



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

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

WEDNESDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2015

ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Sydney Anderson MLA
Mr Alex Easton MLA
Mr Phil Flanagan MLA
Mr David Hilditch MLA
Ms Anna Lo MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Ms Bronwyn McGahan MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Cathie White (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Vincent Gribbin (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Johnny Lawless (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)
Ms Amy Barr (Legislative Studies & Practice Student)

Apologies: Mr Robin Swann MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA
Ms Claire Sugden MLA

10:03 am The meeting opened in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Chairperson's Business

- The Committee agreed to send an electronic Christmas card to all organisations who had briefed the Committee this year.
- The Committee agreed that Agenda Item 7, the Ministerial Briefing on The Big Conversation and Agenda Item 8, the Departmental Briefing on Further Education Means Business Review, be Hansarded retrospectively.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2015

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting on 11 November 2015 were agreed.

4. Matters arising

- The Committee noted a list of matters arising from the meeting on 11 November 2015.
- The Committee considered advice from DEL that two issues from last week's meeting regarding Student Finance and the NHS Bursary and the impact of immigration rules on attracting people to veterinary positions are for the DHSSPS and DARD respectively.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to DHSSPS and DARD on these two issues.

5. Correspondence

The Committee considered the following items of correspondence:

- Departmental correspondence providing advance notice that the Department will soon publish an Action Plan for young people with severe learning difficulties who are making the transition from school to adult services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Ulster University Students' Union response to Committee request for further statistical information regarding Widening Access.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response and write to the Ulster University requesting a statistical breakdown by gender.

- Correspondence from Include Youth and BITC NI thanking the Committee and inviting them to 2 events.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the Irish Humanities Alliance regarding cuts to humanities courses at the Ulster University.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and forward it to the Ulster University for information and comment.

- Correspondence from the Northern Ireland Assembly EU Affairs Manager providing the EU Matters Newsletter Issue 08/15

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Departmental correspondence providing an update on EU matters which relate to the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and include in the meeting pack for the Briefing on EU issues on 2 December 2015.

- Correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding the monitoring of Savings Delivery Plans 2014-2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and include it in the meeting pack for 9 December 2015.

- Invitation to the Open University Winter Reception at Parliament Buildings, Belfast on 7 December 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

- Correspondence from the Committee for Education regarding the European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020) Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from British Telecom regarding research that was conducted on BT's economic and social impact in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from CCEA inviting the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Committee to visit CCEA Headquarters.

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

- Correspondence from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding the closure of Michelin in Ballymena.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an informal meeting.

- Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment response to Committee correspondence regarding the impact of the National Living Wage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the NIA EU Affairs Manager regarding an initiative of the Centre for Peace Building & Democracy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Invitation from the Northern Ireland Human Rights and Business Forum to a Festival Event.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the invitation.

6. Forward Work Programme

- The Committee noted the revised Forward Work Programme to 9 December 2015.

7. Ministerial Briefing - The Big Conversation

10:10 am The Minister and Departmental officials joined the meeting.

10:11 am Mr Sydney Anderson joined the meeting.

The Committee was briefed by Dr Stephen Farry, Minister for Employment and Learning, Ms Sîan Kerr, Acting Director of Higher Education Division, Ms Laura Irvine, Head of Higher Education Future Policy and Mr Alan Russell, Higher Education Future Policy.

10:18 am Mr Fra McCann left the meeting.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

10:23 am Mr David Hilditch joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Minister agreed to provide the Committee with a copy of papers for the November Monitoring Round as soon as possible.

10:44 am Mr Phil Flanagan left the meeting

11:12 am Mr Alex Easton joined the meeting.

11:22 am Ms Bronwyn McGahan left the meeting.

Agreed: The Minister agreed to provide the Committee with further information on the OECD figure that Northern Ireland's skills base ranking has been 20th out of 26 countries for a decade.

11:29 am The Minister and Departmental officials left the meeting.

8. Departmental Briefing - Further Education (FE) Means Business Review

11:30 am The Departmental officials joined the meeting.

The Committee was briefed by Dr Mary McIvor, Director of Further Education and Mr Daryl Young, Deputy Director Further Education.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

11:52 am The Departmental officials left the meeting.

9. Any other business

- The Chairperson advised Members that the Open University has requested that the Committee propose a motion relating to part-time Higher Education students.

Agreed: The Committee agree to propose the motion.

10. Date, time and place of next meeting

The Committee noted that the next meeting should be held on Wednesday, 2 December 2015 at 10.00 am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

11:55 am The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Robin Swann MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Employment & Learning

2 December 2015