

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**THURSDAY 11 JUNE 2020
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Declan McAleer MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Philip McGuigan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Clare Bailey MLA (via StarLeaf)
Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA
Mr John Blair MLA (via StarLeaf)
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA (via StarLeaf)
Mr Harry Harvey MLA
Mr William Irwin MLA
Mr Patsy McGlone MLA (via StarLeaf)

In attendance: Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk
Ms Barbara Love, Committee Clerk
Ms Marion Johnson, Clerical Supervisor

The meeting commenced at 10.03 a.m. in open session

1. Apologies

None

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2020.

3. Departmental oral briefing on the June Monitoring Round

The following departmental officials joined the meeting by StarLeaf video conferencing app at 10.06 a.m.:

Roger Downey, Finance Director
Lynda Lowe, Head of Financial Planning

The officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

4. Departmental oral briefing on the LCM on Medicines and Medical Devices Bill.

The following departmental officials joined the meeting by StarLeaf video conferencing app at 10.45 a.m.:

Naomi Callaghan, Acting Director, Animal Health & Welfare Policy Division
Frances Kearny, Veterinary Officer, Veterinary Service Animal Health Group
Peter Price, Divisional Veterinary Officer

The officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to express concern around the lack of time it has had to consider issues within the LCM.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that it is kept informed of new veterinary medicines and any issues there may be with the authorisation here, the EU and UK; the Committee further agreed to request that it is kept informed of any concerns with new veterinary medicines and the Protocol and any developments on the Animal Health Framework.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the response to the Health Committee via correspondence with the clerk.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the LCM as it related to the veterinary medical provisions within the Bill.

5. SR 2020/76: The Sea Fish Industry (Coronavirus) (Fixed Costs) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/76: The Sea Fish Industry (Coronavirus) (Fixed Costs) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2020, which provides financial support to the sea fish catching sector during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Question put and agreed:

“The Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs has considered SE 2020/76: The Sea Fish Industry (Coronavirus) (Fixed Costs) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2020, and recommends that it be confirmed by the Assembly.”

6. SL1: The Sea Fish Industry (Coronavirus) (Fixed Costs) (Amendment) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2020.

The Committee considered SL1: The Sea Fish Industry (Coronavirus) (Fixed Costs) (Amendment) Scheme (NI) 2020, which proposes a minor amendment which will define the “length overall” of a fishing vessel by substituting a reference to Council Regulation (EEC) 2930/86 with Regulation (EU) 2017/1130.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the merits of the policy and that it should move to the next legislative stage.

7. Departmental Written Briefing: Covid-19 Update

Agreed: The Committee noted the departmental written briefing on the Covid-19 update and agreed to forward questions to the clerk by close of play.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the Covid-19 update from the Department on the Committee’s webpage and to issue a Tweet regarding the publication.

8. Consideration of the allocation of £25m Covid-19 funding for the Agri-Food Sector Market Intervention

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft letter to the Minister on the allocation of the £25m Covid-19 funding and agreed that it should issue.

9. UK Government Environment Bill – Further oral evidence from the Department

The following departmental officials joined the meeting by the StarLeaf video conferencing app at 11.10 a.m.:

John Mills, Director of Environmental Policy Division
Karl Beattie, Environment Bill Team

The officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

10. Correspondence.

The Committee noted the following:

- i. Correspondence from Pivotal on a series of briefing papers designed to help inform public debate and assist policy makers in decision making post Covid-19.
- ii. Copied correspondence from the TB Eradication Partnership to the Department following an informal meeting on TVR and bTB. The Committee noted that an oral evidence session will be organised with the TB Eradication Partnership at a future date.
- iii. Correspondence from the NI Business Brexit Working Group on its report entitled, “Implementing the NI Protocol: What Business in NI Needs and Why.
- iv. Correspondence from the Department on the Vegetable Plant Material and Seed (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2020, which is a Statutory Instrument which DEFRA legislates on a UK-wide basis by Devolved Authorities’ Consent.
- v. Correspondence from the Chairpersons’ Liaison Group on Revised Guidance for Assembly Committees during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- vi. Correspondence from the Committee for Education in response to the Committee’s letter on Rural Broadband and the issue of

differential access to distanced learning and broadband connectivity in rural areas.

The Committee considered correspondence from Minister Poots on the Department's Legislative Programme and what needs to be progressed or achieved by the end of the transition period in December 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to discuss the correspondence in greater detail at its informal meeting on 2 July 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Clerk Assistant for information and to request that he meets with the Chairperson in order to give consideration to the resources, Committee capacity and adequate time required to progress the legislation.

The Committee noted correspondence from Carla Lockhart MP on support for the Agri Food Industry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the correspondence on the it's Committee webpage.

11. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme and agreed to publish it on the Committee's webpage.

12. AOB

An issue was raised by a Member in relation to the sound quality in the Senate Chamber. It was requested that the matter is addressed as a matter of urgency. The Clerk agreed to take the issue forward.

13. Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will be on Thursday 18 June 2020 as an informal meeting on Microsoft Teams.

The meeting moved into Closed Session at 11.42 a.m.

14. UK Government Environment Bill – Consideration of Further Departmental Oral Evidence.

The Committee discussed the further evidence that it received from the Department at the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a number of additional points to be included in the draft report which will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue a copy of the final report to the NI MPs in Westminster.

The meeting adjourned 12.03 p.m.

Declan McAleer, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date