



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**OFFICIAL REPORT
(Hansard)**

**Department for Social Development
Work Priorities**

16 June 2011

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Alex Maskey (Chairperson)
Mr Mickey Brady (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mrs Judith Cochrane
Mr Michael Copeland
Mr Sammy Douglas
Mr Mark H Durkan
Mr Fra McCann
Mr David McClarty

Witnesses:

| | | |
|----------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Mr Nelson McCausland |) | The Minister for Social Development |
| Mr Will Haire |) | Department for Social Development |
| Mr Tommy O'Reilly |) | |

The Chairperson:

I now open the meeting and formally welcome the Minister for Social Development and his team.
I will hand over, first of all, to the Minister.

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development):

Thank you, Chairman and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to come along and

speak to you about the work of the Department for Social Development (DSD). At the start, I must say that I am looking forward to working with the Committee very much over the coming few years. I hope that it will be a constructive partnership, whereby together, working in partnership, we can produce a better outcome for the people of Northern Ireland. Should the Committee request briefings on any issue, I am keen that my officials are available and accessible. I know that the Chairman has already engaged in a number of meetings with senior officials. I hope that those have been useful, and if further briefings are required, I am happy for officials to come to the Committee to facilitate those at any time. I am happy for officials to come along, and I will do likewise as required in the future.

Most of the Department's work is focused on our most disadvantaged citizens, families and communities, through social security, child maintenance, providing social housing, addressing homelessness and supporting our poorest communities through neighbourhood renewal. DSD has a huge impact on people's lives, delivering a budget of almost £6 billion a year through 7,900 staff. The Department has an impact on every residential area, community, village and town across Northern Ireland.

I am greatly impressed with the work of the Department and its staff. I have endeavoured to meet as many staff as I can and have visited a number of offices already; I am impressed by what I have seen. I was in Londonderry yesterday at the pension credit office on Carlisle Road. I spoke to a lady who deals with MLAs' offices who actually knew my office manager by first name. I was impressed with that personal connection and the fact that staff knew the folk with whom they deal so well.

Housing targets have been exceeded. A substantial programme of improvement to our towns and cities has been delivered. Through neighbourhood renewal, many hundreds of projects of direct support have been delivered to the poorest communities. The Social Security Agency (SSA) has recorded its best ever performance levels, and record levels of money are being collected for children by the child maintenance enforcement division.

Nevertheless, major problems remain to be tackled. We are in the midst of an economic downturn that affects everybody but impacts most on the least well off. The latest figures from

the Institute for Fiscal Studies state that, between 2008 and 2010, inflation increased the cost of goods and services to the poorest families by 4.3% a year compared with 2.7% experienced by the richest fifth of households during the same period.

Unemployment continues to rise here, as does the number of those seeking support from the Social Security Agency. We have stubbornly high rates of people dependent on benefits compared with the rest of the UK. Tackling poverty will, therefore, be a significant challenge in this difficult economic climate. We need to think about not only addressing the effects of poverty but addressing the causes of poverty — why people are in that situation — and the causes of unemployment to try to get people back into work and out of poverty.

We need to continue to provide support to the people most in need through payment of benefits, social housing, neighbourhood renewal and the work on child maintenance. However, we also need to do more than that and to be both realistic and ambitious: realistic in recognising the scale of the problem and ambitious in designing new and more effective solutions to the problems that we face.

I want all business areas in DSD to work together to achieve our common goals. That means working towards what I understand to be sustainability for individuals, families and communities. We sometimes talk about Departments having a silo mentality, but it is important not only to integrate Departments but to ensure that all aspects of a Department are integrated and working together. I am thinking about some areas I have already visited in which there are difficult housing situations and lots of blocked-up houses that blight an area. Money may be put into neighbourhood renewal in a certain area, but unless other issues are addressed, problems will not be sorted out. We need to look at those issues holistically.

I also want to work with other Departments such as the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), the Department for Regional Development, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Department of Education, and the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, and I have already had a number of meetings with ministerial colleagues in those Departments and plan to talk to all of them over the coming weeks.

What does that mean for DSD? It means working with the Executive to get people into work to ensure that our poorest communities are part of growing our economy; tackling fuel poverty through measures that result in warmer, more fuel-efficient homes, making sure that all parents are encouraged and, where necessary, required to support their children through child maintenance payments; working actively with our most disadvantaged communities and with other Departments to provide the services that those communities need to tackle poverty and reduce the gap between the richest and the poorest; and, where necessary, providing good social housing for those in need.

That will be no easy task. I am asking officials to consider how we can work better together to tackle poverty and achieve greater sustainability within a budget that we know is unlikely to increase; I will seek the support and views of the Committee on that endeavour. That is the big picture. I welcome the Committee's views on how we can progress that agenda.

