



# Northern Ireland Assembly

## AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR A BILL OF RIGHTS

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday 2 July 2020**  
**Room 29, Parliament Buildings**

Present, Room 29:	Emma Sheerin MLA (Chairperson) Mike Nesbitt MLA (Deputy Chairperson) Michelle McIlveen MLA
Present, via StarLeaf:	Paula Bradshaw MLA Mark Durkan MLA John O'Dowd MLA (deputising for Carál Ní Chuilín MLA)
Apologies:	Christopher Stalford MLA
In Attendance:	Caroline Perry (Assembly Clerk) Gareth Cross (Clerical Officer)

*The meeting commenced in open session at 2.02 p.m.*

#### **1. Apologies**

As noted above.

#### **2. Briefing on the South African Bill of Rights by Professor Kate O'Regan**

Professor Kate O'Regan, the inaugural Director of the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights and a former judge of the South African Constitutional Court joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 2:04 p.m.

Her briefing emphasised the importance of history when one is drafting a Bill of Rights, the key structural provisions of the Bill of Rights, the rights contained in the South African Bill of Rights which could be said to be supplementary to the rights explicitly contained in the European Convention on Human Rights and the adjudication of economic and social rights under the South African constitution.

*Mark Durkan joined the meeting at 2:10pm.*

The oral evidence was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Kate for her time and evidence.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

### **3. Briefing on Children's Rights in Northern Ireland by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People**

Koulla Yiasouma, the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) and Mairéad McCafferty, Chief Executive of NICCY, joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 3:24 pm.

Their briefing included consideration of the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC), its obligations and a child rights compliant Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. It discussed the impact of Northern Ireland's particular circumstances on today's children and young people along with the potential impact of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic on children's rights. NICCY also stressed the importance of listening to children and young people.

The oral evidence was followed by a question and answer session.

*Mark Durkan left the meeting at 4:02pm.*

The Chairperson thanked Koulla and Mairéad for their evidence.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

### **4. Chairperson's business**

The Chairperson explained that it is normal practice for committees to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson during periods of recess to submit views on the releasing or withholding of information in any non-routine / contentious Freedom of Information requests received.

The Committee will be advised of any such requests, the views expressed by the Chairperson and/or Deputy Chairperson and the response issued by the FoI Unit, at the first available meeting following the recess period.

*Agreed:* The Ad Hoc Committee agreed to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson during recess to submit views on the releasing or withholding of information in any non-routine / contentious Freedom of Information requests received.

## **5. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The Ad Hoc Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 18 June 2020.

## **6. Matters arising**

No matters arising.

## **7. Correspondence**

*Agreed:* The Committee noted the correspondence memo and agreed that the body of emails sent to the Committee will included in future meeting packs.

## **8. Forward Work Programme**

The Chairperson referred Members to the draft Forward Work Programme.

Members noted the Forward Work Programme.

Following the presentation by NICCY, John O'Dowd asked how the Committee could hear the voices of young people. The Clerk advised the Committee that Assembly Communications and Outreach teams are drawing up a plan for the Committee which will be presented to Members at the strategy afternoon. There are a range of ways in

which the Committee can engage with young people and this is something that can be explored further to identify options for the Committee.

**9. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting will be a strategy afternoon on Thursday 10 September .

*The meeting adjourned at 4.07 p.m.*

**Ms Emma Sheerin MLA**  
**Chairperson, Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights**