



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

8 JULY 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 10:02am

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Minutes

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Minutes from 1st July 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Record of Decisions taken by correspondence on items pertaining to the meeting on 1st July 2020:

Agreed: Members considered a Departmental response on dental practices during the COVID-19 situation and agreed to forward the response to the British Dental Association.

Agreed: Members considered a Departmental response on neonatal leave and pay and agreed to forward this response to Bliss and Tiny life.

Agreed: Members considered a Departmental response on additional monies and the June Monitoring Round and agreed to forward this response to the NUS-USI.

Agreed: Members considered a Departmental response on the EU Emissions Trading Scheme and agreed to forward this response to the AERA Committee.

Agreed: Members considered the terms of reference for the FE Advisory and Oversight Group and agreed to highlight to the Minister and the Department the need for Students Union representation on the FE advisory and oversight group.

Noted: Members noted a response from Treasury on grant funding for businesses in regards to the Protocol.

Noted: Members noted a Departmental paper on June Monitoring outcome.

Noted: Members noted a Ministerial response on issues raised during the FE briefing.

Agreed: Members considered a Ministerial response on the micro business hardship fund and agreed to ask the Department for a written update when available.

Noted: Members noted a Ministerial response on Thompson Aero Seating.

Noted: Members noted a copy of a Ministerial response to Jim Allister MLA on the non-domestic- RHI scheme.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Minister to the Westminster Migration Advisory Committee on the shortage occupation list.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Minister of Finance on financial support for businesses.

Noted: Members noted a statement by the Finance Minister regarding provisional outturn and June Monitoring.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Finance Committee on the road haulage, taxi industry and transport sector.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee to the Minister on the supported employment sector.

Noted: Members noted submissions on student number controls on English-domiciled students from Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University, St Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College.

Agreed: Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the SL1 The Rates (Coronavirus) (Emergency Relief) (No 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and further noted that Members views were already ascertained on Monday and a response sent to the Finance Committee, as requested by that Committee due to the tight turnaround.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding provision for companies with multiple owned sites.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Education regarding training and employment for disabled young people.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Education regarding the House of Lords International Agreements Sub Committee Inquiry into UK/US Trade Negotiations.

Noted: Members noted the Fourteenth Report of the Examiner of Statutory.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from the British Heart Foundation concerning the threat to research investment and agreed to forward to the Department for comment.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from Upskill Enterprise highlighting their work.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from the Sea Fish Industry Training Association NI on the impact of COVID19 and agreed to forward to the Department for comment.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from Ping Group, a local cargo company, on the impact of COVID19 and agreed to forward to the Department for comment.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from the Finance Committee on that Committee forwarding information to the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre and agreed to receive a briefing from the Economic Policy Centre on 15th July.

Noted: Members noted the Belfast Chamber of Commerce's 15 point plan to rebuild.

Noted: Members noted the latest investment activity report.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from an individual on loss of jobs at Titanic Belfast and agreed to forward to the Department for an urgent response on the matter.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from Diabetes UK NI on better protection for workers with diabetes and agreed to forward to the Department for an urgent response on the matter.

Noted: Members noted a Retail NI planned promotional activity at Parliament Buildings.

3. Chairpersons Business

Agreed: Members agreed to ask the Department what, if any, Barnett consequentials arise following the 8th July 2020 statement from the Chancellor and how these will be allocated.

Agreed: Members agreed to ask the Department what bids the Minister made on the surplus funds that were returned from Covid-19 grants funding and how these are being re-purposed.

4. Oral Briefing by Invest NI - Covid-19 Response and Recovery Planning

The officials joined the meeting at 10.05am

Members received a briefing from:

Mr Kevin Holland Chief Executive, Invest NI;

Mr Donal Durkan Executive Director Strategy, Invest NI; and

Mr Diarmuid McLean Head of Economic Strategy Group, Department for the Economy.

Key issues discussed included: an update and overview of the work of Invest NI to address issues pertaining to the economic impact of restrictions around Covid-19.

Christopher Stalford joined the meeting at 10.25am

The officials left the meeting at 11.19am

Agreed: the Chair and Deputy Chair to hold an informal meeting with the Invest NI CEO.

5. Oral Briefing by Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance & Northern Ireland Hotels Federation - Reopening and Recovery of Tourism Sector

The representatives joined the meeting at 11.19am

Members received a briefing from:

Dr Joanne Stuart OBE	CEO, Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance;
Ms. Janice Gault	CEO, Northern Ireland Hotels Federation;
Mr Eddie McKeever	Group Operations Director, McKeever Hotels;
Mr Ciaran O'Neill	Managing Director, Bishop's Gate Hotel; and
Ms Oonagh O'Reilly	Sales & Marketing Director, ICC Belfast.

