



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2014
Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Paul Givan MLA (Chairman)
Mr Raymond McCartney MLA (Deputy Chairman)
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Sammy Douglas MLA
Mr Tom Elliott MLA
Mr Paul Frew MLA
Mr Chris Hazzard MLA
Mr Seán Lynch MLA
Mr Alban Maginness MLA
Mr Patsy McGlone MLA
Mr Edwin Poots MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Christine Darragh (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Keith McBride (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Miss Marianne Doherty (Clerical Officer)
Miss Anna McDaid (Assembly Bursary Student)

Apologies: None

The meeting commenced at 12.05 p.m. in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Evidence session on the current position in relation to the Desertcreat Community Safety College Capital Project

Mr David Ford MLA, Minister of Justice, Assistant Chief Constable Alistair Finlay, PSNI, Rosemary Crawford, Deputy Director, Policing Policy and Strategy Division, Department of Justice and Brendan Smyth, Acting Director, Central Procurement Directorate, Construction Division, Health Projects, Department of Finance and Personnel joined the meeting at 12.06 p.m.

The Minister of Justice briefly outlined the current position in relation to the Desertcreat Community Safety College Capital Project.

A detailed question and answer session followed covering issues including: whether the current procurement process is still viable or whether it has in effect been abandoned; whether a new business case and economic appraisal will now be required; what risks there are in proceeding with the current procurement process; whether the Minister is now considering alternative locations for the College; the timescale for the current review and when the first phase decision is expected; whether the project should now be referred to the Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee for a forensic investigation of the handling of the process; whether the Minister and the PSNI is committed to achieving the Programme for Government objective of a new Integrated Training College; whether the Minister is committed to going ahead with the College at the Desertcreat site; the disappointment within the constituency and the construction industry regarding the failure of the project; the detrimental impact on confidence within the construction sector and the business community and how, and if, this can be restored; what recent communication has taken place with the contractors regarding the project; who instructs the Project Steering Group and to whom it is accountable; the length of time taken to complete the initial business case and procurement process and the potential delay if this work has to be re-done; whether the PSNI and the NI Policing Board is committed to going ahead with the College at the Desertcreat site; the nature of the training facilities originally planned for the Desertcreat site; the changing training needs of the PSNI and the implications of this for the College requirements; the purpose of the previous 8-week review in July 2014; the potential for the project to be divided into smaller size projects to enable smaller businesses to bid; how smaller projects could be achieved and whether they would result in any significant savings; the potential for the same problems to reoccur in any new project; how the Minister can provide confidence that the decision making processes within any new project would improve; the reasons for the failure of the project; the reasons for the rising cost of the project including construction inflation and delay in the decision making process; the cost of the project to date; the position in relation to seeking redress against the design team; the likelihood of the scale of the project changing so materially that the procurement process will have to start again; the estimated yearly running costs of the original planned College; whether ‘training tourism’ was ever part of the rationale for the project; the capital budget currently available for the project; whether the Department of Finance and Personnel has made a case to secure end year flexibility for the project funding; the public concern at the inability to deliver the project within budget; whether comparable facilities exist in other countries; what mechanisms were in place to detect when estimates were going over budget; the lack of oversight of the design team by the Project Board; and the lack of rigour applied by the cost consultants to the estimated costs of the project.

The Chairman thanked the Minister of Justice, Assistant Chief Constable Finlay and the officials for the briefing and they left the meeting.

3. Date and Time of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 12 November 2014 at 2.00 p.m. in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.23 p.m.

Mr Paul Givan MLA
Chairman, Committee for Justice