



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY 30 JANUARY 2020

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Paul Givan MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Doug Beattie MLA
Mr Gordon Dunne MLA
Mr Paul Frew MLA
Mr Raymond McCartney MLA
Mr Patsy McGlone MLA
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA
Ms Rachel Woods MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Christine Darragh (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Peter Madine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Miss Leanne Johnston (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Allison Mealey (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.01p.m. in open session.

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

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 23 January 2020.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Overview Briefing on the Access to Justice Directorate

The following Department of Justice officials joined the meeting at 2.02 p.m.:

Mr Anthony Harbinson, Director, Access to Justice Directorate
Mr Glyn Capper, Deputy Director, Justice Performance Team
Ms Laurene McAlpine, Deputy Director, Civil Justice Policy Division
Ms Linda Hamilton, Gillen Review Implementation and EU Exit Team

The officials provided an overview briefing on the Access to Justice Directorate.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

5. Introduction with the Attorney General for Northern Ireland and Discussion on Criminal Justice Issues.

The Attorney General for Northern Ireland, Mr John Larkin QC, joined the meeting at 3.02 p.m..

The Chairperson welcomed the Attorney General to the meeting.

The Attorney General provided an overview on his role and discussed a range of criminal justice issues with Committee Members.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

6. SR 2018/108: The Attorney General's Human Rights Guidance (Domestic Abuse and Stalking) Order (Northern Ireland) 2018

The Attorney General provided an overview of SR 2018/108, which brings into operation his human rights guidance in respect of domestic abuse and stalking for the PSNI, the Public Prosecution Service, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland and the NI Courts and Tribunals Service.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Ms Dillon left the meeting 3.55 p.m.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2018/108: The Attorney General's Human Rights Guidance (Domestic Abuse and Stalking) Order (Northern Ireland) 2018 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the rule.

7. SR 2018/110: The Attorney General's Human Rights Guidance (The Application of Section 5 of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 to Rape Victims and Those to Whom They Make Disclosures in Connection With a Claim for Social Security, Child Tax Credit or Anonymous Registration on the Electoral Roll) Order (Northern Ireland) 2018

The Attorney General provided an overview of SR 2018/110 which brings into operation his human rights guidance to assist the Public Prosecution Service on the application of Section 5 of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 to rape victims and those to whom they make disclosures in connection with a claim for social security, child tax credit or anonymous registration on the electoral roll.

Ms Dillon rejoined the meeting at 3.59 p.m.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2018/110: The Attorney General's Human Rights Guidance (The Application of Section 5 of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 to Rape Victims and Those to Whom They Make Disclosures in Connection With a Claim for Social Security, Child Tax Credit or Anonymous Registration on the Electoral Roll) Order (Northern Ireland) 2018 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the rule.

8. SR 2019/138: The Attorney General's Human Rights Guidance (The Use of the Irish Language) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019 An tOrdú um an Treoir ón Phríomh-Atúrnae ar Chearta an Duine (Úsáid na Gaeilge) (Tuaisceart Éireann) 2019

The Attorney General provided an overview of SR 2018/138, which brings into operation his human rights guidance relevant to the use of the Irish language in respect of the PSNI and the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2019/138: The Attorney General's Human Rights Guidance (The Use of the Irish Language) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019 An tOrdú um an Treoir ón Phríomh-Atúrnae ar Chearta an Duine (Úsáid na Gaeilge) (Tuaisceart Éireann) 2019 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the rule.

The Chairperson thanked the Attorney General for his attendance and he left the meeting.

9. Draft Committee Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the draft Committee Forward Work Programme for February 2020 and noted that the Chief Constable of the PSNI would be attending the meeting on 13 February 2020 to outline the PSNI budget position and key policing priorities and challenges.

Agreed: Committee Members would forward any issues they wish to raise with the Chief Constable to the Committee Clerk and a discussion on the structure for the evidence session would take place at the meeting on 6 February.

Agreed: The written briefing scheduled for the meeting on 20 February on a Legislative Consent Motion for the Criminal Finances Act 2017 should be changed to an oral evidence session.

The Committee noted the press release by the Minister of Justice regarding her intention to bring the Domestic Abuse legislation through the Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Justice and request details of the timescale for the legislation going to the Executive and for introduction into the Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission a research paper on any new or emerging approaches in other jurisdictions including Scotland and England and Wales and the Republic of Ireland on tackling domestic violence and abuse and in particular the creation or use of other offences in addition to coercive control offences.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme for February 2020.

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered a letter from the British Association for Shooting and Conservation asking it to consider a proposal to amend Schedule 1A of the Firearms Order 2004 to add additional calibres of firearms that may be exchanged in a one-off-one-on transaction carried out in firearms dealers' premises.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Justice and request a response to the issues raised and whether it intends to bring forward the proposed legislative changes.

- ii. The Committee considered correspondence regarding a rescue plan for the Risk Avoidance and Danger Awareness Resource (RADAR) Centre.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an update from the Department of Justice on the current position regarding the RADAR Centre.

The Committee noted the following:

- iii. A notice from the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission regarding the appointment of six temporary High Court Judges in Northern Ireland.

- iv. Correspondence from Queens University Belfast providing a briefing note on the UK Withdrawal Agreement Bill, Statutory Instruments and devolved competence.
- v. The Investment Strategy Northern Ireland – Department of Justice’s Procurement Activity Report for January 2020.

11. Chairperson’s Business

Invitation from the Bar of Northern Ireland

The Chairperson informed Members that he had accepted a request from the Bar of Northern Ireland for an informal meeting to discuss a range of justice issues.

Invitation from Lisburn Commerce Against Crime

The Chairperson informed Members that he had accepted an invitation from Lisburn Commerce Against Crime to visit the CCTV Monitoring Suite in Lisburn and Castlereagh Council area.

12. Any Other Business

None.

13. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 4 February at 2.00 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.36 p.m.

Paul Givan MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Justice