



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Justice

## Minutes of Proceedings

3 March 2022

**Meeting Location:** Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

**Present:** Mr Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)  
Ms Sinéad Ennis MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Robin Newton MLA  
Mr Peter Weir MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Mr Doug Beattie MLA  
Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA

**Apologies:** Ms Jemma Dolan MLA  
Ms Emma Rogan MLA

Ms Rachel Woods MLA

**In Attendance:** Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)  
Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Senior Assistant Clerk)  
Mr Stephen Corr (Clerical Supervisor)



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

The meeting commenced at 2:05 p.m. in public session.

**1. Apologies**

As above.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that, under Standing Order 115(6), Emma Rogan MLA had delegated authority to the Deputy Chairperson, Sinéad Ennis MLA, to vote on her behalf and Robin Newton MLA had delegated authority to him to vote on his behalf when he left the meeting.

**2. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2022.

**3. Matters Arising**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to move into closed session to discuss correspondence from the Department of Justice on the Committee amendments to the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill.

The Committee moved into closed session at 2:08 p.m.

**Item 1 – Correspondence from the Department of Justice on the amendments to the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill**



## Northern Ireland Assembly

The Committee discussed the issues raised in the correspondence from the Department of Justice on the Committee amendments for Further Consideration Stage of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill relating to the abuse of trust provision.

The Committee moved into open session at 2:57 p.m.

The Committee noted the text of amendments regarding the ‘anonymity of suspects’ provisions of the Bill to be brought forward by the Minister of Justice at Further Consideration Stage of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request clarification of the position of the Minister of Justice on the Committee’s abuse of trust amendments and her alternative amendment to provide for a review mechanism.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to hold an additional meeting on Monday 7 March 2022 to consider the issues and concerns raised in the correspondence in relation to its amendments to the abuse of trust provision in advance of Further Consideration Stage of the Bill taking place.

Doug Beattie MLA placed on the record that he was not supportive of the approach proposed by the Committee in relation to the abuse of trust amendments.

### **Item 2 – Note of Informal Meeting – Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill**

The Committee noted that the note of the informal meeting with a victim of voyeurism behaviour had been agreed and would be anonymised before inclusion in the Appendices to the Committee report on the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill as previously agreed.

### **4. CJINI Report on a Review into the Operation of Care and Supervision Units in the NI Prison Service - Oral evidence session with the Chief Inspector**



## Northern Ireland Assembly

The following officials joined the meeting at 3:00 p.m.

Jacqui Durkin, Chief Inspector, Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland

Maureen Erne, Inspector, Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland

Ms Durkin outlined the key findings and recommendations of the CJINI Report on a Review into the Operation of Care and Supervision Units in the NI Prison Service.

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

The Committee placed on record its appreciation of the work undertaken by Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Robin Newton MLA left the meeting at 3:29 p.m.

### **5. CJINI Report on a Review into the Operation of Care and Supervision Units in the NI Prison Service - Oral evidence session with NI Prison Service Officials**

The following officials joined the meeting at 3:31 p.m.

Ronnie Armour, Director General, Northern Ireland Prison Service

David Kennedy, Director of Prisons, Northern Ireland Prison Service

Steven McCourt, Acting Director of Rehabilitation, Northern Ireland Prison Service

Mr Armour outlined how the recommendations of the CJINI Report into the Care and Supervision Units would be taken forward by the Northern Ireland Prison Service

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



## Northern Ireland Assembly

The Committee placed on record its appreciation of the work carried out by all the staff of the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to take Agenda Item 19: Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Bill 2022 next.

### **6. Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Bill 2022**

The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Justice seeking initial views from the Committee on the extension of powers relating to Unexplained Wealth Orders in the Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Bill 2022 to Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was supportive in principle of the provisions relating to Unexplained Wealth Orders being extended to Northern Ireland.

### **7. SL1 - The Police Service of Northern Ireland (Amendment) Regulations 2022 - (Amendment to reflect Platinum Jubilee Public Holiday arrangements for 2022)**

The Committee considered a proposal for a Statutory Rule, which is subject to the negative resolution procedure, to amend relevant Regulations specifying public holidays for PSNI officers for 2022 only to facilitate the decision to move the last bank holiday in May from Monday 30 May to Thursday 2 June and to grant an additional bank holiday for Friday 3 June to celebrate the Queen's 70th anniversary as monarch.

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

### **8. Police Service of Northern Ireland Retention and Disposal Schedule**



## Northern Ireland Assembly

The Committee considered an amendment to the Police Service of Northern Ireland Retention and Disposal Schedule.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it had no objection to the PSNI Retention and Disposal Schedule as amended.

### **9. NI Prison Service Strategic Improvement Programme 2022-2025: Prisons 25 by 25**

The Committee noted the Northern Ireland Prison Service Strategic Improvement Programme for 2022 – 25.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request an update from the Department of Justice on the current position in respect of the pay and grading settlement for Northern Ireland Prison Service Staff.

