



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE**

**Minutes of Proceedings**

Wednesday 6 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 2.02pm.*

**1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

**2. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 29 April 2020.

### **3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **4. Victims and Survivors Service – Overview Briefing**

The following representatives from the Victims and Survivors Service joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 2.06pm:

Margaret Bateson, Chief Executive Officer, Victims and Survivors Service  
Oliver Wilkinson, Chair, Victims and Survivors Service  
Andrew Walker, Head of Operations, Victims and Survivors Service.

The representatives briefed the Committee on the work of the Victims and Survivors Service.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

### **5. Draft Statutory Rule – The Census Order (Northern Ireland) 2020**

The Committee had considered Draft Statutory Rule: The Census Order (Northern Ireland) 2020, at its meeting on 22 April 2020, and recommended that it be approved by the Assembly, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report.

The Committee noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had no issues to raise with the technical elements of the Draft Statutory Rule, and that it was approved by the Assembly on 5 May 2020.

### **6. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme for May 2020.

### **7. Correspondence**

The Chairperson advised Members that a number of pieces of correspondence had been received in relation to Historical Institutional Abuse, and that one item made reference to 'legal action' having begun.

The Chairperson reminded Members of Standing Order 73:

## *Sub Judice*

*(1) A member shall not, in any proceedings of the Assembly, refer to any matter in respect of which legal proceedings are active (within the meaning of section 2 of the Contempt of Court Act 1981) except to the extent permitted by the Speaker.*

*(2) Where the proceedings are committee proceedings, paragraph (1) applies as if the reference to the Speaker were a reference to the chairperson of that committee.*

*(3) Nothing in this order shall prevent the Assembly from considering legislation.*

The Chairperson advised Members that it would therefore not be appropriate for the Committee to consider the correspondence on this matter until it can be established whether there are active legal proceedings.

The Chairperson reminded Members that Committee papers are provided to allow them to carry out their scrutiny role, and once received, Members become the information owners. Information assurance policies and legalisation that apply to information owners in relation to the sharing of information are therefore relevant.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to The Executive Office requesting the factual background to the matter, including whether there are active legal proceedings.

- i. The Committee noted a response from The Executive Office regarding S.R. 2020/55 - The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, and the concerns raised by the Committee that the Regulations came into operation before they were considered by the Assembly or the Committee for the Executive Office.
- ii. The Committee noted a response from The Executive Office providing information on Executive Information Service press officers. The Committee also noted that officials will provide similar information for devolved regions in due course.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from The Executive Office providing a copy of its response to the Clerk to the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights on plans to appoint a Panel of Experts to assist that Committee.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance providing a copy of the written evidence it received from the Department of Finance on the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

## **8. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson updated Members on the constructive informal meeting he had with the First Minister and deputy First Minister on a range of issues.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Chairperson should write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister thanking them for accommodating the meeting and setting out the issues discussed and agreed.

## **9. Any Other Business**

The Committee expressed its appreciation to Mike Nesbitt MLA, for the contribution he made to the Committee in his roles as Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.

## **10. Date, Time and Place of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 13 May 2020 at 2.00 pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 3.06pm.*

**Mr Colin McGrath MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office**