



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Communities

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 10 February 2022

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Ms Paula Bradley MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Kellie Armstrong MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Andy Allen MBE MLA
Mr Mark Durkan MLA
Mr Paul Frew MLA
Ms Áine Murphy MLA
Mr Stephen Dunne MLA
Ms Ciara Ferguson MLA

Apologies: Ms Aisling Reilly MLA

In Attendance: Dr Janice Thompson (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Sean McCann (Assistant Clerk)
Ms Rachel Ashe (Clerical Supervisor)



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In Attendance by Video or Teleconference: Ms Antoinette Bowen (Clerical Officer)

The Chairperson, Paula Bradley, assumed the Chair. The meeting began at 9.13 am in open session. The following Members were present at the start of the public session: Paula Bradley, Ciara Ferguson, Andy Allen, Paul Frew, Mark Durkan and Áine Murphy.

Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

1. Apologies

Aisling Reilly.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a draft press release on the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the draft press release for the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Bill should be issued.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a draft response to the Committee for Finance regarding the Draft Budget 2022-25.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the response should be sent to the Committee for Finance.



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3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 1 February 2022.

4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson informed Members that they had received a Departmental response to the Committee's invitation to brief on the Housing budget. The Department informed the Committee that, as the draft 2022-2025 Budget is currently out for consultation, that it would be more helpful to brief the Committee after the completion of this consultation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a briefing once the outcome of the consultation was known.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had received a response from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive regarding the transfer of Low Income Rates Relief. The Committee was content to note.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that they had received a response from Retail NI regarding crane grab machines. The Committee was content to note.

5. Draft Committee Report on the Support for Mortgage Interest etc. (Security for Loans) Bill

The Chairperson informed Members that the Committee needed to consider the draft report on the Support for Mortgage Interest etc. (Security for Loans) Bill.

Powers and Membership

The Committee was content with this section as drafted.

Executive Summary

The Committee was content with this section as drafted.



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Introduction

The Committee was content with this section as drafted.

Committee Consideration of the Bill

The Committee was content with this section as drafted.

Committee Deliberations on the Bill

The Committee was content with this section as drafted.

Clause by Clause Scrutiny of the Bill

The Committee was content with this section as drafted.

Appendices

The Committee was content with this section as drafted.

Minutes

The Committee was content with this section as drafted.

The Committee agreed that the minutes of this meeting be included in the report.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that this concluded the Committee Stage of the Support for Mortgage Interest etc. (Security for Loans) Bill.

The Chairperson thanked the Departmental Officials and the Assembly Bill Office Officials for their hard work and assistance during the Committee Stage.

The Committee moved to items further down in the agenda as the witnesses had not yet joined the meeting.

6. SR 2022/26 – The Charities Act 2008 (Presbyterian Widows’ Fund Association Scheme) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2022/26 - The Charities Act 2008 (Presbyterian Widows’ Fund Association Scheme) Order (NI) 2022 and, subject to the report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, had no objection to the Rule.



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7. SR 2022/27 – The Housing- Related Functions of the Department of Finance (Exercise by the Housing Executive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2022/27 - The Housing-Related Functions of the Department of Finance (Exercise by the Housing Executive) Regulations (NI) 2022 and, subject to the report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, had no objection to the Rule.

8. SR 2022/28 – The Energy Payment Support Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2022/28 - The Energy Payment Support Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 and, subject to the report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, had no objection to the Rule.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an update on the following:

- The degree of flexibility to broaden the scheme to include those people not in receipt of qualifying benefits;
- The financial implications of broadening the scheme and whether the Department could bid for additional funds following the reported recent underspends by departments; and
- Whether the Department had sufficient powers to deliver an updated scheme in the absence of an Executive.

The Committee returned to the original agenda as the witnesses had joined the meeting.

9. Briefing by the National Lottery Heritage Fund

Kellie Armstrong joined the meeting at 9.30 am.

Stephen Dunne joined the meeting at 9.34 am.



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The Chairperson welcomed the following representative to the meeting:

Dr Paul Mullan

The representative briefed the Committee and participated in a question and answer session with Members.

The Chairperson thanked the representative for his attendance.

The meeting was suspended at 10.21 am.

The meeting resumed at 10.30 am.

10. Briefing by the Historic Environment Division

The Chairperson welcomed the following representatives to the meeting:

Iain Greenway

Bronagh Ramsden

Manus Deery

The representatives briefed the Committee and participated in a question and answer session with Members.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

Agreed: The representatives agreed to send a copy of the process map for listed buildings.

11. Correspondence

The Chairperson informed the Committee that they had received correspondence from the NI Football League (NIFL) in relation to the delivery of the Sub Regional Stadia Programme for Football.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the letter to the Department to support the NIFL comments and to ask the Department to brief on this issue at a future meeting.

The Committee was content to note the following items of correspondence:

- i. Correspondence from the Department for Communities regarding the Social Fund Account Year Ended 31 March 2021;
- ii. Correspondence from the Institute of Public Health in response to the Gambling Regulation Bill 2021 (Ireland);
- iii. A copy of the UK Sports Annual Report and Accounts 2020 – 2021 from UK Sport;
- iv. A letter of thanks from Community Places following their briefing on Thursday 3 February 2022;
- v. A letter from the Department for Communities regarding the Social Housing Development Programme 2022-23 to 2024;
- vi. A Copy of the RaISe paper on Covid-19 Allocations and Spending in Northern Ireland for information from the Committee for Finance; and
- vii. Correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the Spring Supplementary Estimates.

12. Forward Work Programme

The Committee was informed that an updated work programme would be in meeting papers for consideration at the meeting on 17 February.

13. Any Other Business

A Member raised the lack of financial support for DJs affected by the closure of music venues during Covid-19.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department regarding the lack of new financial support for DJs affected by Covid-19 and to call for support to be made available as DJs had been omitted from any Covid support funding.



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A Member raised the issue of the Notice to Quit Consultation that was announced during Committee scrutiny of the Private Tenancies Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an update from the Department on the status of the consultation.

14. Date, Time and Location of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 17 February 2022 at 10.00 am in room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.32 am.

Paula Bradley MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Communities