



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**14 DECEMBER 2016**

**Room 29, Parliament Buildings, 10:00am**

**Present:**

Mr Conor Murphy (Chairperson)  
Mr Steve Aiken OBE (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Tom Buchanan  
Ms Caoimhe Archibald  
Ms Sinéad 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 Sinéad 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 10:06am in open session*

### **1. Apologies**

As noted above.

### **2. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* that the Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting on 30th November 2016, as amended in regards to the date of the meeting and to include the request by Ms Bradley at that meeting for the Committee to be recalled next week for budget scrutiny.

Ms Bradley requested again that the Committee be recalled again next week to scrutinise the budget. Mr Aiken supported the proposal.

*Agreed:* that the Committee will be recalled again before recess should a budget paper be made available next week.

### **3. Chairpersons Business**

The Chairperson informed Members that a short report on the Committee's visit to Dublin will be included in Members' papers for the meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

*Agreed:* to invite the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to Parliament Buildings for an informal meeting in February 2017.

*Agreed:* that the Committee will arrange for a dinner to be held in Belfast similar to that hosted by Ibec in Dublin.

*Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 10:08am*

### **4. Evidence Session with the Department for the Economy on Energy Delivery Plans**

*The representatives joined the meeting at 10:10am*

Members received a briefing from Mr Chris Stewart, Deputy Secretary, Department for the Economy, and Ms Orla Gray, Principal, Energy Strategy, Department for the Economy.

The key issues discussed included Departmental papers to the Committee in a timely manner, consideration of what the Department's Energy Delivery Plans may entail when published, Renewable Heating Incentive, energy capacity margin, Integrated –

Single Electricity Market (I-SEM), second North/South Interconnector and the new wholesale market arrangements.

*Agreed:* Officials agreed that the Minister will inform the Committee at the earliest opportunity on any proposals brought forward to reduce the end costs of the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme.

*Agreed:* Officials agreed that the Department will inform the Committee on any delays with the I-SEM.

*Tom Buchanan joined the meeting at 10:19am*

*Alex Maskey joined the meeting at 10:23am*

*The representatives left the meeting at 10:58am*

## **5. Evidence Session with the Department For the Economy on Economy Delivery Plans**

*The representatives joined the meeting at 10:59am*

Members received a briefing from Mr Derek Baker, Deputy Secretary, Department for the Economy, Mr Victor Dukelow, Assistant Secretary, Department for the Economy, and Mr Diarmuid McLean, Assistant Secretary, Department for the Economy.

The key issues discussed included the Department's Economic Delivery Plans, a partnership approach by Departments, Programme for Government targets and the Economic Strategy.

*Agreed:* that the Committee forward a response to the Committee for the Executive on the Committee's views on the second draft programme for Government which reflects the findings by the Committee from each evidence session on Delivery Plans.

*Sinéad Bradley left the meeting at 11:47am*

*Alex Maskey left the meeting at 11:50am*

*Mervyn Storey left the meeting at 11:51am*

*The representatives left the meeting at 11:52am*

## **6. Matters Arising**

*Noted:* Members noted a Ministerial response on Departmental Budget Baseline and October Monitoring.

*Noted:* Members noted a timetable for budget scrutiny by Committees.

Members considered a Departmental response in relation to the Department's view on

a standalone public consultation for renewables, separate from the wider review of the Strategic Energy Framework.

*Agreed:* to forward the response to those small scale renewables bodies that had corresponded with the Committee on the issue for comment.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office in relation to this Committee's response to the Good Relations Indicators.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Labour Relations Agency regarding its Annual Report and Accounts 2015-16.

Members considered correspondence from Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP in relation to a response he received from the UK Economy Secretary on Credit Unions in Northern Ireland and the payment of corporation tax.

*Agreed:* to forward the correspondence to the two credit union bodies for information.

Members considered a briefing paper prepared by Tourism NI for the evidence session on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016 at Cultra Manor which was received from the Department following the meeting. Members considered a departmental response to the Chairperson's letter to Tourism NI in which the Chairperson had asked for detail of Tourism NI's forward work programme, the briefing paper for the evidence session and Tourism NI's role in the bid for the Commonwealth Youth Games. Members considered a paper providing details of correspondence between the Committee and the Department.

