



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

23 SEPTEMBER 2020

ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

10:00am

- Present: Dr Caoímhe Archibald (Chairperson)
Ms Sinéad McLaughlin (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Stewart Dickson
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 David McClure (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies: Mr Christopher Stalford

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

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Minutes

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Minutes from 16th September 2020.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Clerk wrote to the Department regarding the Minister's intentions in relation to bringing forward a Legislative Consent Memorandum on the UK Internal Market Bill.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee on Procedures in relation to the extension of temporary provisions contained within Standing Orders 110-116.

4. Oral Briefing from the Minister - Economic Situation and Recovery briefing

The Minister joined the meeting at 10.07am

Members received a briefing from:

Diane Dodds MLA,	Minister, Department for the Economy
Mike Brennan,	Permanent Secretary, Department for the Economy
Shane Murphy	Head of Analytical Services, Department for the Economy.

Key issues discussed included: the need to rebuild the Economy, the impact Covid-19 has had and the Government interventions needed, the impact another lock-down would have on the local economy, the work the Minister is doing for the tourism sector, initiatives to support local retailers and the high street building on the Digital Capability Grant and the ending of the Furlough job retention scheme.

The Minister left the meeting at 11.46am

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Committee for the Executive Office regarding an update on the "High street taskforce".

5. Oral Briefing from The Northern Ireland Business Brexit Working Group

The witness joined the meeting at 11.46am

Members received a briefing from:

Aodhán Connolly,	Convenor, The Northern Ireland Business Brexit Working Group.
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Key issues discussed included: the need for a comprehensive UK EU trade deal, the time needed for NI Business's to prepare for any changes coming in, a need for zero tariffs and a common sense approach within the Joint Committee.

The witness left the meeting at 12.39am

6. Matters Arising

Noted: Members noted a response from the Department regarding the closing date for the consultation on proposals for transporting the EU Electricity (Recast) Directive 2019.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Chair of the Further Higher Education Colleges Principals Group in relation to the colleges experience with BTEC.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Chair of the Group seeking their views on next steps.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Minister providing an updated list of EU Exit legislation.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Department asking that they continue to provide updates on the progress of legislation

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Minister for Finance in response to the Committee request for a database to gather data regarding business excluded from Covis-19 support.

7. Impact of Covid-19 on Higher Education Teaching, Access to Facilities and Fee's

Members considered a letter from a local student regarding lack of face to face teaching and access to facilities.

Agreed: Members agreed to write seek the views of the universities and university colleges, as well as bodies representing students and lecturers, on the current position.

Agreed: Members agreed to arrange informal meetings with the local Student Union and Lecturers Union bodies.

8. SR 2020/199 The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Amendment of Certain Relevant Periods) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 202

Members considered SR 2020/199 The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Amendment of Certain Relevant Periods) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for the Economy has considered SR 2020/199 The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Amendment of Certain Relevant Periods) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and recommends that it be confirmed by the Assembly, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ report.”

9. SL1 - Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act (Meetings Amendment) Regulation (Northern Ireland) 2020

Members considered SL1 – Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act (Meetings Amendment) Regulation (Northern Ireland) 2020

Agreed: Members indicated that they are content with the policy implications of the proposed legislation.

10. Departmental Consultation - Legislative proposals to ensure compliance with the EU Gas Directive Amendment 2019/692

Noted: Members noted the Departmental Consultation on the Legislative proposals to ensure compliance with the EU Gas Directive Amendment 2019/692.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Department to indicate that the Committee will act as “super consultee” and will seek an oral briefing on the results on the consultation prior to legislation coming before the Assembly.

11. Department for the Economy Corporate Risk Register

Noted: Members noted the Department for the Economy Corporate Risk Register.

Agreed: Members agreed to request an un-redacted copy of item 10 on the Corporate Risk Register.

12. Department for the Economy Annual Report and Accounts - 2019-20

Noted: Members noted the Department for the Economy Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20.

13. Invest NI Annual Report and Accounts - 2019-20

Noted: Members noted the Invest NI Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20.

Agreed: Members agreed to seek clarification on procedures for awarding funding following the NIAO report into Invest NI funding to Wrightbus.

Sinéad McLaughlin left the meeting at 1.00pm

14. Bedford Street Developments Limited Report and Financial Statements - 2019-20

Noted: Members noted the Bedford Street Developments Limited Annual Report and Financial Statements 2019-20.

15. MRDE Limited Report and Financial Statements - 2019-20

Noted: Members noted the MDRE Limited Annual Report and Financial Statements 2019-20.

16. Correspondence

Noted: Members noted a Departmental response regarding access to Covid-19 support for travel agent and tour operator business.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward to the Department for information.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the DALO regarding the results evaluation of the Public Sector Transformation Fund.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Department seeking a more detailed breakdown of the fund for the ALB's listed.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding Covid-19 funding allocations for each department.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Health to the Department for the Economy DALO regarding applications for the first year medical places at QUB.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office regarding a letter from the Counsel General and Minister for European Transition in the Welsh Government to the Chair of the Welsh Parliament's External Affairs and Additional Legislation detailing the ten priority common frameworks that have been identified.

Noted: Members noted a response from HM Treasury regarding the extension of the Job Retention Scheme and SEISS.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Managing Director of a travel agency business regarding access to Covid-19 financial support.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward to the Department for information.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the NI Tourism Alliance to all Executive Ministers outlining the scale of the crisis facing the Tourism Sector.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward to the Department for information.

Noted: Members noted a paper from Pivotal on the main issues facing the Northern Ireland Executive.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from a local student attending Oxford University and the issue of Northern Ireland students receiving lower maintenance loans than English students.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward to the Department for a response on the issues raised.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Association of Northern Ireland Travel Agents.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward to the Department for information.

Noted: Members noted the Twentieth report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the DALO regarding proposed subordinate legislation to transpose an EU Directive concerning “posted” workers into Northern Ireland Legislation.

Agreed: Members agreed to await the results of the consultation and SL1.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from Chris Hazzard MP regarding support for travel agents.

Noted: Members noted the Twenty First report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

Noted: Members noted a press release from Ulster Bank regarding a survey of SME’s and issues impacting on their recovery.

17. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: Members agreed the Committee Draft Forward Work Programme.

18. Any Other Business

Members discussed the issue of newly setup businesses struggling to access loans from banks.

Agreed: Members agreed to write the four main local banks regarding the issue.

Members discussed how future briefings with the Minister will be arranged.

Agreed: Members agreed a format for future briefings with the Minister.

19. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

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

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 13.31pm

Dr Caoímhe Archibald
Chairperson
Committee for the Economy
30th September 2020