



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Communities

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 18 November 2021

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Ms Paula Bradley MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Andy Allen MLA
Mr Stephen Dunne MLA
Mr Paul Frew MLA
Ms Áine Murphy MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Kellie Armstrong MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Mark Durkan
Ms Ciara Ferguson MLA
Ms Aisling Reilly MLA

Apologies:

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



Northern Ireland Assembly

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Antoinette Bowen (Clerical Officer)

The Chairperson, Paula Bradley, assumed the Chair. The meeting began in open session at 9.08 am. The following Members were present at the start of the open session: Paula Bradley, Kellie Armstrong, Andy Allen, Ciara Ferguson, Áine Murphy, Aisling Reilly.

1. Effective Questioning Training

The Chairperson opened the meeting and informed Members that they had received feedback notes from the Effective Questioning training session on Thursday 11 November 2021. The Committee noted the information and agreed to go into a short closed session to discuss the feedback.

Paul Frew joined the meeting at 9.15 am.

The meeting went back into open session at 9.16 am.

Andy Allen declared an interest as a private landlord and as a charity trustee.

Paul Frew declared an interest as a private landlord and as a qualified electrician.

2. Apologies

There were no apologies.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 11 November 2021.



Northern Ireland Assembly

4. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson proposed that the Committee holds a Zoom event with young people as part of the Committee Stage of the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Bill

Agreed: The Committee agree that the Committee Team liaises with Engagement to arrange this event.

5. Matters Arising

Mark Durkan joined the meeting at 9.23am.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a Departmental response in relation to the Committee's concerns regarding a lack of a joined-up approach to fuel poverty and its recommendations for a cross departmental fuel poverty taskforce and that an oral briefing relating to this issue had been scheduled for 2 December. The Committee was content to note.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a Departmental response in relation to a Fuel Poverty Proposal – A Perfect Storm and that the Minister was due to meet representatives of Advice NI and the National Energy Action NI to discuss the current fuel crisis. The Committee was content to note.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a Departmental response in relation to amendments to the computer system within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The Committee was content to note.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a Departmental response in relation to the Committee's letter regarding the HC1 Health Claim Form.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting a timeline indicating when the direct link to the HC1 form will be available to the public. Members also stressed the importance of this direct link in highlighting the



Northern Ireland Assembly

availability of the funding to the public and wanted to know if the HC1 claim form supports the cost of a parent visiting a sick child in hospital and agreed to highlight this in the correspondence.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a Departmental response in relation to the Support for Mortgage Interest etc. (Security for Loans) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting clarification on the term 'default event', and to ask for examples of the exact circumstances under which a default event could be triggered. Members also wished to enquire as to who will be required to pay back a loan if a default event is triggered.

Due to technical problems, the Committee agreed to move to Agenda item 9 and return to witness briefings once the issue had been addressed.

6.Support for Mortgage Interest etc. (Security of Loans) Bill

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a signposting advert for the Support for Mortgage Interest etc. (Security of Loans) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee was content for the signposting advert to be published and for the Call for Evidence to be commenced.

7. SL1 – State Pension Revaluation for Transitional Pensions Order (NI) 2021

The Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 introduced new State Pension for people reaching State Pension age on or after 6th April 2016. This proposed Rule re-values protected payments to reflect increases in the general level of prices since 6th April 2016.

Agreed: The Committee was content for the Department to proceed to make the rule.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

8.SL1 – The Occupational Pensions Revaluation Order (NI) 2021

The proposed Rule specifies the percentage by which preserved pension rights are revalued for members of salary related occupational pension schemes who leave their scheme before pension age (“early leavers”). A Rule has to be made each year to apply to those who attain their scheme’s normal pension age in the following calendar year. This year’s Rule will affect people who reach the scheme’s normal pension age in 2022.

Agreed: The Committee was content for the Department to proceed to make the rule.

9.SL1 – The State Pensions Debits and Credits (Revaluation) Order (NI) 2021

The Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 introduced new State Pension for people reaching State Pension age on or after 6th April 2016. The proposed Rule revalues new State scheme pension debits and credits to reflect price increases since the debit or credit was created.

