



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

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

WEDNESDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 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
Ms Bronwyn McGahan MLA
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA
Mr Alastair Ross MLA

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

Apologies: Mr David McClarty MLA

10:04 am The meeting opened in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Chairpersons Business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting an update on its proposed, live, and closed consultations since October 2013.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2014

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting on 19 February 2014 were agreed.

4. Matters arising

- The Committee noted a list of matters arising from the meeting on 19 February 2014.

5. Correspondence

The Committee considered the following items of correspondence:

- Response from the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment to the Committee Inquiry into Post School Special Educational Need in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response and include it in the Inquiry report.

- Correspondence from the Forum for Adult Learners Northern Ireland regarding Adult Learners week.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Forum for Adult Learners Northern Ireland to interview Members regarding their experience of adult learning and how that has impacted on their own personal education journey.

- Departmental briefing paper on the Review of the Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing with Stranmillis University College and St Mary's Teacher Training College on the Review in the Forward Work Programme for after Easter.

- Correspondence from the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure to the Minister for Employment and Learning regarding the Performing Arts Centre at South Eastern Regional College, Bangor.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Response from the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the progress of the Draft Economic Inactivity Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Correspondence from the Departmental European Thematic Desk Officer providing information on the Erasmus Sports Funding Information Day.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from Stranmillis University College regarding the Review of Teacher Training Infrastructure in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Responses from the University of Ulster, Queen's University Belfast and the Department regarding the 2 hour strike action by the University and College Union.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the responses and forward the correspondence to the University and College Union for information and comment.

- Correspondence from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding a joint showcase event for the Northern Ireland Science Park.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to the hosting of a joint event.

- Correspondence from North West Regional College regarding the response to queries raised by Mr William Coyle.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment providing the DETI response regarding the Consultation on the Strategic Framework to Tackle Economic Inactivity in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental response regarding flexible working in the Public Sector.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response and forward to the Committee for Finance and Personnel for information.

- Departmental response regarding the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network (STEMNET).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Departmental response regarding the details of the Northern Ireland Contact Points under Horizon 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Departmental response regarding Cultural Skills Training for businesses.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response and to forward the response to Mrs Irene McMahon for information.

- Correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry into the Barroso Task Force.

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

- Correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister providing a summary of the Joint Ministerial Council (Europe) meeting on 2 December 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental correspondence requesting that the briefing on the Review of Youth Training on 26 March 2014 be postponed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reschedule the briefing in the forward work programme.

- Correspondence from the University of Ulster requesting the opportunity to brief the Committee on the establishment of a School of Veterinary Medicine.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing on 9 April 2014.

- Departmental response regarding comparisons between Northern Ireland and other EU Jurisdictions with respect of Equal Pay.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response and to write to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for information on this matter.

- Copy of the Department for Employment and Learning Investing Activity Report for February 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the report.

- Departmental response regarding a tracking system for those young people not in education, employment or training.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the meeting pack for 12 March 2014.

- Response from the Minister of Education to the Committee Inquiry into Post School Special Educational Need.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response and include in the Inquiry report.

- Correspondence from Colleges NI requesting the opportunity to brief the Committee on the Salisbury Review of Industrial Relations in Further Education Colleges.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing in the forward work programme.

- Departmental correspondence requesting that the briefing on the Department's Programme for Government commitments is rescheduled.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reschedule the briefing in the forward work programme.

- Invitation from Belfast Metropolitan College to the film premiere of 'Breaking the Barriers' in the E3 campus on 3 March 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation from SEMTA to attend an event launching Addressing the Gender Imbalance in STEM in the Long Gallery on 25 March 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

6. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme to 23 April 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed not to hold a meeting on 21 May 2014 as there are elections taking place on 22 May.

7. Subordinate Legislation

Agreed: That the Committee for Employment and Learning has considered SR 2014 - 39 The Employment Rights (Increase of Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 and has no objection to the rule.

8. Briefing from the Northern Ireland Audit Office on their report into Sickness Absence in the Northern Ireland Public Sector

10: 18 am Mr David Hilditch joined the meeting.

10:19 am The officials joined the meeting.

The Committee was briefed by Mr Neil Gray, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office and Mr David Murdie, Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting details of what policies and procedures are in place to reduce sickness absence and to ascertain if the Internal Audit Branch has carried out an audit/review on the sickness absence processes in the last 6 years.

10:35 am The officials left the meeting.

9. Departmental Briefing on the Work Connect Programme

10:36 am The officials joined the meeting.

The Committee was briefed by Mr Terry Park, Head of Disability Employment Service, Department for Employment and Learning, Mrs Margaret Haddock, Deputy Chief Executive, The Orchardville Society and Mr Peter Shields, Operations Manager, Action Mental Health.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

11:09 am Mr Chris Lyttle joined the meeting.

11:19 am The officials left the meeting.

10. Departmental Briefing - Terms of Reference for the Departmental Review of Careers in Northern Ireland and the Departmental Response to the recommendations made in the Committee Inquiry into CEIAG in Northern Ireland

11:20 am The Departmental officials joined the meeting.

The Committee was briefed by Ms Frances O'Hara, Head of Careers Service Delivery, Department for Employment and Learning, Mr Michael Gould, Assistant Director Skills and Industry Division, Department for Employment and Learning and Dr David Hughes, Director of Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards, Department of Education.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

11:31 am Mr Sammy Douglas joined the meeting.

11:35 am Mr Fra McCann left the meeting.

11:46 am Mr Alastair Ross left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that they be kept updated on examples of good practise in careers provision from other jurisdictions.

11:49 am Mr Robin Swann joined the meeting.

11:51 am Mr Fra McCann re-joined the meeting.

11:52 am Mr Phil Flanagan joined the meeting.

11:53 am Mr Robin Swann took the Chair

Agreed: The officials agreed to provide the Committee with information on what actions the Department is taking to address the gender imbalance in STEM subjects.

11:57 am Mr Pat Ramsey left the meeting.

Agreed: The officials agreed to provide the Committee with details on the STEM target of a 5% increase in the percentage of pupils studying STEM subjects in sixth form.

12:00 pm Mr Fra McCann left the meeting.

12:03 pm Mr Phil Flanagan left the meeting.

Agreed: The officials agreed to provide the Committee with details on the number of hits to the Parents Portal on the NI Direct Careers Website.

12:34 pm Mr Chris Lyttle left the meeting.

Agreed: The officials agreed to revisit the Departmental response to Recommendation 22.

Agreed: The officials agreed to provide a timeline for the completion of 4 Continuous Professional Development modules.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the Hansard to the Committee for Education for information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the Hansard to the Department providing the Committee's views on the responses to the recommendations in its Inquiry and the Review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue a press release on the Departmental response to the Committee Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) in Northern Ireland.

12:47 pm The Departmental officials left the meeting.

11. Any other business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting information on whether a disparity exists between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK which prevents technology teachers in the rest of the UK from teaching in Northern Ireland until they gain a specific City and Guilds qualification.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department and Queen's University Belfast to comment on why Student Union jobs are being advertised as University jobs and if this is contrary to the 1994 legislation.

12. Date, time and place of next meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the next meeting should be held on Wednesday 12 March 2014 at 10.00 am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

12:50 pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Robin Swann MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Employment & Learning

12 March 2014