



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**WEDNESDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2014**

**ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

**Present:** Mr Robin Swann MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Sammy Douglas MLA  
Mr Phil Flanagan MLA  
Mr David Hilditch MLA  
Mr Chris Lyttle MLA  
Mr Fra McCann MLA  
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA  
Mr Alastair Ross MLA

**In Attendance:** Mrs Cathie White (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Vincent Gribbin (Assistant Clerk)  
Mr Nathan McVeigh (Clerical Supervisor)  
Ms Noreen Hayward (Clerical Officer)

**Apologies:** Ms Bronwyn McGahan MLA  
Ms Claire Sugden MLA

*The meeting opened in public session at 10:02 am.*

**1. Apologies**

Apologies are detailed above.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

- The Committee considered its Strategic Planning Day which was held in Loughry College on 3 September 2014 and formally accepted the following:

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive briefings from the successful Steps 2 Success contract organisations and the Department as scheduled in the Forward Work Programme.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to schedule bi-annual briefings from officials on the monitoring of the Steps 2 Success contracts.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive a research paper on each of the 3 Steps 2 Success contract organisations.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive a research paper on the inclusion of Not For Profit Organisations in procurement competitions.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive briefings from the five individual Teacher Training institutions and the Universities followed by a briefing from the Expert Panel on Teacher Training Infrastructure as scheduled in the Forward Work Programme.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to attend the Wrightbus Apprenticeship Showcase when it is finalised and to receive a written briefing to the Committee on Youth Training.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive Departmental briefings on the Economic Inactivity strategy as scheduled in the Forward Work Programme.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive a research paper on Economic Inactivity.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to await receipt of the Business Plan before deciding whether it requires a briefing.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive briefings on the European Social Fund as scheduled in the Forward Work Programme.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive briefings on Graduating to Success and Access to Success as scheduled in the Forward Work Programme.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Universities for information on what action they have taken to widen access, particularly in rural areas.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive briefings on the Disability Employment Strategy as scheduled in the Forward Work Programme.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive briefings on the Further Education Strategy as scheduled in the Forward Work Programme.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive briefings on Zero-Hours Contracts in NI as scheduled in the Forward Work Programme.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed the list of Events and Visits as detailed in the Forward Work Programme.

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to schedule a joint Showcase event for the teacher training colleges in Northern Ireland.
- Agreed:* The Committee has also agreed that it will continue to consider the following issues on a recurring basis:
- Labour Force Survey*  
*Savings Delivery Plans*  
*Monitoring Rounds and Outturn Figures*  
*Programme for Government*  
*European Briefing*  
*Skills Strategy*
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to continue with 6 monthly briefings on the North West Regional College Action Plan with the Change Manager, the Chair of the College Board of Governors and DEL officials with a briefing beginning in the New Year.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to hold informal meetings with the North West Regional College Chief Executive and the Chair of the College Board of Governors and separately with representatives with UCU and NIPSA in the Autumn.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed with the scrutiny of the Work and Families Bill as outlined in the Forward Work Programme.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it would schedule scrutiny of the General Teaching Council (NI) Bill when it is introduced.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it would schedule scrutiny of the Employment Bill when it is introduced.
- Agreed:* The Committee has agreed to Antrim/Ballymena area and Omagh as the locations for taking evidence on its Inquiry into post SEN provision and to consider carrying out a third evidence session.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to invite the Minister and Officials to the Inquiry into post SEN provision evidence events.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request a research paper on the Post SEN model in Sweden for consideration of a study visit, including existing legislation.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the Include Youth Briefing paper to the Department for Comment.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive a research paper on the hours of self-employed workers.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive a comparative research paper on the working poor in GB and RoI.

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive a research paper on the Productivity Gap in Northern Ireland.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive a further research paper on the Hardship Fund and the differences between its use in universities and colleges.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive a research paper on employment of disabled workers in Northern Ireland.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department for information on why the colleges Hardship fund money is changing and not universities.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from NICVA on its report into the Living Wage into the Forward Work Programme.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Chairperson will host a dinner in Parliament Buildings for an International UK Skills Seminar on 22 October 2014.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing by NUS-USI on its recent Pound in Your Pocket report in the Forward Work Programme.

### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2014 and 9 July 2014**

*Agreed:* The minutes of the meetings on 2 July 2014 and 9 July were agreed.

