



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY 30 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.

Mr Beattie joined the meeting at 1:02 p.m.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 23 June 2020.

3. Matters Arising

Letter from the Minister of Justice Regarding the Northern Ireland Temporary Resting Place

The Committee considered a letter from the Minister of Justice on the Northern Ireland Temporary Resting Place in which she extended an invitation to visit the facility to help set a context for its future use.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that a visit to the Northern Ireland Temporary Resting Place should be arranged in the autumn.

Ms Woods joined the meeting at 1.03 p.m.

Committee Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted an updated Committee Forward Work Programme which included a briefing by the Senior Assistant Bill Clerk on the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill at the meeting on 3 September 2020.

Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Informal Meetings with Individuals

The Committee considered the proposed arrangements for the informal private meetings with individuals on the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the arrangements for the informal private meetings.

Ms Dolan joined the meeting at 1.06 p.m.

4. **SR 2020/113 The Attorney General’s Human Rights Guidance (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 Disclosures) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020**

The Committee considered SR 2020/113 The Attorney General’s Human Rights Guidance (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 Disclosures) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020 which brings into operation on 29 June 2020 the Attorney General’s Human Rights Guidance for the Public Prosecution Service and the PSNI 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.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2020/113 The Attorney General’s Human Rights Guidance (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 Disclosures) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ report, had no objection to the Rule.

5. Department of Justice Finance Up-date – Written Briefing

The Committee noted an update on financial issues provided by the Department of Justice which covered a range of issues including a revised timetable for the laying of the Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20, potential emerging cost issues, the Department's input to the NI Audit Office on expenditure on Covid-19 related activities and a breakdown of the support provided to the NI Prison Service by third sector organisations.

The Committee discussed the correspondence between the Department of Justice and the Executive Office and the Minister of Justice and the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the victims' pension scheme, copies of which the Department of Justice had provided.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Justice and the Executive Office to request further information and clarification on a range of issues.

6. Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Seven Year Strategy – Up-date on Year Five Action Plan and Overview of Progress against the Year Four Action Plan

The Committee noted information provided by the Department of Justice on key actions to be included in the Year Five Action Plan relating to the Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Seven Year Strategy and progress made against the Year Four Action Plan and the timescale for the publication of the action plan and progress report.

Agreed: Consideration of the Year Five Action Plan and Report on progress against the Year Four Action Plan will be scheduled when both are available.

7. Use of Live Link Technology for Police Detention/Interviews - Results of the Targeted Consultation and Proposed Way Forward

The Committee considered information provided by the Department of Justice on the results of the targeted consultation on the use of Live Link technology for police detention and interviews and the proposed way forward.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information on how the issues raised in the consultation regarding the use of live links technology for police interviews have been addressed and the Equality Screening/Impact Assessments undertaken.

8. Minor Changes to the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support For Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 – Proposed Consultation

The Committee considered information provided by the Department of Justice on a proposed eight-week public consultation during July and August on two potential

amendments to the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support For Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 and expressed concerns regarding the timing of and timescale for the consultation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information on the rationale for the proposed removal of the statutory requirement to publish a strategy at least once every year, whether the Department had met this statutory requirement since the Act has been in place and the rationale for the timing and timescale of the proposed consultation.

9. Access NI - Annual Performance and Activity Report 2019-20

The Committee considered a copy of the AccessNI Performance and Activity Report for 2019/20.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information on a range of issues.

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from two individuals regarding court proceedings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the individuals to contact one of their constituency MLAs for support.

- ii. The Committee considered the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) Report on Child Sexual Exploitation in Northern Ireland and the Criminal Justice System's Response which highlighted a range of concerns and made a number of strategic and operational recommendations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a copy of the response from the Department of Justice and justice bodies to the findings and recommendations in the report following which consideration will be given to scheduling oral briefing sessions.

The Committee noted the following:

- iii. A Research and Statistical Bulletin on 'Court Prosecutions, Convictions and Out of Court Disposals Statistics for Northern Ireland 2019'.
- iv. A copy of a response from the Minister of Justice to Action for Children in relation to the adverse impact that domestic abuse has on children and young people.
- v. The Investment Strategy Northern Ireland – Department of Justice's Procurement Activity Report for June 2020.

11. Chairperson's Business

None.

12. Any Other Business

None.

13. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 2 July 2020 at 10.00 a.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.39 p.m.

Mr Paul Givan MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Justice