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Assembly

## Committee for Justice

### Minutes of Proceedings

9 December 2021

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

**Present:** Mr Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Doug Beattie MLA

Mr Robin Newton MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA

Ms Jemma Dolan MLA

Ms Rachel Woods MLA

**Apologies:** Ms Sinéad Ennis MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Emma Rogan MLA

Mr Peter Weir MLA

**In Attendance:** Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)

Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Mr Stephen Corr (Clerical Supervisor)



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**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Senior Assistant Clerk)

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

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the oral evidence session on the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill should be reported by Hansard and for the oral evidence session with the Minister of Justice also to be reported depending on capacity to do so.

**1. Apologies**

As above.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that, under Standing Order 115(6), the Deputy Chairperson, Sinéad Ennis MLA and Emma Rogan MLA had delegated authority to Jemma Dolan MLA to vote on their behalf and Peter Weir MLA had delegated authority to the Chairperson, Mervyn Storey MLA, to vote on his behalf.

**2. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2021.



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### **3. Matters Arising**

#### **Items 1 - 6 – Protection from Stalking Bill – Notes of Informal Meetings with Individuals**

The Committee considered notes of informal meetings held with individuals to discuss their experiences of stalking behaviour or who had specific experience in this area to assist the Committee's consideration of the Protection from Stalking Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the notes would be anonymised and included in the Appendices to the Committee report on the Protection from Stalking Bill.

The Chairperson thanked the Members who attended the informal meetings and placed on record the Committee's appreciation to the individuals who took the time to share their experiences.

#### **Items 7 and 8 – Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill – Further Information following oral evidence sessions**

The Committee noted further information provided by Barnardo's and Professor Clare McGlynn following their oral evidence sessions on the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill at the meetings on 11 and 18 November 2021 respectively.

#### **Item 9 – Protection from Stalking Bill – Correspondence from the Department of Justice on the Committee's Amendments**

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Justice regarding the Committee's agreed amendments to the Protection from Stalking Bill.



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The Committee welcomed the Minister of Justice's indication that she would incorporate the additional amendments it intended to bring forward in respect of guidance, training and reporting in the Department's amendments.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request the text of the revised amendments in advance of the closing date for submitting amendments for the Consideration Stage of the Bill to provide the Committee with an opportunity to consider them.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider agenda item 5 prior to agenda item 4 - the oral evidence session on the Proposed Consultation on the Stocktake of Policing Oversight and Accountability Arrangements and Police Ombudsman's Five Year Review - to accommodate the Minister of Justice's attendance at an Executive meeting.

**4. Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill – Part 2 – Trafficking and Exploitation - Consideration of Key Issues raised in the written and oral evidence – oral evidence session with departmental officials**

The Committee noted additional information provided by CARE NI and by the Migration Justice Project organisations following the oral evidence sessions on 11 November 2021 on the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill.

The following officials joined the meeting at 2:18 p.m.

Brian Grzymek, Deputy Director, Criminal Justice Policy and Legislation Division, Department of Justice

Cathy Galway, Deputy Director, Protective and Organised Crime Division, Department of Justice

Ronnie Pedlow, Head of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Branch, Department of Justice

Alison Redmond, Head of Organised Crime Branch, Department of Justice



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Brian Grzymek outlined the purpose of clauses 16 and 17 and addressed the key issues raised in the written and oral evidence received by the Committee on these clauses including proposals for additions to this Part of the Bill.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The officials agreed to provide the Committee with additional information on one issue discussed during the session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to provide the Department of Justice with a copy of the further information provided by CARE NI.

**5. Stocktake of Policing Oversight and Accountability Arrangements and Police Ombudsman's Five Year Review – Proposed Consultation – Oral Evidence Session**

The following joined the meeting at 3.15 p.m.

Naomi Long MLA, Minister of Justice

Maura Campbell, Deputy Director, Head of Policing, Policy and Strategy Division, Department of Justice

Lisa Boal, Policing, Policy and Strategy Division, Department of Justice

The Minister outlined the background to and the areas covered in the consultation the Department intended to undertake on the Stocktake of Policing Oversight and Accountability Arrangements and the Police Ombudsman's Five Year Review.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.



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The Minister agreed to provide clarification on one issue discussed during the session.

The Chairperson thanked the Minister and officials for their attendance.

### **6. Protection from Stalking Bill – Consideration of Draft Committee Report**

The Committee considered the draft report on the Protection from Stalking Bill.

#### **Title Page, Committee Membership and Powers Page, Table of Contents Page and List of Abbreviations Page**

The Committee considered the Title Page, the Committee Membership and Powers Page, the Table of Contents Page and the List of Abbreviations Page as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the Title Page, Committee Membership and Powers Page, Table of Contents Page and List of Abbreviations Page.

#### **Introduction Section**

The Committee considered the Introduction section of the report (paragraphs 1 to 23) as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the Introduction section of the report.

