



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY 1 JUNE 2016

Room 21, 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 Pat Sheehan MLA

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

Apologies: Mr Sammy Douglas MLA
Mr Declan Kearney MLA

The Chairperson welcomed the Members to the first meeting of the Committee for Justice.

The Committee agreed to start the meeting in closed session to discuss a number of protocols and procedures.

The meeting commenced in closed session at 2.06 p.m.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Committee Protocols

The Committee discussed a number of protocols and procedures covering arrangements for Committee meetings, correspondence and requests for meetings not linked to its strategic priorities or statutory responsibilities, approaches to preparation for evidence sessions, strategic priorities and outcomes of an effective committee and the Committee use of social media.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that an informal meeting would be arranged prior to the Committee meeting on 30 June to facilitate an initial discussion on strategic priorities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed an approach for dealing with correspondence and requests for meetings not specifically linked to its strategic priorities or statutory duties.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should explore opportunities for the Committee to participate in a questioning techniques session.

The meeting moved into public session at 2.27 p.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the three oral overview briefings on the Department of Justice should be recorded by Hansard.

3. Committee Membership

The Committee noted details of the membership.

4. Staff Contact Details

The Committee noted the Justice Committee staff contact details.

5. Declaration of Members' Interests

The Chairperson advised Members that the relevant entry from the Members' Register of Interests for each Member of the Justice Committee would be circulated in due course.

The Chairperson informed members of the requirement in Standing Order 69(5) that:

'A Member who has

(a) a financial interest in any matter; or

(b) a relevant interest in any matter,

must declare that interest before taking part in any proceedings of the Assembly relating to that matter.'

The Chairperson advised that *'proceedings of the Assembly'* included meetings of the Committee for Justice and asked Members if they had any interests to declare.

No interests were declared.

6. Committee Procedures

The Committee noted guidance papers on:

- The Powers and Operation of Statutory Committees
- The Role of the Chairperson
- The Role and Functions of the Committee Office
- Good Practice Guidelines for Providing an Effective Research Service to Committees

The Chairperson drew the attention of Members to the guidance on Privilege and Sub-Judice contained in the guidance paper on the powers and operation of statutory committees.

Mr Attwood joined the meeting at 2.34 p.m.

The Chairperson advised Members that Mr Tim Moore, Assembly Senior Research Officer and his team would be responsible for providing research services to the Committee for Justice.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Committee for Justice research papers would automatically be published on the assembly website once presented to the Committee unless it decided otherwise.

7. Subordinate Legislation: Delegation of Technical Scrutiny to the Examiner of Statutory Rules

The Committee noted the guidance paper on Handling Subordinate Legislation (Statutory Rules).

Agreed: The Committee for Justice resolves under Standing Order 43 to delegate to the Examiner of Statutory Rules the technical scrutiny of Statutory Rules referred to the Committee under the above mentioned Standing Order.

The Committee further resolves that in carrying out this function the Examiner shall be authorised to report her technical findings on each Statutory Rule to the Assembly and to the relevant Department, as well as to the Committee itself, and to publish her report.

8. Guidance on Timescales for Interaction between Committees and Departments

The Committee noted guidance on interaction between Committees and Departments which set out the timescales for the provision of information and evidence between Departments and Committees.

9. 2011-16 Committee for Justice Legacy Report

The Committee considered the Legacy Report of the previous Justice Committee which covered the period May 2011 to March 2016 and in particular the range of issues which it believed this Justice Committee may wish to take account of when considering its priorities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an up-date from the Department of Justice on progress to implement the recommendations in the Report on Innovative Approaches for the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland, the proposed departmental consultation on sexual offences and child protection and the proposed review of the policy and legislation relating to Vehicle Immobilisation on Private Land to inform the Committee's discussion on strategic priorities.

10. Overview Briefing on the Department of Justice

Mrs Cameron joined the meeting at 2.38 p.m.

Mr Nick Perry, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Justice, joined the meeting at 2.38 p.m.

