



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2021

Virtually via Video Conferencing

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

Apologies: Mr Christopher Stalford MLA

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)

All Members, Staff and Officials attended the meeting via video conferencing.

The meeting commenced at 2:03pm.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson referred to the announcement by the European Commission, and subsequent retraction, that it would invoke Article 16 of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol and urged Members to approach the issue with cool heads.

The Chairperson condemned a shooting that took place in Belfast on 2 February 2021 and stated that there was no place in society for violent acts like this.

The Chairperson gave Members an update on the meeting with the Seanad Special Select Committee on the Withdrawal of the UK from the EU held on Tuesday 2nd February 2021 and informed Members that the Seanad Committee expressed its desire to continue to have regular engagement with the Committee for the Executive Office. The Chair expressed his disappointment at the low attendance from Members and asked them to make a special effort to attend any future meetings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Seanad Special Select Committee on the Withdrawal of the UK from the EU to meet with Members at the Committee meeting on 10 March 2021.

The Chairperson informed Members that Gordon Lyons MLA had taken on a new role as Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and had been succeeded as Junior Minister by Gary Middleton MLA. The Chairperson wished them both well in their new roles.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 27 January 2021.

4. Matters Arising

None.

5. High Streets Task Force – Oral evidence session with departmental officials

The Official joined the meeting at 2:12pm

Mr Chris Stewart, Director of Programme for Government and NICS of the Future, The Executive Office.

The Official 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 official for his attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Executive Office to seek assurance that the High Streets Task Force membership will include local stakeholders from across Northern Ireland to ensure regional balance across membership going forward.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Economy Minister to ask for consideration to be given to alternative schemes that could avail of the monies allocated to the High Street Voucher Scheme.

6. Interim Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service/The Executive Office Permanent Secretary – Introductory Briefing

The Officials joined the meeting at 3:01pm

Ms Jenny Pyper, Interim Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, The Executive Office.

Dr Mark Browne, Deputy Secretary of Strategic Policy, Equality and Good Relations, The Executive Office.

Dr Andrew McCormick, Director General, International Relations, The Executive Office.

The officials briefed Members on the work of the Interim Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

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.

7. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme for February to March 2021 and noted a number of changes.

8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office informing Members that as the Executive Office had not been consulted during the progress of the Finance (Taxation) Bill, it was unable to provide information on its implications for Northern Ireland.
- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Executive Office announcing the launch of a public consultation on a new Programme for Government Outcomes Framework on 25 January 2021, which will run for 8 weeks until 22 March 2021.
- iii. The Committee noted the Executive Office Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20.
- iv. The Committee noted an urgent oral statement by the First Minister and deputy First Minister to the Assembly on Tuesday 26 January 2021 on historical Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the withdrawal agreement and common frameworks and proposing that consideration be given to commissioning external research on the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol and the roles and relationships of the relevant bodies.
- vi. The Committee noted a response from the Committee for Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs regarding Committee Scrutiny of Common Frameworks.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Infrastructure to the First Minister and deputy First Minister highlighting the issues raised by the haulage and retail sectors regarding the impact on trade to Northern Ireland as a result of Brexit.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lords European Union Committee to Minister Gove, requesting an update on the Government proposals to facilitate parliamentary scrutiny of the decisions of the Joint Committee.

- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from Hillmount Garden Centre outlining the difficulties they are facing due to the current political and economic situation.
- x. The Committee Noted “SEUPB: Your EU Winter Edition”.

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

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

The meeting was adjourned at 4:13pm.

Mr Colin McGrath MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office