



# Committee for Communities

## Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 10 June 2021

**Meeting Location:** Room 29, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

**Present:** Ms Paula Bradley MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Andy Allen MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Ms Kellie Armstrong MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Mark Durkan MLA  
Ms Karen Mullan MLA  
Mr Fra McCann MLA  
Ms Sinéad Ennis MLA  
Mr Robin Newton MLA

**Apologies:** Mr Alex Easton MLA

**In Attendance:** Dr Janice Thompson (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Sean McCann (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Antoinette Bowen (Clerical Supervisor)



**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Mr Oliver Bellew (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 09.36 am in open session.

**1. Apologies**

Apologies as above.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee had agreed to seek information on the work that the Committees for Health and Education had done recently regarding physical activity in schools and links to health outcomes.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with two RaISe papers - one on 'Physical Activity and the Wellbeing of Children and young People' and another summarising some of the evidence on the links between physical activity in schools and health and the economy in the longer term.

The Chairperson informed Members that these papers were prepared by RaISe towards the end of 2020 for the Education Committee and had now been shared with the Committee.

The Committee noted that a request had been sent to the Education Committee for more information on this subject.

**3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 3 June 2021.



*Mr Robin Newton joined the meeting at 09.38 am.*

#### **4. Matters Arising**

##### **Departmental Response in Relation to Neighbourhood Renewal**

The Chairperson informed Members that, at the meeting on 13 May 2021, the Committee agreed to write to the Department on this matter and to request information on progress around the gap in regeneration funding for towns with a population between 2500 and 5000.

The Committee noted that the issue falls outside the remit of Neighbourhood Renewal and within the responsibility of Officials in Housing, Urban Regeneration and Local Government (HURLG).

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask that Officials include statistical data in their written paper for their briefing session, at the meeting on 17 June.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to ask what legislation they have in place to combat social deprivation in rural areas that do not fall under the Department for Communities (DfC) Neighbourhood Renewal.

##### **Departmental Response in Relation to Civil Service Recruitment**

The Committee noted the response on Civil Service recruitment which stated that, the recruitment of 900 additional staff had commenced and will continue on a phased basis throughout this year.

##### **Departmental Response in Relation to Amendments to NI Social Security Legislation**

The Committee noted the response, including the work undertaken to date by the Department in relation to Scotland, which has been to identify any potential issues for customers as a result of the changes being brought forward in Scotland.



The meeting moved into closed session at 09.47 am to allow the Committee to be briefed by Departmental Officials on the Charities Bill.

#### **4. Departmental Pre Legislative Briefing on the Charities Bill – Closed Session**

*Mr Andy Allen declared an interest as a Charity Trustee.*

*Ms Kellie Armstrong declared an interest as a former Director of a local charity.*

The following Departmental Officials joined the meeting:

Mr Martin Ireland

Ms Sharon Russell

The Officials briefed the Committee and took part in a question and answer session with Members.

The Chairperson thanked the Officials for their attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask whether CO3 had been formally consulted on the proposals for the Bill and to ask that a copy of NICVA's paper containing its members' views on the issues is forwarded to the Committee.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a breakdown of the 6500 registration decisions and the 500 other Charity Commission decisions. Members also requested the number of registration decisions that were appealed, information on the criteria for an appeal and the number of appeals that were upheld in terms of decisions being unlawful.

*The meeting was suspended at 10.31 am.*

*The meeting moved into open session at 10.41 am.*



## 5. Departmental Briefing on the June Monitoring Round

*Karen Mullan declared an interest as a former employee in the Community and Voluntary Sector, also that her spouse is currently employed in the sector.*

The following Departmental Officials joined the meeting:

Mr Gavin Patrick

Ms Cherrie Arnold

The Official briefed the Committee and took part in a question and answer session with Members.

The Chairperson thanked the Officials for their attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further information on the Child Funeral Fund.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further information on its ongoing workstream in relation to the replacement of EU funding.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further information on its ongoing work in relation to the definition of terminal illness.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an update following the decisions on the June Monitoring Round to include information on the areas in which the Department was successful and unsuccessful in their bids and to outline the remaining budgetary challenges for the Department.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification on when letters of offer will be issued in relation to funding for homelessness.

## 6. NICVA briefing on Impact of Covid-19

*Fra McCann declared an interest as member of a range of Community and Voluntary groups.*

The following representative joined the meeting:



Mr Geoff Nuttall

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

The Chairperson thanked the representative for his attendance.

## **7. CO3 briefing on Impact Covid-19**

The following representatives joined the meeting:

Ms Nora Smith, Chief Executive, CO3

Mr Richard Spratt, Chief Executive Officer of Cancer Focus NI

Ms Michele Janes, Head of Barnardo's NI

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

Andy Allen left the meeting at 12.26 pm.

Robin Newton left the meeting at 12.49 pm.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

## **8. SL1 Private Rented Sector Registered Rents Increase Order 2021**

The Chairperson informed Members that the proposed regulations would allow for an increase of 1.5 percent to rents of protected and statutory tenancies for those properties that meet the housing fitness standard. This would represent an average weekly increase of £1.08.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content for the Department for Communities to proceed to make the Statutory Rule.



## 9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from Dolores Kelly MLA in relation to the funding for Women's Aid refuges.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to support the call for more funding.

- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Finance regarding Forecast Outcome data.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to query the rationale for any resource or capital end of year spend surges.

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- i. Department for Communities Investing Activity Report 30 May 2021.
- ii. Correspondence regarding the Review of Charity Regulation.
- iii. Copy of letter to the Committee for the Economy re Penalties for Charities Submitting Delayed Annual Accounts to Companies House.
- iv. Invitation to the Committee Chair to attend the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities remote monitoring visit to the United Kingdom.
- v. Ministerial letter regarding Discretionary Support Review.
- vi. Correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) on changes in Public Sector Pensions.



## **10. Forward Work Programme**

Members noted that, at the meeting on 17 June 2021, the Committee will be briefed by Departmental Officials on Neighbourhood Renewal and will also be briefed by the Council for Homelessness, Co Ownership and the National Insulation Association of Ireland.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Minister was also available to brief on Welfare Reform Mitigations at the meeting on 17 June.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to commence its meeting at 9.00 am on 17 June 2021 to allow a briefing by the Minister.

## **11. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **12. Date, Time and Place of the Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 17 June 2021 at 09.00 am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 13.14 pm.

**Paula Bradley MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Communities**