



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

10 OCTOBER 2013

ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS 10.00AM.

- Present: Mr Patsy McGlone (Chairperson)
Mr Phil Flanagan (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sammy Douglas
Mr Gordon Dunne
Mr Paul Frew
Mr Fearghal McKinney
- In Attendance: Mr Jim McManus (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Stephanie Mallon (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Nathan McVeigh (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Jacqueline Holt (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies: Mr Steven Agnew
Mr Sydney Anderson
Ms Maeve McLaughlin
Ms Sandra Overend
Ms Sue Ramsey

The meeting began at 10.17am in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 26 September 2013 and Thursday 3 October 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of 26 September 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of 3 October 2013 as amended.

3. Electricity Policy Review - Oral Briefing from DETI

Representatives joined the meeting at 10.19am

Members received an oral briefing from David Sterling, Permanent Secretary, Fiona Hepper, Head of Energy Division, Alison Clydesdale, Principal, Renewable Electricity Policy and Legislation, Bill Stevenson, Principal, Energy Markets External and Fred Frazer, Principal, Energy Markets Domestic.

Key issues discussed included: security of supply and the cost to consumers.

Agreed: that the Permanent Secretary ask the Minister for Consumer Council papers in adequate time to allow the Chairperson and deputy Chairperson to consider them in detail.

Phil Flanagan left the meeting at 11.29am

Sammy Douglas left the meeting at 11.31am

The meeting became inquorate and was suspended at 11.33am

Phil Flanagan returned to the meeting at 11.36am

The meeting recommenced at 11.36am

Sammy Douglas returned to the meeting at 11.38am

Fearghal McKinney joined the meeting at 11.46am

Agreed: that the Department respond in writing to any further questions the Committee may have.

Representatives left the meeting at 11.48am

Paul Frew left the meeting at 11.49am

Agreed: that the Committee is content to receive an oral briefing from the new Utility Regulator on their forthcoming paper, which focuses on increasing transparency on electricity prices in Northern Ireland, to inform the review.

Agreed: to put back the reports on the electricity policy review until after the Committee has had an opportunity to consider the findings in the Utility Regulator's report which is soon to be published.

Agreed: that the Committee is content to prioritise the report on security of supply with the report on pricing to follow.

4. Fuel Pricing - Oral Briefing from RMI Petrol Retailers Association

Representatives joined the meeting at 11.54am

Paul Frew returned to the meeting at 11.54am

Members received an oral briefing from Brian Madderson, RMI Petrol Retailers Association, Ms Una Lilley, Topaz, Mr David Cox, Texaco, Mr Richard Law, BP and Mr Terry Mulkherns, Maxol.

Key issues discussed included: the cost of fuel, supermarket pricing policies and the difficulties facing independent petrol retailers.

Paul Frew left the meeting at 12.54pm

Representatives left the meeting at 12.54pm

5. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson welcomed new member Fearghal McKinney to the Committee and suggested writing to outgoing member Alban Maginness.

Agreed: to write to Alban Maginness thanking him for his input and commitment to the work of the Committee both as a member and, formerly, as Chairperson.

The Chairperson reminded members that at the planning meeting in September members agreed to investigate the possibility of the Committee receiving advice on budget scrutiny.

The Chairperson informed members that Research and Information Service is currently rolling out a series of public finance workshops to members through their parties and that their intention is to follow this with similar work with the secretariat staff and then consolidate the work done with individual Committees.

Agreed: that members are content with this approach.

6. Matters Arising

Members noted a draft programme for the Investment Conference.

Members considered the Department's response to the Committee query on the Tourism Development Scheme.

Paul Frew returned to the meeting at 12.58pm

Agreed: to ask the Department if and when all of the schemes listed have been sent to the Minister for approval and the expected date of decision for those under assessment.

Members noted the Department's response to the Committee query on Public Insolvency Notices.

Agreed: to write to the Department noting the Committee's concern regarding the high cost of advertising in the Belfast Telegraph given it does not have the highest newspaper circulation in Northern Ireland and asking what consideration could be given to online advertising instead.

Sammy Douglas left the meeting at 1.01pm

Members noted the Department's response to the Committee query on Post Project Evaluations.

Members considered the Department's response to the Committee request for clarification on various points in the DETI Operating Plan Outturn Figures and Slippage.

Agreed: to write to the Department asking for clarification on any aspect of economic development being influenced by the introduction of corporation tax varying powers.

Members considered a response from Three to the Committee query on abolition of mobile phone roaming charges.

Agreed: that the Chair and deputy Chair meet with representatives from Three.

Members considered an invitation from the Committee for the Environment to the Chair and deputy Chair to a meeting with NIPSA on the subject of the proposed closure of Exploris.

Agreed: that the Committee would hold a formal Committee meeting in Portaferry at 10.30am on Wednesday 23 October to consider the proposed closure of Exploris and to receive oral evidence from Ards Borough Council, Portaferry Regeneration and NIPSA.

Agreed: to invite the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Committee for the Environment to the meeting.

Members considered the Department's response to the Committee query on Assisted Area Status.

Agreed: to receive an oral briefing from the Department on this issue.

Members noted the Department's response to the Committee query on Portadown Diamond Credit Union.

Members considered the Department's response to the Committee query on the Climate Change Levy on Natural Gas Supplies.

Agreed: to ask the Department how it is making businesses aware of the exemptions listed under the CHP Quality Assurance Programme.

Members noted the Department's response to the Committee query on Connecting Europe.

Members noted responses to the Committee query on the Intellectual Property Bill from Assembly Research and the Department.

The Chairperson informed members that the Committee, in conjunction with the CAL Committee, is sponsoring an OFCOM event on 24 October.

Agreed: members noted that the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure agreed not to invite members of the All Party Group on Postal Issues to the event.

7. Implementation of Metering and Billing Provisions of the Energy Efficiency Directive (2012/27/EU) - Consultation

Members noted a consultation from the Department regarding Implementation of Metering and Billing Provision of the Energy Efficiency Directive (2012/27/EU).

8. Review of Consumer Council Northern Ireland – copy of recommendations prior to publication - Written Briefing from DETI

The Chairperson informed members that papers were not received regarding this agenda item.

Agreed: that this agenda item is deferred to a future meeting.

9. Air Connectivity Study - Written Briefing from DETI

Members noted a written briefing from the Department regarding the Air Connectivity Study.

10. Power NI: hedging – Assembly Research Paper

Members considered an Assembly Research Paper regarding Power NI hedging.

Agreed: to include the research in the Electricity Policy Review.

11. Correspondence

Members noted the following items of correspondence for action

- i. From Politics Plus regarding an invitation to the launch of the Politics Plus Exchange MLA/Scientist.
- ii. From the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development regarding the abolition of the organisation ‘Food from Britain’.
- iii. From the Committee for Finance and Personnel detailing a proposed approach to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee’s call for evidence on the banking structure in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: that the Committee is content with the approach proposed by the Committee for Finance and Personnel.

Agreed: to ask the Committee for Finance and Personnel if the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee will be taking evidence from Committees.

- iv. From the Minister regarding the closure of infringement proceedings concerning common rules for the internal markets in electricity and in natural gas.
- v. From the Minister regarding a study into communities and renewable energy, and from the Minister to the Committee for the Environment on wind energy.

12. Any other business

None

13. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on **17 October at 10.00am** in **Room 30 Parliament Buildings**.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 1.16pm

Mr Patsy McGlone
Chairperson
Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

17 October 2013