



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

WEDNESDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2013

ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

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

Mr Sammy Douglas MLA
Mr Chris Lyttle MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Ms Bronwyn McGahan MLA
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA
Mr Alistair 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 Hilditch MLA
Mr David McClarty MLA
Mr Phil Flanagan MLA

The meeting opened in public session at 10:03 am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Chairperson's Business

- The Chairperson advised the Committee that Mr Jim Allister MLA was no longer a Member of the Committee and thanked Mr Allister for his service to the Committee.
- The Committee considered the decisions taken at its planning meeting in Cookstown Further Education College of 4 September.

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the NISRA and DEL quarterly briefings on the Labour Force Survey will be 2 bi-annual oral briefings and 2 bi-annual written briefings.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Programme for Government briefings will be bi-annually and that the Director of Finance will give the first briefing and the individual policy leads for the PfG targets will give the second briefing.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Savings Delivery Plan briefings will be bi-annually.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it would still receive a briefing from the Assembly Researcher and Departmental officials on European Issues on a quarterly basis.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it would still receive a briefing from Departmental officials on the North West Regional College Action Plans on a quarterly basis.
- Agreed:* The Committee noted that the Department has indicated that it will not be in a position to brief on the Steps 2 Success tendering process until March 2014 and agreed to ask the Minister about this issue during his briefing on 11 September 2013.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it would arrange to meet the Thematic Desk Officer for a briefing during its visit to the Employment Forum in Brussels in November 2013.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it would schedule a departmental briefing on Engineering Working Group and Agri-food Strategy Board and Action Plan on 4 December 2013.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it would schedule a departmental briefing on the qualification framework as part of Graduating to Success briefing on 18 September 2013.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it would request the Minister to arrange a briefing from the Department on the Steps 2 Work and to consider a practical “walk through” of the process which clients under go.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it would request a further written briefing from Assembly Research and Information Service on the breakdown of the 4% of the NI population on Zero Hour Contracts.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it would consider the Inquiry over the coming month with a view to debate the report in Plenary in mid-October.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to issue a press release once the plenary debate has commenced.

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it would share the relevant recommendations with the Education Committee when the Committee has finalised the Report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed in principle to carry out an Inquiry into Post SEN.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from Professor Roy McConkey on the terms of reference for the Inquiry on 25 September 2013.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to visit Special Schools and facilities as part of the Inquiry.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed the list of scheduled events.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to invite the Northern Ireland Youth Forum to the Apprenticeships Showcase Event.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed the list of scheduled visits.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to add a request for a briefing from Copious Resources to its list of possible briefings.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to add a request for a briefing from Forum for Adult Learners to its list of possible briefings.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive a briefing from the NI Science Park Connect Director on the Knowledge Economy Index report during a planned visit to the NI Science Park.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to visit the Appleby Trust as part of its Post SEN Inquiry.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to get further information on the areas of interest put forward by Queen's University Belfast.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to add a request for a briefing from RNIB NI to its list of possible briefings.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to attend a STEM in Schools/Colleges event hosted by the Committee for Education on 29 January in Parliament Buildings.
- The Chairperson informed Members that the Central Committee Office is rolling out the trial of Electronic Committee Packs during meetings and has developed a timetable for the phasing in of fully electronic Committee meetings.
 - The Chairperson informed Members that Action Mental Health is holding an event to mark the end of their year as the Assembly's nominated charity and that he will attend on the Committee's behalf.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2013

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

4. Matters arising

- The Committee noted a list of matters arising from the previous meeting.
- The Committee noted that at its meeting on 19 June, it had agreed to write to those organisations and the relevant Trade Unions which come under the auspices of the Department, seeking their views on the implications of the Public Service Pensions Bill and that no responses had been received.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Finance and Personnel advising it that no responses had been received.

