



Northern Ireland Assembly

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON A BILL OF RIGHTS

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 18th February 2021
Virtual Meeting, StarLeaf

Present, via StarLeaf: Emma Sheerin MLA (Chairperson)
Mike Nesbitt MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Paula Bradshaw MLA
Mark Durkan MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
Christopher Stalford MLA

Apologies: No apologies

In Attendance: Caroline Perry (Assembly Clerk)
Gareth Cross (Clerical Officer)
David McClure (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

The meeting commenced in open session at 2.05 p.m.

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Briefing by Tony O'Reilly: Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Tony O'Reilly, a Committee Member of the North West Forum of People with Disabilities, joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 2:07p.m.

Tony said that people with disabilities in Northern Ireland are viewed as people with special needs; not as human beings within a rights context. Tony noted that in October 2020 Scotland announced plans to remove the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and a move to place greater emphasis on the principle of human dignity. He stated that the rights of people with disabilities had been ignored for too long. Tony commented that a bill of rights is needed immediately, and that the rights of disabled people should be included within such a bill of rights.

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

The Chairperson thanked Tony O'Reilly for his evidence.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Michelle McIlveen left the meeting at 2:46pm.

3. Briefing by Alexa Moore: Perspective on a Bill of Rights

Alexa Moore, Director of TransgenderNI, joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 3:00 p.m.

Alexa said that she supported a bill of rights, commenting that it could address gaps in equality legislation and build towards a better society for everyone. Alexa stated that young people from the LGBTQ community are leaving Northern Ireland as their rights are not upheld and that some communities need to be specifically named in a bill of rights.

She said that while a bill of rights would not be a cure-all, it would provide a framework for the Executive to progress legislation and policy from a rights-based approach and convince young people that it is a new approach for a new decade.

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

The Chairperson thanked Alexa Moore for her evidence.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

4. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's business.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Ad Hoc Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 11th February 2021.

6. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

7. Correspondence

Members noted correspondence from Conradh na Gaeilge requesting to present evidence to the Committee.

Agreed: Members agreed to invite Conradh na Gaeilge to give evidence.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson referred Members to the draft forward work programme.

Members agreed the forward work programme.

9. Any other business

There was no other business.

10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday 25th February 2021 at 2.00 pm where the Committee will hear from Dr Robin Wilson, an expert adviser to the Council of Europe on Intercultural Integration and the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform.

The meeting adjourned at 3.46 p.m.

Ms Emma Sheerin MLA
Chairperson, Ad Hoc Committee