



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITIES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 30 September 2020

Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Paula Bradley MLA (Chairperson)
Kellie Armstrong MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Andy Allen MBE MLA
Jonathan Buckley MLA
Robin Newton MBE MLA
Sinéad Ennis MLA
Fra McCann MLA

Present: Starleaf Mark Durkan MLA

In Attendance: Janice Thompson (Assembly Clerk)
Sean McCann (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Oliver Bellew (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced in open session at 14:02 p.m.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies to record.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a copy of the new layout for the Committee room. The layout ensures that social distancing of 2m is maintained during meetings. The Chairperson also informed Members that consideration is being given to the use of the Assembly Chamber for Committee meetings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Chairpersons' Liaison Group to encourage the use of the Chamber for Committee meetings.

The Chairperson reminded Members that they should inform Committee staff in advance of each meeting as to whether they will attend in person or via Starleaf.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been emailed, in advance of the meeting, a copy of a letter from the Minister in relation to the reopening of the Sports Hardship Fund on Thursday 1 October.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 23 September 2020.

4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a memo from the Clerk to the Committee on Procedures seeking the Committee's views on the current procedures for Legislative Consent Motions.

Agreed: Members agreed that the Committee Clerk drafts a response to the Committee for Procedures.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a paper on proposed stakeholder Starleaf briefing events.

Agreed: Members agreed that the Committee Secretariat provides further detail on proposed stakeholder events.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a paper on the main issues they had raised during the Departmental briefing on the draft outcome report of the Consultation on the Regulation of Gambling in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: Members agreed that the Committee Secretariat drafts a letter to the Minister detailing issues raised by the Committee to be considered at a future meeting.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with tabled papers from the Department in relation to an additional Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) on the Westminster Pension Schemes Bill. The additional LCM enables amendments made to the Bill, since its introduction in the House of Lords, to remain in the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a Departmental briefing on this issue at a future Committee meeting.

5. Departmental Briefing on the October Monitoring Round, Covid-19 Funding and Budget 2021-24

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting:

Mr Gavin Patrick, Director of Financial Management

Ms Cherrie Arnold, Director of Financial Planning

The Departmental officials briefed the Committee on the October Monitoring Round, Covid-19 Funding and Budget 2021-24.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to agenda item 5 later in the meeting to ensure the Ministerial briefing could commence at the scheduled time.

6. Ministerial Briefing on Departmental Priorities

The Minister for Communities, Carál Ni Chuilín MLA, joined the meeting along with the following Departmental Officials:

Ms Heloise Brown, Deputy Director Social Housing Policy and Oversight

Ms Maeve Walls, Director of Culture

Ms Joanna Gray, Head of Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement

Ms Roisin Sloan, Jobstart Programme Manager

Mr Paul McKillen, Acting Director General Policy

Mr Gerard Murray, Director of Regional Development Office

Mr Martin McDermott, Head of Supporting People Oversight

Mr Anthony Carleton, Director of Local Government

The Minister and Departmental officials took part in a question and answer session with Members.

The Chairperson thanked the Minister and Departmental officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Minister agreed to provide the Committee with a paper, once finalised, on the application process for Covid-19 funding to the Arts Sector.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to ask for further information on the discussions she has had with wider sports organisations on the impact of Covid-19.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite representatives from the Irish Football Association (IFA) and the Northern Ireland Football League to brief the Committee at a future meeting. The briefing session is to discuss the financial difficulties being faced by football clubs as a result of Covid-19, the IFA Code of Conduct and how the football season 2019-20 was ended.

Jonathan Buckley left the meeting at 16.08p.m.

7. Departmental Briefing on the October Monitoring Round, Covid-19 Funding and Budget 2021-24

The Committee returned to agenda item 5.

The following Departmental officials re-joined the meeting:

Mr Gavin Patrick, Director of Financial Management
Ms Cherrie Arnold, Director of Financial Planning

The Departmental officials continued with their briefing on the October Monitoring Round, Covid-19 Funding and Budget 2021-24.

This was followed by a question and answer session with Members.

Agreed: The Departmental officials agreed to provide the Committee with a more detailed breakdown of capital bids under Budget 2021-24.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a Departmental briefing on the Sub-Regional Stadia Programme at a future Committee meeting.

The Chairperson thanked the Departmental officials for their attendance.

The meeting adjourned at 16.20p.m.

The meeting recommenced at 16.27p.m.

8. Briefing by the Workers Pension Trust on the Pension Schemes Bill

The following representatives from the Workers Pension Trust joined the meeting:

Mr Declan McErlean, Managing Director
Ms Hannah Sankannawar, Governance and Compliance Manager

The representatives briefed the Committee on the Pension Schemes Bill.

This was followed by a question and answer session with Members.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

9. Consideration of Proposals for Secondary Legislation

SL1 – The Fines (Deductions from Benefits) Regulations (NI) 2020

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification on the proposal in relation to a situation where an individual receives a fine but also has a loan. Members wish to know whether the payment of the fine or the loan takes precedence.

10. Correspondence

Members considered a request from the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) regarding the Charity Commission.

Agreed: Members agreed to update the PAC on future discussions in relation to the Charity Commission.

Members considered a Departmental response to queries forwarded by the Committee regarding Northern Ireland Housing Executive leases.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward a copy of the response to the original correspondent.

Members considered correspondence from the Irish Video Game Orchestra, Young at Art and an individual employed in the Arts Sector regarding the impact of Covid-19, the return of the Arts Sector and the prohibition of live music.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward copies of the correspondence to the Department for comment.

Members considered correspondence regarding the All Party Group Inquiry into a new approach to gambling regulation in NI.

Agreed: Members agreed to add the All Party Groups, all Statutory Committees and Suicide Today to the Committee Stakeholder list when considering legislation on gambling in the future.

The Committee noted the following:

- I. Invitation for the Committee Chair to attend a roundtable event at a virtual Belfast International Homecoming.
- II. Ministerial response to a Committee for Communities request to publicise recent Statutory Rules on changes to Statutory Sick Pay.
- III. Information on the 'Heritage Delivers' Initiative.
- IV. Departmental motion for approval of Statutory Rule - The Pension Protection Fund (Moratorium and Arrangements for Companies in Financial Difficulty) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.
- V. Copy of letter to the Department of Communities regarding the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.
- VI. Departmental letter re Consultation on 5C's Public Realm Project.

11. Forward Work Programme

Members noted that, at the meeting on 8 October, the Committee will be briefed by Solace on Covid-19 funding to councils and by The Pensions Regulator on the Pension Schemes Bill. Members noted that they will also receive a pre-legislative briefing on the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Date, Time and Place of the Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday 8 October at 10:00 a.m. in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 16:46 p.m.

Ms Paula Bradley MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Communities