



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

WEDNESDAY 13 JANUARY 2021

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:** Mr Michael Potter (Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Carla Campbell (Assistant Clerk)  
Ms Sarah-Anne McKinley (Assistant Clerk)  
Mr Craig Mealey (Clerical Supervisor)  
Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)

\* Members who attended the meeting via video conferencing.

*The meeting commenced at 2:06pm.*

**1. Apologies**

As above.

## 2. **Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 December 2020.

## 3. **Matters Arising**

The Committee considered

*Agreed:*

## 4. **Briefing by the First Minister and deputy First Minister**

The First Minister and deputy First Minister joined the meeting at 2:11pm

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's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other general departmental issues.

*The meeting was suspended at 2:20pm*

*The meeting resumed at 3:52pm*

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

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

The First Minister and deputy First Minister agreed to seek clarification from Officials on the process of deciding the level of payment awarded in respect of Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Payments.

The Chairperson thanked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their attendance.

*Meeting suspended at 4:00pm.*

*Meeting resumed at 4:05pm.*

**5. Brexit – Assessment of the impact of Brexit on the institutions and North/South and East/West relationships – Departmental Oral Evidence Session**

The following officials joined the meeting at 4:06pm

Lorraine Lynas, EU Future Relations, The Executive Office.

Tim Losty, Joint Secretary, North South Ministerial Council.

The officials briefed Members on the impact of Brexit on the institutions and North/South and East/West relationships.

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

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

**6. Brexit – Update on Common Frameworks – Departmental Oral Evidence Session**

The Committee considered a response from the Executive Office in relation to difficulties experienced in the scrutiny of Common Frameworks by the Assembly.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the Executive Office response to relevant Assembly Committees asking them to notify the Committee for the Executive Office of any further issues going forward.

The Committee considered a response from the Executive Office confirming that the First Minister and deputy First Minister would not be giving evidence to the House of Lords Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the Executive Office response to the House of Lords Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee for information.

The following officials joined the meeting at 4:06pm

Lorraine Lynas, EU Future Relations, The Executive Office.

Stephen Hamilton, EU Future Relations Division, The Executive Office.

Michael Williamson, EU Future Relations Division, The Executive Office.

The officials briefed Members on Common Frameworks.

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

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

*Mr Christopher Stalford left the meeting at 4:50pm.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Executive Office to request the current status of the Common Framework: “Equal Treatment Legislation” and proposed date for implementation; expected timeline for scrutiny by the Committee for the Executive Office; and how the framework interacts with Article 2 of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Executive Office asking them to provide further details on which sectors from Northern Ireland would be included in the membership of the Joint Consultative Working Group, and ask that the Committee be kept informed on any other progress in relation to the establishment of the Joint Consultative Working Group and its membership.

## **7. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme for December 2020 to February 2021.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Seanad Special Select Committee of the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, inviting the Committee to take part in a meeting with the Seanad Special Select Committee regarding Brexit issues.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to schedule a meeting with the Seanad Special Select Committee of the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union in February 2021.

## **8. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lords Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee thanking Members for giving evidence at their meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office notifying the committee meetings of the EU-UK Joint Committee and the Ireland/Northern Ireland Specialised Committee scheduled to take place on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office notifying the Committee of the next meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee (European Negotiations) scheduled to take place on 29 December 2020.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office informing the Committee that a call for applications is to be made for funding under the Minority Ethnic Development Fund, with applications open on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020.
- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Finance to the Chairperson of the Committee for Finance informing them that the draft budget has not yet been considered by the Executive.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister requesting an urgent update on the 2021-22 budget and a timetable for its agreement and introduction.

- vi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Justice to the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the establishment of the Troubles Permanent Disablement Pension Scheme by the Department of Justice, asking for clarification of how the statutory duty of the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors is being carried out given the current vacancy.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that any future briefings or communications from the Executive Office in relation to this issue will be shared with the Committee for Justice.

- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Health to the Department of Health regarding the Christmas Regulations and requesting that a representative from the Executive Office be made available to regularly brief the Committee on future regulations going forward.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister supporting this request from the Committee for Health.

- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy to the First Minister and deputy First Minister highlighting the potential economic impact on people at the end of COVID-19 support schemes, and seeking details on contingency plans for this.

- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy to the First Minister and deputy First Minister asking that the Executive Office Taskforce urgently look at the issue of taxi and coach operators being excluded from the COVID Restrictions Business Support Scheme Part 2 and asking that they engage across the Executive to ensure that adequate support is provided to the sector.
- x. The Committee noted a report published by Pivotal “New Decade, New Approach – One Year On”:
- xi. The Committee noted “Statement on Children’s Rights in Northern Ireland 2 – November 2020” published by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People.
- xii. The Committee noted “Northern Ireland NGO Stakeholder Report to inform the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s “List of Issues Prior to Reporting” – December 2020” prepared by the Children’s Law Centre on behalf of the Northern Ireland NGO Sector.
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Royal Irish Academy regarding the establishment of an all-island Higher Education Futures Taskforce to consider what is needed to deliver an internationally competitive and nationally and regionally responsive higher education sector across the island of Ireland by 2035.
- xiv. The Committee noted the Northern Ireland Assembly Brexit Brief Newsletter 21 December 2020.
- xv. The Committee noted: *Information Strategy Northern Ireland – Investing Activity Report – December 2020*.
- xvi. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual raising concerns around the easing of COVID-19 restrictions over the Christmas period.
- xvii. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office regarding the timely provision of departmental briefing papers.
- xviii. The Committee noted the Northern Ireland Assembly Brexit Brief Newsletter 11 January 2021.

## 9. Chairperson’s Business

The Chairperson updated Members on his informal meeting with the Deputy Chairperson and representatives from the Historical Institutional Abuse Groups.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it would consider the range of issues highlighted at the informal meeting at the Committee meeting on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

#### **10. Any Other Business**

The Chairperson reminded Members that it had been agreed to consider scheduling a professional development workshop on “Effective Questioning/Questioning Skills” in early 2021.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to schedule a workshop on “Effective Questioning/Questioning Skills” for February 2021.

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

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 20 January 2021 at 2:00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 5:05pm.*

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