



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

6 MAY 2020

ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

10:00am

Present: Dr Caoímhe Archibald (Chairperson)
Ms Sinéad McLaughlin (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Gordon Dunne MBE
Mr Gary Middleton
Mr John O'Dowd
Mr Christopher Stalford
Mr John Stewart
Ms Claire Sugden

In Attendance: Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Angela McParland (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Stewart Dickson

The meeting began at 10:04am in open session.

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Minutes

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Minutes from the 29th April 2020.

The Committee agreed the Record of Decisions taken by correspondence on items pertaining to the meeting on 29th April 2020:

Agreed: Members considered a Ministerial letter on the Minister's intention to seek Executive agreement for the inclusion of Northern Ireland departments in a Westminster Statutory Instrument for EU Exit Legislation on The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 providing them with a role regarding any future application by a public authority here to participate in a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). The Committee is content with the Minister's preferred option of a 'dual approval' approach which would mean the approval of the relevant department would be required before the BEIS Secretary of State can accept or reject an application by a NI public authority to join an EGTC.

Agreed: Members considered a Ministerial letter on the Transposition of EU Directive on Proportionality Test in Respect of Recognition of Professional Qualifications. This would allow the UK to maintain the existing level of co-operation with the EU on the recognition of profession qualifications during the Transition Period. Following this arrangements will need to be part of any deal between the UK and EU going forward. The Minister supports the BEIS approach and is seeking Executive and Committee support. The Committee is content in principal with the Minister's suggestion of supporting the BEIS approach. The Committee would like to explore further, mutual recognition of qualifications as part of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Noted: Members noted correspondence with regard to a notice of intention for the Department to bring a Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) on the Corporate Governance and Insolvency Bill. This creates changes to Insolvency and Company Law Regimes as a Consequence of the Coronavirus Outbreak.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive regarding a document setting out the references within the New Decade, New Approach paper that fall within the remit of the Executive.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from the Chair of the Committee for Finance seeking for the two Committees to meet to explore opportunities for a common approach to the issues being raised in regards to COVID-19 by each committees' stakeholders. Members agreed to that in the short term the Chair respond that the Finance Committee could assist the Committee through highlighting issues with the Department of Finance logistical support, that the Economy Committee host a joint meeting in the future (safety and logistics permitting) where the Finance

Committee's assistance in the economic recovery process can be discussed. The Committee to consider further if needed.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from an individual regarding employment law and agreed to forward to the Department for comment.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from the Leisure and Entertainment Forum and agreed to receive an oral briefing.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from a small business owner on a phased approach to the resumption of the events sector and agreed to forward to the Department for comment and receive a joint oral briefing with the Leisure Forum.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from the Money and Pensions Service regarding the launch of its UK Strategy for Financial Well Being earlier this month, as a ten year vision for transforming the financial well-being of families and communities and agreed to include the body on the Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from Claire Hanna MP regarding the delivery and effectiveness of the Small Business Support Grant to businesses in South Belfast and agreed to forward to the Department for comment on the issues raised.

3. Chairpersons Business

The Chairperson offered the Committee's condolences to the family of John Dallat MLA.

4. Briefing by Londonderry Chamber of Commerce, Newry Chamber of Trade & Commerce, Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce & Causeway Chamber - Impact of Covid-19

The representatives joined the meeting at 10.06am

Members received a briefing from:

Mr Paul Clancy, Londonderry Chamber of Commerce

Mr Colm Shannon, Newry Chamber of Trade & Commerce

Mr Simon Hamilton, Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce

Ms Karen Yates, Causeway Chamber of Commerce

Key issues discussed included: the economic impact on business owners regionally of COVID-19, successes and challenges for different sectors of the schemes available to counteract the impact of the COVID-19 situation, the outlook for businesses of a wide scale resumption to normal business.

Agreed: the Committee to write to the Minister regarding the whole of the issues raised.

The representatives left the meeting at 11.04am

5. Briefing by Health and Safety Executive (HSENI) for Northern Ireland - Impact of Covid-19

The representatives joined the meeting at 11.04am

Members received a briefing from:

Mr Robert Kidd, Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland

Mr Bryan Monson, Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland

Mrs Nikki Monson, Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland

Key issues discussed included: the role of HSENI in enforcing legislation and protocol around health and safety measures in the workplace, the need for HSENI to be given clear and strict guidance that will allow it to enforce its role efficiently.

Agreed: the Committee to include issues raised regarding the need for clear guidance for HSENI to carry out its remit in its letter to the Minister, as agreed in Item 4.

The representatives left the meeting at 11.42am

6. Departmental Briefing - Insolvency Service

The officials joined the meeting at 11.42am

Members received a briefing from:

Mr Richard Monds, Director, Insolvency Service

Mr Jack Reid, Insolvency Service, Department for the Economy

Mr Keith Brown, Head of Better Business, Department for the Economy

Key issues discussed included: the Westminster Corporate Governance & Insolvency Bill and how it applies to Northern Ireland, ahead of Committee considering a Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) for the Bill.

Agreed: the Committee to consider the information provided in the briefing in its preparation for receipt of the LCM.

The officials left the meeting at 12.32pm

7. Matters Arising

Noted: Members noted a Ministerial letter in response to a correspondence from the Renewable Heat Association regarding the 2019 RHI non-domestic tariff review.

Noted: Members noted an updated copy of the table of responses from the Department to issues raised by the Committee in relation to the Covid-19 response.

8. Departmental Written Briefing - RHI Tariff review

Members considered the written brief on the RHI Tariff review.

Agreed: to receive a summary of responses from the Department, and a briefing on the outcome of the consultation, reserving its role as a super consultee.

9. Examiner of Statutory Rules - Eighth Report of Session 2019 - 2020

Members noted the eighth report of 2019-20 by the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

10. Correspondence

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from the Committee for Infrastructure regarding financial assistance to the taxi industry and agreed to forward to the Department for comment and to seek clarification on the Department's role in any safety protocol/guidance for taxi driver safety during the COVID-19 situation.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence to the Minister from the Chair of the Bar Council on the impact of COVID-19 and the adjournment of a significant amount of court business on the legal services sector. The Committee agreed to refer to the Department for comment.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from CO3 in regards to the impact of COVID-19 on the Charity Sector and agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for a response, as part of its consideration of support measures for the third sector.

Agreed: Members considered a report by the University of Edinburgh Business School on the Early Impact of COVID-19 on UK Entrepreneurial Firms and agreed to share the report with the Department.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from the Provost of Coleraine UU regarding a research proposal on recovery intervention for the small business sector and agreed to share share the correspondence with the Department and advise the Department that the Committee endorses the research proposal.

11. Any Other Business

No items of business were recorded.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 13th May 2020 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 13.02pm

Dr Caoímhe Archibald
Chairperson
Committee for the Economy

13th May 2020