



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITIES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 22 September 2016

University of Ulster, Belfast

Present: Colum Eastwood MLA (Chairperson)
Michelle Gildernew MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Steven Agnew MLA
Andy Allen MLA
Fra McCann MLA
Christopher Stalford MLA

In Attendance: Kevin Pelan (Assembly Clerk)
Ashleigh Mitford (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Stewart Kennedy (Clerical Supervisor)
Ciarán Brannigan (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Jonathan Bell MLA
Naomi Long MLA
Nichola Mallon MLA
Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

The meeting commenced in open session at 10:20 am

The meeting began without a decision-making quorum and therefore scheduled briefings not requiring a decision were taken first.

1. Strategy on the Impact of Welfare Reform

The Committee noted briefing papers from the Clerk and the Department

The Committee noted a booklet on Universal Credit

The following officials joined the meeting at 10:20 am

- Tommy O'Reilly, Deputy Secretary, Department for Communities

- Paul McKillen, Principal Statistician, Department for Communities
- Michelle Crawford, Director of Analytical Services Unit, Department for Communities

The officials briefed the Committee

Christopher Stalford joined the meeting at 10:25am and a decision-making quorum was established

Michelle Gildernew joined the meeting at 10.32am

The briefing was followed by questions from members.

Mr McKillen and Ms Crawford left the meeting at 11:02 am

2. Welfare Reform Mitigations Scheme - Social Sector Size

The committee noted briefing papers from the Clerk and the Department.

The following official joined Mr O'Reilly at the table at 11:02 am:

- Gavin McBride – Grade 7, Social Sector Size Criteria.

The officials briefed the committee and this was followed by questions from members.

11:30am Michelle Gildernew left the meeting

11:34 am Christopher Stalford left the meeting and the decision-making quorum was lost.

11:37 am Michelle Gildernew joined the meeting and the decision-making quorum was re-established.

11:40 am Fra McCann left the meeting and the decision-making quorum was lost.

11:42 am Christopher Stalford joined the meeting and the decision-making quorum was re-established.

11:43 am Fra McCann joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk follow up with the Department on a number of issues including streamlining of communication from the Department and Executive to the public in relation to changes to benefits and related mitigations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the Department's submissions on the Committee website.

The officials left the meeting at 12:50 am

3. Apologies

Apologies are recorded above

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting of 15 September 2016 were agreed.

5. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised members that the Deputy Chairperson has agreed to speak on behalf of the Committee on a number of items next week as he is attending the Labour Party Conference.

These are:

Monday 26 September 2016: The NI Assembly Charity of the Year 'Positive Futures' event

Tuesday 27 September 2016: Second Stage: Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill;

And The 'take note' debate on the content of the draft BBC Charter and Framework

6. Matters Arising

The Chairperson reminded members that the Committee has agreed to hold a short follow-up session to its strategic planning day after the conclusion of today's formal committee meeting, ahead of the Committee attending the Welfare Reform seminar at 2PM.

The Committee noted draft letters to the Permanent Secretary to the Department for Communities and to the Committee for the Executive Office. The letters set out the Committee's agreed position and proposals following the briefing by the Commissioner for Public Appointments on the imbalance of representation on the boards of public bodies and the briefing on The Boardroom Apprentice on 15 September 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue the letters as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek information regarding the class background of those serving on the boards of public bodies and on the number of people who have held more than one position. This will be added to a research request that has already been commissioned.

7. Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Bill – Legislative Consent Motion

The Committee noted a draft Report and supporting papers in relation to the Minister's Legislative Consent Memorandum which has been laid in the Assembly.

The Committee noted a response from the Department in relation to the mechanism that would determine how cultural property is designated by the Minister.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Department's response.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Report as follows:

Front cover, the page of contents and the Powers and Membership

Background

Purpose of the LCM

Committee Consideration

Links to appendices

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Report be the first Report of the Committee for Communities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to order the Report to be printed.

8. Correspondence

The committee noted a correspondence memo and a number of items of tabled correspondence.

The Committee noted correspondence from the BBC Trust expressing its views on the BBC Charter. The Trust has also offered to meet with the Chair/Committee to discuss the Charter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to consider this correspondence at next week's meeting given that a 'Take Note' debate on the content of the draft BBC Charter and Framework is scheduled in the Assembly on Monday 26th.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to note all tabled correspondence

Agreed: The Committee agreed to action all other correspondence as outlined on the correspondence memo

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its draft Forward Work programme

The Committee noted that ONS have advised that the announcement in relation to the possible reclassification of Housing Associations will be published on 29 September, the date that the Department is due to brief the Committee on the same subject.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it may be more valuable to delay the oral briefing by 2 weeks (to 13 October) to allow a fuller briefing on the matter. The Committee agreed to request an interim written update from the Department.

The Chairperson reminded members that the Committee has agreed to hold an external meeting on the afternoon of 6 October 2016, at the Nerve Centre in Derry/Londonderry. This is to allow members wishing to attend the morning sessions of the NILGA conference at the Everglades Hotel to do so.

Members were reminded that the Committee Chair, Minister Givan and the deputy First Minister are all scheduled to speak at the NILGA conference.

The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson emphasised the importance of good attendance to ensure quorum.

Members noted the itinerary for the day.

Agreed: The committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme as amended.

10. AOB

No items were raised

11. Date, time and location of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Communities will take place on Thursday 29 September 2016 at 10.00 am in room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:00 pm

Colum Eastwood MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Communities

29 September 2016