



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for The Executive Office

### Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021

**Meeting Location:** Room 30, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Mr Colin McGrath MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Trevor Lunn MLA

Ms Emma Sheerin MLA

**Present via Video Conferencing:**

Ms Diane Dodds MLA

Mr George Robinson

Mr Pat Sheehan MLA

Mr Christopher Stalford MLA

**Apologies:**

Mr John Stewart MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

**In Attendance:**

Mr Michael Potter (Assembly Clerk)

Ms Carla Campbell (Assistant Clerk)

Ms Sarah-Anne McKinley (Assistant Clerk)

Ms Alice O'Hare (Clerical Supervisor)

Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)



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The meeting commenced at 2:07pm in open session

**1. Apologies**

As Above.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson expressed the Committee's thanks to Martina Anderson MLA for her contribution to the Committee and wished her well in her new position.

The Chairperson informed Members that Ms Jayne Brady has taken up the post of Head of the Civil Service.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to invite Ms Brady to attend a Committee meeting and provide an introduction and update on the planned work.

The Chairperson reminded Members that the role of the Head of the Civil Service has been changed and no longer includes the role of Permanent Secretary for the Executive Office. The Chairperson informed Members that Mr Denis McMahan has taken up the post of Permanent Secretary for the Executive Office.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to invite Mr McMahan to attend a Committee meeting and provide an introduction and update on the planned work.

The Chairperson advised Members that any communication from the Committee staff would be sent only to the official Member's Assembly email address.



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The Chairperson informed Members that, as agreed, a joint letter from committees of the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly had been submitted to the House of Lords European Union Committee in relation to the UK EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly.

The Chair informed Members that, during recess, he had met with Clare Adamson MSP convener of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee to update each other on the work their respective committees.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that, should matters of common interest arise, a meeting between the Committees would be scheduled.

The Chairperson referred to a letter from Dianne Dodds MLA raising the issue of Covid-19 support for the travel industry.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to schedule oral briefings with the travel sector on the difficulties faced by the industry due to Covid-19.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request an oral briefing from the Executive Office on support provided to the travel sector and any plans for further support.

The Chairperson welcomed the announcement that the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme had opened for applications.

The Chairperson referred to correspondence from the Committee to the Executive Office calling for the report of the Working Group on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition to be published. He informed Members that this report, although submitted, had still not been published.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request an oral briefing from the Junior Ministers on the status of the report on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition.

Members discussed the high rates of Covid-19 transmission in Northern Ireland and the scrutiny of the Covid Taskforce.



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*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Executive Office to ask for an update on the work of the Covid Taskforce.

*George Robinson joined the meeting at 2:25pm.*

Members discussed Peace Plus funding and the potential for delays.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Special EU Programme Body to ask for information on the processes for approval of the Peace Plus funding and how decisions will be taken.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek further information on the operation of Community Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund.

### **3. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

### **4. Matters Arising**

None.

### **5. Climate Change Bill – Ms Clare Bailey MLA**

The witnesses joined the meeting at 1:56pm.



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- Ms Clare Bailey MLA, The Green Party
- Mr Phil Carson, RSPB
- Mr Anurag Deb, Queen's University

The Member briefed Committee Members on the Climate Change Bill.

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

*Christopher Stalford joined the meeting at 2:34pm.*

*Christopher Stalford left the meeting at 3:09pm.*

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Clerk would provide a summary of Members' questions and suggestions to the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for the Committee meeting on 22 September 2021.

### **6. Scrutiny of Arms-Length Bodies – Victims and Survivors Service**

Members considered a written briefing from the Victims and Survivors Service.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Executive Office to request a timeline for the appointment of a Victims' Commissioner.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Executive Office and the Victims and Survivors Service to request an update on progress on any plan to expand the Victims and Survivors Service to include survivors of Historical Clerical Childhood Abuse.



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### **7. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme for September to October 2021.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to reschedule the scrutiny of the Maze/ Long Kesh Development Corporation to the meeting of 13 October 2021.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to schedule a number of oral briefings with the Executive Office on Covid Recovery.

*George Robinson left the meeting at 3:50pm.*

### **8. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee noted written Ministerial statements from the First Minister and deputy First Minister on Covid from 22 July to 6 September 2021.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the First Minister and deputy First Minister to the Committee for Justice in relation to funding for the Victims' Payment Scheme.
- iii. The Committee noted the Executive Office Consolidated Covid-19 Recovery Plan.
- iv. The Committee noted the Executive Office response to the Committee's query on raising issues surrounding the European Union Settlement Scheme and an update on the Travel Agent Scheme payments.