#### **Consideration of the Bill Provisions Section**

The Committee considered the Consideration of the Bill Provisions section of the report (paragraphs 24 to 293) as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the Consideration of the Bill Provisions section of the report.



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### **Implementation of the Legislation Section**

The Committee considered the Implementation of the Legislation Section of the report (paragraphs 294 to 343) as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the Implementation of the Legislation Section of the report.

Doug Beattie MLA left the meeting at 4:38 p.m.

### **Clause by Clause Consideration of the Bill Section**

The Committee considered the Clause by Clause Consideration of the Bill section of the report (paragraphs 344 to 377) as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the Clause by Clause Consideration of the Bill Section of the report.

### **Other Issues Raised in the Evidence Received by the Committee not currently covered in the Bill Section**

The Committee considered the Other Issues Raised in the Evidence Received by the Committee not currently covered in the Bill Section of the report (paragraphs 378 to 385) as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the Other Issues Raised in the Evidence Received by the Committee not currently covered in the Bill Section of the report.

### **Appendices**

The Committee considered the Appendices section of the report.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content that the Appendices be included in the report.



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### **Executive Summary**

The Committee considered the Executive Summary of the report as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the Executive Summary.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content for the Report on the Protection from Stalking Bill to be published on the Committee webpage and issued to all MLAs and the Minister of Justice.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to clear the Minutes of Proceedings of this meeting for inclusion in Appendix 1 of the report. They will then be replaced by the final version of the Minutes of Proceedings once agreed by the Committee.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that an electronic copy of the Bill report should be sent to all organisations and individuals who provided evidence to the Committee on the Bill.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairperson thanked the Committee team, Bill Clerk, Hansard and other Assembly staff as well as the Department of Justice officials who assisted the Committee during its scrutiny of the Bill.

### **7. Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill – Information from the Department of Justice and the Police Service of Northern Ireland**

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Justice and the PSNI on the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill including copies of the responses they had submitted to the Committee for Health on the Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek clarification from the PSNI on one point outlined in its response.





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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to advise the Committee for Health that it had noted the responses that the Department of Justice and the PSNI had submitted to it on the Bill.

### **8. SL1: The County Courts (Financial Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered a proposal for a Statutory Rule, which is subject to the negative resolution procedure, to increase the Small Claims jurisdiction of the County Court in Northern Ireland from the current level of £3,000 to £5,000.

The Committee noted that the proposal is being made under powers conferred by Article 22 of the County Courts Order which are exercisable after consultation with the Lady Chief Justice.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request further information from the Department on the timeframe for consultation with the Lady Chief Justice.

### **9. SL1: The County Courts (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022 – Small Claims**

The Committee considered a proposal for a Statutory Rule, which is subject to the negative resolution procedure, to amend references in the County Court Rules (Northern Ireland) 1980 which refer to the financial limit for the Small Claims jurisdiction to reflect the proposed increase from £3,000 to £5,000.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to await the response from the Department of Justice in respect of the timeframe for consultation with the Lady Chief Justice on the proposed increase before considering this proposal.



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## **10. Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking: Transparency in Supply Chains – Outcome of Consultation and Next Steps**

The Committee noted the information provided by the Department of Justice on the results of a public consultation with public and private sector bodies on strengthening Transparency in Supply Chains arrangements.

## **11. Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 – Implementation of Section 28 (Domestic Abuse Waiver for Legal Aid) - Update**

The Committee considered further information provided by the Department of Justice on the position regarding the Outline Business Case which will consider the options for the evidential test to be applied by the Legal Services Agency in relation to the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Waiver for Legal Aid and the exploration and conclusion with regard to potential repercussive risk.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek further clarification on a number of issues from the Department of Justice.

## **12. Correspondence**

- i. A copy of correspondence from the Committee for Health to the Department of Justice regarding its strategy and approach to providing access to information to people affected by hearing loss, sight loss and other sensory impairments.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request a copy of the response from the Department of Justice to the Committee for Health.

The Committee noted the following:



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- ii. A response from the Minister of Justice outlining the discussions and engagement that have taken place regarding the scheduling of the Justice Bills to ensure that all necessary legislative steps can be completed before the end of the Mandate.
- iii. Notification from the Department of Justice of the publication of the Official Statistics Bulletin on 'Youth Engagement Statistics for Northern Ireland 2021/22' on 2 December 2021.
- iv. An invitation from the Committee and Member Support Office to online sessions on Deaf Awareness to be facilitated by RNID as part of the Member Development Programme.

### **13. Chairperson's Business**

The Committee noted the decision by the PSNI to move the planned event on 12 January 2022 in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings on its draft strategy to tackle Violence and Intimidation Against Women and Girls online in light of the recent Covid-19 developments.

### **14. Any Other Business**

None.



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

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 16 December 2021 at 2.00 p.m. in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

**Mervyn Storey MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Justice**  
**16 December 2021**