I will now consider some of the specifics. The major immediate challenges that I face include the welfare reform programme being taken forward by the coalition Government, which will deliver the greatest change to welfare since the Beveridge report. In the context of the parity arrangements for the delivery of social security and child maintenance that currently provides support to 500,000 people here, how can we get the best deal for Northern Ireland? How can the delivery of universal credit be part of the wider Executive strategy to deliver economic development? How do we get the overall housing market moving effectively to see how the private rental, affordable and social housing sectors can best develop? How can we deliver a social housing programme that makes the best use of the public and private sectors and maximises income to deliver that housing from the private sector? What is the future role and direction of the Housing Executive and housing associations in delivering social housing?

I intend to make public very soon an independent report prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) as part of the fundamental review of the Housing Executive. I will ask the Committee to consider that report and give me its views by September, before bringing forward my proposals. I have asked PWC to be available to the Committee to explain its work, if that would be helpful. My officials will speak to you later about the background to that report.

How can we help our most disadvantaged communities to reduce the economic disparity between rich and poor and ensure that those communities are connected to and benefit from economic development? How can we support communities to ensure that they are sustainable, combining housing with regeneration work in a more effective way? With the cost of fuel increasing rapidly, what actions can we take to protect the people who are most vulnerable to fuel poverty? How can we develop our town and city centres in the midst of a recession in a way that can continue to contribute to economic development?

I am sure that the Committee will not be surprised by the challenges that I have outlined. I am sure that you recognise them. However, I believe that if we are to succeed, there has to be a step change in our actions and policies. How can I, as the Minister for Social Development, work better with Executive colleagues and with communities to achieve sustainable outcomes, whereby those who are currently the most disadvantaged are increasingly connected to a vibrant and growing economy?

Those are my introductory thoughts, and I am happy to take questions and comments.

The Chairperson:

Thank you very much, Minister, for that comprehensive sketch of the major challenges that you and your Department face. On behalf of the Committee, I reiterate that we very much look forward to working with you on a co-operative basis over the next four years. Clearly, the Committee has a statutory role, and we intend to discharge that in a robust manner; you would expect no less. By the same token, we want to work constructively with you and the Department, and we look forward, as you say, to working together to ensure that we deliver the best service for the people whom we collectively represent.

Mr Brady:

Thank you very much for the presentation, Minister. You outlined some of the issues that are coming down the road, particularly welfare reform, which is, as you said, the biggest change since Beveridge and certainly since 1948. On a number of occasions, your predecessor talked about stretching the flexibility of parity as far as possible. Obviously, there are prevailing circumstances here in the North that are unlike those in many parts of Britain where the rules will

apply. Are you of the same mind? Issues will arise and regulations will come before the Committee, but parity is a bigger issue that maybe needs to be discussed by parties on a more political level. Are you also of that mind? I saw statistics yesterday that show that unemployment figures went up by more than 400 in the past month. We are now talking about the prospect of 59,000 people being unemployed, and that is likely to increase. We have the advent of universal credit, which is a huge change. Logistically, that will be a nightmare for the Department. Are you confident that the Department is geared up, or will be geared up, to deal with that? What do you have to say about flexibility on the issue of parity?

Mr McCausland:

The principle of parity is important. If we were to move away from that, we would be going down a dangerous road. I have already spoken to people who are working on welfare reform in London about some of the issues. I emphasised the fact that, when they are looking at change, they should keep in mind the impact that it would have on Northern Ireland and that that may be different from what it would be elsewhere.

I had a telephone conversation with Lord Freud about that, and I hope to meet him in the next few weeks. Those conversations are relevant, and, in fairness, he is conscious of the different situation here and is sympathetic to it. From what I have seen so far with Tommy and the staff from the SSA side of the Department, I have every confidence that we are doing all that we can to ensure that we get the best deal for Northern Ireland.

Mr F McCann:

You are very welcome. I wish you well in your time as Minister. You said that DSD is probably the biggest Department, and it employs 7,900 staff. Obviously, there are very challenging times ahead. Over time, do you think that that figure will be reduced by much? Will there be redundancies?

The Committee for Social Development is the lead Committee for neighbourhood renewal, but is a stronger cross-departmental approach needed to deal with neighbourhood renewal and for other Departments to live up to their commitments? Will that be one of your prime moves to try to ensure that that obligation is fulfilled? In Belfast city centre, there has been a sequence of

development over the past number of years. It has affected north and west Belfast in that the city centre elements of those areas have been left in dereliction. Will you challenge them?

