



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

## **COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

THURSDAY 8 OCTOBER 2015  
Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Alastair Ross MLA (Chairman)  
Mr Raymond McCartney MLA (Deputy Chairman)  
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA  
Mr Sammy Douglas MLA  
Mr Paul Frew MLA  
Mr Seán Lynch MLA  
Mr Alban Maginness MLA  
Ms Bronwyn McGahan MLA  
Mr Patsy McGlone MLA  
Mr Edwin Poots MLA  
Mr Neil Somerville MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Keith McBride (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mrs Roisin Donnelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Leanne Johnston (Clerical Supervisor)  
Ms Marianne Doherty (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: None.

*The meeting commenced at 2.00 p.m. in public session.*

#### **1. Apologies**

As above.

#### **2. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2015**

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2015.

#### **3. Matters Arising**

- i. The Committee considered a report on the key issues discussed at the Business Crime Stakeholder Event held on 14 May 2015.

The Committee noted that a copy of the report would be forwarded to those organisations that had participated in the event.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to send a copy of the report to the Minister of Justice and the Chief Constable to enable them to consider the issues raised and respond to the proposed actions, after which the Committee would consider tabling a motion on business crime for debate in the Assembly.

- ii. The Committee noted an up-dated Forward Work Programme for October 2015 and discussed the programme and arrangements for its 'Justice in a Digital Age' Conference to be held on 15 October 2015 in W5.

#### **4. Update on the Delivery of the Prison Reform Programme**

Ms Sue McAllister, Director General, Mr Mark Adam, Director of Human Resources and Corporate Services, Mr Brian McCaughey, Director of Rehabilitation and Mr Phil Wragg, Director of Offender Policy and Operations, Northern Ireland Prison Service joined the meeting at 2.03 p.m.

*2.05 p.m. Mr Paul Frew joined the meeting.*

The Committee noted a copy of the Prison Review Oversight Group Summary Report following its meeting on 9 September 2015.

Ms McAllister provided an update on the delivery of the Prison Reform Programme and Mr Wragg provided an update on the current situation in relation to HM Prison Maghaberry.

*2.19 p.m. Mr Edwin Poots joined the meeting.*

A detailed question and answer session followed covering issues including: staff morale within the prison service and the findings of the last annual staff survey; the delay in developing a staff leadership training programme; the high sick absence rates in HM Prison Maghaberry and across the wider prison service; the reasons for the current level of sick absence amongst staff; how sickness absence is being managed; staffing levels across the service; the current number of vacant posts; the retention level of the new recruits; the level of abuse of prescribed and illegal drugs by prisoners; usage levels of the training facilities and education programmes by prisoners; the reasons for the low levels of purposeful activity; progress on the development and operation of Hydebank Secure College; how many young offenders obtain employment upon release and how this will be monitored in the future;

*2.37 p.m. Mr Alban Maginness left the meeting.*

*2.45 p.m. Mr Patsy McGlone joined the meeting.*

the challenges facing the new Governor of HM Prison Maghaberry; what flexibility there is regarding the age at which young offenders must move from the Secure College to an adult prison facility; how education and employment courses are provided when young offenders move to an adult prison; progress to deliver recommendation 30 relating to prisoner personal development plans; reasons for the backlog in completing prisoner personal development plans in HM Prison Maghaberry; the number of lockdowns in HM Prison Maghaberry; whether there was resistance from the senior management team in HM Prison Maghaberry in relation to the implementation of recommendation 5 relating to three mini prisons; the timescale for the publication of the CJINI report on HM Prison Maghaberry; the impact of the turnover of staff at senior management level within the

prison service; the division in the responsibility between Mr Wragg's role as Governor of HM Prison Maghaberry and that as Director of Offender Policy and Operations; how and when drug finds are reported to the PSNI; drug non-compliance levels; assaults on prison officers; the operation of the sick absence management policy in relation to prison officers who have been assaulted on duty; the current threat level against prison staff; monitoring of social media in relation to threats against prison staff;

*3.10 p.m. Mr McCartney left the meeting.*

*3.19 p.m. Mr Stewart Dickson left the meeting.*

future recruitment plans for custody officers; the impact of the voluntary exit scheme on the prison service; the training programme for new recruits and the delivery of practical on-the-job training; the help available to support prisoners with mental health problems; the creation of employment opportunities within the prison and outside the prison; how the success of Hydebank Secure College will be measured; lack of progress on the development of the joint Justice and Health Care Strategy; and difficulties with the recruitment and retention of health care workers for prisons.

*3.29 p.m. Mr Edwin Poots left the meeting.*

The briefing was recorded by Hansard.

