



COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

16 NOVEMBER 2016

Systems Operator Northern Ireland Headquarters, 10:00am

Present:

Mr Conor Murphy (Chairperson)
Mr Steve Aiken OBE (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Tom Buchanan
Ms Caoimhe Archibald
Ms Sinead Bradley
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 10:07am in open session

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: the Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting on 9th November 2016.

3. Chairpersons Business

The Chairperson informed Members that the Committee received an invitation from Catalyst Inc. inviting the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to attend a breakfast around the publication of the results of the 2016 Knowledge Economy Index.

Agreed: that the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson will attend the event.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Committee received correspondence and an invitation from the Cedar Foundation asking the Chairperson to speak at the 75th anniversary of the Cedar Foundation. As the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson are not available to attend, Members were asked to consider whether they would be available to speak at the event.

4. Evidence Session with Northern Ireland Authority For Utility Regulation

The representatives joined the meeting 10:09am

Members held an evidence session with Ms Jenny Pyper, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation, and Mr Kevin Shiels, Director of Retail and Customer Protection, Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation.

The key issues considered were the challenges and priorities of the Utility Regulator, efficient and effective monopolies, competitive and effective markets, ISEM, the North South Interconnector and the Strategic Energy Framework.

Agreed: that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson will meet with John Woods of Linwoods, as requested in correspondence.

Gordon Lyons joined the meeting at 10:10am

The representatives left the meeting at 11:10am

5. Evidence Session with the System Operator for Northern Ireland (SONI)

The representatives joined the meeting at 11:12am

Members received a briefing from Mr Robin McCormick, General Manager, SONI Ltd, Mr John Fitzgerald, Director, Grid Development and Interconnection, SONI Ltd, and Ms Natasha Sayee, Senior Lead Public Affairs Specialist, SONI Ltd.

The key issues considered were the development of North South interconnector, options concerning overhead and underground wiring and community engagement.

6. Matters Arising

The Chairperson referred Members to a Ministerial response regarding the Department's budget baseline and October monitoring.

Noted: Members noted the response and that further correspondence on this issue was outstanding.

The Chairperson referred Members to a Departmental response to the Committee's briefing on the work of the social enterprise sector.

Agreed: Members noted the briefing paper and agreed to consider it again when discussing the Committee's social economy strategic work-stream

The Chairperson referred Members to correspondence from Reprieve in response to the Minister's letter in relation to NI-CO.

Agreed: that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson will meet with Reprieve.

The Chairperson referred Members to correspondence from Bord Bia.

Agreed: that Members shall visit Bord Bia's offices as part of the Committee's visit to Dublin on the 6th and 7th of December 2016.

The Chairperson referred Members to a Ministerial response with regard to the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Youth Games in 2021.

Agreed: that the Committee will forward this response to the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Committee.

The Chairperson referred Members to correspondence the Committee had previously sent to the Minister on the proposed increases in fees relating to the registration of credit union rule amendments.

Agreed: that the Chairperson will write to the Minister conveying concern that the matter has not yet been addressed.

The Chairperson referred Members to a press release from HM Treasury on the Apprenticeship Levy.

Agreed: to write to the Minister highlighting the evidence from stakeholders that the Committee has heard in opposition to the levy, and confirming that it is the Committee's view that the Levy offers no benefit locally.

7. SL1 Proposed Insolvency (Deposits) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Members considered the SL1 Proposed Insolvency (Deposits) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016.

Agreed: that the Committee is content with the policy implications of the proposed legislation.

8. SL1 Proposed Insolvency Practitioners and Insolvency Account (Fees) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Members considered the SL1 Proposed Insolvency Practitioners and Insolvency Account (Fees) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016.

Agreed: that the Committee is content with the policy implications of the proposed legislation.

9. SL1 Proposed Insolvency (Fees) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Members considered the SL1 Proposed Insolvency (Fees) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016.

Agreed: that the Committee is content with the policy implications of the proposed legislation.

10. SL1 The Education (Student Support) (No.2) (Amendment) and Repayment Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

Members considered the SL1 The Education (Student Support) (No.2) (Amendment) and Repayment Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016.

Agreed: that the Committee is content with the policy implications of the proposed legislation.

11. SR 2016/391 The Further Education (Governing Body of Institution of Further Education) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Members considered the SR 2016/391 The Further Education (Governing Body of Institution of Further Education) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for the Economy has considered SR 2016 No. 391 The Further Education (Governing Body of Institution of Further Education) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 and recommends that it be affirmed by the Assembly.”

12. Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) Report on the Higher Education and Research Bill

Members considered submissions received by the Committee on the LCM.

Department Officials joined the meeting at 12:55pm

The Committee held an evidence session with Mr Trevor Cooper, Head of Higher Education Policy and Finance Division, Department for the Economy, and Mr Conor Brady, Principal, Higher Education Policy, Department for the Economy.

The key issues considered were the concerns highlighted in the submissions received by the Committee.

Agreed: that the Committee will reflect the concerns of the National Union of Students-Union of Students in Ireland (NUS-USI) and the University and College Union (UCU) in its LCM report.

Agreed: that the Committee will include recommendations for the Minister to address in its LCM Report.

Agreed: Members agreed to clear the draft LCM report by correspondence should time constraints make this necessary.

Gordon Dunne left the meeting at 12:59pm

Representatives left the meeting at 13.00pm

13. Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland: Annual Operating Plan 2016/17

The Chairperson referred Members to the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) draft Annual operating plan for 2016/2017.

Agreed: Members noted the HSE NI annual operating plan and agreed to return to it during the HSE NI evidence session with the Committee in the New Year.

14. Correspondence

Noted: Members noted correspondence that the Committee received from the

Committee for the Executive Office regarding a response from the Executive Office on the implications to Northern Ireland of the decision for the UK to exit the EU.

Noted: Members noted a report for the period August 2016 – October 2016 by the Northern Ireland Executive Office Brussels.

Agreed: in considering correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the Monthly Forecast Outturn Data August 2016 – 2017 from the Department of Finance, the Committee agreed to receive a quarterly evidence session with the Department on its Forecast Outturn Data, beginning March 2017.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in regards to the paper by Rural Support ‘Health and Social Effects of the Agricultural Downturn in NI’ and the recommendations within the report relevant to this Committee.

Noted: Members noted an Investment Activity Report from Investment Strategy Northern Ireland.

Agreed: in considering correspondence from Social Enterprise NI, Members agreed to receive a briefing from Social Enterprise NI and consider engagement with the body and the social enterprise sector further in next week’s strategic planning session.

Agreed: Members considered correspondence from the Committee for Justice on the SL1 Insolvent Companies (Disqualification of Unfit Directors) Proceedings (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2016 and agreed write to that Committee stating that this Committee was content with the policy implications.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from Ms Claire Hanna MLA, inviting participation in a public consultation on public attitudes towards breast feeding in public places.

15. Forward Work Programme

Noted: Members noted the Committee’s Forward Work Programme to the end of December 2016.

16. Any Other Business

There were no additional items of business.

17. The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 23rd November 2016 in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 13:03pm

Mr Conor Murphy
Chairperson
Committee for the Economy
23rd November 2016