Mr McCausland:

I will answer those questions, but not necessarily in the same order. The point about neighbourhood renewal is important, and it follows a reference I made earlier, which is the need to consider issues in conjunction with other Departments. Neighbourhood renewal concerns not only what DSD does directly but what local schools, for example, do and how they are being integrated. Consideration has to be given to how shared facilities and sports facilities are tied in with local schools. Over the past couple of days, I have said again and again that we need to look at communities to make them sustainable in a holistic way, in that we look at housing, the voluntary and community sector and at employment and education issues. Will is going to be tired of hearing me say that. Therefore, all Departments should have something to contribute to that.

I use that as an example, because, when I was Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, I met a number of groups that were in local neighbourhood renewal partnerships. I looked at the plan for their area, and, given that I was from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, it struck me that there was no sport element. It had not occurred to the groups that sport should be considered in the context of neighbourhood renewal. Therefore, I agree with you entirely that a holistic approach has to be at the centre.

There are a lot of initiatives in Belfast city centre, and things are happening not only through DSD but through other Departments that will impact on the centre of Belfast. The Department for Employment and Learning, for example, is involved, and the arrival of the University of Ulster in York Street has had a big impact. I want to take time to consider the Royal Exchange, CastleCourt and other developments and their sequencing. I am conscious of the way in which one development can impact on another. What will happen in the future around the Cathedral Quarter? What will happen to the Royal Exchange? What will happen to the areas around Bank Square, Castle Street and so on? There is much to be considered, but there will be a focus on that.

I will ask Will to speak about departmental redundancies.

Mr Will Haire (Department for Social Development):

Our budget settlement does not indicate that there will be redundancies. We have a large natural churn in staff numbers, and that should deal with the change that we are dealing with. However, as we go forward, there will undoubtedly be significant reform issues that we will have to address. It is vital that we try to identify the issues early and work closely with staff. We can address those issues well and find practical solutions through a natural turnover of staff. For the next couple of years, it looks as if we will have the budget to pay for our staff and to deal with reform. We have a significant challenge. Tommy will have to run the existing system as he builds the new system, so we will have to work with staff to get that balance right and make sure that we can do both tasks effectively.

Mr Campbell:

I welcome the Minister and his team. Welfare reform has been referred to, so I will not ask a question on that, although it is an issue that you, and the Committee, have to deal with because it comes from Westminster. I am more interested in some of the projects that you and the Department might initiate, rather than having to deal with them as they come to you. At some point, I would like to hear details about the empty homes strategy. It is a very good strategy, which, if done properly, could be a comprehensive way of dealing with a huge antisocial problem as well as a housing problem.

There may be more than 30,000 empty homes. How will that pan out in the next year or two? In our constituencies, we are all aware of periodic problems with empty homes, but there seems to be a sustained blight in some difficult areas that requires a comprehensive analysis.

Mr McCausland:

I agree entirely about the importance of looking at empty homes. I have been given a figure of some 40,000 empty homes across Northern Ireland. The imposition of rates will have some effect on people allowing properties to sit empty, in some cases for 20 or 30 years, blighting an area. If some of those houses can be brought back into use, that will help to address the need for housing, will remove a blight and will also create employment. It is a winner in a series of areas.

In the past, perhaps, we were not focused enough, but empty houses are a priority for us over the next couple of years so we can get those houses back and address the issue of blight. I have already seen the situation in some towns and cities, and I intend to go out and about as much as I can to look at different situations. In some cases that I have seen already, people are being expected to live in conditions that should not be accepted or tolerated in this day and age. That is often the result of the blight of empty homes.

Mr Campbell:

Will it help to concentrate minds in the Housing Executive on the rateable element that commences later in the year? I presume that it would be a drain on the Housing Executive's budget if it were unable to resolve the empty homes problem in its estate if there were 2,000, 3,000 or 5,000 empty properties, on which, I presume, it would have to pay rates if they remain derelict.

Mr McCausland:

I met the acting chief executive of the Housing Executive the other day, and empty homes and their implications were emphasised to him. Those houses are also devaluing adjoining properties. It is bad for Housing Executive tenants, bad because of the drain on resources and bad because it devalues properties.

Mr Campbell:

I have no doubt that it was emphasised to the Housing Executive; I am more interested in the response. What is it going to do about it?

Mr McCausland:

There is a willingness in the Housing Executive, and I was encouraged by the response. Given that the Department and the Minister are saying that it is a priority, and the Housing Executive is recognising its importance, I hope that we can get somewhere. Of course, we also need to look at the role of housing associations and what they can do. I spent the entire day in Londonderry yesterday, and I spent the late morning visiting projects in the Creggan and in Rosemount, looking at their work on regenerating houses through a housing association. Housing associations

can leverage in additional money, and the more that we can do that and get those houses back into use, the better.