5. Correspondence

The Committee considered the following items of correspondence:

- Correspondence from the Big Lottery Fund regarding the new Reaching Out: Supporting Families Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental response to Committee correspondence regarding Post 19 SEN Provision in the Dungannon area.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Ministerial correspondence to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding the Northern Ireland Science Park Connect Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from Public Accounts Committee regarding the recently published report on Improving Literacy and Numeracy in Schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee to the Minister for Employment and Learning regarding internet learning at Magilligan Prison.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental response to Committee correspondence highlighting queries in relation to the Forecast Outturn for 2012 - 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Departmental correspondence regarding the Review of Employment Law.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from Derry City Council providing an update report on the Collaboration and Innovation Fund.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the Open University thanking the Chairperson for meeting with them.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from Committee for Finance and Personnel on the Monitoring of Departmental Savings Delivery Plans.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental response to Committee correspondence requesting details on projects referred to in Savings Delivery Plan B/6.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting information on the impact and benefits of the work of the 12 research and development projects no longer receiving funding as a result of savings delivery plan B/6, where they are now receiving funding from, and details of the work the Department's £50m research and development budget now funds.

- Response from the Department for Social Development regarding undeclared work, especially in a cross border context.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Correspondence from the Assembly Research and Information Service detailing a European Union Communication - Action on Youth Unemployment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from Grant Thornton detailing the costs of the Review of Teacher Education Study.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental correspondence detailing the implications of the unsuccessful bid in the June Monitoring Round.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the United Youth Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Departmental response to Committee for Finance and Personnel correspondence regarding the Efficiency Delivery Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Departmental response to Committee for Education correspondence requesting further information on Career Pathways.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Department for Employment and Learning Investment Activity Reports for July and August 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the reports.

- European Union communication on the European Court of Auditors special report on the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- European Union communication on a proposal for a decision on the European Parliament and of the Council on enhanced co-operation between Public Employment Services (PES).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- European Union communication on EU Staff working document “Evaluation of the European Strategy 2007 - 2012 on Health and Safety at Work”.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from OFQUAL including a copy of its 2013-16 Corporate Plan.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental correspondence regarding the Maritime Labour convention.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental response clarifying the Department’s engagement with stakeholders on Training for Success and Programme Led Apprenticeships.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Departmental response providing a geographic breakdown of the home location of STEM students.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Open University press release highlighting increase in Open University student satisfaction in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send a letter of congratulations.

- Departmental correspondence inviting the Committee to a series of stakeholder meetings on the review of apprenticeships.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental correspondence inviting the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment to a series of stakeholder meetings on the review of apprenticeships.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental correspondence inviting the Committee for Education to a series of stakeholder meetings on the review of apprenticeships.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from Mr Edwin Ayres regarding the closure of crèche facilities at the University of Ulster Magee Campus.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Mr Ayres providing him with the correspondence received on this matter from DEL and the University of Ulster.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the University of Ulster requesting information on what efforts it has made to assist students with childcare arrangements.

- Departmental correspondence including the fifth annual report of the Employment Agency Inspectorate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Assembly Research and Information Service research paper discussing the main measures of employment and unemployment in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the research paper.

- Response from the Department of Education to Committee request for a comparison on educational attainment between Switzerland and Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Assembly Research and Information Service paper providing an explanation of how NEET's are calculated.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the research paper.

- European Union communication on a European Union Proposal on higher education.

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

- Correspondence from Mrs Maureen Mawhinney regarding the Student Loan Policy for 5th Year Dental Students studying outside Northern Ireland.

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

- Assembly Research and Information Service paper providing information on issues of note to the Committee for Employment and Learning.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the research paper.

- Correspondence from Sir Bob Salisbury requesting to meet the Committee to discuss the independent review of the industrial relations framework for FE Colleges in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an informal meeting to discuss the Review.

- Invitation from NICEM to its 15th Annual Human Rights and equality Conference.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation from RNIB NI to attend the launch of their programme “This is Working in Northern Ireland”.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation to the Chairperson from the Attorney General Northern Ireland to the conference “Legislation: Getting it Right.”

