



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

Minutes of Proceedings

6th October 2021

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Dr Caoímhe Archibald (MLA (Chairperson))

Mr Keith Buchanan MLA

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Mr Stephen Dunne MLA

Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA

Mr John O'Dowd MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

Apologies:

Mr Peter Weir MLA



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In Attendance: Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Jean Barkley (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)

The meeting commenced at 10:06am in open session.

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised Members of the current issues with applying for the High Street Support Scheme and finding that your National Insurance number has already been allocated to an application.

Agreed: to write to the Department seeking an update on this issue and on the rollout of the scheme.



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3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes from 29th September 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Record of Decision from 29th September 2021.

4. Briefing from the Skills Strategic Advisory Group – Skills Strategy

The witness joined the meeting at 10:10am

Members received a briefing from:

Mr Mark Huddleston,

Deputy Chair, Skills Strategic
Advisory Group

Key issues discussed included: the establishment of the Skills Strategic Advisory Group in Summer 2020, the delayed development of the 14-19 Strategy, the need to deliver the skills needed for a 'high growth scenario' and the current skills shortages in Northern Ireland.

The witness left the meeting at 11:25am

Agreed: to ask the Department for clarification as to why the business case for the all-age apprenticeships programme was rejected by the Department and what work is now being done to take it forward



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5. Departmental Briefing – Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill

The officials joined the meeting at 11:29am

Members received a briefing from:

Mr Colin Jack,	Director of Business & Employment Regulation, DfE
Ms Kellie Sprott,	Employment Relations Policy and Legislation, DfE
Mr Laurence Rogers,	Employment Relations, DfE

Key issues discussed included: the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill, the option for amendments to the Bill and the response from the Minister to the Committee's summary table.

The officials left the meeting at 11:56am

The Committee agreed to go into closed session at 11.56am to receive advice from the Bill Clerk.

Agreed: to draft an options paper in relation to potential amendments as discussed for consideration at next week's meeting.

The Committee returned to open session at 12.30pm.



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6. Matters Arising

Noted: Members noted a copy of an update from the Minister on the HE Cheating Services Prohibition Bill.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Departmental regarding a number of Committee queries on the HSSS.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Departmental regarding a Committee query about clarity on what contingency plans are in place for assessments and vocational qualifications in the event of further lockdowns.

7. Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill

This item was dealt with at Agenda Item 5.

8. Small-Scale Green Energy Bill

Members considered a number of papers in relation to the Small-Scale Green Energy Bill and a Committee motion to extend Committee Stage to the 28th January 2022.

Agreed: *“That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 28th January 2022, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Small-Scale Green Energy Bill (NIA Bill 33/17-22)”.*

Agreed: to invite Mr. John O’Dowd MLA to provide an oral briefing and next week’s meeting.



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**9. SR 2021/253 (C.10) The Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
(Commencement No. 4) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021**

Members noted SR 2021/253 (C.10) The Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (Commencement No. 4) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021.

10. Correspondence

Noted: Members noted a copy of correspondence from the Assembly's EU Affairs Manager regarding the protection of critical infrastructure.

Noted: Members noted a copy of correspondence from the Assembly's EU Affairs Manager regarding a draft EU energy taxation directive.

Noted: Members noted a copy of the Department for Economy's input to the House of Lords Scrutiny report on the UK-EEA/EFTA Trade Agreement.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from Amnesty International regarding a report on the appropriate state response to abuses in Mother and Baby Homes, Magdalene Laundries and workhouses in Northern Ireland.

Noted: Members noted a copy of the Airport Operators Association quarterly update.

Noted: Members noted a copy of the Consumer Council's Annual Report and Accounts for 2020-21.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee on Procedures to all Statutory Committees regarding whether Committees have experienced any particular challenges relating to LCMs since its last consultation exercise.

Agreed: for the Clerk to respond indicating the Committee's view on legislation via Westminster.



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Noted: Members noted a copy of correspondence from the Clerk Assistant to the Chairperson's Liaison Group highlighting the current work pressures in Committees as we approach the end of the mandate.

Noted: Members noted a copy of the 'Belfast Business Sustainability Survey' from the Belfast Chamber.

11. Any Other Business

There were no items of business.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.50pm.

**Dr Caoímhe Archibald MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Economy
13th October 2021**