



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

27 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 John Stewart
Ms Claire Sugden

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

Apologies: Mr Stewart Dickson

The meeting began at 10:05am in open session.

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Minutes

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Minutes from 20th May 2020.

3. Chairpersons Business

There were no items of business.

4. Briefing from Irish Congress of Trade Unions – Update on the Impact of Covid-19

The witnesses joined the meeting at 10.08am

Members received a briefing from:

Mr Owen Reidy Assistant General Secretary, ICTU

Mr Paul MacFlynn Researcher, Nevin Economic Research Centre

Key issues discussed included: The role of essential workers to the economy of Northern Ireland, the need for support to workers as government backed wage schemes start to end, the impact Covid-19 has had on the tourism sector and the staff employed, availability of childcare to enable parents to return to work and workers' rights and economic rights aspects of New Decade New Approach and how these can be taken forward

The witnesses left the meeting at 11.10am

Agreed: The Committee agreed to discuss the issues raised during the briefing at its weekly triage videocall and then write to the Minister accordingly.

5. Oral Briefing by Teleconference from FinTech Northern Ireland

The representative joined the meeting at 11.12am

Members received a briefing from:

Mr Andrew Jenkins FinTech Envoy for Northern Ireland

Key issues discussed included: The investment by US Cyber Security companies in Northern Ireland and the number currently employed in this sector, the need to get better at retaining skills in NI and a focus on skills which are under-supplied, how we can support the sector in particular new start-up companies in growing and maximising opportunities, the challenges currently facing the sector due to newness of many of the companies involved and the need to increase female representation in the sector.

The representative left the meeting at 12.36pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to discuss the issues raised during the briefing at its weekly triage videocall and then write to the Minister accordingly.

6. Matters Arising

Noted: Members noted a letter from the Minister outlining the UK Government's intention to make an EU Exit Statutory Instrument called Professional Qualifications and Services (Miscellaneous Provisions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

Noted: A letter from the Minister to students encouraging them to consider the right provider, of their third-level education, and course for them.

Noted: A response from the Finance Minister to the Committee's concerns about the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme's identity checks.

Noted: A response from the Department to the Committee's request to create a direct point of contact for MLAs queries.

Noted: A response from the Department to the Committee's request for confirmation of the responsibilities that the Department for Justice's LCM for the Private International Law (Implementation of Agreements) Bill, will place on the Department.

Noted: A response from the Department to the Committee's request for comment on correspondence the Committee received regarding the resumption of the events sector.

Noted: A response from the Department to the Committee's request for comment on correspondence the Committee received regarding employment law.

Noted: A response from the Department to the Committee's request for comment and clarification on the Department's role in any safety protocol/guidance for taxi driver's safety during the pandemic.

Noted: A response from the Department to the Committee's request for comment on correspondence from the Chair of the Bar Council on the Impact of COVID-19 on the legal services sector.

Noted: A response from the Department to the Committee's request for comment on correspondence from the Committee for Infrastructure regarding financial pressures on the logistics sector.

Agreed: The Committee considered a discussion paper from the University of Ulster Economic Policy Centre describing the potential impact and consequences of COVID-19 for Northern Ireland. The Committee agreed to seek a briefing on the paper.

Noted: A paper requested by the Committee following the LRA briefing which outlines their response to the COVID-19 emergency and how they plan to support their staff.

7. Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) for the Corporate Insolvency & Governance Bill

Agreed: The Committee considered the Legislative Consent Motion for the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Bill. Members agreed with paragraphs 1 to 87 of the draft report and the conclusions at paragraphs 88 and 89 on the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the UK Government Corporate Insolvency and Governance Bill.

Agreed: Members agreed that the report on the Legislative Consent Motion should be published on the Committee's webpage at the commencement of the LCM debate; and the report will be issued to all MLAs prior to the LCM debate on 2nd June.

8. Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) for the Trade Bill

Agreed: Members considered the Legislative Consent Motion for the Trade Bill and agreed to ask for a briefing from the Department on the Bill and those elements which will be contained in the required LCM.

9. SL1 - Student Fees (Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Members considered SL1 – Student Fees (Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Agreed: that the Committee is content with the policy implications of the proposed legislation.

10. Departmental Consultation - Parental Bereavement Leave & Pay

Noted: Members noted the Departmental Consultation on Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Minister offering the Committee's support for the introduction of legislation concerning Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay.

11. Correspondence

Noted: Members considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance containing a briefing paper Budget (No.2) Bill 2020 and a Further Vote on Account Paper.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from the Committee for Communities, which raised concerns regarding the new Micro-business Hardship Fund launched by the Minister for the Economy. The Hardship Fund excludes Charities and Social

Enterprises with charitable status, and Social Enterprises that receive 60% revenue from trade goods and/or services. The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for a response.

Noted: Members considered correspondence from Ian Paisly MP concerning the issue of NI/U.K. driving licences not being accepted in the emergency special provision arrangement.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence in the form of a briefing paper from the Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment concerning future funding for disability employment. The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for a response.

Noted: Members considered correspondence from the Belfast Chamber of Commerce to the First and Deputy First Ministers regarding the safe re-opening of non-essential retail.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from the Rural Community Network regarding the unavailability of reliable, affordable broadband and its impact on rural citizens and businesses. The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for a response.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from a member of the public regarding early year's childcare provision. The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for a response.

The Chairperson, Dr Caoimhe Archibald had to leave the meeting at 1.00pm. Mr John O'Dowd was nominated to replace Dr Archibald as Chairperson by Mr Dunne, and Members agreed.

12. Any Other Business

There were no items of business.

13. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 3rd June 2020 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 13.31pm

Dr Caoímhe Archibald
Chairperson
Committee for the Economy
26th May 2020