



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 29 April 2021

Meeting Location: Virtual Meeting, StarLeaf

Present: 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 at 2:06pm in open session.



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1. Apologies

As above.

2. Briefing by RalSe: Gender Issues

Ms Eileen Regan, Senior Research Officer, RalSe, and Mr Stephen Orme, Research Officer, RalSe, joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 2:07pm.

Their briefing provided an overview of research papers on gender budgeting, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Istanbul Convention.

There were discussions around how governments use a gender-sensitive approach on the formulation and execution of budgets and the establishment of a gender equality expert advisory panel in Northern Ireland. There were also discussions around CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention and the potential impact these may have on a bill of rights.

Christopher Stalford joined the meeting at 2:10pm

Christopher Stalford left the meeting at 2:21pm

Mark Durkan left the meeting at 2:34pm

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

The Chairperson thanked Ms Eileen Regan and Mr Stephen Orme for their evidence.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.



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3. Briefing by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland: Implications of Brexit on Human Rights

Mr Les Allamby, Chief Commissioner, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC), Ms Éilis Haughey, Head of Service, Dedicated Mechanism – EU Withdrawal, NIHRC, Ms Geraldine McGahey OBE, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) and Ms Roisin Mallon, Director, Dedicated Mechanism Unit, ECNI, joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 2:44pm.

Their briefing provided an overview of Article 2 of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, with specific reference to ‘no diminution’, and the impact of Brexit on equality and human rights.

There were discussions around how a bill of rights should be fit for purpose, the importance of equality legislation, the issue of pre-legislative scrutiny and the safeguarding of environmental rights.

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

Michelle McIlveen left the meeting at 3:19pm

The Chairperson thanked the representatives from the NIHRC and the ECNI for their evidence.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

4. Briefing by the Children’s Law Centre: Children and Young People’s Rights

Ms Paddy Kelly, Director, Children’s Law Centre, and Ms Monye Anyadike-Danes QC joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 3:26pm.

The briefing provided background to the work of the Children’s Law Centre, the views on inadequacies of current legal protections for children and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and young people.



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There were discussions around the incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the accessibility of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, the human rights implications of Brexit and the human rights education.

Mark Durkan re-joined the meeting at 3:29pm

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

The Chairperson thanked Ms Paddy Kelly and Ms Monye Anyadike-Danes for their evidence.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

5. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson referred Members to a note of an informal meeting that the Committee held with representatives of the Supreme Court on Thursday 22 April.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the note of the informal meeting held with the Supreme Court on Thursday 22 April 2021.

6. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 15 April 2021.

7. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.



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8. Correspondence

Members noted correspondence from Mr Dermot Nesbitt in relation to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission submission; the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee and Members Support Office in relation to engagement with marginalised groups; and Professor Christopher McCrudden in relation to the legislative competence of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson referred Members to the draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: Members agreed the Forward Work Programme.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The Committee will meet informally on Friday 30 April 2021 for a virtual meeting with the Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

The next formal meeting will be on Thursday 6 May 2021 at 2:00pm when the Committee will receive briefings from Northern Ireland Assembly Engagement colleagues on the Committee's stakeholder events, the Northern Ireland Education Service on the series of focus groups with schools and representatives of Churches on their perspective on a bill of rights.



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The meeting was adjourned at 4:24pm.

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