



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITIES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 19 January 2017
Room 29 Parliament Buildings

Present: Colum Eastwood MLA (Chairperson)
Steven Agnew MLA
Andy Allen MLA
Naomi Long MLA
Nichola Mallon MLA
Christopher Stalford MLA

In Attendance: Kevin Pelan (Assembly Clerk)
Ashleigh Mitford (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Paula Best (Clerical Supervisor)
Stewart Kennedy (Clerical Supervisor)
Stephanie Wilson (Clerical Officer)

Claire McCanny (Bill Office)

Apologies: Adrian McQuillan

The meeting commenced at 10:06 am

Agreed: The Committee agreed to conduct the first session in closed session to receive a briefing from the Assembly Bill Office.

1. Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill – session with Bill Office

The Chairperson declared a family interest in relation to agenda items related to the Licensing and Registration of Clubs Bill

The Committee noted a paper from the Bill Office setting out options in relation to a possible additional clause to allow children attending a family function to remain on licensed premises after 9.30pm.

Claire McCanny briefed the Committee.

Christopher Stalford joined the meeting at 10:15 am

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Bill will fall upon dissolution of the Assembly on 26 January 2017. Even if an identical Bill is introduced by an incoming Minister in a new mandate, it will nevertheless have to go back to the beginning of the legislative passage through the Assembly. This was followed by discussion amongst members on possible ways forward. The Committee noted that its Consideration of the Bill to date is well documented and available for future consideration by an incoming committee.

Agreed: The Clerk will write to those who have made a contribution to the Bill to thank them for their assistance and to provide an explanation in relation to the status of the Bill upon dissolution. The Committee also wished to assure stakeholders that the threads of work will be picked up where possible to ensure work to date and contributions from stakeholders are not lost.

The Committee noted a confidential paper.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to express concerns in relation to the Steps 2 Success Programme. The Committee also agreed to forward written submissions received from providers to date setting out their experience of the programme.

The meeting moved into open session at 10:35 am

2. Apologies

Apologies are recorded above

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meetings of 8 December 2016 were agreed.

4. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised members that The Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Belfast and the Chinese Welfare Association NI have invited him to NI's Chinese New Year Showcase 2017 on 25 January 2017.

The Committee noted an invitation to an upcoming seminar in the 2016-17 Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series Labour Market and Employment: Current Themes. The Chair, the Deputy Chair or one of the Committee's Members have been asked to make the opening remarks at this seminar on 25 January 2017.

5. Matters Arising

The Committee noted a draft response to the Committee for the Executive Office regarding EU priorities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Clerk to amend the draft response to indicate that the Committee recommends that an incoming committee include the priorities set out in the paper in its work programme.

6. Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill – Consideration session with the Department for Communities

The following departmental official joined the meeting at 10:37 am

- Liam Quinn, Social Policy Unit

The Chairperson advised those in attendance that this Bill will fall upon dissolution next week. Even if the incoming Communities Minister introduces an identical Bill in the new mandate it will have to start from the beginning of the legislative pathway through the Assembly.

Members expressed disappointment, recognising the importance of the Bill to all stakeholders, and extended thanks to the Chair and all who have contributed to the Committee Stage of the Bill to date. Further, members sought to assure stakeholders that work to date has been documented and will be available to inform consideration in a new Assembly Mandate.

The Committee noted briefing papers from the Clerk and a copy of a letter dated 6 December 2016 from the Committee to Minister. The Committee noted that the Minister has not as yet responded to the letter.

The Department updated the Committee on discussions with the PSNI in relation to potential amendments to the Bill. These related to large scale events and changes of Directorship.

Liam Quinn left the meeting at 10:44am

The session was recorded by Hansard

7. Housing Policy and a Framework for Action into the Future – Briefing by NIPSA

The Committee noted the briefing paper from NIPSA.

The following representatives joined the meeting at 10:44 am

- Mr Paddy Mackel, Assistant Secretary, NIPSA
- Ms Sheena McDaid, Housing Executive, NIPSA
- Mr Sam Morton, Chairperson - NIHE Central Panel, NIPSA

The representatives briefed the Committee and this was followed by questions from members.

The representatives left the meeting at 11:35 am

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The Clerk briefed the Committee in relation to procedures for handling secondary legislation after the final Committee meeting and during dissolution.

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8. SL1 The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2016

The Committee noted the SL1.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Rule to be made.

9. The Pension Protection Fund and Occupational Pension Schemes (Levy Ceiling and Compensation Cap) Order (Northern Ireland) 2017

The Committee noted the SL1.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Rule to be made.

10. SL1/SR9 The Housing Benefit (Executive Determinations) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017

The Committee noted the SL1 and the SR.

The Committee noted that the Department laid the SR in the Assembly ahead of the Committee's consideration of the SL1 so that it can be considered ahead of the target operation date of 23 January.

The Committee also noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had not reported on the SR.

Question put and agreed:

"That the Committee for Communities has considered the Statutory Rule SR 9/2017 - The Housing Benefit (Executive Determinations) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, has no objection to the Rule."

11. SR 409/2016 The Social Security (Credits and Crediting and Treatment of Contributions) (Consequential and Miscellaneous Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2016

The Committee noted the SR.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for Communities has considered the Statutory Rule SR 409/2016 The Social Security (Credits and Crediting and Treatment of Contributions) (Consequential and Miscellaneous Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2016 and has no objection to the Rule.”

12. SR423/2016 The Occupational Pensions (Revaluation) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Committee noted the SR.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for Communities has considered the Statutory Rule SR423/2016 The Occupational Pensions (Revaluation) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 and has no objection to the Rule.”

13. SR1/2017 The Housing Benefit and State Pension Credit (Temporary Absence) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017

The Committee noted the SR. The Committee also noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had not yet reported on the SR.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for Communities has considered the Statutory Rule SR1/2017 The Housing Benefit and State Pension Credit (Temporary Absence) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ report has no objections to the Rule.”

14. Correspondence

The Committee noted 2 correspondence memos.

Correspondence memo of 9 January 2017

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for Communities in relation to the Digital Economy Bill and the Minister for Finance’s intention to bring a Legislative Consent Motion to the Assembly in relation to the Bill.

The Committee was content to note correspondence from the Department which provided the Committee with a status update on the key strands of the Housing Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to action all correspondence as outlined in the correspondence memo of 9 January. (NB - In the cases where there is a proposal to request a briefing, a recommendation to that effect will be made to the incoming committee.)

Correspondence memo of 16 January 2017

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk inform the Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht affairs of the Oireachtas that it has noted its correspondence in relation to its recommendation to the Minister for Finance regarding joint funding for An Foras Teanga.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to action all other correspondence as outlined on the correspondence memo of 16 January 2017.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that should any correspondence be sent to the Committee prior to dissolution, that a standard letter will be issued, stating that the Committee has no further meetings but the correspondence has been forwarded to its members.

15. Forward Work Programme

Given that the meeting of 19 January was the final meeting of the current mandate this item was not considered.

16. AOB

Agreed: The Committee agreed, given today is the final meeting of the Committee, that the minutes be approved by the Chair.

Members noted concerns around recent cost control and budgetary issues that have recently come to the fore in relation to certain programmes. The Committee again expressed concern regarding the lack of transparency and openness from the Department in relation to budgetary issues during this mandate.

17. Date, time and location of the next meeting

As the Assembly will dissolve on 26 January 2016 there will be no further meetings of the Committee for Communities this mandate.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 11:52pm

Chairperson, Committee for Communities

January 2017