



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

Minutes of Proceedings

23rd March 2022

Meeting Location: Room 29

In Attendance: Dr Caoimhe Archibald (MLA (Chairperson))
Mr John O'Dowd MLA
Mr Peter Weir MLA
Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA

Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Stephen Dunne MLA
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Apologies: Ms Claire Sugden MLA

In Attendance: Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Thomas Armstrong (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Aaron Pakenham (Clerical Officer)

Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

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



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The meeting commenced at 9:33am in open session.

Apologies

As noted above.

1. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes from 16th March 2022.

2. Chairperson's Business

Agreed: Members agreed that the Chair be permitted to sign off the minutes for this meeting before the end of the mandate.

Agreed: Members agreed that relevant Committee papers from this mandate and any papers received following dissolution be shared with the successor Committee.

Noted: Members reflected on the informal meeting with stakeholders around the ongoing issues with P&O.

3. Briefing from the NI Utility Regulator

Members received a briefing from:

John French Chief Executive, Utility Regulator

Roisin McLaughlin Head of Network Operations, Utility Regulator

Key issues discussed included: the increase in fuel prices and the impact on rates of fuel poverty; the progress of the SONI governance review; and the role and remit of the Utility Regulator and the need for enhanced powers.



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The witnesses left the meeting at 10.58am.

The Committee suspended at 10.59am to observe a minute's silence for the National Day of Reflection.

The Committee recommenced at 11.08am in closed session.

4. Departmental Briefing - DfE Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21

Members received a briefing in closed session from:

Mike Brennan	Permanent Secretary, Department for the Economy
Sharon Hetherington	Director of Finance, Department for the Economy
David Malcolm	Under Secretary, Department for the Economy
Ronan Murtagh	Accountant, Department for the Economy

The Committee received a briefing in closed session on the Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21.

The officials left the meeting at 12.28pm

Members agreed to move to open session 12.28pm

5. Matters Arising

Noted: Members noted a response from the Department regarding mineral licenses.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Minister regarding P&O Staff redundancies.

Noted: Members noted the NI Audit Office Report on the NI Non-Domestic RHI Scheme.



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Noted: Members noted a response from the Department to the AERA Committee regarding the prospect of an extension for COVID-19 Schemes.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Minister for Business, Energy and Corporate Responsibility to the BEIS Committee's queries on the Company Law Common Framework.

Noted: Members noted the Hansard from Committee deliberations of the Onshore Fracking (Prohibition) Bill Report from 16th March 2022.

Noted: Members noted the Hansard from Committee deliberations of the Employment (Zero Hours Workers and Banded Weekly Working Hours) Report from 16th March 2022.

6. Correspondence

Noted: Members noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules - Twentieth Report of Session 2021-2022.

Noted: Members noted a letter from Clyde Shanks to the Minister for Infrastructure regarding a proposed wind farm.

Noted: Members noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules – Twenty-First Report of Session 2021-2022.

Noted: Members noted the 22nd Report of the ESR received via email as it missed the tabled pack.

Noted: Members noted the letter from BEIS to the Chair of the Sub-Committee on the Protocol regarding the Subsidy Control Bill.

Members agreed to move to agenda item 10



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10. SR 2022/135 The Employment Rights (Increase of Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022

Members considered the SR 2022/135 The Employment Rights (Increase of Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022.

Question out and agreed:

“That the Committee for the Economy has considered SR 2022/135 The Employment Rights (Increase of Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022, and has no objection to the Rule, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules report.”

Members agreed to move to agenda item 8

7. Any Other Business

None received.

8. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

This is the final meeting of the Economy Committee for the 2017-2022 mandate.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.42pm.

**Dr Caoímhe Archibald MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Economy**