



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 24 February 2021

Meeting Location: Virtually via Video Conferencing

Present by Video or Teleconference:

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 by Video or Teleconference:

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)



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The meeting commenced at 2:09pm in open session

1. Apologies

As Above.

2. Chairperson's Business

None.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 17th February 2021.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee considered a response from the Executive Office regarding the virtual meeting of the European Commission Vice President Maroš Šefčovič with a number of organisations in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Northern Ireland Office to ask how the meeting was organised and how attendees were selected.

The Committee considered a list of matters raised during the closed session with the Northern Ireland Assembly EU Affairs Manager at the meeting on 17 February 2021.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for the Economy to ask that Committee has undertaken any scrutiny of the effectiveness of the Business Engagement Forum.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Executive Office what wider flexibilities are required under the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol referred to by Minister Gove.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask if the Executive will be participating in the UK-EU Joint Partnership Council.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Executive Office to explain the reason for delays in the publication of certain common frameworks.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Westminster Parliament in relation to the participation of the Northern Ireland Assembly in the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly envisaged by the Trade and Co-operation Agreement.

The Committee considered an overview of the issues raised by the Northern Ireland Youth Forum at the Committee meeting on 17 February 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Minister for Education to embed mental health issues into the curriculum and to support the request from the Northern Ireland Youth Forum to meet him to present the key issues for students across Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Minister for Health to use a portion funding for Covid-19 to help support the voluntary sector in delivering vital mental health services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Minister for the Economy to reschedule the planned meeting with the Our Voices group as soon as possible.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister to ensure that young people's basic human rights are met and upheld in light of



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the impact of Covid-19 on current policies and that the Youth Press Conference is rescheduled as a matter of urgency.

5. Departmental Spending Plans – Oral evidence session with departmental officials

The Officials joined the meeting at 2:16pm

- Dr Mark Browne, Deputy Secretary of Strategic Policy, Equality and Good Relations, The Executive Office.
- Neelia Lloyd, Assistant Secretary of Strategic Policy, Equality and Good Relations, The Executive Office.
- Tara Kennedy, Accountant, Strategic Policy, Equality and Good Relations, The Executive Office.

The meeting was suspended at 2:20pm

The meeting resumed at 2:25pm

The officials briefed Members on departmental Spending Plans.

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

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.



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During the session, Officials agreed to provide the Committee with details of assumptions used in the calculation of potential uptake for the pension for people injured in the conflict. Officials also agreed to provide details of projected spend by the Department in March 2021, whether this would be spent by the end of the financial year and potential implications of not doing so on spending plans for the coming year.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

6. Brexit Issues – Oral Evidence Session with Junior Ministers on Brexit Issues

The Junior Ministers joined the meeting at 3:18pm.

Declan Kearney MLA, Junior Minister, The Executive Office.

Gary Middleton MLA, Junior Minister, The Executive Office.

The Junior Ministers briefed the Committee on Brexit issues.

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

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the Junior Ministers for their attendance.



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7. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme for February to April 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, due to Easter Recess, the briefing session with Junior Ministers scheduled for March would be cancelled and that Junior Ministers would be asked to provide a written briefing to the Committee by this date instead.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule Effective Questioning Training for 5 May 2021.

8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office providing further information on Agricultural Funding and EU Beneficiaries.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Justice inviting views or comments on any aspects of the Protection from Stalking Bill relevant to the remit and responsibilities of the Committee.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Communities to the Executive Office expressing its concern at the lack of funding allocation for the provision of Work Ready Employability Services and asking that urgent priority consideration be given should additional funding become available.
- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from Mark Bassett and Professor Colin Harvey asking to present to the Committee on the EU and Irish Unity – Planning and Preparing for Constitutional Change.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the authors to present to Members.

- v. The Committee noted correspondence from Mr Mark Browne acknowledging Members' best wishes on his appointment as Permanent Secretary in the Department of Education.



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- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy confirming that they had not been engaged in any specific monitoring of Invest NI's international offices to date and informing Members that they are scheduled to receive a briefing from Invest NI on 3 March 2021 and intend to raise the issues highlighted.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Audit Committee to the Minister for Finance regarding draft Budgets 2021-22 for the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman and the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Welsh Parliament External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee to the Earl of Kinnoull regarding the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly.

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 3 March 2021 at 2:00pm, virtually via Starleaf.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:59pm.

Colin McGrath MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office