



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

THURSDAY 2 JULY 2020

Room 30, 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 video conferencing.

Apologies: Ms Emma Rogan MLA

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)

*The meeting commenced at 10.08 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 25 June 2020.

### **3. Matters Arising**

#### Item 1 – Proposed Department of Justice consultation on amendments to the Human Trafficking Act

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Justice to the issues it had raised regarding the proposed consultation on amendments to the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (NI) 2015.

### **4. Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Up-date**

The Committee considered information from the Department of Justice on a number of developments relating to issues covered by the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill, other domestic and sexual violence and abuse initiatives and Covid-19 related domestic abuse work.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request a copy of the draft terms of reference for the Review of Law on Strangulation and details of the membership of the expert reference group and the organisations involved in it.

The Committee considered an update on the written evidence received on the Bill and the areas on which further information and/or research had been requested.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to send the issues raised in the evidence received on the Bill to the Department for a written response to assist its deliberations on the Bill.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request clarification regarding the planned pilot of Operation Encompass.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request further information on the engagement that has taken place with the voluntary sector regarding the planned new advocacy service for victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

### **5. Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Evidence Session – Bar of Northern Ireland**

The following representatives joined the meeting at 10.17 a.m. via video conferencing:

Ms Sarah Ramsey QC, Chair, the Bar of Northern Ireland

Mr David Mulholland, Chief Executive, Bar of Northern Ireland

Ms Ramsey 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.

Ms Ramsey agreed to provide further information on one issue.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

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

## **6. Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Evidence Session – Public Prosecution Service**

The following officials joined the meeting at 10.53 a.m.:

Mr Ciaran McQuillan, Assistant Director and Head of Serious Crime Unit, Public Prosecution Service

Ms Caroline Conway, Principal Public Prosecutor, Policy Unit and Domestic Violence Policy Lead, Public Prosecution Service

The officials 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 officials for their attendance and they left the meeting.

*The Committee agreed to take agenda items 9, 10 and 11 next.*

## **7. SR 2020/93: The Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Prescribed Police Stations) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020**

The Committee had considered SR 2020/93: The Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Prescribed Police Stations) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 at its meeting on 23 June 2020, and agreed that it had no objection to the Rule subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report.

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

## **8. Correspondence**

There were no items of correspondence.

## **9. Chairperson's Business.**

FoI Requests

The Committee considered arrangements for dealing with Freedom of Information requests during the summer recess period.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to submit, during the recess period, views on the releasing or withholding of the information in any non-routine/contentious Freedom of Information requests received by the Committee.

#### Request for a meeting

The Chairperson advised the Committee that a request from an individual, who had already submitted written evidence on the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill, to meet informally with Members had been received.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to hold an informal private meeting with the individual.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.25 a.m.*

*The meeting recommenced at 11.55 a.m.*

Present: Mr Paul Givan MLA (Chairperson)  
Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Doug Beattie MLA  
Ms Sinead Bradley MLA\*  
Ms Jemma Dolan MLA\*  
Mr Gordon Dunne MLA  
Ms Rachel Woods MLA\*

\* These Members attended the meeting via video conferencing.

#### **10. Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Evidence Session – Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission**

The following representatives joined the meeting at 11.55 a.m.:

Mr Les Allamby, Chief Commissioner, NI Human Rights Commission

Ms Hannah Russell, Director of Legal, Research and Investigations and Advice to Government, NI Human Rights Commission

The representatives 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 representatives agreed to provide further information on one issue.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

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

The Chairperson advised the Committee that he had received a copy of a Report on parental alienation in the UK, including Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the report should be circulated to Members for information and included in the Electronic Bill Folder.

*The meeting was suspended at 12:38 p.m.*

*The meeting recommenced at 2:02 p.m.*

Present: Mr Paul Givan MLA (Chairperson)  
Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Doug Beattie MLA  
Ms Sinead Bradley MLA\*  
Ms Jemma Dolan MLA\*  
Mr Paul Frew MLA  
Ms Rachel Woods MLA

\* These Members attended the meeting via video conferencing.

## **11. EU Exit Related Issues – Evidence Session with Department of Justice Officials**

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

Ms Linda Hamilton, Deputy Director, Gillen Implementation and EU Exit, Department of Justice

Mr Graham Walker, Head of EU Preparations, Department of Justice

The following official joined the meeting via teleconferencing at 2.12 p.m.

Mr Billy Stevenson, EU Preparations, Department of Justice

Ms Hamilton outlined the key justice issues and priorities relating to EU Exit and the current position.

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

The officials agreed to provide further information on a range of issues including details of what is being proposed for each key measure, the likely implications compared to the current position and the contingency plans for each in the event of a No Deal situation.

The officials also agreed to provide up-dates on any developments during the summer period.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

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

## **12. Any Other Business**

The Domestic Abuse Bill currently progressing through Westminster was raised.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that a summary of the areas included in the Westminster Bill that are not currently covered by the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill and any proposed additions/changes being considered to the Westminster Bill should be prepared to assist the Committee.

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

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 3 September 2020 at a time to be confirmed unless an urgent matter arises that requires the Committee to meet earlier.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

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