Key issues discussed included: an overview of the tourism sector's challenges in reopening following enforced restrictions around Covid-19.

The representatives left the meeting at 12.15pm

6. Matters Arising

Noted: Members noted a response from the First and deputy First Minister on the Hardship Fund.

Noted: Members noted a response from the First and deputy First Minister on collaboration between the Executive, local councils and other stakeholders.

Noted: Members noted a Ministerial response on clarity on reopening guidelines.

Noted: Members noted a Ministerial response on issues raised by the NI Union for Supported Employment.

Noted: Members noted a Departmental brief on 'rebuilding a stronger economy.'

Noted: Members noted a Departmental response on the haulage industry.

Noted: Members noted a Departmental response on the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce report.

Noted: Members noted a Departmental correction advising of a figure omitted from the Statutory Rule 'The Education (Student Support) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020'.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance on SL1 The Rates (Coronavirus) (Emergency Relief) (No.2) Regulations (NI) 2020 and agreed that the Clerk liaise with that Committee on Members' concerns over timings.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP, Paymaster General, on the transition period. Further noting that the Committee agreed at last week's meeting to write to the Northern Ireland Secretary of State seeking an update on the meeting and future plans, with the letter copied to the Minister.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the National Lottery Fund on Dormant Account funding. Further noting that the Committee sought clarification on the operation of the Dormant Account scheme in Northern Ireland as it operates differently in GB.

Agreed: Members considered further correspondence from an individual on the Presbyterian Mutual Society, responding to the Department's previous comments on the matter and agreed to thank the individual for the information provided to the Committee in the correspondence and acknowledge, as the individual states in the correspondence, that it was a traumatic event for thousands of people at the time. Further, Members agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for its record.

Agreed: Members considered a Departmental response on post graduate funding and agreed to forward to the correspondent who raised the issue with the Committee.

Noted: Members noted a Solace NI briefing paper.

Noted: Members noted correspondence sent to the Minister by the Communities Committee on rates guarantee.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Financial Conduct Authority on business insurance claims.

7. Legislation: SL1 Industrial Training Levy (Construction Industry) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Members considered SL1 Industrial Training Levy (Construction Industry) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020.

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

8. Departmental Consultation - Priority Dispatch Provisions of the 2019 Electricity (Recast) Regulation (EU) 2019/943

Noted: Members noted the Departmental Consultation on Priority Dispatch Provisions of the 2019 Electricity (Recast) Regulation (EU) 2019/943.

9. Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation Annual Report 2019-20

Noted: Members noted the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation Annual Report 2019-20 and further noted the Committee's intention to receive an oral briefing from the Utility Regulator in the Autumn.

10. Correspondence

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance on a review of Arm's Length Bodies and agreed to write to the Minister to indicate that the Committee is aware of the review and will seek a briefing from the Department to ensure that Members play an appropriate role in the process.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from NILGA and SOLACE NI on a joint policy paper on Transformation Policy Guidance for Renewing Urban & Rural Centres Post Covid and agreed to

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from Coffee Conjo, a local coffee shop, regarding access to the hardship fund and agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for an urgent response on the matter.

Agreed: Members considered a position paper from the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce regarding the procurement of personal protective equipment and agreed to forward the paper to the Department and the Department for Finance for their information.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from Gerry Carroll MLA on the imminent launch of his Private Members' Bill 'Trade Union Freedom Bill' and noted the forthcoming survey for the Bill.

Noted: Members noted the Fifteenth Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

Noted: Members noted the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales Annual Report 2019.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from an individual enquiring as to the NIRHI Scheme and agreed to ask the Department for an urgent status report on the scheme.

Noted: Members noted a copy of correspondence from Belfast International Airport to the Chancellor on the introduction of arrivals duty free stores once the transition period ends.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from Northern Ireland Renewables Industry Group (NIRIG) on the energy strategy and agreed to forward to the Department to convey the Committee's support for the sentiments of the letter regarding timescales for the strategy.

11. Any Other Business

There were no items of business.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 15th July in Room 30, Parliament Buildings at 10.00am.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.31pm

Dr Caoímhe Archibald
Chairperson
Committee for the Economy
15th July 2020