framework

The Committee noted a paper from DARD providing an update on the Framework for Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation.

4.49 p.m. *The meeting suspend.*

5.04 p.m. *The meeting resumed in Open Session with the following Members in attendance: Mr Irwin, Mr McCarthy, Mr McMullen, Mr Milne and Mr Swann.*

5.04 p.m. *Mr McCrea rejoined the meeting.*

12. Written Brief DARD – Update on Sustainable Use of Poultry Litter Project

The Committee noted an update from DARD on the Sustainable Use of Poultry Litter Project and the associated loan scheme.

5.05 p.m. *Mr McMullen left the meeting.*

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

13. Written Brief SL1: The Common Agricultural Policy (Review of SCMO Decisions) Regulations (NI) 2015

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the SL1 moves to the next legislative stage.

14. Correspondence

Noted: The Committee noted a letter from the Minister providing an update on the results of court cases challenging the financial corrections imposed on DARD by the European Commission for the CAP scheme years 2007 to 2009.

Noted: The Committee noted the final evaluation report of the Contested Space/Interface Programme 2011-2015.

Noted: The Committee noted the report entitled 'Towards a Wellbeing Framework Report on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland' by the Carnegie UK Trust.

Noted: The Committee noted an invitation to the 'Creating First Job Opportunities in Northern Ireland' conference, to be hosted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on 18 November 2015.

Noted: The Committee noted the DARD investment strategy report.

15. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

16. AOB

There was no other business.

17. Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 10 November 2015 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

5.08 p.m. The meeting moved into Closed Session.

18. Inquiry into Better Regulation

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek further information on a number of issues relating to its Inquiry into Better Regulation.

5.19 p.m. The meeting adjourned.

William Irwin, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date