



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

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

WEDNESDAY, 4 DECEMBER 2013

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 Chris Lyttle MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Ms Bronwyn McGahan MLA
Mr Pat Ramsey 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 Alastair Ross MLA

The meeting opened in public session at 10:06 am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Chairpersons Business

- The Committee considered a list of individuals and organisations to receive Christmas cards.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue the electronic Christmas Cards to those on the list.

- The Chairperson advised Members that he, the Deputy Chairperson and the Clerk met with the Minister on 3 December to discuss his Statement to the Assembly on Economic Inactivity Strategic Framework.

3. Minutes of the meetings held on 20 and 26 November 2013

Agreed: The minutes of the meetings on 20 and 26 November 2013 were agreed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister regarding the appointment of the new Chairperson of the Board of Governors of North West Regional College requesting that he considers both internal and external candidates.

4. Matters arising

- The Committee noted a list of matters arising from the meetings on 20 and 26 November 2013.

5. Correspondence

The Committee considered the following items of correspondence:

- Departmental response to a Committee query regarding the Bright Start Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Correspondence from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding extracts from the Official Report on a briefing from the Green Investment Bank.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from GEMS NI providing a report of the Final Evaluation of the Kestrel Pilot Project.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting information on the availability of funding to continue the programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk would liaise with the Clerk of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Clerk of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety before writing to their respective Departments regarding the availability of funding for the programme.

- Correspondence from Include Youth thanking the Committee for holding its Committee meeting in Include Youth's Omagh Office and for the Committees participation in the launch of the Transitional Support Pilot Project on 6 November 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from Queen's University Belfast, University of Ulster and The Open University thanking the Committee for hosting the Universities Showcase on 19 November 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Response from the Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the Committee's research paper in relation to good practice gender equality policy in the European Union.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Correspondence from the Northern Ireland Union for Supported Employment thanking the Committee for hosting the work experience event on 20 November 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding the future of the Exploris Aquarium and Seal Sanctuary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental correspondence regarding the outcome of Stage 1 of the procurement process for Steps 2 Success contractors.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing by the Central Procurement Directorate on the procurement process for Steps 2 Success.

- Correspondence from Copius Resources providing a preliminary response to Departmental correspondence regarding its briefing on 9 October 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

Mr Flanagan joined the meeting at 10:19 am.

- Department for Employment and Learning Investing Activity Report for November 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the report.

- Assembly Research and Information Service briefing paper considering the emerging differences in Higher Education Policy and Practise as a result of devolution in the United Kingdom.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the paper.

- Assembly Research and Information Service correspondence highlighting an EU Memorandum advising of a report on the annual accounts of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training for the financial year 2012 and the Centre's replies.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the EU Memorandum.

- Assembly Research and Information Service correspondence highlighting an EU Memorandum advising of a report on the annual accounts of the European Training Foundation for the financial year 2012 and the Foundation's replies.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the EU Memorandum.

- Assembly Research and Information Service briefing paper on the LFS and Claimant Count Statistics in the Derry District Council Area.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the paper.

- Ministerial response to Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure query regarding the Performing Arts Centre in Bangor.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Departmental correspondence providing an update on the Economic Inactivity Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Invitation to the Chairperson from Queen's University Belfast to attend a dinner to mark the re-constitution of the Senate, on 12 December, in the Great Hall, Queen's University Belfast.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- The Chairperson advised Members that correspondence had been received from an individual whom the Committee, at its meeting on 1 May 2013, had agreed not to enter into correspondence with and that the correspondence received is available in the Committee office.

Agreed: The Committee reaffirmed its decision not to enter into any correspondence with the individual on any issue.

6. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme up to 11 December 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Departmental briefing on the United Youth programme scheduled for the meeting on 11 December is postponed until the Department has more information to provide to the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a Departmental briefing on the Economic Inactivity Strategic Framework into its meeting on 11 December 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the first meeting after Christmas recess will be 15 January 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from ClicSargent on its Report “No Teenager with Cancer left out” into the Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from Dr Joanne Stuart of the STEM Implementation Steering Group into the Forward Work Programme.

7. Departmental Briefing on Steps to Work

The Departmental officials joined the meeting at 10:22 am.

The Committee was briefed by Mr Colum Boyle, Director of Employment Services, Mr Gerry Lindsay, Employment Service, Programme Management and Development, Mr Aidan Kelly Steps to Work Manager, People First and Mr Brendan McCann, Head of New Employment Team.

Mr Chris Lyttle left the meeting at 10:32 am.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Officials agreed to provide the Committee with a breakdown of the figures of those who have participated in Steps to Work and who go on to sustain employment for 12 months and for 18 months or more.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing on the Work Connect Programme in to the Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a copy of a blank Pre-Qualification Questionnaire form for the Steps 2 Success Programme from the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request Assembly Legal Advice on procurement issues for the Steps 2 Success programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing by the Department and the Central Procurement Directorate on the procurement process for Steps 2 Success.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting information on the ability, within EU Legislation, to award contracts to local organisations and if so, what adherence has there been by the Department in the procurement for the Steps 2 Success Programme or what clauses it has added to the process that ensures local organisations will deliver the programme.

The Departmental officials left the meeting at 11:21 am.

8. Departmental Briefing on the Way Forward in light of the European Social Fund Consultation

The Departmental officials joined the meeting at 11:23 am.

The Committee was briefed by Mr Tom Evans, Deputy Director, Strategy, European and Employment Relations Division, Ms Briega Rainey, Head of ESF Future Funding and Mr John Noble, Head of ESF Managing Authority.

Mr Phil Flanagan left the meeting at 11:25 am.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Departmental officials agreed to provide a list of the organisations that responded to the consultation and their geographic location.

Agreed: The Departmental officials agreed to provide further information regarding the location of future events planned for the planning of the ESF 2014 - 2020 Strategy.

Mr Pat Ramsey left the meeting at 12:03 pm.

Agreed: The Departmental officials agreed to provide the Committee with information on the evaluation of projects.

The Departmental officials left the meeting at 12:09 pm.

9. Departmental Briefing on the ICT, Engineering and Food and Drink Action Plans.

The Departmental officials joined the meeting at 12:10 pm.

The Committee was briefed by Mr Michael Gould, Acting Director, Skills and Industry Division, Ms Sian McCleave, Head of Skills Policy and Mr George Wilson, Acting Head of Sectoral Development.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Sammy Douglas left the meeting at 12:34 pm.

The Departmental officials left the meeting at 12:38 pm.

10. Date, time and place of next meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the next meeting should be held on Wednesday 11 December at 10.00 am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:39 pm.

Mr Robin Swann MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Employment & Learning

11 December 2013