



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights

## Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 1 July 2021

**Meeting Location:** Hybrid Meeting – Room 29, Parliament Buildings, and via StarLeaf

**Present:** Emma Sheerin MLA (Chairperson)  
Paula Bradshaw MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Alan Chambers MLA  
Stephen Dunne MLA  
Mark Durkan MLA  
Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

**Apologies:** None

**In Attendance:** Caroline Perry (Assembly Clerk)  
Gavin Ervine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)

The meeting commenced at 2:03pm in open session.

### 1. Apologies

As above.



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### **2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson informed Members that the Committee had received correspondence informing it that Alan Chambers was replacing Doug Beattie as a Member of the Committee.

The Chairperson also informed Members that the Committee had received correspondence informing it that Stephen Dunne had been nominated as a Member of the Committee.

The Chairperson welcomed both Alan Chambers and Stephen Dunne to the Committee.

The Chairperson placed on record the Committee's appreciation of Doug Beattie's and Michelle McIlveen's work on the Committee and thanked them for their dedication throughout their tenure on the Committee.

The Chairperson reminded Members that that they must declare all relevant interests at their first meeting, in accordance with Standing Order 69(5).

The Chairperson informed Members that she and the Deputy Chairperson attended a Human Rights Consortium event in relation to public polling on Wednesday 23 June 2021, at which she provided attendees with an update on the Committee's work.

*Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 2:06pm.*

The Chairperson referred Members to a note of the informal session of the Committee's reporting stage deliberations on 17 June 2021.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the note of the informal session of the Committee's reporting stage deliberations on 17 June 2021.

The Chairperson referred Members to a note of the informal session of the Committee's reporting stage deliberations on 24 June 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the note of the informal session of the Committee's reporting stage deliberations on 24 June 2021.

The Chairperson informed Members that it was 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 Fol requests received.

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

### 3. Draft Minutes

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 17 June 2021.

### 4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson reminded Members that, at last week's meeting, the Committee discussed the possibility of moving Committee meetings from Thursday afternoon to Wednesday morning.



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The Chairperson informed Members that, at present, no rooms were available to accommodate the Committee meeting on a Wednesday morning.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to move its weekly meeting from 2:00pm on Thursday to 2:30pm on Thursday.

### 5. Correspondence

Members noted correspondence from the University of Texas in relation to a Comparative Constitutions Project; the Ulster Unionist Party in relation to membership change; the Women's Policy Group inviting Members to the Feminist Recovery Plan Relaunch - One Year On on 28 July 2021; Ulster University inviting Members to a webinar on 2 July 2021; the Human Rights Consortium in relation to polling results; Professor Colin Harvey requesting information on expert witnesses and the Committee's liaison with the Executive Office; and the Democratic Unionist Party in relation to membership change.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the data from of the Committee's consultation process with the University of Texas.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Chairperson will provide a response to Professor Colin Harvey's queries on behalf of the Committee.

### 6. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson referred Members to the draft Forward Work Programme.

**Agreed:** Members agreed the Forward Work Programme.



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## 7. Any Other Business

Members discussed a number of options for moving the Committee's deliberations forward at the start of the new session.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to hold a full-day session on Thursday 2 September 2021, with support provided by Dr David Kenny.

## 8. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday 9 September 2021 at 2:00pm when the Committee will continue its reporting phase.

The Committee moved to closed session at 2.15pm.

*Christopher Stalford joined the meeting at 2:25pm.*

*Mark Durkan left the meeting at 2:55pm.*

*Paula Bradshaw left the meeting at 2:56pm.*

The Committee continued its reporting stage deliberations and was supported by Professor Christopher McCrudden, School of Law, Queens University Belfast. The main area of discussion was in connection with a preamble.

The meeting adjourned at 3:34pm.

**Emma Sheerin MLA**

**Chairperson, Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights**