



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

5 OCTOBER 2016

ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, 10:00am

- Present: Mr Conor Murphy (Chairperson)
Mr Steve Aiken OBE (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Sinead Bradley
Mr Tom Buchanan
Mr Alan Chambers
Dr Stephen Farry
Mr Gordon Lyons
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 Brendon Corr (Bursary Student)
- Apologies: Ms Caoimhe Archibald
Mr Gordon Dunne MBE
Mr Alex Maskey

The meeting began at 10:07am in open session

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Draft Minutes of Meeting on 28th September 2016

Agreed: the Committee agreed the draft Minutes of the meeting on 28th September 2016.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Committee expressed its condolences to the family of Shane McArdle who was Business Development Director at Invest NI.

Agreed: to write to Invest NI to convey the Committee's condolences and to request that Invest NI pass the Committee's condolences on to Mr McArdle's family.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs referred to an Agri-Food Marketing body when answering an oral Question from the Chairperson during Question Time on Monday. The Minister indicated that the body will have an Economy Department lead.

Agreed: to write to the Minister to seek a written update on the development of the body and its intended role, remit and functions and how it will incorporate the role, remit and functions of predecessor bodies; and seek details on how the Department will engage with the body.

Agreed: to write to Bord Bia regarding the opportunities to engage with the Agri-Food Marketing body and to seek information on the role and functions of Bord Bia.

Gordon Lyons joined the meeting at 10:09am

The Chairperson informed the Committee of correspondence from the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

Agreed: the Committee will hold an informal meeting with the Joint Committee at the Oireachtas and with relevant stakeholders during its visit to Dublin.

The Chairperson informed Members of correspondence from NIE Networks requesting a meeting with the Chair.

Agreed: that the Chair meets informally with NIE Networks.

The Chairperson informed Members of the draft itinerary for the meeting next week at Loaf (Social Enterprise) Café and visit to Springvale Employment and Learning Solutions.

The Chairperson reminded Members to inform the Committee Office in advance of external meetings and visits of any diary conflicts Members may have in order to ensure quorum at meetings and good attendance numbers at visits.

Agreed: that the Clerk will email a list of planned external meetings to members for information.

The Chairperson informed Members of correspondence received from Reprieve, an international human rights charity, regarding its report “Belfast to Bahrain, the torture trail”.

Agreed: to write to the Department to ascertain Invest NI’s relationship to NI-CO, NI-CO’s governance structure, and details of the work that NI-CO undertakes.

The Committee agreed to move to agenda 5

5. Programme for Government

Mervyn Storey joined the meeting at 10:17am

Noted: Members noted the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association submission to the draft Programme for Government Framework.

Agreed: Members agreed to incorporate the submission into the Committee’s analysis of the first draft Programme for Government.

6. Matters Arising

Noted: Members noted a response from Invest NI regarding ownership of its Bedford Square Headquarters.

Agreed: to write to Invest NI seeking details on the governance structure of Bedford Street Developments Limited (BSDL) and membership of its Board; including historical membership of the Board going back as far as practical.

Stephen Farry joined the meeting at 10:21am

7. Correspondence

Members considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the forthcoming Budget and attached correspondence from the Minister for Finance.

Members considered a planned co-ordinated response by Committees which will outline areas of spending priority, rather than comment on a draft budget.

Members considered a number of key strategic issues which the Committee will wish to consider in relation to the budget such as the Tourism Strategy, Higher Education settlement, the Apprenticeship Levy and overspend on the Renewable Heating Incentive (RHI) scheme.

Some Members expressed concern that the Committee will not have an opportunity to consider the Department's input to the 2017-18 budget in draft.

Members considered that the Department may be able to provide the Committee with an assessment of how it will handle key issues which concern Members.

Members considered the structures and current events which the Finance Minister is currently working within.

Agreed: to consider the matter again at next week's meeting and agree priorities that the Committee will wish to be addressed by the Department at its briefing on 19th October 2016. The Department is to brief the Committee on budget base line and an October Monitoring process.

The Committee agreed to move to agenda 4

4. Oral Briefing by Ulster Federation of Credit Unions and Irish League of Credit Unions

Conor Murphy declared an interest as a member of a credit union

Sinead Bradley declared an interest as a member of a credit union

Mervyn Storey declared an interest as a member of a credit union

The Officials joined the meeting at 10:37am

Members received a briefing from:

Mr David Dowey, Chairman, Ulster Federation of Credit Unions, Mr Gordon Smyth, Business Development Manager, Ulster Federation of Credit Unions, Mr Brian McCrory, President, Irish League of Credit Unions and Mr Martin Fisher, Regulatory and Legal Officer, Irish League of Credit Unions.

The key issues discussed included: the impact of corporation tax and commercial rates on Credit Unions, negative impact of Individual Voluntary Arrangements, regulatory barriers preventing by credit unions invest in community enterprises and the role Credit Unions play in debt crisis.

Agreed: to write to all of the relevant bodies on the issues raised, as listed in the Clerk's Memo. To include in the Committee's strategic planning, a review of how credit unions can be enabled to invest in local enterprises

The officials left the meeting at 11:31am

The Committee returned to agenda 7

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Infrastructure regarding a briefing which that Committee received from the Systems Operator for Northern Ireland (SONI).

Agreed: to be included with papers for the SONI briefing on 16th November 2016. Papers from SEAT will also be included.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from Open College Network NI requesting to brief the Committee.

Agreed: that the Clerk will meet with OCN NI in the first instance.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from Asthma UK regarding an invite to the Asthma Research in NI Reception.

Agreed: Members to contact the Committee Office regarding their attendance.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from Northern Ireland Screen regarding the publication of the second edition of its Value Report.

8. Any Other Business

There were no additional items of business.

9. Date, Time and Place of Next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 12th October 2016 at 10.00am in Loaf (Social Enterprise) Café.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 11:36am

Mr Conor Murphy
Chairperson
Committee for the Economy

12th October 2016