



Northern Ireland Assembly

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON A BILL OF RIGHTS

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 15 October 2020

Room 29, Parliament Buildings

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

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

1. Apologies

None.

2. Briefing by Dermot Nesbitt on the 'Particular Circumstances' of Northern Ireland

Dermot Nesbitt, former Junior Minister in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and former Minister of the Environment joined the meeting at 2.03 p.m.

His briefing summarised his experience as a member of The Bill of Rights Forum, a negotiator for the UUP during the multi-party talks leading up to the Belfast Agreement and a member of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights.

He outlined the benefits of drawing on international law and presented the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities as a solution.

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

The Chairperson thanked Dermot for his attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The meeting was suspended at 3.06 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 3.13 p.m.

3. Briefing by Mark Durkan on the 'Particular Circumstances' of Northern Ireland

Mark Durkan, former deputy First Minister joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 3.13 p.m.

His briefing reflected on his experience as a negotiator for the SDLP during the multi-party talks leading to the Belfast Agreement and what the term 'particular circumstances' meant. He also recounted what the Agreement intended or offered in terms of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. He explained that Westminster was tasked with legislating for such a Bill as a guarantee as it would not require all-party agreement. He raised a number of concerns in the current context including the Internal Market Bill and Brexit.

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

Mark Durkan MLA left the meeting at 3.39 p.m.

The Chairperson thanked Mark for his evidence.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

4. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson referred Members to the draft survey questionnaire for the Committee's proposed consultation.

Agreed: The Ad Hoc Committee agreed the survey questionnaire to be used in its forthcoming consultation.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Ad Hoc Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 8 October 2020.

6. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

7. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson referred Members to the draft Forward Work Programme.

Members noted 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 22 October at 2.00p.m. in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 15.59 p.m.

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