



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY 16 JUNE 2020

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

- Present: Mr Paul Givan MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Doug Beattie MLA
Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA
Ms Jemma Dolan MLA
Mr Gordon Dunne MLA
Mr Paul Frew MLA
Ms Rachel Woods MLA
- Apologies: Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Emma Rogan MLA
- In Attendance: Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Peter Madine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

The meeting commenced at 1:01 p.m. in open session.

1. Apologies

As above.

The Clerk informed the Committee that, under Standing Order 115(6), Ms Dillon and Ms Rogan had delegated authority to Ms Dolan to vote on their behalf.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9 June 2020.

3. Matters Arising

Correspondence from the Committee for Education on the Transfer of Functions Order for the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST)

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Education advising that it was content with the proposal to transfer the statutory function to make changes to the procedural regulations relating to SENDIST from the Department of Education to the Department of Justice by way of a Transfer of Functions Order to be brought forward by the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

The Committee also noted that the Committee for Education had requested further information from the Department of Justice regarding the Tribunal.

Scheduling of the briefing on EU Exit and Justice Related Issues

The Committee considered a proposal to schedule the oral evidence session with Department of Justice officials on the UK's exit from the EU and developments in respect of justice-related issues for the meeting on Thursday 2 July.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule the briefing on EU exit and justice related issues on the afternoon of Thursday 2 July 2020.

4. Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Further Proposals for Oral Evidence Sessions

The Committee discussed further proposals for oral evidence sessions on the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite CaraFriend, HereNI, the Rainbow Project, Evangelical Alliance and the Migrant Centre to give oral evidence on the Bill at the meeting on Thursday 25 June 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Bar of Northern Ireland, the Public Prosecution Service and the Human Rights Commission to give oral evidence on the Bill on Thursday 2 July 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to several organisations and encourage them to submit any written views on the Bill from their particular perspective.

The Committee discussed the proposed informal, private meetings with victims of domestic violence and abuse who had indicated that they would be willing to meet with Members.

Agreed: Committee staff would liaise with Women's Aid Federation and the Men's Advisory Project and make appropriate arrangements.

5. Criminal Finances Act 2017 – Proposals to Commence the Devolved Provisions Relating to Northern Ireland

The Committee considered further information provided by the Minister of Justice on her proposal to commence the devolved provisions in the Criminal Finance Act 2017 and noted the views of the NI Policing Board on the matter.

The Committee noted the intention of the Minister of Justice to write to the Home Secretary seeking commencement of the devolved provisions in the Criminal Finances Act 2017 for Northern Ireland and to issue a written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly.

6. The Crime (Overseas Production Orders) Act 2019 – Commencement of the Devolved Provisions Relating to Northern Ireland

The Committee considered further information provided by the Minister of Justice on her proposal to commence the devolved provisions in the Crime (Overseas Production Orders) Act 2019 and noted the views of the NI Policing Board on the matter.

The Committee noted the intention of the Minister of Justice to write to the Home Secretary seeking commencement of the devolved provisions in the Crime (Overseas Production Orders) Act 2019 for Northern Ireland and to issue a written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly.

7. UK Wide Regulations to Maintain Northern Ireland Alignment to the Making Available on the Market and Supervision of Explosives for Civil Use Directive 2014/28/EU

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Justice advising of her agreement for UK-wide Regulations to be brought forward by the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Department to amend the Regulations in relation to the Making Available on the Market and Supervision of Explosives for Civil Use Directive 2014/28/EU so that Northern Ireland maintains alignment with the EU Directive.

8. New Legal Framework for the Personal Injury Discount Rate – Proposed Consultation

The Committee considered information from the Department of Justice on a proposed consultation on whether or not the legal framework for setting the personal injury discount rate should be changed and if so, how.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to note the planned consultation and consider the matter further when the Department of Justice provides the results of the consultation and proposed way forward.

9. June 2020 Monitoring Round

The Committee noted the information provided by the Department of Justice on its June 2020 Monitoring Round position.

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered a response from the Department of Justice to the Department of Health providing details of its funding position relating to the seven year Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Health and request a copy of the information it receives covering all Departments.

- ii. The Committee considered a copy of a response from the Minister of Justice to an individual in relation to issues raised by him regarding the purpose of the new Mental Health Champion.

Agreed: The Committee agree to write to the individual to advise that it has been updated by the Department of Justice on the range of justice issues he has discussed with the Minister and officials and notes he is pursuing the issues regarding the Mental Health Champion with the Department of Health.

- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Justice providing an update on the on-going engagement with the UK Government at both Ministerial and official level on the Counter-Terrorism (Sentencing and Release) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the matter would be placed on the agenda for consideration at the meeting on 23 June 2020.

- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the approach of the PSNI to policing the Black Lives Matter protests and the issuing of fines.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reply to the individual advising that the NI Policing Board has responsibility for scrutinising operational matters in relation to the PSNI and providing relevant contact details.

- v. The Committee considered a request by the Committee for Communities to share with the Department of Justice correspondence in relation to consideration of those with visual impairments when applying social distancing measures.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Justice.

The Committee noted the following:

- vi. A letter from the Department of Justice advising that the Minister of Health had made The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and these had been laid in the Assembly.
- vii. A response from the Attorney General following the evidence session on 14 May 2020 regarding a proposed contact tracing app and any possible human rights or privacy issues.

- viii. The Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland Report on an Unannounced Inspection of Hydebank Wood Secure College.
- ix. The Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland Report on an Unannounced Inspection of Ash House Women's Prison.

11. Chairperson's Business

None.

12. Any Other Business

The matter of the Attorney General for Northern Ireland completing his term of office at the end of June and what plans are in place to appoint a successor was raised.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister and request information on the timescale and process to identify a successor and what interim arrangements would be put in place in the meantime.

13. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 18 June 2020 at 10.00 a.m. in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.26 p.m.

Mr Paul Givan MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Justice