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- v. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office addressing queries raised with the Committee by an individual in relation to Mother and Baby/Magdalene Laundry institutions.
- vi. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office providing further information in relation to the June Monitoring Round.
- vii. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office to the Committee for Justice providing an update on the work being taken forward in relation to the violence against women and girls strategy.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office in relation to approval to commence a research project on historical clerical child abuse.
- ix. The Committee noted a speech by Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič which he delivered to Queen's University Belfast on 10 September 2021.
- x. The Committee noted press speaking points by Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič in Belfast, following his two-day visit to Northern Ireland – 10 September 2021.
- xi. The Committee noted a statement by Lord Frost, Minister of State in the Cabinet Office, on the UK Government proposals set out in its 21 July Command Paper "Northern Ireland Protocol: the way forward" – 6 September 2021.
- xii. The Committee noted a statement by the European Commission following the UK announcement regarding the operation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland – 6 September 2021.
- xiii. The Committee noted the Secretary of State's speech to the British Irish Association Conference on 4 September 2021.
- xiv. The Committee noted Lord Frost's speech at the British-Irish Association – where now on the Northern Ireland Protocol – 4 September 2021.
- xv. The Committee noted a UK Government press release – UK announces majority contribution to PEACE PLUS funding – 4 September 2021.



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- xvi. The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lords Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee to the Executive Office inviting the First Minister and deputy First Minister to give oral evidence to the Committee on the Common Frameworks Programme.
- xvii. The Committee noted a response from European Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič in relation to recognition of professional qualifications.
- xviii. The Committee noted a response from the Financial Secretary to the Chair of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland Sub-Committee in relation to commission implementing regulation (EU) 2021/414 of 8 March 2021 on technical arrangements for developing, maintaining and employing electronic systems for the exchange and storage of information under regulation (EU) No. 952/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council.
- xix. The Committee considered correspondence from the NI Assembly European Affairs Manager in relation to correspondence between the Northern Ireland Office and the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee relating to a European Commission proposal for a Directive on pay transparency.  
  
*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department for Communities to request an update on the process for the human rights and equality protections under Article 2 of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol.
- xx. The Committee noted a response from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in relation to Article 2 of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland and European Commission Proposal on Pay Transparency.
- xxi. The Committee noted the House of Lords European Affairs Committee *Report from the Sub-Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland: Introductory Report – 29 July 2021*.
- xxii. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office providing details of the procedural steps necessary to facilitate final approval of the Peace Plus Programme.





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- xxiii. The Committee noted a series of “non-papers” in the fields of medicines and sanitary and phytosanitary measures published by the European Commission in the framework of the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.
- xxiv. The Committee noted the North South Ministerial Council twenty sixth Plenary meeting Joint Communiqué – 30 July 2021.
- xxv. The Committee considered an oral statement by the Secretary of State on the UK Government Command Paper *Northern Ireland Protocol: the way forward*. The Chairperson informed Members that the Assembly Research and Information Service have prepared a paper on this subject which will be considered at the meeting of 22 September 2021.
- xxvi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office providing information on a meeting of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Specialised Committee on 19 July 2021.
- xxvii. The Committee noted a UK Government Command Paper *Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland’s Past* – July 2021.
- xxviii. The Committee noted a minute of the first meeting of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement Partnership Council on 9 June 2021.
- xxix. The Committee noted the Executive Office Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021.
- xxx. The Committee considered a call for evidence from the Committee for Justice on the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill and the implications for the Executive Office.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that there were no comments to add.
- xxxi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance in relation to a report on an Independent Fiscal Council for Northern Ireland.



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- xxxii. The Committee noted a call for evidence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on Climate Change (No.2) Bill.
- xxxiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights to the Executive Office requesting a further update on the status of the panel of experts.
- xxxiv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Commission for Victims and Survivors accepting an invitation to brief the Committee on 13 October 2021.
- xxxv. The Committee noted the Investment Strategy Northern Ireland Investing Activity Report – July 2021.
- xxxvi. The Committee noted the Investment Strategy Northern Ireland Investing Activity Report – August 2021.
- xxxvii. The Committee noted Pivotal Public Policy Forum NI *Pivotal Tracker – policy priorities for Northern Ireland* – September 2021.
- xxxviii. The Committee noted a press release from Ulster University “Ulster University opens the doors to its first medical students with a new School of Medicine in the heart of the Community” -23 August 2021.
- xxxix. The Committee noted an invitation from Carnegie UK to their embedding wellbeing in Northern Ireland final event on Wednesday 8 September 2021.

### **9. Any Other Business**

The Chairperson informed Members that Good Relations Week 2021 will commence on 20 September 2021 and referred Members to the Community Relations Council website for further details.



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**10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 22 September 2021 at 2:00pm, in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:56pm.

**Colin McGrath MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office**