



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**7 SEPTEMBER 2016**

**CONFERENCE ROOM, ARMAGH CITY HOTEL, 10:00am**

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

In Attendance: Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)  
Mr Craig Mealey (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Stephen Farry

*The meeting began at 10:06am in open session*

**1. Apologies**

As noted above.

**2. Draft Minutes of Meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

### **3. Declaration of Interests**

Members noted the Declaration of Interests for each Member on the Committee and no further declarations were made.

### **4. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson thanked the Armagh City Hotel for hosting the Committee.

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee will be visiting Linwood's foods following the meeting.

The Chairperson noted the work carried out by the Committee in its strategic planning meeting the previous day, including agreeing a set of 14 work-streams on which the Committee will focus, six of which will be of particular Committee focus initially, moving forward.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed a number of actions for the Committee Office to take forward, outlined at the strategic planning meeting on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

The Chairperson informed Members that Ofcom is currently carrying out a fundamental review of the telecoms sector to examine how high quality mobile and broadband services are available to everyone.

*Agreed:* that the Chair and Deputy Chair will meet with Ofcom.

The Chairperson informed Members of an invitation from NIPSA to speak at its Annual Health and Safety Conference which will be held on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

*Agreed:* to clarify timings with NIPSA, and the Chair will speak at the conference if Assembly business permits.

The Chairperson informed Members of correspondence from NI Impact Forum on Adult Learning, requesting a meeting with the chair and asking that the Committee sponsor its event in the Long Gallery in February.

*Agreed:* that the Chair meet with NI Impact.

*Agreed:* that the Committee will sponsor the event.

The Chairperson informed Members of correspondence from Assembly Outreach inviting the Chair to speak at an event for the Assembly's Charity of the Year, 'Positive Futures'. The event is to be held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2016, Assembly business permitting.

*Agreed:* that the Chair will speak at the event.

The Chairperson informed Members of an invitation to The Open University Degree Ceremony on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2016.

*Steve Aiken declared an interest as his wife will be graduating at the event*

*Agreed:* Members to contact the Committee Office if they wish to attend as part of the platform party and procession.

The Chairperson informed members that Colleges NI have asked the Committee to sponsor their showcase event in the Long Gallery on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

*Agreed:* that the Committee will sponsor the event, and the Committee Office will discuss the choice of date with Colleges NI.

## **5. Oral Briefing by Northern Ireland Hotels Federation**

*The representatives joined the meeting at 10:15am*

Members received a briefing from Mr Ciaran O'Neill, President, Northern Ireland Hotels Federation, and Ms Janice Gault, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Hotels Federation.

The key issues discussed included the current licensing laws in Northern Ireland, VAT rate reductions for the tourism sector in Europe, infrastructure outside Belfast, and planning issues.

*Agreed:* to commission research on tourism strategies for the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain.

*The representatives left the meeting at 11:20am*

## **6. Oral Briefing by The Federation of Small Businesses**

*The representatives joined the meeting at 11:22am*

Members received a briefing from Mr Roger Pollen, Head of External Affairs, Federation of Small Businesses, Ms Mairaid McMahon, Development Manager, Federation of Small Businesses, and Mr Seamus Millen, Policy Advisor, Federation of Small Businesses.

The key issues discussed included the potential of a Small Business Advocate, regulation red tape and the slow turnaround of planning permission applications.

*Agreed:* to commission research on whether other jurisdictions have any wider economic benefit criteria within the planning application system.

*Gordon Dunne left the meeting at 11:32am*

*The representatives left the meeting at 12:06pm*

## **7. Matters Arising**

The Chairperson informed Members that the Minister's response in regards to public appointments is in the tabled pack.

*Agreed:* members agreed to discuss the correspondence at next week's meeting.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Department providing further detail of the Department's overall involvement with mines regulations.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Department in respect of the award of Mineral Prospecting Licences to Dalradian Gold Ltd.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Department regarding funding towards strengthening the electricity grid.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Ulster University regarding the Magee Campus expansion and the action plan for the Holyland area on St. Patrick's day.

