

**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY 7 OCTOBER 2020

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Colin McGrath MLA (Chairperson)*
Mr Doug Beattie MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Martina Anderson MLA *
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr Trevor Lunn MLA
Mr George Robinson MLA*
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA
Ms Emma Sheerin MLA*
Mr Christopher Stalford MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Ms Marie Austin (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Carla Campbell (Assistant Clerk)
Ms Sarah-Anne McKinley (Assistant Clerk)

* Members who attended the meeting via video conferencing.

The meeting commenced at 2:11pm in open session.

The Deputy Chairperson chaired the meeting.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 30 September 2020.

3. Matters Arising

None.

4. Briefing by the First Minister and deputy First Minister

The First Minister and deputy First Minister joined the meeting at 2:13pm:

Arlene Foster MLA, First Minister, The Executive Office

Michelle O'Neill MLA, deputy First Minister, The Executive Office.

The First Minister and deputy First Minister briefed the Committee on the Executive's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other general departmental issues.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The First Minister and deputy First Minister agreed to provide updates to the Committee on a range of issues.

The Chairperson thanked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their attendance.

The meeting was suspended at 3:47pm.

The meeting resumed at 3:52pm.

5. Common Frameworks – Departmental Oral Evidence Session

The following officials joined the meeting at 3:52pm:

Andrew McCormick, Director General, International Relations, The Executive Office

Lorraine Lynas, EU Future Relations Division, The Executive Office.

Michael Williamson, Common Frameworks Programme Team, The Executive Office.

The officials briefed the Committee on Common Frameworks.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Officials agreed to provide clarification on whether the Northern Ireland Executive can ensure that there is a legal commitment to the principle of non-regression of nature and conservation laws following the UK's exit from the EU.

The Chairperson thanked officials for their attendance.

6. Update on the Assessment of the Impact of Brexit on the Institutions and North/South and East/West relationships – Departmental Written Briefing

The Committee noted that the Department had not provided a written update on the assessment of the impact of Brexit on the Institutions and North/South and East/West relationships.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a departmental oral evidence session on progress made on the assessment of the impact of Brexit on the Institutions and North/South and East/West relationships.

7. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme for October to November 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider scheduling a professional development workshop on 'Effective Questioning/Questioning Skills' in early 2021.

Mr Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 4:37pm

The Committee noted that Junior Ministers were not available in October 2020, to brief Members on Brexit issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that departmental officials should attend the Committee meeting on 21 October 2020, to brief Members on Brexit issues.

8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office regarding customs and excise matters in relation to Belfast International Airport.
- ii. The Committee noted a written briefing from The Executive Office on The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No.3) Regulations (NI) 2020.

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Clerking and Member Support Office providing guidance on maintaining social distancing in committee rooms.
- iv. The Committee noted: *Information Strategy Northern Ireland – Investing Activity Report - September 2020*.
- v. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the Executive’s approach to music and live performance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Communities to request information on the suite of funding schemes that will be launched to support the arts, culture and heritage sectors to help them recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

9. Chairperson’s Business

The Deputy Chairperson updated Members on his informal meeting with the Rosetta Trust and Survivors North West which took place on 1 October 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board to request quarterly progress statistics.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Finance to ask for details of any discussions he has had with Treasury to ensure that any payments made through the Redress Board to those residing in Britain, will not be liable to taxation or national insurance deductions, and will also not affect social security payments.

10. Any Other Business

None.

11. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 14 October 2020, at 2:00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53pm.

Mr Doug Beattie MLA
Deputy Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office