



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 3 March 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)
Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)



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The meeting commenced at 2:05pm in open session

1. Apologies

As Above.

2. Chairperson's Business

Members were informed that the Chairperson had attended a meeting between Northern Ireland Assembly Committee Chairpersons and the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee to discuss matters relating to the UK Exit from the European Union.

The Committee considered a statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly by the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the Executive's pathway out of Covid restrictions on 2 March 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister to ask that the Committee is kept informed of discussions taking place regarding the pathway out of Covid restrictions.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 24th February 2021.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted the joint statement by the co-chairs of the EU-UK Joint Committee on 24 February 2021.



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The Committee noted the Executive Office update on EU exit matters.

5. High Streets Task Force – Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)

The representatives joined the meeting at 2:09pm

- Mr Derek McCallan, Chief Executive Officer, Northern Ireland Local Government Association.
- Alderman Stephen Moutray, Chairperson, Economy and International Affairs Committee, Northern Ireland Local Government Association.
- Ms Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive, Belfast City Council.

The representatives briefed Members on the High Streets Task Force.

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

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.



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6. High Streets Task Force – Federation of Small Business

The representative joined the meeting at 2:24pm

- Mr Neil Hutcheson, Head of Policy, Federation of Small Businesses.

The representative briefed Members on the High Streets Task Force.

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

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the representative for his attendance.

7. High Streets Task Force – Hospitality Ulster

The representative joined the meeting at 2:36pm

- Mr Colin Neil, Chief Executive Officer, Hospitality Ulster.

The representative briefed Members on the High Streets Task Force.

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



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The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the representative for his attendance.

8. High Streets Task Force – Northern Ireland Retail Consortium

The representative joined the meeting at 2:48pm

- Mr Aodhán Connolly, Director, Northern Ireland Retail Consortium.

The representative briefed Members on the High Streets Task Force.

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

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the representative for his attendance.

9. High Streets Task Force – Tourism NI

The representative joined the meeting at 2:57pm



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- Mr John McGrillen, Chief Executive Officer, Tourism NI.

The representative briefed Members on the High Streets Task Force.

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

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the representative for his attendance.

10. High Streets Task Force – Retail NI

The representative joined the meeting at 3:19pm

- Mr Glyn Roberts, Chief Executive, Retail NI.

The representative briefed Members on the High Streets Task Force.

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

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.



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The Chairperson thanked the representative for his attendance.

11.High Streets Task Force – Scotland’s Towns Partnership

The representative joined the meeting at 3:32pm

- Mr Phil Prentice, Chief Officer, Scotland’s Towns Partnership.

The representative briefed Members on the High Streets Task Force.

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

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the representative for his attendance.

A general question and answer session followed with all participants.

The meeting suspended at 4:12pm.

The meeting resumed at 4:18pm.



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12. Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman – Part 3 of the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Officials joined the meeting at 4:18pm.

Ms Margaret Kelly, Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

Mr Sean Martin, Acting Deputy Ombudsman.

The Officials briefed the Committee on Part 3 of the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

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.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly to inform him that the Committee is content that it is now an appropriate time to commence Part 3 of the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

13. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme for March to April 2021.



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14. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office providing information on the sectors that will be included in the membership of the Joint Consultative Working Group.
- ii. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office on assessments carried out in relation to tariff levels for both a negotiated outcome and a non-negotiated outcome.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance to the Executive Office requesting a copy of the Government Actuary's Department report on anticipated costs of the Victims' Pension Scheme.
- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for the Economy asking if the Committee for the Executive Office has received a briefing setting out how the Executive can/does communicate with the EU Commission and Joint Consultative Working Group.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should respond to the request from the Committee for the Economy to provide them with any relevant information received.

- v. The Committee noted a response from the Committee for the Economy regarding correspondence received from an individual on Internet and Digital Poverty.
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lords European Union Committee to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State regarding the implications of the Commission Work Programme for Northern Ireland and Gibraltar.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from Phoenix Law and a Position Paper on behalf of Birth Mothers and their Children for Justice NI.



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- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual to Archbishop Martin regarding a BBC News article on the centenary of Northern Ireland.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding an industrial tribunal.
- x. The Committee noted a response from an individual regarding a formal complaint.
- xi. The Committee noted a statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly from the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the Executive's pathway out of restrictions on 2 March 2021.
- xii. The Committee noted the summary document "Moving Forward: The Executive's Pathway out of Restrictions" 2 March 2021.
- xiii. The Committee noted the full document "Moving Forward: The Executive's Pathway out of Restrictions" 2 March 2021.

15. Any Other Business

The Committee discussed a question put to the Minister for Infrastructure in the Plenary session on Monday 1 March 2021 regarding the establishment of a working group to look at recommendations and findings in the report of the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister seeking further information and clarity on both the report and the establishment of the working group.



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16. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 10 March 2021 at 2:00pm, virtually via Starleaf.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:08pm.

Colin McGrath MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office