



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2020

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Paul Givan MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Doug Beattie MLA
Mr Gordon Dunne MLA
Mr Paul Frew MLA
Mr Patsy McGlone MLA
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA
Ms Rachel Woods MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Peter Madine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Miss Leanne Johnston (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Allison Mealey (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.00 p.m. in open session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the oral evidence sessions should be reported by Hansard.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 4 February 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 6 February 2020.

3. Matters Arising

Budget Bill 2020 and Departmental Resource Requirements

The Committee considered a memo from the Committee for Finance regarding the timescale for departments to provide details of resource requirements for 2020/21 to the Department for Finance and for the introduction of the Budget Bill to the Assembly.

The Committee noted that an oral evidence session on the Department of Justice resource requirements for 2020-21 had been provisionally scheduled for the meeting on 20 February.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send a copy of any information received from the Department of Justice on its resource requirements for 2020-21 to the Committee for Finance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Justice to emphasise the importance of the Committee getting as much detailed information as was available on the 2020-21 budget bids/requirements, pressures and priority areas to enable it to assess the position in advance of the Assembly debates on the budget.

Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the updated Forward Work Programme for February 2020.

Domestic Abuse Bill

The Chairperson informed the Committee that he and the Deputy Chairperson had met with the Minister for Justice informally on Monday 10 February, and took the opportunity to emphasise the Committee's wish for the Domestic Abuse Bill to be introduced as soon as possible.

4. Overview Briefing on the PSNI Budget and Key Policing Priorities/Challenges

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.03 p.m.:

Mr Simon Byrne, Chief Constable, PSNI
Mr Mark Hamilton, Deputy Chief Constable, PSNI
Mr Mark McNaughten, Director of Finance and Support Services, PSNI

The Chief Constable provided an overview briefing on the PSNI budget, key policing priorities and challenges.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials agreed to provide further information on a number of issues.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the Chief Constable and officials for their attendance.

Mr McGlone left the meeting at 4.45 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 4.45p.m.

The meeting resumed at 5.01 p.m.

Present: Mr Paul Givan MLA (Chairperson)
 Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Doug Beattie MLA
 Mr Gordon Dunne MLA
 Mr Paul Frew MLA
 Mr Pat Sheehan MLA
 Ms Rachel Woods MLA

5. Overview Briefing on the Northern Ireland Prison Service

The following officials joined the meeting at 5.01p.m.:

Mr Ronnie Armour, Director General, Northern Ireland Prison Service
Mr Austin Treacy, Acting Director of Prisons, Northern Ireland Prison Service
Mr Steven McCourt, Deputy Director of Rehabilitation, Northern Ireland Prison Service
Mr Brendan Giffen, Head of Strategy and Governance, Northern Ireland Prison Service

The officials provided an overview briefing on the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Beattie left the meeting at 5.32 p.m.

Mr Sheehan left the meeting at 5.38 p.m.

The Chairperson, Mr Paul Givan, left the meeting at 5.46 p.m. and the Deputy Chairperson, Linda Dillon chaired the meeting.

The Chairperson, Mr Paul Givan, rejoined the meeting at 6.08 p.m. and resumed chairing the meeting.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

6. Examiner of Statutory Rules – Second Report of Session 2019-2020

The Committee considered the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Second Report of Session 2019-2020 that covered three negative resolution Statutory Rules considered by the Committee at the meeting on 4 February 2020.

The Committee noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had no issues to raise with the technical elements of the following Statutory Rules:

- S.R. 2020/10: The Judicial Pensions (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020
- S.R. 2020/11: The County Court (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2020
- S.R. 2020/13: The Police Service of Northern Ireland (Amendment) Regulations 2020

7. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the House of Lords European Union Committee inviting Members to attend a working lunch on Tuesday 25 February in Parliament Buildings to discuss how it might work with Assembly Committees on scrutiny of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland and other issues arising from the UK's exit from the EU and requesting views on the European Commission's Recommendation for a Council Decision authorising the opening of negotiations for a new partnership with the United Kingdom and the UK Government's written ministerial statement of 3 February on UK/EU relations.

Agreed: Members agreed to advise the Clerk if they wished to attend the lunch along with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.

Agreed: Members agreed to advise the Clerk if they wished to participate in the roundtable seminar in the morning of Tuesday 25 February or observe the afternoon evidence sessions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Assembly EU Affairs Officer to provide a briefing in closed session on the UK's exit from the EU and justice related issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Justice and request a briefing paper setting out the position on all Brexit-related justice issues.

- ii. The Committee considered an invitation from Mid Ulster Council to hold a Committee Meeting at a council facility.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to give further consideration to holding a meeting at Mid Ulster Council premises when considering its strategic priorities and programme of visits.

- iii. The Committee considered an invitation from the Bar of Northern Ireland, to an event on "Defending Democracy – The Law in an Era of Fake News" on Wednesday 26 February in the Inn of Court, Royal Courts of Justice.

Agreed: Members agreed to advise the Clerk if they wished to attend the event.

- iv. The Committee noted a letter from the Department of Justice providing information on the dates for publication of Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service quarterly statistical bulletins on civil, criminal and family business across all court tiers.

8. Chairperson's Business

Request from the Human Rights Commission for a Meeting

The Chairperson informed Members that he had received a request from the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission for an introductory meeting and arrangements will be made for this to take place.

Request from the Chair and Chief Executive of the Consumer Council for a Meeting

The Chairperson informed Members that he had received a request from the Chair and Chief Executive of the Consumer Council for a meeting. Given the work highlighted in the letter was not justice related, the Chairperson advised the Committee that he had asked the Clerk to contact them regarding any future justice-related work that may be relevant to the Committee.

Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Bill

The Chairperson raised the issue of the Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Bill currently progressing through Westminster, which would not apply to Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Justice to request information on what communication/discussion had taken place on including Northern Ireland in the legislation and what engagement would now take place on the implications for Northern Ireland of not being included in the legislation.

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 20 February at 2.00 p.m. in Room 30. Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 6.18 p.m.

Paul Givan MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Justice