



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 20 May 2020

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Colin McGrath MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Doug Beattie MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Martina Anderson MLA
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA*
Mr Trevor Lunn MLA
Mr George Robinson MLA*
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA
Ms Emma Sheerin MLA*
Mr Christopher Stalford MLA

Apologies: None.

In Attendance: Ms Marie Austin (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Craig Mealey (Assistant Clerk)

** Members who attended the meeting via telephone conferencing.*

The meeting commenced at 14.02pm.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13 May 2020.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. COVID-19 Response - Oral Briefing from the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the Executive Office and Executive's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

The First Minister and deputy First Minister joined the meeting at 14.03pm:

Arlene Foster MLA, First Minister, The Executive Office

Michelle O'Neill MLA, deputy First Minister, The Executive Office.

The First Minister and deputy First Minister briefed the Committee on the Executive Office and Executive's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The oral evidence was followed by a question and answer session.

During discussions, issues around the provision of childcare were raised and the First Minister agreed to provide clarification on the current advice for childcare service providers.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the Ministers for their attendance.

5. Community Relations Council – Overview Briefing

The following representatives from the Community Relations Council joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 15.42pm:

Ms Jacqueline Irwin, Chief Executive, Community Relations Council

Mr Martin McDonald, Chair, Community Relations Council

The representatives briefed the Committee on the work of the Community Relations Council.

The oral evidence was followed by a question and answer session.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information/clarification on a range of issues.

Trevor Lunn left the meeting at 15.44pm

Christopher Stalford left the meeting at 15.55pm

6. Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill – Consideration of written evidence

The Committee considered written evidence from The Executive Office on the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to focus on all or part of Clauses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 12 of the Bill which are of relevance to The Executive Office.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral evidence session with David Sterling, Permanent Secretary of the Executive Office and Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, on 10 June 2020.

7. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme for May to July 2020.

8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from The Executive Office on the appointment of Lay Members to the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from The Executive Office on the publication of the Urban Villages FOCUS magazine.
- iii. The Committee noted a response from the Chairperson of the Chairpersons' Liaison Group on the Northern Ireland Assembly scrutiny of policy areas relating to EU exit.
- iv. The Committee considered a memo from the Clerk to the Committee for Justice inviting views/comments from Assembly Statutory Committees on the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to The Executive Office requesting its views on any clauses of the Bill that are relevant to The Executive Office.

- v. The Committee noted a memo from the Clerk to the Committee for Communities providing a copy of a briefing from Solace Northern Ireland on Covid-19 and its financial impact on local government.
- vi. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from an individual on Historical Institutional Abuse.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Office of the Lord Chief Justice asking that the Lord Chief Justice responds directly to the individual and copies the Committee into his response.

- vii. The Committee considered a copy of the Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service Briefing Paper: *2020-21 In-year Monitoring of Public Expenditure – First Round: Supporting Assembly Committees in their Advisory and Scrutiny Roles*.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the briefing paper to The Executive Office asking that it responds to the scrutiny points and provides the Committee with a copy of the relevant documentation.

9. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's Business.

10. Any Other Business

- i. Members welcomed the commencement of compensation payments to victims and survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse. The issue of a memorial to all victims and survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse was also raised.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing session with the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse, once appointed, and to raise the issue of a memorial.

- ii. The position regarding the Victims Payment Scheme was raised.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to The Executive Office: expressing its disappointment that it did not receive notification that the Victims Payment Scheme would not open for applications on 31 May 2020; requesting formal notification of the position in relation to the Scheme; asking that The Executive Office makes victims and relevant organisations aware of the position; and, reiterating its view that Westminster should fund the Scheme.

11. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 27 May 2020 at 2.00 pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 16.34pm.

Mr Colin McGrath MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office