## **8. Legislation: SL1 The Further Education (Governing Body of Institution of Further Education) Order (NI) 2016**

Members considered SL1 The Further Education (Governing Body of Institution of Further Education) Order (NI) 2016.

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

## **9. Legislation: SR 2016/266 The Control of Electromagnetic Fields at Work Regulations (NI) 2016**

Members considered SR 2016/266 The Control of Electromagnetic Fields at Work Regulations (NI) 2016.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Examiner of Statutory Rules has not yet reported on the Rule so members will be agreeing to the legislation subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rule's report.

*Question put and agreed:*

*“That the Committee for the Economy has considered SR2016/266 The Control of Electromagnetic Fields at Work Regulations (NI) 2016 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rule's report, has no objection to the rule”.*

*Alex Maskey left the meeting at 12:10pm*

## **10. Programme for Government**

Members considered copies of submissions by stakeholders to the Programme for Government Call for Evidence.

Members considered an extract from the Draft Programme for Government Framework on Outcomes and Indicators in relation to the Department for the Economy.

*Agreed:* the Committee to produce an issues paper with respect to the PfG submissions that it has received.

*Agreed:* to ask the Department for an update on the status of its PfG implementation action plan.

## **11. Former Department for Employment and Learning Annual Report and Accounts for Year Ended 31 March 2016**

*Noted:* Members considered the former Department for Employment and Learning Annual Report and Accounts for Year Ended 31 March 2016.

## **12. Former Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment Annual Report and Accounts for Year Ended 31 March 2016**

*Noted:* Members considered the former Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment Annual Report and Accounts for Year Ended 31 March 2016.

## **13. Invest NI Annual Report and Accounts 2015-16**

*Noted:* Members considered the Invest NI Annual Report and Accounts 2015-16.

*Agreed:* to write to Invest NI to seek clarification on the ownership of its Bedford Street headquarters.

#### **14. Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2016**

*Noted:* Members noted the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2016.

#### **15. RP6 Price Control**

*Noted:* Members noted the NIE Networks RP6 Business plan 2017-2024.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to discuss the RP6 Price Control with the Utility Regulator when she briefs Members in November.

*Noted:* Members noted the joint report 'Empowering Consumers' produced by the Consumer Council, NIE Networks, and the Utility Regulator.

#### **16. Written Brought by the Department: Hunter Review Implementation**

*Noted:* Members considered a Departmental briefing on the Hunter Review Implementation.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to reflect again on the Review when it receives the draft Tourism Strategy from the Department.

*Tom Buchanan left the meeting at 12:17pm*

#### **17. Forward Work Programme**

*Agreed:* Members agreed the Committee Forward Work Programme.

#### **18. Correspondence**

*Noted:* Members considered correspondence from the Finance Committee on the 2017-20 Budget.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from an individual regarding the NIRO closure to onshore wind.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to forward the individual's correspondence to the Department for comment.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Ulster Federation of Credit Unions (UFCU).

*Agreed:* to invite the UFCU and the Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU) to give an overview briefing to the Committee.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) regarding a joint CBI/Ibec report 'Connected: A prosperous island of 10 million people'.

*Agreed:* to consider again when the CBI briefs the Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from The Executive Office to the Prime Minister in relation to the EU referendum result.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from Ulster Bank regarding the Ulster Bank Skills and Opportunities Fund.

*Noted:* Members noted the latest EU Matters Newsletter.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from Investment Strategy Northern Ireland regarding the ISNI Delivery Tracking System – Investing Activity Report.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office regarding the Annual Report on Public Bodies and Public Appointments for 2014-15

## **19. Any Other Business**

The Committee considered how tourism statistics are gathered and a point was raised regarding the availability of research data in Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* to write to NISRA to ask for information on the process to compile tourism statistics for Northern Ireland and for information on the barriers NISRA faces in producing the statistic to a shorter timescale.

## **20. Date, Time and Place of Next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2016 at 10.00am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:20pm*

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

**14<sup>th</sup> September 2016**