



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY 20 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 2:02pm.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed Members that the Chairperson's Liaison Group agreed that Committee Meetings should be held fully virtually where possible whilst COVID-19 restrictions are in place.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that from 27 January 2021 meetings would be held virtually.

The Chairperson referred to correspondence received from the North West Migrants Forum asking for support in the context of the attack on the Belfast Multi-Cultural Centre on 14 January 2021. The Chairperson reiterated the Committee's position against racism or sectarianism of any kind.

The Chairperson informed Members that a document outlining the range of issues raised by Historical Institutional Abuse Groups at the informal meeting with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson on 13 January was being drafted and would be circulated to Members in advance of the session with the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13 January 2021.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted an article from the Belfast Telegraph on 7 January 2021 reporting on a 10-point recovery plan for Covid by Professors Deirdre Heenan and Gabriel Scally which was referred to by Members during the briefing with the First Minister and deputy First Minister on 13th January 2021.

5. Historical Institutional Abuse: Engagement with Institutions

The following officials joined the meeting at 4:06pm

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

Gareth Johnston, Director, Victims and Survivors Division, The Executive Office.

The officials briefed Members on Historical Institutional Abuse Engagement with Institutions.

Christopher Stalford joined the meeting at 2:24pm.

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.

The meeting moved into closed session at 3:06pm.

The Committee considered certain matters raised in the briefing on Historical Institutional Abuse.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department to urgently investigate whether institutions have, or had, public liability insurance in place.

The meeting moved into public session at 3:16pm

6. The Executive Office Work Strands under New Decade, New Approach

The Committee considered correspondence from the Executive Office informing Members that the Executive has agreed to proceed with the public consultation phase of the Programme for Government based on a new draft Outcomes Framework.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing on the Programme for Government at a later stage in the consultation.

The following officials joined the meeting at 3:16pm

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

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

Siobhan Broderick, Assistant Secretary of Strategic Policy, Equality and Good Relations, The Executive Office.

Geoffrey Simpson, Head of Programme for Government and NICS of the Future,
The Executive Office.

The officials briefed Members the Executive Office on work strands under New Decade,
New Approach.

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

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

Officials agreed to provide further information on further amendments to the Ministerial
code following the Executive Committee (Functions) Act 2020.

Christopher Stalford left the meeting.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

7. Forward Work Programme

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

The Chairperson informed Members that the oral briefing on the Internal Market Act
scheduled for today's meeting had been withdrawn. He advised Members that the
Department for the Economy is now the lead Department for this issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content not to receive a briefing on the
Internal Market Act.

The Committee noted that whilst the 3rd February 2021 had been identified as a mutually
suitable date for the agreed joint meeting of the Seanad Special Select Committee on the
Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, Members may need to be
flexible due to potential changes in arrangements at the Seanad due to the pandemic. The
Committee agreed that in the event of a change in arrangements, a representative group of
Members will attend the meeting.

8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted an oral statement from the First Minister and deputy First
Minister to be made to the Assembly on Monday 18th January with relates to the
North South Ministerial Council Institutional Meeting held on 16 December and
the North South Ministerial Council Plenary Meeting held on 18 December 2020.

- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from Michael Gove MP to the House of Lords European Union Committee regarding scrutiny of Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.
- iii. The Committee noted a response from Michael Gove MP to the Committee's letter of 11 November 2020 regarding the future relationship with the European Union.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lords European Union Committee to Michael Gove MP regarding the operation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland since it came into force on 1 January 2021.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lords European Union Committee requesting clarification of which of the legislative proposals outlined in the Work Programme and its Annexes fall within the scope of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy to the First Minister and deputy First Minister, to highlight its concerns around the rigidity regarding the ring-fencing of Covid support funding.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy to the Minister for the Economy regarding the application process for Covid Restrictions Business Support Schemes.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from North West Migrants Forum seeking support for a statement from Belfast Multi-Cultural Association regarding the fire in their community hub in Belfast on Thursday 14 January 2021 (see Chairperson's business).
- ix. The Committee noted the Northern Ireland Assembly Brexit and Beyond Newsletter 18 January 2021.

9. Any Other Business

The Chairperson raised the announcement by the Finance Minister of a draft Budget 2020-21 on 18 January 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department for a written briefing outlining what implications the draft Budget has for the departmental budget.

10. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 27 January 2021 at 2:00pm, virtually via Starleaf.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10pm.

Mr Colin McGrath MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office