



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

MONDAY 23 MARCH 2020

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

- Present: Mr Paul Givan MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Doug Beattie MLA
Ms Jemma Dolan MLA
Mr Gordon Dunne MLA
Mr Paul Frew MLA
Mr Patsy McGlone MLA
Ms Rachel Woods MLA
- Apologies: Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Emma Rogan MLA
- In Attendance: Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Miss Leanne Johnston (Clerical Supervisor)

The meeting commenced at 9.34 a.m. in open session.

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

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Legislative Consent Motion on the Coronavirus Bill – Justice Related Provisions

The following officials joined the meeting at 9.35 a.m.:

Doreen McClintock, Head of Operations and Resilience Planning, Department of Justice

Jane Maguire, Head of Family Courts and Tribunals Branch, Department of Justice

Clare Irvine, Head of Judiciary and Mental Capacity Branch, Civil Justice Policy Division, Department of Justice

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

Alan Smyth, Deputy Director, Northern Ireland Prison Service

The officials provided an overview of the justice related provisions in the Bill relevant to each of their business areas.

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

The officials agreed to provide further information on several issues.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The Chairperson sought the views of Members on the LCM for the Coronavirus Bill. While some Members expressed reservations about some of the provisions and a number of Members expressed concern at the two-year time limit that would apply to many of the measures provided for in the Bill, given the seriousness of the public health crisis and the extraordinary circumstances being faced, all Members accepted the need for the measures and powers provided for in the Bill as outlined by the Department of Justice officials.

Members also placed on record their appreciation of the work being undertaken by staff across the Justice system including the Police Service, the Prison Service, the NI Courts and Tribunals Service and the Department of Justice in these exceptional times.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to support the proposal to extend the justice-related provisions in the Coronavirus Bill to Northern Ireland by way of a Legislative Consent Motion.

The Chairperson advised Members that he would outline the position of the Committee during the debate on the Legislative Consent Motion on Tuesday 24 March 2020.

The Committee noted the Department of Justice press release regarding the suspension of visits in Northern Ireland Prisons in response to Covid-19.

3. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be scheduled when required to consider urgent items of business.

The meeting was adjourned at 10.51 a.m.