



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

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

WEDNESDAY, 5 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
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
Ms Bronwyn McGahan MLA

The meeting opened in public session at 10:05 am.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Chairpersons Business

None

3. Minutes of the meetings held on 22 January 2014

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting on 22 January 2014 were agreed.

4. Matters arising

- The Committee noted a list of matters arising from the meeting on 22 January 2014.

5. Correspondence

The Committee considered the following items of correspondence:

- Correspondence from the University and College Union regarding the planned strike action by staff at Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and forward it to Queen's University Belfast, the University of Ulster and the Department for comment.

- Correspondence from Parenting NI requesting a meeting with the Committee regarding its Inquiry into Post School Special Educational Need Provision in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Parenting NI advising it that if it wishes, it can provide a submission to the Inquiry, reflecting the views of the Parenting Forum.

- Ministerial response to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding the proposed closure of Exploris Aquarium and Seal Sanctuary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Correspondence from the Minister for Employment and Learning regarding the launch of the "Skills to Success" advertising campaign.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental correspondence providing an update on the provision of Further Education courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Response from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding funding for the GEMS NI Kestrel Project.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response and forward it to GEMS NI for information.

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the report.

- Response from a member of the public to the Committee Inquiry into Post School Special Educational Need Provision in Northern Ireland.

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

- Response from a member of the public to the Committee Inquiry into Post School Special Educational Need Provision in Northern Ireland.

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

- Departmental response to Committee correspondence requesting an update on Post Project Evaluations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Correspondence from the Department for Finance and Personnel on the Departmental Savings Delivery Plans.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Note of the key issues discussed and actions taken at the Chairperson's Liaison Group meeting held on 21 January 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Response from the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety regarding funding for GEMS NI Kestrel Project.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response and forward it to GEMS NI for information.

- Correspondence from Professor Patrick Morrison thanking the Committee for congratulating him on the receipt of his CBE.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister acknowledging receipt of the Terms of Reference for the Committee Inquiry into Post School Special Educational Need Provision in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from Youth Action NI on how it is striving to tackle youth unemployment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Ministerial response to the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure regarding how the Performing Arts Centre in Bangor will fit within the wider strategies for the creative industries.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Ministerial response to the Committee's Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister requesting that he provide it with a response on each of the individual Inquiry recommendations.

- Response from the Committee for Finance and Personnel to the Committee's Inquiry into Post School Special Educational Need Provision in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding its Inquiry into Flexible Working in the Public Sector in Northern Ireland.

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

- Invitation to the opening of the Ulster Museum's Elements Exhibition in the Ulster Museum on 6 March 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation to Queen's University Belfast 18th Annual Sir Bernard Crossland Lecture in Riddell Hall on 27 February 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation to Queen's University Belfast School of Law Careers Teachers Event in the Great Hall on 6 February 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Invitation to attend The Open University's degree ceremony to celebrate the success of this year's graduates in the Waterfront Hall, Belfast on 17 May 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

6. Forward Work Programme

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

7. Subordinate Legislation

10:12 am The Departmental official joined the meeting.

The Committee was briefed by Mr John Neill, Head of Student Finance Branch, Department for Employment and Learning on the proposed Statutory Rule, The Education (Student Loans) (Repayment) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposed Statutory Rule.

10:16 am The Departmental official left the meeting.

8. Briefing from Assembly Research and Information Service on the European Commission Legislative Work Programme.

10:17 am The Assembly Researcher joined the meeting.

The Committee was briefed by Mr Eoin Murphy, Researcher in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Researcher agreed to provide further briefing on how the European legislative proposals impact on the introduction of the UK Welfare Reforms.

10:24 am The Assembly Researcher left the meeting.

9. Departmental update on Departmental European Policy Developments including the European Social Fund 2014 - 2020

10:25 am The Departmental officials joined the meeting.

The Committee was briefed by Mr Colin Jack, Director of Strategy, European and Employment Relations Division, Department for Employment and Learning, Mrs Patricia

McVeigh, Head of European Policy Branch, Department for Employment and Learning and Mr Gordon Browne, Barroso Taskforce Working Group Competiveness and Employment Thematic Group Desk Officer, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

10:40 am Mr Thomas Buchanan joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Department would brief the Committee on the Operational Programme for the European Social Fund in Northern Ireland before it is submitted to the European Commission.

Agreed: The Departmental officials agreed to provide the Committee with details of the Northern Ireland contact points under Horizon 2020.

10:56 am Mr Chris Lyttle joined the meeting.

10:57 am Mr Phil Flanagan joined the meeting.

11:08 am Mr Pat Ramsey joined the meeting.

11:08 am the Departmental officials left the meeting.

10. Briefing from Colleges NI on Programme Led Apprenticeships

11:09 am the representatives joined the meeting.

The Committee was briefed by Mr Brian Doran, Chief Executive, Southern Regional College, Mr Micheal Melaugh, Head of School of Construction and Engineering Crafts, North West Regional College, Mr Liam Gallagher, Chairman, Irish Region of Unite the Union and Ms Karen Lennon, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Colleges NI.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The representatives agreed to brief the Committee on Colleges NI's views on and input to the Review of Youth Training, the Review of Apprenticeships and the work of Colleges NI at a later date.

11:28 am Mr Fra McCann left the meeting.

11:35 am the representatives left the meeting.

11. Any other business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for information on STEM NET.

12. Date, time and place of next meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the next meeting should be held on Wednesday 12 February 2014 at 10.00 am in The Innovation Centre, Northern Ireland Science Park, Belfast.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 11:35 am.

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

12 February 2014