The officials agreed to provide a range of information to the Committee.

The Chairman thanked the officials for their attendance and they left the meeting.

## **5. Time Limits in the Youth Court – Proposed Revised Approach**

Ms Karen Pearson, Head of Criminal Justice Division and Mr Graham Walker, Criminal Justice Division, Department of Justice joined the meeting at 3.39 p.m.

Ms Pearson outlined a proposed revised approach to the introduction of time limits in the Youth Courts.

A question and answer session followed covering issues including: whether the Minister of Justice remained committed to the introduction of statutory time limits in the Youth Courts; whether bringing forward an administrative, rather than a statutory time limit, was an admission that the proposed statutory timescale of 120 days was not sufficiently challenging; and whether the proposed revised approach was a change of policy away from Statutory Time Limits.

The briefing was recorded by Hansard.

The Chairman thanked the officials for their attendance and they left the meeting.

## **6. SL1: Amendment to Police Conduct, Performance and Appeals Regulations Northern Ireland**

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department of Justice to make a Statutory Rule to revoke and replace the existing definition of 'member' in the Regulations that govern police officer conduct, performance and appeals procedures so that PSNI Part-Time Reserve Officers have a right of appeal to a Police Appeals Tribunal to ensure they are treated no differently than their full-time colleagues.

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

## **7. SL1: Proposed Human Rights Guidance for the Police Service of Northern Ireland (Relevant to the Protection of the Right to Life) by the Attorney General for Northern Ireland**

The Committee considered a proposed Statutory Rule to bring into operation Human Rights Guidance by the Attorney General for Northern Ireland for the Police Service of Northern Ireland relevant to the protection of life.

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

*3.47 p.m. Mr Stewart Dickson joined the meeting.*

## **8. Justice No.2 Bill – Proposals for Oral Evidence Sessions**

The Committee considered proposals for oral evidence sessions on the Justice No.2 Bill and proposed amendments by the Department of Justice.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed oral evidence sessions on the Justice No.2 Bill and proposed amendments that would be scheduled in November 2015.

## **9. Reducing Avoidable Delay in the Criminal Justice System – Progress Report on the Programme of Work**

The Committee noted a progress report from the Department of Justice on the delivery of the programme of work to reduce avoidable delay in the criminal justice system.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing from departmental officials when the final update before the end of the mandate is available.

## **10. Draft Committee for Justice End of Session Report for 2014-2015**

The Committee considered a draft End of Session Report covering the work of the Committee for the period 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the End of Session Report as drafted and that it should be published on the Committee webpage.

## **11. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee noted the publication of Official Statistics Bulletin 20/2015 ‘First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland 2013/14’.
- ii. The Committee noted correction slips from the Department of Justice relating to drafting errors which had been identified in SR 2014 No. 320 The Criminal Justice (European Protection Order) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2014.

- iii. The Committee noted a copy of the Department of Justice's submission to the Committee for Finance and Personnel on the Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that a draft response to the Committee for Finance and Personnel on the Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill should be prepared for consideration.

- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Justice in relation to the recruitment of a Senior Coroner and the interim arrangements to provide coronial services.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the First Minister and Deputy First Minister providing a copy of the submission by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to the UK's 5th Periodic Report on compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- vi. The Committee noted an invitation from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists in partnership with Disability Action and the NI Health and Social Board to the launch of 'My Journey, My Voice' a portraits and stories exhibition on 2 November 2015 in Parliament Buildings.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that Members should advise the Clerk if they wished to attend this event.

- vii. The Committee considered a request from NIACRO and Extern for an informal meeting with the Committee to discuss both organisations' roles in the criminal justice system and future funding and service delivery issues.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to hold an informal meeting with NIACRO and Extern on a suitable date.

## **12. Chairman's Business**

The Chairman updated the Committee on his attendance at the Ulster Bank Fraud Conference on 6 October 2015.

## **13. Any Other Business**

The issue of an upsurge in burglaries in East Belfast was raised.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request further information from the PSNI on the number and pattern of burglaries in East Belfast and across Northern Ireland.

## **14. Date and Time of next meeting**

The Committee 'Justice in a Digital Age' Conference will take place on Thursday 15 October 2015 at 2.00 p.m. in W5.

The next Committee meeting will take place on Thursday 22 October 2015 at 3.00 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings and will be preceded by a Justice Seminar at 1.30 p.m. in the Senate Chamber with a presentation by the Centre for Justice Innovation.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.55 p.m.

**Mr Alastair Ross MLA**  
**Chairman, Committee for Justice**