



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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

WEDNESDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2015

ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr Robin Swann (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
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA
Ms Claire Sugden MLA

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

Apologies: Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Bronwyn McGahan MLA

10:12 am The meeting opened in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson noted the retirement of Mr Ramsey from the Northern Ireland Assembly and thanked him for his contribution and dedication to the Committee over the mandate.

The Committee agreed to move to Agenda Item 7.

7. Departmental Briefing - November Monitoring Round

10:16 am The Departmental officials joined the meeting.

10:16 am Claire Sugden joined the meeting.

The Committee was briefed by Mr Stephen McMurray, Director of Finance, Mr Brendan McCann, Corporate Governance & Business Planning, Mr Michael Camplisson, Head of Further Education Finance and Funding, and Mr Philip Rodgers, Head of Apprenticeship Reform Implementation Team.

10:32 am Sydney Anderson joined the meeting.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on:

- Savings from Steps 2 Success providers as a result of the reduced bonus and performance related pay from the 54% lower voluntary uptake of the programme.
- Non-validated preliminary statistics for the Steps 2 Success programme.
- Figures for the numbers and timing of claimants moving from Job Seekers Allowance to Employment Support Allowance and other benefits.

10:47 am Alex Easton joined the meeting.

10:51 am David Hilditch joined the meeting

- An update on the Northern Regional College New-build Project.
- Whether the statistics to be published in late February on Steps 2 Success relate to just October 2014 intake or October to December 2014 intake.

11:06 am Mr McCann and Mr Rogers left the meeting.

11:07 am Phil Flanagan left the meeting.

The Committee agreed to move to Agenda Item 3.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2015

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting on 2 December 2015 were agreed.

4. Matters arising

- The Committee noted a list of matters arising from the meeting on 2 December 2015.

5. Correspondence

The Committee considered the following items of correspondence:

- Response from Student Finance to issues raised by an individual in respect of student bursaries.

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

- Response from PeoplePlus NI following its briefing to the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Response from Assembly Research and Information Service request for details on schools that operate apprenticeship programmes.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Correspondence from Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland providing the Department for Employment and Learning Investing Activity Report for November 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the NOW organisation inviting the Committee to hold a meeting at one of its facilities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a meeting in the Forward Work Programme.

- Correspondence from the Northern Ireland Assembly EU Affairs Manager providing a copy of the EU Matters Newsletter Issue 09/2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding a Departmental Restructuring Briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Response from the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development regarding the impact of immigration rules on attracting people to veterinary positions in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Response from the Department of Justice to the consultation on the proposed amendments to the Judicial Pensions Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Response from the Minister regarding Steps 2 Success.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

Departmental response regarding the Skills Base Ranking.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Departmental response regarding NICEM's query on ESOL.

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

- Departmental response regarding Steps 2 Success.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response.

- Departmental response regarding its ongoing Inquiry into Special Educational Needs in Northern Ireland.

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

- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills consultation on Fulfilling Our Potential - Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice and Universities UK Summary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the paper.

- Correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the Departments Bill and Transfer of Functions Order.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and agreed to schedule a Departmental briefing on the Re-Structuring of the Department for the Economy.

- Response from the Department for Education to Committee correspondence regarding Union Learn Qualifications and Fund.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note response.

- Correspondence from the Minister for Employment and Learning giving notice of his intention to make an oral statement on the Further Education Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- Correspondence from the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Services response regarding student finance and bursaries.

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

- Correspondence from the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure to the Minister for Employment and Learning regarding Sign Language Legislation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

6. Forward Work Programme

- The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme to 6 March 2016.

The Committee agreed to move to Agenda Item 8.

8. Departmental Briefing - Savings Delivery Plans

11:12 am The Departmental officials joined the meeting.

The Committee was briefed by Ms Heather Cousins, Deputy Secretary, Mr Stephen McMurray, Director of Finance, Ms June Ingram, Director of Skills and Industry and Mr Michael Camplisson, Head of Further Education Finance and Funding.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on:

- The number of ESOL places being delivered at each of the FE Colleges and the cost of the courses at each FE College.
- Provide detailed figures on any reduced uptake as a result of the reduction in funding for upskilling in the Management and Leadership Programme.
- The number of people being made redundant by Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University, when available.

11:50 am Mr David Hilditch left the meeting.

11:53 am Mr McMurray left the meeting.

9. Departmental Briefing - Departmental Business Plan

11:53 am The Departmental officials joined the meeting.

11:54 am Ms Anna Lo left the meeting.

The Committee was briefed by Ms Heather Cousins, Deputy Secretary, Ms June Ingram, Director of Skills and Industry, Mr Michael Camplisson, Head of Further Education Finance and Funding and Mr Philip Rodgers, Head of Apprenticeship Reform Implementation Team.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on:

- The number of number of people accessing ESF 2014-2020 to reduce economic inactivity and improve access to skills training.

12:04 pm Mr David Hilditch re-joined the meeting.

12:04 pm Mr Alex Easton left the meeting.

- What advanced work is being carried out to achieve the increase from 67 to 111 knowledge exchange projects on behalf of local businesses.

12:10 pm Mr Alex Easton re-joined the meeting.

12:17 pm The Departmental officials left the meeting.

10. Any other business

None.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The Committee noted that the next meeting should be held on Wednesday, 6 January 2015 at 10.00 am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

12:17 pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Robin Swann MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Employment & Learning

6 January 2016