### **4. Matters arising**

- The Committee noted a list of matters arising from the meetings on 2 July 2014 and 9 July 2014.

### **5. Correspondence**

The Committee considered the following items of correspondence:

- Ministerial response regarding the North West Regional College Action Plan Briefing on 18 June 2014.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from University and College Union regarding the Departmental Briefing on the NWRC Action Plan Update on 18 June 2014.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental response regarding the reasons for the delay on each of the six outstanding post project evaluations.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and write to the Department requesting further clarification.

- Departmental response regarding cuts to the budget for apprenticeships.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental response regarding the Food and Drink Skills Action Group strategy and action plan.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the Committee for the Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding a Legislative Consent Motion – Westminster Childcare Payments Bill.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental response regarding the Legislative Consent Motion – Westminster Childcare Payments Bill.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and forward it to COFMDFM for information.

- Correspondence from the Committee for the Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the terms of reference for the Committee for the Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister’s inquiry into Building a United Community.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and request the Department copy the Committee into its response to the Committee for the Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister.

- Correspondence from the Committee for Education regarding the terms of reference for the Committee for Education Inquiry into Shared/Integrated Education.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and to inform the Committee for Education that it has a number of Hansard transcripts on the NI Assembly website which may be of use.

- Correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel providing an Assembly Research and Information Service Paper on Year End Surges in Northern Ireland Departmental Expenditure.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and forward it to the Department for comment.

- Departmental response regarding the geographical breakdown of deprived areas where people have attained qualifications.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and write to the Department requesting further clarification.

- Departmental response regarding sickness absence figures.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental response regarding the up-skilling 2000 people.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental response regarding the protocol for transferring correspondence cases.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from an individual requesting copies of the reports on the review of the Teacher Education Infrastructure.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and noted that the individual was informed to contact the Department.

- Correspondence from the Disability Equality Group requesting copies of the briefing papers provided by the Department for the briefing on Steps 2 Success on 9 July 2014.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and noted that the individual was informed that the papers were on the Department's website.

- NISRA response to Committee correspondence regarding the latest labour market statistics.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Queen's University Belfast response regarding the Graduate Employment and Further Study.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Response from the Assembly Research and Information Service regarding the drawdown of Horizon 2020 funding.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Department for Employment and Learning Investing Activity Report - July 2014.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental response regarding the impact of Savings Delivery Plan B/7 on Section 75 groups and on front line services

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental response regarding Education in deprived areas.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental response regarding Skills Shortages.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental response regarding the Prison Arts Foundation

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and to forward it to the Prison Arts Foundation for information.

- Departmental response regarding ESF funding from 2014-20.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from Mr Michael Humphreys requesting a meeting with the Committee to discuss Disability Services Assessment anti-competitive practices.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and forward it to the Department for comment.

- Assembly Research and Information Service briefing paper on Transition Planning in Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and include in the Inquiry Pack.

- Assembly Research and Information Service briefing paper on Transition Planning in the Republic of Ireland.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and include in the Inquiry Pack.

- Correspondence from the Commissioner for Older Northern Ireland requesting to brief the Committee on “Valuing an Ageing Workforce” Report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and to schedule a briefing with the Commissioner for Older Northern Ireland on the report in the Forward Work Programme.

- Assembly Research and Information Service briefing paper on The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence, forward it to OFMDFM for information and comment and include in the Inquiry pack.

- Correspondence from the Assembly European Officer providing a list of EU events and conferences through to January 2015.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Department of Justice response regarding the Prison Arts Foundation.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and to forward it to the Prison Arts Foundation for information.

- Correspondence providing the UCU and NIPSA's views on the implementation of the McConnell Action Plan.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the Change Manager at North West Regional College regarding the University and Colleges' Union views on the status of the McConnell Action Plan.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Invitation to the Minister for Employment and Learning from the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure to an event celebrating 90 years of the BBC in Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the University of Ulster Students' Union providing an update on the Students' Union's ongoing governance review.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Department for Employment and Learning Investing Activity Report - August 2014.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental response to request for comments on the Justice Bill.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and forward to the Committee for Justice for information.

- Correspondence from the Big Lottery Fund providing an update on the Reaching Out: Supporting Families Programme.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the Belfast Metropolitan College providing a submission to the Committee Inquiry on Post Special Educational Need Provision in Education, Employment and Training for those with Learning Disabilities.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and include in the Inquiry pack.