### **10. New Legislative Measures to Strengthen the Response to Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking - Proposed Public Consultation**

The Committee considered information provided by the Department of Justice on a public consultation on a range of proposed new measures to strengthen the response to Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

**Agreed:** The Committee noted the consultation and agreed to seek clarification from the Department of Justice on the reasons why the Duty to Notify provided by Section 13 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 had not been commenced before now.

### **11. Legislative Amendments to Impose a Restriction on the Circumstances in which an Order for Taxation of Legal Aid Costs may be made and to enable Legal Aid Statutory Charges - Proposed Public Consultation**



## Northern Ireland Assembly

The Committee noted information provided by the Department of Justice on a public consultation on two proposed legislative provisions to facilitate future reform of taxation to address a Public Accounts Committee recommendation and to enable legal aid statutory charges to be placed on the statutory charges register.

### **12. Implementation of the Recommendations of the Gillen Review into Serious Sexual Offences in Northern Ireland – Update**

The Committee considered an update provided by the Department of Justice on progress to implement the recommendations in the Gillen Review into the law and procedures surrounding serious sexual offences in Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request clarification from the Department of Justice on the likely impact of the absence of a multi-year budget on the implementation of the recommendations in the Gillen Review.

### **13. Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme - Update**

The Committee considered responses from the President of the Victims' Payment Board, Capita, the Department of Justice and Representatives of Victims' Groups on the current position regarding the implementation of the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme.

Members expressed disappointment about the low level of applications that have reached a determination to date.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health and the Department of Justice regarding the challenges with securing medical evidence from the Health and Social Care Trusts in a timely manner and how these can be addressed.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the President of the Victims' Payment Board regarding the challenges with securing medical evidence and request



## Northern Ireland Assembly

information on any other reasons for the low level of applications that have reached a determination to date.

Peter Weir MLA left the meeting at 4:17 p.m.

### **14. CJINI Report on the Care and Treatment of Victims and Witnesses by the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland - Update on Implementation of Action Plan to address findings and recommendations**

The Committee noted information provided by the Department of Justice on the current position regarding the implementation of the action plan to address the findings and recommendations of the Criminal Justice Inspection Report on the Care and Treatment of Victims by the Criminal Justice System.

### **15. CJINI Report on Effective Penalty Enforcement – A Review of the Impact of Current Fine Default Strategy and Services - Update on Implementation of the findings and recommendations**

The Committee noted information provided by the Department of Justice on the current position regarding the implementation of the recommendations in the Criminal Justice Inspection Report on Effective Penalty Enforcement – A Review of the Impact of Current Fine Default Strategy and Services that fall within the responsibility of the Department and the NI Courts and Tribunals Service.

### **16. Correspondence**

The Committee noted the following:

- i. A response from the Minister of Justice on the NI Police Ombudsman's Report on an Investigation into Police Handling of Certain Loyalist Paramilitary Murders and Attempted Murders in the North West of Northern Ireland during the period 1989 to 1993.





Northern Ireland  
Assembly

- ii. Correspondence from the Department of Justice advising that the Minister of Justice intended to make an oral statement to the Assembly on 1 March 2022 on the work carried out under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Agreement on Co-operation on Criminal Justice.
- iii. A response from the Department of Justice providing clarification regarding the campaign to raise public awareness of the domestic abuse offence.
- iv. Correspondence from the Department of Justice advising that the Minister of Justice had agreed that a Review of the 2007 Protocol for Community Based Restorative Justice Schemes would commence on 28 February 2022.
- v. A response from the Department of Justice providing further information on a number of the projects in the Five-Year Problem-solving Justice Strategy Plan.
- vi. A response from the Department of Justice providing information on its engagement on the UK Government's Online Safety Bill.
- vii. A response from the Police Service of Northern Ireland providing information on its engagement on the UK Government's Online Safety Bill.
- viii. Correspondence from the Clerk to the Chairpersons' Liaison Group providing a briefing paper on work by the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights to improve witness diversity.
- ix. A Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland Report of an Unannounced Inspection of HM Prison Magilligan.
- x. A copy of a response from Baroness Williams of Trafford, Minister of State at the Home Office, to the House of Lords European Affairs Sub-Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland regarding issues it raised in relation to the Nationality and Borders Bill.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

- xi. A response from the Bar of Northern Ireland providing information on gender breakdown per years of call by Counsel following the oral evidence session on the Draft 2022 – 25 Budget on 10 February 2022.

Sinead Bradley MLA expressed her surprise about the changing trend in respect of the gender balance of the Bar of Northern Ireland.

- xii. The Northern Ireland Fiscal Council stakeholder engagement report - March to October 2021 and its forward work plan.

- xiii. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission Draft Strategic Plan for 2022 – 2025.

- xiv. The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland – Department of Justice Procurement Activity Report for February 2022.

### **17. Chairperson's Business**

None.

### **18. Any Other Business**

None.

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

The next scheduled meeting was due to be held on Thursday 10 March 2022 at 2:00 p.m. in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, however in light of agreement reached at today's meeting, a meeting would be scheduled for Monday 7 March 2022 at a time and location to be confirmed.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

The meeting was adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

**Mervyn Storey MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Justice**

**10 March 2022**