Mr Perry provided an overview briefing on the structure, responsibilities and budget of the Department of Justice.

Mrs Cameron declared an interest in relation to the employment of a family member by the Department of Justice.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Perry agreed to provide further information/clarification on a number of issues.

The Chairperson thanked the Permanent Secretary for his attendance.

The meeting was suspended at 3.12 p.m. due to technical difficulties.

The meeting resumed at 3.19 p.m. in public session.

Present: Mr Paul Frew MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood MLA
Mr Doug Beattie MLA
Ms Michaela Boyle 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 Leanne Johnston (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Allison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

11. Overview Briefing on the Reducing Offending Directorate

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.19 p.m.:

Ms Sue McAllister, Head of Reducing Offending Directorate and Director General of the NI Prison Service
Declan McGeown, Chief Executive of the Youth Justice Agency
Brian Ingram, Director of Custodial Services, Reducing Offending Directorate
Kiera Lloyd, Reducing Offending Policy Unit, Reducing Offending Directorate

Mr Beggs rejoined the meeting at 3.21 p.m.

Ms Bailey rejoined the meeting at 3.23 p.m.

The officials provided an overview briefing on the Reducing Offending Directorate.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials agreed to provide further information on the funding available to support young people with mental health issues.

The briefing was recorded by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance. Ms Sue McAllister remained for the next briefing session.

12. Overview Briefing on the NI Prison Service

The following officials joined Ms McAllister in the meeting at 3.50 p.m.:

Mr Brian McCaughey, Director of Rehabilitation, NI Prison Service

Mr Phil Wragg, Director of Operations, NI Prison Service

Mr Stephen Davis, Director of Policy and Service Delivery, NI Prison Service

The officials provided Members with an overview briefing on the NI Prison Service.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials agreed to provide further information on several issues.

The briefing was recorded by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

13. Department of Justice June 2016 Monitoring Round Return and 2015-16 Provisional Outturn

The Committee noted information provided by the Department of Justice on its 2015-16 Provisional Outturn and 2016 June Monitoring Round Return.

The Chairperson advised Members that departmental officials were scheduled to brief the Committee on the Department of Justice budget at the meeting on 16 June and this would provide an opportunity to seek further information/clarification if required.

14. Draft Committee Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft Forward Work Programme for June 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold a meeting on Tuesday 21 June at 12.30 p.m. in place of the meeting scheduled to take place on Thursday 23 June.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme for June 2016.

15. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted Statutory Rule SR.2016/136 (C.8): The Justice (2015 Act) (Commencement No.5) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 which was not subject to Assembly procedure.
- ii. The Committee noted Statutory Rule SR.2016/199 (C.12): The Access to Justice (2003 Order) (Commencement No.9) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 which was not subject to Assembly procedure.
- iii. The Committee noted Statutory Rule SR.2016 No.202: The Civil Legal Services (Scope) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 which was not subject to Assembly procedure.
- iv. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Lord Chief Justice to the Minister of Justice regarding a number of Court of Appeal vacancies and the procedure to fill these.
- v. The Committee noted the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland Annual Business Plan 2016-17.
- vi. The Committee noted the Northern Ireland Executive Office Brussels Report: February 2016 – April 2016.
- vii. The Committee noted the Northern Ireland Police Fund Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2015.

16. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised Members that he and the Deputy Chairperson had held an introductory meeting with the Minister of Justice on 31 May 2016. At the meeting the Minister had indicated her wish to maintain the good working relationship that had existed between the Department and the Committee during the last mandate.

The Chairperson also advised Members that he and the Deputy Chairperson had held a short meeting with representatives of the Probation Board, at their request, during which they had invited the Committee to hold a meeting at one of the Board's premises and also to meet staff and hear about the range of work and projects they are involved in.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to give further consideration to the invitation to hold a meeting at Probation Board premises when considering its strategic priorities.

17. Any Other Business

None.

18. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 9 June at 2 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.45 p.m.

Mr Paul Frew MLA
Chairman, Committee for Justice