- Correspondence from Colleges NI offering to brief the Committee on the College Hardship Funds.



*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and to schedule a briefing in the Forward Work Programme.

- Correspondence from the European Commission urging coding classes at school.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Invitation from Centre for Economic Empowerment to attend its Launch of Research into the Living Wage in Northern Ireland at 9.00 am on the 9 September 2014 at Belfast City Hall.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation from InterTradeIreland to attend its All-Island Innovation Programme - lecture, on 'The Globalisation of Innovation and Business Creation' at 6.30 pm on 15 September at Riddell Hall, Stranmillis.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation from the Restart 2 Transfer of Innovation Project to attend it Lone Parents in the European Labour Market event at 11.00 am on 16 September at Belfast City Hall.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation from the European Institute to attend the Final Conference of the PAT-TEIN Project - Tools for Capacity building of actors of Cross-Border Cooperation at 1.00 pm on 18 September at the European Parliament, Strasbourg.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation from Collaboration NI to attend the Collaboration NI and Social Enterprise NI roundtable discussion to consider Supply Chain Partnerships as a model of collaboration across the third, public and private sectors at 5.30 pm on 23 September in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation from the Chief Executives' Club at Queen's to attend its event on "Competition in a world of 7 billion citizens: A New Model for Business Growth." At 5.30 pm on 6 October at Riddell Hall, Belfast.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation from the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure to attend an event celebrating 90 years of the BBC in Northern Ireland at 11.00 am on 8 October at Parliament Buildings Belfast.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Invitation from the Royal Society of Chemistry to the Chairperson to attend its third annual Science and Stormont at 5.30 pm on 13 October in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation from the Department to attend a series of Job Fairs which are planned for September and early October.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation from the Chairpersons' Forum to attend a Breakfast Briefing at 8.00 am on 17 September in Malone House, Belfast.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

## **6. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme to 10 December 2014.

## **7. Ministerial Briefing - Provisional Outturn 2013/14 including an update on budget reductions**

*10:12 am The Minister and his officials joined the meeting.*

*10:12 am Mr Buchanan joined the meeting.*

The Committee was briefed by Dr Stephen Farry, Minister for Employment and Learning, Mr Derek Baker, Permanent Secretary, Ms Heather Cousins, Deputy Secretary and Mr Stephen McMurray, Director of Finance.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*10:31 am Mr Lyttle joined the meeting.*

*11:10 am Mr Hilditch joined the meeting.*

*Agreed:* The Minister agreed provide statistics on the Hardship Fund for the past five years on the colleges' bids for hardship fund allocations at a Northern Ireland level and by college.

*11:34 am The evidence session ended.*

## **8. Ministerial Briefing on the Term Ahead**

*11:34 am The evidence session started.*

The Committee was briefed by the Minister for Employment and Learning on the term ahead.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*Agreed:* The Minister agreed to provide the Committee with a list of the organisations in the supply chain for each of the three organisations successful in the Steps 2 Success programme.

*12.00 pm The Minister and his officials left the meeting.*

## **9. Work and Families Bill - Engineering Employers Federation NI**

*12:00 pm The representatives joined the meeting.*

*12:01 pm Mr Ross left the meeting.*

The Committee was briefed by Ms Michelle McGinley, Employment Lawyer and Ms Kathryn McCormick, Employment Lawyer.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*12:17 pm Mr McCann left the meeting.*

*12.33 pm The representatives left the meeting.*

## **10. Work and Families Bill - Departmental Briefing**

*12:33 pm The Departmental officials joined the meeting.*

The Committee was briefed by Mr Tom Evans, Deputy Director, Strategy, European and Employment Relations Division and Dr Alan Scott, Employment Relations Policy and Legislation Branch.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*Agreed:* The officials agreed to review the Hansard of the Engineering Employers Federation NI evidence and respond to the issues raised.

*12:52 pm The Departmental officials left the meeting.*

## **11. Any other business**

None.

**12. Date, time and place of next meeting**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the next meeting should be held on Wednesday 17 September 2014 at 9.00 am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

*12:52 pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.*

**Mr Robin Swann MLA  
Chairperson, Committee for Employment & Learning**

**17 September 2014**