



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

14 OCTOBER 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 10:03am in open session.

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Minutes

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Minutes from 7th October 2020.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson chaired the Committee meeting via StarLeaf, as per Standing Order 110, paragraph 3, regarding 'Temporary provisions for Statutory Committees:

(3) Any member(s) of a committee, including the chairperson and deputy chairperson may attend a meeting remotely, for example by video-link or telephone attendance.

Agreed: Members agreed to move to **point 9.8** of Correspondence, a Press Release from the Audit Office regarding its report on Generating Electricity from renewable energy.

Agreed: the Committee agreed to request that Departmental officials come to brief the Committee as soon as possible.

Noted: Members noted that there will be an informal videocall on Thursday 15th October with the anti-fracking group, LAMP, regarding the potential petroleum license applications that may or may not be granted.

The Chairperson spoke to the new COVID-19 restrictions on NI businesses.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, and the Economy and Finance Ministers, seeking their views on the impact of the new COVID-19 regulations on a range of sectors within the Committee's remit.

Agreed: Members agreed to move to Matters Arising before the statement from the First Minister regarding new Covid-19 restrictions.

6. Matters Arising

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland regarding the laying of the SI mentioned in his correspondence to the NI Affairs Committee in relation to 'qualifying goods'.

Noted: Members noted correspondence of the Minister of State at the NIO to the Lords EU Committee, regarding a briefing follow-up on points raised around the Business Engagement Forum and Article 2 of the Protocol.

Agreed: Members agreed to seek the views of the Stakeholders in relation to correspondence from the AERA Committee on the proposed UK Emissions Trading Scheme in regards to the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme Order 2020.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Department for a further update to be shared with the AERA Committee and joint discussions between committees in relation to the correspondence from the AERA Committee on the overlap of committee business on EU Exit matters.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the UK Finance NI Committee in response to the three new bank loan schemes designed to provide financial support to viable businesses that are losing revenue.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Minister highlighting the impact of late papers on the Committee in relation to the incorrect figures on the slides used by Invest NI in the Committee meeting of the 7th October 2020.

The Committee meeting was suspended at 10.23am due to the announcement from the First Minister in the chamber on the new COVID-19 restrictions.

4. Oral Briefing from the Department: October Monitoring Round

The meeting reconvened at 11:57am after brief suspension due to statement in the chamber.

The Officials joined the meeting at 11.57am

Members received a briefing from:

Ms Sharon Hetherington, Director of Finance, DfE

Ms Johanna Park, Accountant, Financial Management, DfE

Key issues discussed included: the Departments realignment and allocation of its budget and the increasing need for there to be flexibility. The Executive has given the Department the flexibility to reallocate no-ring fence budgets and the paper talks about the further bids that have been made for additional funding. The Minister has approved the reallocation of £13 million resource DALE non-ring fence budget to fund a £9 million over commitment carried forward from the June monitoring and £4 million of emerging pressures.

The Officials left the meeting at 12.23pm

Agreed: Members agreed to ask the Department to provide clarification on the timescales for funding for City of Derry Airport; the funding for Ulster University Belfast Campus and due diligence on the FTC on Ulster University.

5. Oral Briefing from the Department: Apprenticeships and Youth Training Recovery Package

The officials joined the meeting at 12.26pm

Members received a briefing from:

Mr Jim Wilkinson; Director Apprenticeships, Careers & Vocational Education Division, DfE

Mr Clement Athanasiou, Deputy Director Apprenticeships, Careers & Vocational Education Division, DfE

Mr Gordon Dunne left the meeting at 12.35pm and returned at 12:41

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin left the meeting at 12:40pm

Key issues discussed included: the further detail on the Apprenticeship Recovery Package and how the Package mainly focuses on the short term interventions which are target to reduce the potentially significant longer-term economic impacts. The interventions aim to reduce the unemployment amongst apprenticeships and ensure that employers continue to get the access to people with skills and qualifications needed to maintain productivity and grow their business. Apprenticeships being allocated £17 million in 2021 complementing £4 million allocated to from the Department's internal central funds.

The officials left the meeting at 12.42pm

Agreed: Members agreed to ask the Department to provide a briefing on the Assured Skills Academy and on the Adapted Assessments arrangements.

6. Matters Arising

The Committee returned to complete Matters Arising.

Noted: Members noted the NIE Network Green Recovery briefing paper.

7. Results 2020 and Covid-19

Agreed: Members agreed to seek further updates from the student and lecturer representatives and the HEIs regarding the impact that the just announced Covid-19 restrictions on them and their members.

8. SR 2020/214 The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Schedule 8) (Early Termination of Certain Temporary Provisions) Regulations (NI) 2020

Members considered SR 2020/214 The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Schedule 8) (Early Termination of Certain Temporary Provisions) Regulations (NI) 2020.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for the Economy has considered SR 2020/214 The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Schedule 8) (Early Termination of Certain Temporary Provisions) Regulations (NI) 2020 and recommends that it be confirmed by the Assembly, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ report.”

9. Correspondence

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Department regarding correspondence from a business owner in relation to the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Noted: Members noted a Clerk’s memo from the Committee for Finance regarding the forwarding of a response from the Minister for Finance referring to information of Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications.

Noted: Members noted a Clerk’s memo from the Committee for Finance regarding details of all bids submitted by Departments within the in-year monitoring process and bids supported by costed proposals for COVID-19 related funding outside the in-year monitoring process including the purpose, value and outcome of each bid.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from Joan McAlpine MSP, Convener of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee in the Scottish Parliament, to Bruce Crawford MSP, Convener of the Finance and Constitution Committee in the Scottish Parliament, regarding her Committee’s views on the UK Internal Market Bill.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Department seeking clarifications around issues raised around its Tourism Recovery Action Plan; as well as writing to the Minister endorsing the actions set out for the Executive in the NITA Crisis paper.

Agreed: Members also agreed to write to the Executive to highlight this issue.

Noted: Members noted the twenty fourth report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules 2019-2020.

Noted: Members noted the Departmental response regarding the Electricity Directive Regulations.

Noted: Members noted a Departmental response regarding issues raised by the Association of NI Travel Agents.

Agreed: Members agreed to reply to the Causeway Chamber indicating the Committee’s understanding of the issues it raises, and confirming that the Committee has written to Ministers highlighting them.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Minister and to The Executive Office to forward the correspondence and highlight these issues.

Agreed: Members agreed to include the issues raised by NITA in the correspondence discussed at point 9.12.

10. Any Other Business

There were no items of business.

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 21st October 2020 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

Informal meeting online via Teams with the anti-fracking lobby on Thursday 15th October 2020.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.14pm

Dr Caoímhe Archibald
Chairperson
Committee for the Economy
21st October 2020