Agreed: The Committee was content for the Department to proceed to make the rule.

10.SL1 – The Universal Credit (Work Allowance and Taper) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021

Agreed: The Committee was content for the Department to proceed to make the rule.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

11.SL1 – The Universal Credit (Exemptions to the requirement not to be receiving education) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021

Agreed: The Committee was content for the Department to proceed to make the rule.

12.SR 2021/298 – Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Conditions for Transfers) Regulations (NI) 2021

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/298 – Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Conditions for Transfers) Regulations (NI) 2021 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules report, had no objection to the rule.

The Committee returned to Agenda Item 6, a briefing from the NI Fire and Rescue Service on the Private Tenancies Bill.

The Committee agreed to return to witness briefings following the resolution of all technical problems.

13.Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service briefing on the Private Tenancies Bill

The following representatives from the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) joined the meeting:

Geoff Somerville

Paddy Gallagher

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

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Andy Allen left the meeting at 10.00am.

14. Electrical Safety First briefing on the Private Tenancies Bill

The following representative from Electrical Safety First joined the meeting:

Martyn Allen

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

The Chairperson thanked the representative for their attendance.

The meeting was adjourned at 10.19am.

Paul Frew left the meeting at 10.19am.

The meeting resumed at 10.32am.

Andy Allen and Paul Frew re-joined the meeting at 10.34am.

15. Propertymark briefing on the Private Tenancies Bill

The following representative from Propertymark joined the meeting:

Daryl McIntosh

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

The Chairperson thanked the representative for his attendance.



Northern Ireland Assembly

16. Correspondence

The Chairperson informed Members that they had received correspondence from NICVA requesting to brief the Committee on the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite NICVA to give an oral briefing.

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- i. A copy of the response from the Department for Communities to the Justice Committee on SL1 - Court Fees New Licensing Applications.
- ii. Invitation to attend a reception recognising the success of the Tyrone GAA football team winning the All-Ireland Senior Football Championship.
- iii. Invitation to 2021 Annual Human Rights Statement Launch.

17. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson informed Members that at the meeting on 23 November 2021 at 9.00am to continue to take evidence on the Private Tenancies Bill. The Chairperson also informed Members that, at the meeting on 25 November 2021, the Committee will conduct the formal clause by clause consideration of the Charities Bill.

18. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The meeting was adjourned at 10.58 am.

Stephen Dunne joined the meeting at 11.00 am.

The meeting resumed at 11.06 am.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

19. Committee deliberations on the Charities Bill

The Chairperson welcomed Department for Communities Officials Sharron Russell and Martin Ireland, and Department of Justice Officials Clare Irvine and Gillian McClearn to the meeting.

The Department of Justice Officials gave their views on the Committee's queries on the possibility of increasing the timeframe for all appeals to the Charity Tribunal from 42 days to 91 days. The respective Departmental Officials also took part in a question and answer session with Members.

The Chairperson thanked Clare, and Gillian for their attendance.

The Chair asked Members if they had any further questions for Sharron and Martin on any of the Clauses of the Charities Bill.

The Chairperson thanked Sharron and Martin for their attendance.

The meeting then went into closed session at 11.33 am to allow Members to take advice from Claire McCanny, Bill Office Clerk.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Justice to state that Members welcomed the commitment from the Minister for Communities for her Officials to begin work with the Officials in DoJ on a policy change in relation to Charity Tribunal appeals to affect any necessary change through secondary legislation using section 13 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 (the Act).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Communities to state that Members welcomed her commitment for her Officials to begin work with the Officials in DoJ on a policy change to Charity Tribunal appeals to affect any necessary change through secondary legislation using section 13 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 (the Act).

The meeting went into open session 11.56 am



Northern Ireland
Assembly

20.Date, Time and Place of the Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 23 November 2021 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings, at 9.00 am.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.56 am.

Paula Bradley MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Communities