



Northern Ireland Assembly

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON A BILL OF RIGHTS

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 25 March 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: None

In Attendance: Caroline Perry (Assembly Clerk)
Gavin Ervine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Gareth Cross (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced in open session at 2:04pm.

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Call for Evidence: Survey Results; RaISe and Assembly Engagement

Mr Robert Barry, Senior Statistician, RaISe, and Mrs Louise Close, Outreach Manager, Assembly Engagement, joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 2:05pm.

Their briefing provided the methodology and survey results of the Committee's call for evidence.

It was highlighted that the survey was carried out between November 2020 and February 2021, and achieved a total of 2,346 responses from a wide range of groups and individuals, with many diverse views expressed. It was also noted that, as the survey sample was derived from a non-random self-selection process, the results obtained should not be generalised to the wider population, and should only be seen as a reflection of the views of the groups and individuals who responded.

Christopher Stalford joined the meeting at 2:18pm.

All Members placed on record their thanks to Mr Robert Barry and Mrs Louise Close for their work in relation to the survey.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

3. Briefing by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People Youth Panel: Children and Young People's Rights

Ms Koulla Yiasouma, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY), joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 2:25pm. Ms Yiasouma was joined by NICCY Youth Panel members Ciará Fettes, Hannah Sabu, Natasha Manganaro and Madalaine Wilson.

Their briefing provided background to the work of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People Youth Panel, highlighting that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) should be fully incorporated into a bill of rights.

There were discussions around the right to education, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and digital rights in relation to social media. There were also wide-ranging discussions on violence against women and girls and the associated rights on this issue.

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

Michelle McIlveen left the meeting at 3:08pm.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Koulla Yiasouma and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People Youth Panel representatives for their evidence.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to each of the representatives from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People Youth Panel to thank them for their briefing.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

4. Briefing by Niall Murphy: Perspective on a Bill of Rights

Mr Niall Murphy joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 3:10pm.

Mr Murphy's briefing provided background to his human rights and legacy work at KRW Law and his role with Ireland's Future.

There were discussions on the European Convention of Human Rights, language rights and the implications on rights in the event of constitutional change.

Michelle McIlveen re-joined the meeting at 3:15pm.

Christopher Stalford left the meeting at 3:16pm.

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

The Chairperson thanked Mr Niall Murphy for his evidence.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

5. Chairperson's Business

No Chairperson's business

6. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Ad Hoc Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 18 March 2021.

7. Matters Arising

The Chairperson returned to the issue raised by the Deputy Chairperson at last week's meeting in relation to the timing of the Committee's report to the Assembly.

Christopher Stalford re-joined the meeting at 4:31pm.

The Chairperson proposed to rescind the Committee's decision to report to the Assembly by summer recess 2021.

Agreed: Members agreed to rescind the decision to report to the Assembly by summer recess 2021.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Executive Office to ask for an update on the appointment of the panel of experts.

8. Correspondence

Members noted correspondence from the Chairperson's Liaison Group in relation to strengthening Committee scrutiny.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson referred Members to the draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: Members agreed the Forward Work Programme, subject to the change agreed in relation to the timing of the Committee's report.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday 15 April 2021 at 2:00pm when the Committee will receive briefings from Dame Vera Baird QC, Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales, and Conradh na Gaeilge. The Committee will also receive a written briefing from Professor Louise Mallinder, Queen's University, Belfast.

The Committee moved to closed session at 4.40pm.

The Committee discussed a number of forthcoming stakeholder events.

Agreed: Members agreed invitees to the stakeholder event on 20 April 2021.

Agreed: Members agreed to add a further stakeholder event to the Committee's schedule, with a date to be confirmed.

The meeting adjourned at 4:49pm.

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