Members considered deadlines for papers missed by the Department and a previous action taken by the Committee to cancel an evidence session with InterTradeIreland after not receiving a briefing paper in a timely manner. The Chairperson informed Members that he has been liaising with the Permanent Secretary over the Department currently insisting that Arm's Length Bodies' evidence session briefing papers are cleared by the Department and on the requirement for the Department to provide papers to the Committee in an appropriate and timely manner.

Members considered the level of access to information on the work of the Department that the Committee should expect to receive, including that pertaining to whistleblowers.

*Agreed:* the Committee directed the Clerk to ascertain the position re papers of other statutory Committees.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to await a response from the Permanent Secretary to the Chairperson's concerns on the provision of Departmental papers to the Committee before agreeing any further courses of action.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to obtain a copy of the Department's Whistleblower policy and risk register. The Committee to consider the findings of the Inquiry by the Public Accounts Committee into the Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive scheme and the Department's internal inquiry on the matter once these are available;

and then to consider further actions.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to follow up on any outstanding Departmental papers.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to encourage and promote the Committee as an avenue available for individuals and organisations that may have issues and concerns pertaining to the Department for the Economy. Members to avail of the advice of the Clerk on any issues or concerns brought forward to them by individuals or organisations.

*Noted:* Members noted a response by the Construction Employers Federation to the Programme for Government consultation.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to the format of the Committee's Round Table Discussions on Energy to be held on 25th January 2017 and Social Enterprises on 8th March 2017.

*Agreed:* the Committee will hold a further forum event in May 2017 with respect to a strategy for 14 to 19 year olds.

*Sinéad Bradley joined the meeting at 11:54am*  
*Caoimhe Archibald left the meeting at 12:03pm*  
*Mervyn Storey joined the meeting at 12:05pm*  
*Alex Maskey joined the meeting at 12:10pm*

## **7. Correspondence**

*Agreed:* Members noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office informing Members of responses it has received in relation to Programme for Government 2016-21 – Indicators 30 & 40 and agreed to add briefings on these to the Committee's forward work plan.

*Noted:* the Committee noted correspondence from the Department for Justice highlighting the SL1 The Judicial Pensions (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland).

*Noted:* the Committee noted correspondence from utility companies highlighting their joint Winter Readiness Campaign that will assist the public in their preparation for winter, which the Committee had previously tweeted.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence informing the Committee that the launch of the Lishally Power Station had been postponed. Members noted that the Committee is scheduled to visit the power station on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the CBI advising the Committee that they have launched an Unlocking Regional Growth Report.

*Agreed:* Members noted an invitation from Northern Ireland Food and Drink to attend the 2017 Northern Ireland Food and Drink Awards on Friday 24th March in the Ramada Hotel, Shaws Bridge and agreed to notify the Committee Office of their

availability.

*Agreed:* Members noted correspondence from Stranmillis University College to attend a Celebration of Christmas in Words and Music on Thursday 15th December and agreed to notify the Committee Office of their availability to attend.

*Agreed:* Members noted correspondence from Reprieve containing a set of questions in relation to NI-CO and agreed to forward to the Department for comment.

*Noted:* the Committee noted a written briefing from Tourism NI to the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on environmental and sustainable tourism.

*Noted:* the Committee noted the Annual Reports and Accounts for year ended July 2016 of the six Further Education colleges.

*Agreed:* Members noted correspondence from BT inviting Members to the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition at the RDS Dublin on 12th January 2017 and agreed that the Chair and Deputy Chair would attend. The Committee Office to forward further information on individual projects to Members and Members to then inform the Committee Office of their availability to attend.

## **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 be at 10:00am on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2017 in Room 29, Parliament Buildings, unless recalled in the interim period as agreed under Item 2.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:15pm*

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**Mr Conor Murphy**  
**Chairperson**  
**Committee for the Economy**

**11<sup>th</sup> January 2017**