



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITIES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 8 October 2020

Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:	Paula Bradley MLA (Chairperson) Kellie Armstrong MLA (Deputy Chairperson) Andy Allen MBE MLA Robin Newton MBE MLA Sinéad Ennis MLA Fra McCann MLA
Present: Starleaf	Mark Durkan MLA Jonathan Buckley MLA
In Attendance:	Janice Thompson (Assembly Clerk) Sean McCann (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Antoinette Bowen (Clerical Supervisor)

The meeting commenced in open session at 10:01 a.m.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies to record.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson provided Members with a brief overview of the Chairperson's Liaison Group discussions regarding committee meeting rooms and Members' physical attendance in meeting rooms. The Chairperson encouraged Members to attend remotely via Starleaf where possible.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Public Finance Scrutiny Unit from Research and Information Services (RaISe) has offered to provide a presentation to the

Committee to support engagement with the Department's Budget Planning Process. The presentation would take place during a Committee meeting in the near future.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to a presentation at a future meeting.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Committee team had investigated room availability for planning the Stakeholder briefing sessions and that the only feasible time for the sessions was on Tuesday afternoons due to the need to use Starleaf. Therefore, it may not be possible for all Members to attend depending on plenary business.

The proposal was to plan one informal 'pilot' event, in the first instance, on a Tuesday afternoon.

Agreed: Members agreed that the Committee team plans the informal pilot session with a view to holding further sessions once the format of the first session has been evaluated.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 30 September 2020.

4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a Departmental letter on the timetable for the production of social inclusion strategies. Members noted the letter.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a draft response on the procedures for the use of Legislative Consent Motions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the Clerk to the Committee for Procedures.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with an update on the timetable for the research papers that RaISE had agreed to produce to support the Committee. Members noted the update.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with copies of the latest reports from the Examiner of Statutory Rules (ESR).

The ESR had drawn attention to the following Rules:

- S.R. 2020/120: The Local Government (Accounts and Audit) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020
- S.R. 2020/147: The Social Security (Electronic Communications) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020
- S.R. 2020/148: The Social Fund and Social Security (Claims and Payments) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020
- S.R. 2020/167: The Statutory Sick Pay (General) (Coronavirus Amendment) (No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Rules had been laid in breach of the 21-day rule. However, the ESR was content with the Department's explanations for the breaches. Members noted the reports.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a draft response to the Minister on the outcome report of the Consultation on Gambling in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the Minister.

5. Committee Consideration in Relation to EU exit Statutory Instruments (SIs)

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a paper on EU Exit Statutory Instruments (SIs). It is anticipated that the Committee for Communities will have to deal with 3 such SIs in the future.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask if there was a time period for Committee consideration of these SIs.

6. Solace Briefing on Covid-19 Funding to Councils

The following interest was declared:

Mark Durkan MLA declared interest as his spouse is a council employee.

The following Solace representatives joined the meeting:

Ms Jacqui Dixon, Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Ms Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive, Belfast City Council
Mr Alfie Dallas, Chief Finance Officer, Derry and Strabane District Council
Mr JJ Tohill, Finance Officer, Mid Ulster Council

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

Robin Newton left the meeting at 11:21 a.m.

Agreed: The Solace representatives agreed to provide the Committee with a paper on efficiencies that were being considered.

The Chairperson thanked the Solace representatives for their attendance.

The meeting adjourned at 11.36a.m.

The meeting recommenced at 11.43a.m.

7. Pre-Legislative Departmental Briefing on the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting:

Mr Liam Quinn
Ms Carol Reid

The Departmental officials briefed the Committee on the draft Bill.

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

The Chairperson thanked the Departmental officials for their attendance.

8. Briefing by the Pensions Regulator on the Pension Schemes Bill

The following representatives from the Pensions Regulator joined the meeting:

Ms Victoria Holmes, Policy Lead
Mr Nick Gannon, Policy Lead

The representatives briefed the Committee on the work of the Pensions Regulator and the Pension Schemes Bill.

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

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

9. Correspondence

Members considered details of an effective questioning online course.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that an online session is arranged.

Members considered details of a 'Private Rented Sector 2020 Future Proofing Private Renting Virtual Conference'. The Assembly Researcher is taking part and will report back to the Committee.

Members considered a letter of concern regarding support for musicians during Covid-19 Pandemic.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the letter to the Department for comment.

Members considered a letter of concern regarding the current state of the Events Sector in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the letter to the Department for comment.

Members considered an email request to brief the Committee regarding future Regulation of Gambling legislation.

Agreed: Members agreed to add the correspondent's details to the Committee stakeholder list for consideration of a future Bill.

Members considered a Department for Communities Investing Activity Report – 28 September 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request clarification on the Department's responsibility in relation to inland waterways.

The Committee noted the following:

- I. Copy of Sean Graham Gambling Consultation summary document.
- II. Departmental response to Committee queries regarding Video Relay Service for the Deaf Community.
- III. Copy of RHI Inquiry - Retention and Disposal Schedule.
- IV. Details and link to Carnegie Trust Report Pooling Together - How Community Hubs have responded to the COVID Emergency.

10. Forward Work Programme

Members noted that, at the meeting on 15 October, the Committee will be briefed by Retail NI on plans to regenerate town and city centres post Covid-19 and by the Department on an additional Legislative Consent Motion on the Pension Schemes Bill. Northern Ireland Football League representatives will also brief on the impact of Covid-19 on local football and the ending of the 2019-20 football season.

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 15 October at 10:00 a.m. in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 12.32p.m.

Ms Paula Bradley MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Communities