



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITIES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 26 November 2020
Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Paula Bradley MLA (Chairperson)
Kellie Armstrong MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Andy Allen MBE MLA
Alex Easton MLA
Robin Newton MBE MLA

Present: Starleaf Mark Durkan MLA
Sinéad Ennis MLA

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

The meeting commenced in open session at 10:00 a.m.

1. Apologies

Fra McCann MLA

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed Members that the recent informal stakeholder briefing event on 'Housing' was a success and that she proposed to organise another such event in January 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold another informal stakeholder briefing event in January 2021.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Minister had offered to brief the Committee on the issues of housing, Casement Park and the Sub Regional Stadia Programme at the meeting on 17 December 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to be briefed by the Minister at the meeting on 17 December 2020 and for the meeting to start at 9.00a.m.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Committee had not yet received a Departmental reply to queries on the Musical Instruments for Bands Scheme and that the deadline for applications had now passed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for an update on the request to extend the deadline for applications.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 19 November 2020.

4. Matters Arising

Members noted a reply from the Ulster Orchestra to Committee queries raised at the meeting on 12 November 2020.

Members noted a response from Sport NI in relation to phase 2 of the Covid-19 sporting grants.

Members noted a response from Belfast City Council in relation to the redevelopment of the former Avoniel Leisure Centre site.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a Departmental update on the Covid-19 Charities Fund.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for more information on the application criteria, for a list of those charities that were not successful in their applications for funding and the reasons why they were unsuccessful.

5. Briefing by Co3 on the impact of Covid-19 on the Charities Sector

The following interests were declared:

Andy Allen – Charity Trustee

Kellie Armstrong – former employee in the Community and Voluntary Sector.

The following representatives joined the meeting:

Nora Smith

Sarah Quinlan

Barry Macauley

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

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask that it reviews and considers removing the restriction of charities holding reserves from the application criteria for the second phase of the Covid-19 Charities Fund. Members also called for the second phase of the fund to be open as quickly as possible rather than the current date in January 2021 and asked that there is flexibility around spend as there is not much time left in the current financial year for funds to be spent. The letter to the Department is also to ask for an update on the status of the concordat agreement between the Department and the Community and Voluntary Sector and whether this will include full cost recovery models.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Chancellor for the Exchequer asking him to consider making an amendment to the furlough scheme so that staff furloughed from charities, particularly those providing specialist services, can subsequently volunteer for their employer.

Agreed: The Committee asked Co3 to provide details of what it considers should be included in the criteria for applications to the second phase of the Covid-19 Charities Fund.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Charities Commission to ask what actions they are taking to deal with the backlog of registrations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Finance and Minister for Economy to ask that charity shops are included in the recently announced high street voucher scheme.

The meeting was suspended at 11.06a.m. and restarted at 11.10a.m.

6. Briefing by Research and Assembly Information Services (RaISe) on the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill

The following interest was declared:

Mark Durkan – family interest in licensed premises.

The following RaISe staff joined the meeting:

Eleanor Murphy
Ray Russell
Aidan Stennett.

The Assembly Research Officers gave a separate briefing each to the Committee and took part in a joint question and answer session with Members.

The Chairperson thanked the researchers for their attendance.

7. Departmental briefing on SL1s - The Registration of Clubs (Accounts) Regulations (NI) 2020 and Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Act (NI) 2011 (Commencement No.6) Order (NI) 2020

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting:

Carol Reid
Eamonn Diver.

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 is content for the Department to proceed to make the rules.

8. Briefing by Research and Assembly Information Services (RaISe) on Sign Language Legislation

The following RaISe staff joined the meeting:

Karen McCallion.

The Assembly Research Officer briefed the Committee and took part in a question and answer session with Members.

Robin Newton left the meeting at 13.04p.m.

The Chairperson thanked the researcher for her attendance.

9. Correspondence

The Committee considered a memo from the Committee for Infrastructure in relation to financial assistance for the Taxi Industry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the memo to the Department for Communities for comment and to seek information on whether the other Covid-19 funds administered by the Department have an impact on those that claim benefits.

A Member raised the correspondence from NICVA, WCVA and SCVO in relation to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for Communities and the Department for the Economy for an update on their work in relation to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The Committee noted the following:

- i. Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Combating Violence Against Women and Girls and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) – 2020 Final Draft Progress Report with NI Input.
- ii. Departmental letter in relation to the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020.
- iii. Departmental letter on the Department for Communities 5-year strategy.
- iv. Department for Communities Active Ageing Strategy 2016-2022.
- v. Copy of joint statement and letter from NICVA, WCVA and SCVO to the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, in relation to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- vi. Letter outlining the work of NICCY including link to their 2019-2020 Annual Report and Accounts.

10. Forward Work Programme

Members noted that, at the meeting on 3 December, the Committee will be briefed by the NI Brewery and Independent Pub Association and the NI Federation of Clubs on the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill. The Committee will also be briefed by the Department on the allocation of Covid-19 funding for the Arts Sector and by Peter Corry on the impact of Covid-19 on the Arts Sector.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business

12. Date, Time and Place of the Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday 3 December 2020 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 13.15p.m.

Ms Paula Bradley MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Communities