



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 23 March 2022

Meeting Location: Room 30 Parliament Buildings

Present: Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan
Mr Trevor Lunn MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr John Stewart (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Easton MLA
Mr Pádraig Delargy MLA

Apologies: Ms Emma Sheerin MLA

In Attendance: Mr Michael Potter (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Sarah-Anne McKinley (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Alison Belshaw (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Christopher McAfee (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.05pm in open session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairperson Business

The Chairperson updated the Committee that the Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill passed Further Consideration Stage on 21 March 2022 and that the Final Stage of the Bill is scheduled to take place on 24 March 2022.

The Chairperson updated the Committee that the Emergency Exceptional Circumstances (Energy Prices and other Contingencies) Bill did not pass pre-introduction checks will not be introduced to the Assembly.

The Chairperson updated the Committee in relation to the UK Government's Nationality and Borders Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the UK and Irish Governments in relation to the Committee's concerns surrounding the Nationality and Borders Bill.

The Chairperson reminded the Committee about previous correspondence sent by the Committee to Queen's University School of Medicine asking particular questions in relation to the acquisition of bodies from institutions identified in the research on mother and baby homes.

The Chairperson updated the Committee that a reply from Queen's University had now been received.

The Chairperson updated the Members that the Committee are calling for an independent investigation into the circumstances of the historical acquisition of bodies for anatomical study through a press release.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to approve the draft press release subject to workhouse institutions being included.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Human Tissue Authority to request background information on the historical acquisition of bodies for anatomical study and to advise that the successor Committee for the Executive Office will be looking at this issue.

The Chairperson updated the Committee that the Legacy Report recommends that the successor Committee of the Executive Office takes this issue forward in conjunction with the successor Committee for Health.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 March 2022.

4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson updated the Committee that responses to Member queries from the oral briefing with the Northern Ireland Assembly EU Affairs Manager at last week's meeting was sent to all Members.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Consumer Council to request information in relation to businesses no longer supplying to Northern Ireland following the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union.

The Chairperson updated the Committee that there are 40 items of outstanding correspondence for the year 2021/2022.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that any outstanding correspondence and any correspondence received after today's meeting will be passed on to the successor Committee.

The Chairperson reminded the Committee about correspondence sent requesting the junior Ministers to brief the Committee on the work they have been undertaking since the resignation of the First Minister.

The Chairperson updated the Committee that a response from the Permanent Secretary detailed how junior Ministers would be unable to brief the Committee under the current circumstances.

The Chairperson also updated the Committee that a request for the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service to brief the Committee on the Department's arrangements for welcoming Ukrainian refugees was also declined, but a written briefing paper was provided.

The Chairperson stated the Committee's view that departmental officials should attend the Committee when asked to do so, regardless of the presence of a Minister.

The Chairperson expressed her appreciation of the work and engagement of those officials who have come before the Committee and particularly to the Departmental Assembly Liaison Section for its important contribution to the work of the Committee.

5. Committee Legacy - Consideration of draft Report

The Committee considered the final Committee Legacy Report for the 2017-2022 mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that they were content with report subject to recommendations from the Northern Ireland Audit Office report into the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) in terms of engagement with the Department being added to the Legacy Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed final financial information from today's meeting being added to the appendices of the Legacy Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to approve today's minutes, that covers the approval of the Legacy Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Legacy Report to be published following the agreed additions.

6. Forward Work Plan

The Chairperson updated the Committee that a Forward Work Programme will be compiled following a successor Committee for the Executive Office being established.

7. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted a report from Joseph Rowntree titled 'Poverty in Northern Ireland.'
- ii. The Committee noted a press release from the Northern Ireland Office regarding additional funding for the International Fund for Ireland.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office regarding the Ukrainian conflict and related refugee crisis.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Truth Recovery NI in relation to mother and baby homes and the historical acquisition of bodies for anatomical study.

- v. The Committee noted a draft press release holding page from the Committee regarding the Queen's University School of Medicine acquisition of bodies from institutions identified in research on mother and baby homes.
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from Rosetta Trust in relation to the Historical Institutional Abuse official apology.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Finance Minister in relation to UK Community Renewal Fund.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from Rachel Woods MLA regarding the Call for Views on the Equally Safe and Domestic Abuse Strategies.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Rachel Woods MLA informing her of the Committee's stakeholder event feedback from the 24 March 2022 which was sent to the Department and Justice and Health Committees, advising that the Department has assured the Committee that written submissions have been received and are being considered as consultation responses.

- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office in relation to the Feminist Recovery Plan.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the NIA EU Affairs Manager regarding EU proposals on medicines.
- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from the NIA EU Affairs Manager in relation to the Fourteenth European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks statutory report.
- xii. The Committee noted a report from the Sub-Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/ Northern Ireland titled 'Scrutiny of EU legislative proposals within the scope of the Protocol on Ireland/ Northern Ireland.'
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Welsh Parliament Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee regarding the first meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee on the 23 March 2022.

8. Any Other Business

The Chairperson updated the Committee how this was the final meeting of the Committee before dissolution of the Assembly on the 28 March 2022.

The Chairperson thanked Members for their contribution and effort as Members of the Committee.

The Chairperson thanked the Deputy Chairperson for his partnership working on the Committee.

The Chairperson expressed her best wishes to those standing in the election and to Trevor Lunn MLA who is retiring at the end of the current mandate.

The Chairperson thanked Committee staff for their work during the mandate.

The Chairperson thanked the former Chairperson of the Committee of the Executive Office Colin McGrath MLA for his work during his tenure as Chairperson in the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to approve today's minutes of proceedings.

The meeting was adjourned at 2.32pm.

Sinéad McLaughlin MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office