



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

THURSDAY 18 JUNE 2020

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Paul Givan MLA (Chairperson)  
Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Deputy 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

\* These Members attended the meeting via Starleaf video conferencing.

Apologies: Ms Emma Rogan MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)  
Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Miss Leanne Johnston (Clerical Supervisor)

*The meeting commenced at 10.03 a.m. in open session.*

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

**1. Apologies**

As above.

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

**2. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 11 June 2020.

### 3. Matters Arising

#### Item 1 – Department of Justice response providing further information on the registration of drones

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Justice providing clarification on the registration of drones and the institutions in Northern Ireland to which the devolved provisions in the Air Traffic Management and Unmanned Aircraft Bill would apply.

#### Item 2 – Plenary Debates on Legislative Consent Motions

The Committee noted that the debates on the Legislative Consent Motions on the Air Traffic Management and Unmanned Aircraft Bill and Domestic Abuse Bill were scheduled to take place on Tuesday 23 June 2020.

### 4. Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Evidence Session – Victim Support NI

Ms Geraldine Hanna, Chief Executive, Victim Support NI, joined the meeting at 10.06 a.m. via video conferencing.

Ms Hanna outlined a number of issues in relation to the provisions of the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill and highlighted other relevant areas not currently covered in the Bill.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Hanna for her attendance and she left the meeting.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request clarification of what legislative changes, if any, are currently preventing the introduction of Operation Encompass in Northern Ireland, how these can be addressed or, in the absence of any legislative requirements, what is required to implement the scheme.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to commission a research paper from Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) on best practice in other jurisdictions regarding the appointment of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner or alternative approaches.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department for Communities regarding the provision of funding, including social security benefits, for victims of domestic abuse whose immigration status prevents them from accessing public funds.

**5. Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Evidence Session – NSPCC and Barnardo’s NI**

Mr Neil Anderson, Northern Ireland Head of Service, NSPCC and Ms Michele Janes, Head of Barnardo’s NI, joined the meeting via teleconferencing at 11.04 a.m.

Mr Anderson and Ms Janes outlined a number of issues in relation to the provisions of the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill and highlighted other relevant areas not currently covered in the Bill.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance and they left the meeting.

**6. Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Evidence Session – The Attorney General for Northern Ireland**

The Attorney General for Northern Ireland, Mr John Larkin QC, joined the meeting at 11.45 a.m.

The Attorney General outlined several issues in relation to the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

**7. The Attorney General for Northern Ireland’s Human Rights Guidance for the Public Prosecution Service and the Police Service of Northern Ireland on the Application of Section 5 of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 to Victims of Serious Sexual Offences and those to whom they make disclosure - Evidence Session - The Attorney General for Northern Ireland**

The Attorney General provided an overview of his Draft Human Rights Guidance for the Public Prosecution Service and the Police Service of Northern Ireland to assist consideration of investigations into or prosecutions for the offence of failing to report a serious sexual offence under Section 5 of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967.

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

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

*Mr Dunne left the meeting at 12.35 p.m.*

The Chairperson acknowledged that the Attorney General’s term of office would come to an end at the end of June and placed on record the Committee’s appreciation of his willing and constructive engagement with the Committee and the assistance he had provided during his tenure.

At the invitation of the Chairperson, the Attorney General outlined some of the key work he and his office had undertaken during his 10-years in post, acknowledged the work of the Committee and placed on record his appreciation of the facilitation of his Human Rights Guidance.

The Chairperson thanked the Attorney General for his attendance and wished him well for the future and he left the meeting.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content with the Attorney General's draft guidance for the Public Prosecution Service and the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the SL1 for the Statutory Rule to bring the guidance into operation will be considered at the Committee meeting on 23 June 2020.

## **8. Chairperson's Business**

None.

## **9. Any Other Business**

(i) The Deputy Chairperson requested that a short paper setting out the background on Operation Encompass and how it functions is provided to Members.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request a short paper on Operation Encompass from the Department of Justice.

(ii) The Committee noted that an oral briefing on justice-related issues arising from the UK's exit from the EU with Department of Justice officials had been scheduled for 2 July and a research paper would be available before the briefing.

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

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 23 June 2020 at 1.00 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.59 p.m.

**Mr Paul Givan MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Justice**