



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

THURSDAY 10 DECEMBER 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 Emma Rogan MLA  
Ms Rachel Woods MLA

\* These Members attended the meeting via video conferencing.

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)  
Miss Leanne Johnston (Assistant Clerk)  
Mrs Allison Mealey (Clerical Supervisor)

*The meeting commenced at 2.04 p.m. in public session.*

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

## **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

The Clerk informed the Committee that, under Standing Order 115(6), Ms Dolan had delegated authority to the Deputy Chairperson, Ms Dillon MLA, to vote on her behalf should she encounter connectivity problems with the video conferencing system.

## **2. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2020.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2020.

### **3. Matters Arising**

#### Item 1 – Letter from the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the Health Protection Regulations

The Committee considered correspondence from the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the Assembly debate led by the Minister of Justice on Tuesday 8 December 2020 on the Health Protection Regulations.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the correspondence had arrived before the letter from the Committee following the meeting on 3 December had issued.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the letter from the Committee to the First Minister and deputy First Minister to the Minister of Health and the Minister of Justice for information.

#### Item 2 – Committee Forward Work Programme – December 2020

The Committee considered a revised Forward Work Programme for December 2020 which reflected the deferral of two items of business by the Department of Justice and information provided by the Department on the position on a number of items of business that it had intended to bring to the Committee between September and December that had not been scheduled.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that, given the plenary business taking place on Tuesday 15 December 2020, the Committee meeting scheduled for that day should be postponed and rescheduled to a suitable date in January 2021.

#### Item 3 – Letter from the Minister of Justice on the Committee Amendment for Further Consideration Stage of the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill

The Committee noted a letter from the Minister of Justice indicating that she would not support the amendment being brought forward by the Committee at Further Consideration Stage of the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

### **4. Multi-Agency Briefing on Organised Crime in Northern Ireland**

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.09 p.m.:

Julie Harrison, Director, Safer Communities, Department of Justice  
Barbara Gray, Assistant Chief Constable, PSNI  
Craig Naylor, Deputy Director Investigations North, National Crime Agency  
Steve Tracey, Assistant Director, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

Ms Harrison outlined the role of the Organised Crime Task Force and the current key organised crime threats in Northern Ireland.

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

*Mr Beattie left the meeting at 3.52 p.m.*

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

## **5. Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Bill – Response from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission**

The Committee considered a response from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission in relation to the Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Bill which recommended that further information should be sought from the Department of Justice in respect of its analysis of the Bill for human rights compliance.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request details of the analysis of the Bill for human rights compliance in terms of both the ECHR and international human rights law from the Department of Justice.

## **6. SR: The Carriage of Explosives (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020**

The Committee considered SR: The Carriage of Explosives (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which will correct Northern Ireland legislation that would otherwise cease to function properly at the end of the EU Exit transition period.

The Committee noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules was content with the technical aspects of the Rule but had highlighted in her report a minor drafting error which the Department of Justice had undertaken to correct.

*Agreed:* The Committee for Justice considered Draft Statutory Rule: The Carriage of Explosives (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

## **7. SL1: The Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department of Justice to make a Statutory Rule to amend section 6 of the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 to enable the Board of the Trust to delegate any of its functions as it sees fit.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request information from the Department on whether there are any other justice NDPBs that this issue applies to and whether the proposed changes to the legislation will make any changes to the reporting requirements of the Boards/Trusts involved.

## **8. SL1: The Northern Ireland Police Fund (Amendment) Regulations 2021**

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department of Justice to make a Statutory Rule to amend section 6 of the Northern Ireland Police Fund Regulations 2016 to enable the Board of the Fund to delegate any of its functions as it sees fit.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

## 9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance providing a copy of a briefing paper and briefing note on a Pilot Project – Proactive Committee Use of Departmental Forecasting and Outturn Data’.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the papers to the Department of Justice.

- ii. The Committee considered a request from an individual for an update regarding an inquiry by a previous Justice Committee in 2014.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to respond to the individual outlining the current position in relation to the inquiry.

- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from a number of individuals wishing to submit further evidence or meet with Committee Members in relation to the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to respond to the individuals outlining the current position in relation to the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

- iv. The Committee considered a report from the Northern Ireland Audit Office on a Follow-Up Review on ‘Managing Children who Offend’.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Public Accounts Committee would be considering its work programme in January and if it decided not to hold an inquiry into the NI Audit Office report then this Committee could follow-up on the findings and recommendations.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Committee Clerk should liaise with the PAC Clerk and update the Committee on the position in January 2021.

- v. The Committee considered a report from the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland on an Inspection of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request a response to the Report’s findings and recommendations from the Department of Justice and the Probation Board following which consideration would be given to whether oral evidence sessions should be scheduled.

- vi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Justice providing an update on the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Nightingale Court Project.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson should request an informal meeting with the Lord Chief Justice to discuss this and other relevant justice issues.

The Committee noted the following:

- vii. A response from the Department of Justice providing the further information requested by the Committee following the oral evidence session on the Department’s Budget 2021-24 Information Gathering exercise on 5 November.

- viii. A copy of a joint letter from the Committees for Communities, Economy, Health and the Executive Office to the First Minister and deputy First Minister calling for a coordinated approach across the Executive to address student mental health, welfare and well-being.
- ix. A copy of a letter from the Committee for Health to the Department of Health regarding what engagement it has had or is planning to have on the Dying with Dignity Bill currently in the Oireachtas.
- x. A response from the Minister of State for Northern Ireland clarifying how the Government intended to provide a lawful basis for the retention of DNA and fingerprints for the sole purpose of legacy investigations.
- xi. A copy of correspondence from the Chairperson of Kairos Ireland to Chief Constable Byrne and Garda Commissioner Harris regarding international co-operation on organised crime.

## **10. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson advised the Committee that he had received a written briefing paper from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists on justice and speech, language and communication issues.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that an informal meeting with representatives from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists on the subject should be arranged.

## **11. Any Other Business**

- (i) The Chairperson informed the Committee that the Minister of Justice had written advising that she is seeking the approval of the Executive for the Protection from Stalking Bill and providing advance copies of the Bill and Explanatory and Financial Memorandum for Committee Members.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that copies of the Bill and Explanatory and Financial Memorandum should be provided to Members in advance of the papers issuing for the meeting next week.

- (ii) The Chairperson informed the Committee that he and another Member had met with a family associated with the Inquiry into Hyponatraemia Related Deaths regarding the recommendations in the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request information from the Department of Justice on whether any of the recommendations contained in the Report relate to its remit and responsibilities and if so what engagement has taken place with the Department of Health to take these forward.

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

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 17 December 2020 at 2.00 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.20 p.m.

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