



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**23 NOVEMBER 2016**

**ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS 10:00am**

**Present:**

Mr Conor Murphy (Chairperson)  
Mr Steve Aiken OBE (Deputy Chairperson)  
Ms Caoimhe Archibald  
Ms Sinead Bradley  
Mr Tom Buchanan  
Mr Alan Chambers  
Mr Gordon Dunne MBE  
Dr Stephen Farry  
Mr Gordon Lyons  
Mr Alex Maskey  
Mr Mervyn Storey

**In Attendance:**

Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Angela McParland (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)  
Mr Craig Mealey (Clerical Officer)  
Mr Brendan Corr (Bursary Student)

**Apologies:**

None

*The meeting began at 10:10am in open session*

### **1. Apologies**

As noted above.

### **2. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

### **3. Chairpersons Business**

The Chairperson welcomed A Level Politics students from Grosvenor Grammar School in East Belfast to the meeting.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Committee received an invitation from Ulster University Economic Policy Centre to its annual forecast for the Northern Ireland Economy, to be held on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016 at the Belfast Harbour Commissioner's Office.

*Agreed:* that Members notify the Committee Office of their availability to attend.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Committee received correspondence from an individual formerly employed with the Ulster University.

*Agreed:* to forward to the Vice Chancellor of Ulster University for his consideration, as this constitutes as a personnel matter.

The Chairperson sought Members' agreement that the Committee write to the four Departmental Deputy Secretaries, and Arm's Length Bodies, requesting that they provide details of all forthcoming activities in each of their business areas, as the Committee has not yet received a forward work programme from the Department.

*Agreed:* that the Committee write to the four Departmental Deputy Secretaries and Arm's-Length Bodies as suggested by the Chairperson.

The Chairperson sought Members' agreement that the Committee write to the Permanent Secretary to advise him that the Committee intends to hold an evidence session on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016 and to request the attendance of Chris Stewart, Deputy Secretary, on energy delivery plans and Derek Baker, Deputy Secretary, on economy delivery plans.

*Agreed:* that the Committee write to the Permanent Secretary as suggested by the Chairperson, as confirmation of the Deputy Secretaries' attendance has been requested through the usual channels but has not been received.

*Sinead Bradley joined the meeting at 10:15am*

#### **4. Evidence Session with Invest NI**

*The representatives joined the meeting 10:15am*

Members held an evidence session with Mr Alastair Hamilton, Chief Executive, Invest NI, and Mr Bill Scott, Executive Director, Regional Business, Invest NI.

The key issues considered included the Programme for Government, NI-CO, exports, international trade, regional balance of the economy, investment in research, transfer of functions to councils, Skills Barometer, Knowledge Economy Index and the life sciences sector.

*Alex Maskey joined the meeting at 10:25am*

*Tom Buchanan joined the meeting at 11:20am*

*The representatives left the meeting at 11:50am*

#### **5. Evidence Session with the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)**

*The representatives joined the meeting at 11:50am*

Members received a briefing from Mr Kevin Sweeney, Head of Central Survey Unit, NISRA, and Ms Joanne Henderson, Statistician, NISRA.

The key issues considered included how NISRA collects and publishes tourism statistics.

*Gordon Lyons left the meeting at 12:15pm*

*Alan Chambers left the meeting at 12:15pm*

*Stephen Farry left the meeting at 12:18pm*

*The representatives left the meeting at 12:19pm*

#### **6. Matters Arising**

The Chairperson referred Members to correspondence from the Department of Finance in response to an individual who raised issues regarding the Government Gateway for Self-Assessment online.

*Agreed:* to forward the correspondence to the individual.

The Chairperson referred members to correspondence from the Commonwealth Games Council regarding a Ministerial response on the Commonwealth Youth Games in 2021.

*Agreed:* to receive a written briefing from Tourism NI on the matter, to include its communication plan with the Commonwealth Games Committee going forward.

The Chairperson referred Members to correspondence from Simple Power, the Ulster Farmers' Union and Renewables NI requesting that the Committee write to the Minister in support of a standalone public consultation for renewables, separate from the wider review of the Strategic Energy Framework.

*Agreed:* that Members will consider the matter further in the Strategic Planning Session, Agenda Item 9.

The Chairperson informed Members of a response from the Committee for the Executive Office regarding this Committee's submission to it on the Programme for Government consultation document.

*Noted:* Members noted the response.

## **7. Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Higher Education and Research Bill**

The Chairperson referred Members to the Committee's Report on its consideration of the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Higher Education and Research Bill and reminded Members that it was agreed to by Members, by correspondence, and published on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016.

## **8. Correspondence**

*Agreed:* Members considered correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office regarding the European Commission Work Programme 2017 and agreed to consider a draft response to the Executive Committee at next week's meeting.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance, providing a copy of a briefing paper from the Department of Finance on its Supply Division.

*Agreed:* Members considered an invitation from the University and College Union Northern Ireland Higher Education Committee to the launch of the UCU endorsed Alternative White Paper for Higher Education, to be held in the Senate Chamber on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2016, and agreed that Members contact the Committee Office of their availability to attend.

*Agreed:* Members noted correspondence from Tom Elliot MP, informing the Committee that he has written to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland seeking an update on the issues facing credit unions, and agreed to forward the correspondence to the Irish league of Credit Unions and the Ulster Federation of Credit Unions for information.

*Agreed:* the Committee considered the Northern Ireland Food and Drink report 'BREXIT: Challenges and Opportunities for Northern Ireland', and agreed that the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs should take the lead

initially with respect to the issues raised in the paper.

*Agreed:* that the Committee provide a list to the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (via Ms Archibald) to inform it on the issues this Committee is interested in addressing with regards to the NI Food and Drink report.

## **9. Strategic Planning**

*Committee moved to closed session at 12:25pm*

The Committee considered the key sectors and business areas it will be focusing on over the next year and the processes it will use.

*Agreed:* the Committee considered correspondence from the Ulster Farmers' Union, Simple Power and Renewable NI further, and agreed to seek the Department's view on a standalone public consultation for renewables.

*Agreed:* that Members are content with the Business Plan for the Committee's visit to Dublin in December 2016.

*Agreed:* that Members are content to move forward on the actions considered within the scoping paper, with the Clerk providing further information on the next steps.

*Alan chambers joined the meeting at 12:35pm*

*Committee moved to open session at 12:55pm*

## **10. Any Other Business**

*Agreed:* Members considered an invitation that individual Members had received from Evermore Energy to the official opening of Lisahally Combined Heat and Power Station on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016, clashing with the scheduled Committee meeting, and agreed to the Committee Office liaising with Evermore Energy to look at options around a visit by the Committee.

- 11.** The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016 in Cultra Manor, Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:58pm*

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**Mr Conor Murphy**  
**Chairperson**  
**Committee for the Economy**  
**30<sup>th</sup> November 2016**