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation to the Deputy Chairperson from the Attorney General Northern Ireland to the conference “Legislation: Getting it Right.”

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation from BDO to the Launch of the BDO Graduate Recruitment Campaign in October 2013 at the BDO Belfast Office.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation from the Construction Employers Federation to the Construction Excellence Awards Gala Event on 26 September at the Culloden Hotel, Cultra.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

6. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the draft Forward Work Programme from September 2013 to July 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to the briefings scheduled for September 2013.

The Committee considered its visit to the European Employment Forum in Brussels in November 2013.

The Committee agreed that the following Members would attend the visit:

Mr Robin Swann MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sammy Douglas MLA
Mr David Hilditch MLA
Ms Bronwyn McGahan MLA
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA
Mr Alistair Ross MLA

7. Subordinate Legislation - SL1 - Education (Student Support) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

Agreed: That the Committee for Employment and Learning has considered the SL1 - Education (Student Support) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013, and has agreed that it is content for the Department to make the rule.

8. Ministerial Briefing on the Term Ahead

The officials joined the meeting at 10:25 am.

The Committee was briefed by Dr Stephen Farry, Minister for Employment and Learning, Mr Derek Baker, Permanent Secretary, and Mrs Catherine Bell, Deputy Secretary, on the term ahead.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Minister agreed to provide a briefing on the European Social Fund Consultation.

Agreed: The Minister agreed to provide details of the teams working on the reviews of apprenticeships and youth training.

Ms McGahan declared an interest as a Board Member of the Dungannon Enterprise Centre.

Agreed: The Minister agreed to provide further information on how Student Support for those with disabilities works and for data on participation rates by constituency.

Agreed: The Minister agreed to provide the report of the Department's audit of provision in FE Colleges for those with disabilities.

Mr Pat Ramsey left the meeting at 11:19 am.

Agreed: The Minister agreed to provide statistics used in relation to the Economic Inactivity Strategy.

Mr Pat Ramsey re-joined the meeting at 11:23 am.

Agreed: The Minister agreed to facilitate the Committee having a briefing on the Steps to Work Programme.

9. Ministerial Briefing on the Review of Apprenticeships

The Committee was briefed by Dr Stephen Farry, Minister for Employment and Learning, Mr Derek Baker, Permanent Secretary, and Mrs Catherine Bell, Deputy Secretary, on the Review of Apprenticeships.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Minister agreed to provide a briefing on the Engineering Working Group with regard to Apprenticeships.

Mr Pat Ramsey left the meeting at 11:57 am.

The Minister for Employment and Learning and Mrs Catherine Bell left the meeting at 12:07 pm.

10. Departmental briefing on Departmental Business Plan

The officials joined the meeting at 12:08 pm.

The Committee was briefed by Mr Derek Baker, Permanent Secretary, Mrs Catherine Bell, Deputy Secretary and Mr Andrew Hamilton, Deputy Secretary, Department for Employment and Learning on the Departmental Business Plan. The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Derek Baker left the meeting at 12:20 pm.

11. Departmental briefing on the Savings Delivery Plans Monitoring Report

The Committee was briefed by Mrs Catherine Bell, Deputy Secretary, and Mr Andrew Hamilton, Deputy Secretary, on the Savings Delivery Plan Monitoring Report.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials left the meeting at 12:37 pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for a list of closed consultations for which responses are currently being examined, live consultations with their closing dates, and proposed consultations. .

12. Any other Business

None.

13. Date, time and place of next meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the next meeting should be held on Wednesday 18 September 2013 at 10.00 am in in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

12.38 pm. The Committee moved into Closed Session.

14. Consideration of the draft report on the Committee Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) in Northern Ireland

Agreed: The Committee agreed the content of the report as amended and excluding the report recommendations.

Mr Alastair Ross left the meeting at 12:43 pm.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:51 pm.

Mr Robin Swann MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Employment & Learning

18 September 2013