



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY 9 JUNE 2016

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Paul Frew MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood MLA
Ms Clare Bailey MLA
Mr Doug Beattie MLA
Mr Roy Beggs MLA
Ms Michaela Boyle MLA
Mr Declan Kearney MLA
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Marie Austin (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Pamela Carson (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Allison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Sammy Douglas MLA

The meeting commenced at 2.08 p.m. in open session.

1. Apologies

As above.

The Committee sent its best wishes to Mr Douglas for a speedy recovery after his recent accident.

2. Draft Minutes of the Meeting on 1 June 2016

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2016.

3. Matters Arising

- i. The Committee noted an updated Forward Work Programme for June 2016.

- ii. The Chairperson advised the Committee that, due to technical difficulties, a Hansard of the Permanent Secretary's overview briefing on the Department of Justice at the meeting on 1 June 2016 was not available.

4. Overview Briefing on the Safer Communities Directorate

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.11 p.m.

Mr Anthony Harbinson, Director, Safer Communities, Department of Justice
Ms Karen Pearson, Deputy Director, Protection and Organised Crime Division,
Department of Justice
Mr Steven McCourt, Acting Deputy Director, Community Safety Division,
Department of Justice
Mr Stan Brown, Chief Executive, Forensic Science Northern Ireland, Department of
Justice

The officials provided an overview briefing on the Safer Communities Directorate and Forensic Science Northern Ireland.

Mr Sheehan joined the meeting at 2.20 p.m.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials agreed to provide further information on a number of issues.

Ms Boyle left the meeting at 2.40 p.m.

Ms Boyle rejoined the meeting at 2.49 p.m.

Mr Beggs left the meeting at 2.53 p.m.

The briefing was recorded by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request information from the National Crime Agency on what funding it has drawn down under Fresh Start Agreement and its work on tackling organised crime in Northern Ireland.

5. Overview Briefing on the Access to Justice Directorate

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.18 p.m.

Mr David Lavery, Director of Access to Justice, Department of Justice
Ms Laurene McAlpine, Deputy Director, Civil Justice Policy Division, Department of
Justice
Ms Jane Holmes, Head of Justice Secretariat, Department of Justice

The officials provided an overview briefing on the Access to Justice Directorate.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials agreed to provide further information on the Review of the Voluntary and Community Sector funding model.

The briefing was recorded by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

6. SR 2016/197: The Criminal Defence Services (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Committee considered The Criminal Defence Services (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 which will provide that the Court of Appeal may grant a right to representation under Part 2 of the Access to Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 in respect of criminal appeals in the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court, and in the case of an appellant who is to be retried before the Crown Court.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2016/197: The Criminal Defence Services (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 and agreed that it was content with the policy elements of the Statutory Rule.

7. SR 2016/198: The Criminal Defence Services (Remuneration) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Committee considered The Criminal Defence Services (Remuneration) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 which will provide for the remuneration payable to solicitors and counsel for providing representation under Part 2 of the Access to Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 in respect of criminal appeals in the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court, and in the case of an appellant who is to be retried before the Crown Court.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2016/198: The Criminal Defence Services (Remuneration) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 and agreed that it was content with the policy elements of the Statutory Rule.

8. SR 2016/200: The Legal Aid for Crown Court Proceedings (Costs) (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Committee considered The Legal Aid for Crown Court Proceedings (Costs) (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2016 which prescribes the remuneration for solicitors and counsel assigned under Articles 29 or 36(2) of the Legal Aid, Advice and Assistance (Northern Ireland) Order 1981.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2016/200: The Legal Aid for Crown Court Proceedings (Costs) (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2016 and agreed that it was content with the policy elements of the Statutory Rule.

9. SR 2016/201: The Legal Aid for Crown Court Proceedings (Costs) (Amendment No.2) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Committee considered The Legal Aid for Crown Court Proceedings (Costs) (Amendment No.2) Rule (Northern Ireland) 2016 which makes additional amendments to the Legal Aid for Crown Court Proceedings (Costs) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2005, which prescribe the remuneration for solicitors and counsel assigned under Articles 29 or 36(2) of the Legal Aid, Advice and Assistance (Northern Ireland) Order 1981.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2016/201: The Legal Aid for Crown Court Proceedings (Costs) (Amendment No.2) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2016 agreed that it was content with the policy elements of the Statutory Rule.

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Foundation's Annual Report for 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014.
- ii. The Committee noted an invitation from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association to its October Flagship conference.
- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee regarding an Inquiry it intended to hold into the Northern Ireland Audit Office Report on Managing Legal Aid due to be published on 21 June 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the Public Accounts Committee that it will be considering legal aid budget issues and legislative changes and therefore wished to be kept apprised of progress and the likely publication date of the PAC report on its Inquiry.
- iv. The Committee considered an invitation to a NIACRO Justice Series Seminar on 'Positive Youth Justice' on 21 June 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bring the Committee meeting scheduled for 21 June 2016 forward to 12 noon to allow those Members who wished to attend the NIACRO event the opportunity to do so.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members should advise the Clerk if they wished to attend this event.
- v. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Justice and ask that it responds directly to the individual on the issues raised and provide the Committee with a copy of the response.
- vi. The Committee considered the Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request information from the Minister of Justice on when an implementation plan would be available and what arrangements would be put in place to monitor progress and advise her that Members may wish to discuss the report when she attends the meeting on 30 June 2016.
- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland regarding a visit by Professor Evan Stark, a leading global expert on coercive control in the context of domestic violence and abuse.

Agreed: The Committee agree to schedule an oral evidence session with Professor Stark for the meeting on 30 June 2016.

11. Chairperson's Business

None.

12. Any Other Business

None.

13. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 16 June at 2 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.14 p.m.

Mr Paul Frew MLA
Chairman, Committee for Justice