Mr Campbell:

In answering an earlier question, Will referred to the “churn” in staff. For a variety of reasons, that appears to be a feature. All bodies that come under DSD — for example, the Housing Executive, the child maintenance enforcement division and its predecessor or the Social Security Agency — share a problem, and some of us have been referring to it for many years now. That problem is the imbalance in their workforce and, more importantly, the imbalance in the people whom they recruit to their workforces. As you know, Minister, the problem is that there is a significant under-representation of the Protestant community in people being recruited to each of those bodies. Does the churn not allow for a real concentration of mind and effort to try to resolve the problem? If new people are constantly coming in, I would have thought that it should be easier to address the problem than if the workforce were static, which would make it difficult to resolve. Does that not make it easier to address? Obviously, that has not been the case in the past.

Mr McCausland:

Certainly, if we are to have a shared and better future in Northern Ireland, it has to be based on the principles of equity, as well as other issues. We need to ensure that our workforces reflect the wider community. I know that you have picked up on the issue on a number of occasions. The other day, there was a question for written answer on the issue. The answer to the question, which included figures for the Housing Executive, stated that there was a slight improvement there. We need to examine the issue. I have not seen the breakdown for all the agencies, but I will certainly do that. The issue is recognised.

Mr Copeland:

Minister, you are very welcome. No doubt you will be aware of comments made by your colleague the Minister of Finance and Personnel in the press recently regarding self-certified sickness absence and other non-attendances at work that, he said, were prevalent in DSD. I found that somewhat strange, since it was my understanding that the Department of Finance and Personnel is responsible for recruiting the people.

In my experience of dealing with DSD and the Social Security Agency many times a day for the better part of four years, I found the staff to be relatively simple to deal with and keen to help. The problem is that many of them are at a coalface at which the actions of government meet reality. A substantial number of the people with whom they were dealing had needs and expectations that could not be satisfied.

Is any research or work being done in the Department to find out whether people are — how can I say it? — not victims exactly, but if certain sections of your workforce that interface with the public are more prone to finding the task above or beyond them? Day after day, staff see people whom they cannot really help, and those same staff are blamed for a system that is not of their making.

You mentioned housing associations, which are allowed to lever in additional finance. Are there any plans to reinvigorate, permit or rejig the system to allow the Housing Executive to lever in additional finance as well?

Mr McCausland:

I will take the last question first. The PWC report on the Housing Executive will be coming to you in the next couple of weeks. So we will wait until then when the report is before you.

Mr Copeland:

I shall wait in anticipation.

Mr McCausland:

I am sure that you will. You also asked a question about attendance, absence, and so on. I was encouraged by the pension credit staff whom I met in Londonderry yesterday. I also visited the office in Lisnagelvin and met the folk there. In both cases, I was shown the figures for absences and saw whether the Civil Service and departmental targets were being met. They were able to show that there had been a substantial improvement in the past few years. I questioned why that was, and there are a number of reasons. The end result is that the figures are now at a level that you would expect.

Naturally, people will be sick and, from time to time, will have to take a day off work. There is validity in your point. If people are working in a system that is operating well, where conditions are good and expectations are being met, they will be less likely to be off work. It took some time for all the changes to take effect, particularly in the pension credit division. The pension credit staff pointed out that a dramatic change was introduced and took time to bed down. Members of the public and MLAs have had difficulties, but we are past that now and are getting to a much happier situation. That may be a factor in the better record on absences. The record for absence in Lisnagelvin was fine. As I visit offices, I will take a look at that issue. In fact, I did not even have to ask about absence records in those two cases: staff brought up the issue because they were quite proud of the improvements.

You asked another question, but I cannot remember what it was.

Mr Copeland:

I was trying to establish whether there were certain grades or positions that were more prone to the effects of people coming to them for help when none was available, which meant that staff in those grades had to be the interface and put that message across. If so, repeated exposure to those situations is bound to wear someone down mentally and emotionally, which will surface in either real illness or a basic inability to function or face going into work. Is there anything that can be done to monitor that or have positions rotated? People who man telephones sometimes suffer from that more directly than those who deal with customers face to face.

Mr Tommy O'Reilly (Department for Social Development):

That is a fair point. The vast majority of the staff in the agency are customer-facing, so they are dealing with customers daily. We are working very hard to understand the level of absence in the agency.

Mental illness and stress are still the biggest reasons for people being off work ill. As a consequence, the agency and the Department have put in place a wrap-around whole health and well-being strategy, which uses a range of interventions with individuals to try to understand what is causing the illness, what factors are impacting on that and what we need to do to change

the working environment. We are trying to put support mechanisms in place: we have an occupational health service, Carecall and specific training for staff to deal with stress and difficult customers. So we are looking at the problem from a holistic viewpoint. One silver bullet will not address the absence issue: a range of interventions are required. There are various factors, such as the types of stress that our staff experience and their age profile, as the youngest group of staff in the Northern Ireland Civil Service. The agency also contains the largest number of staff in the Civil Service with caring responsibilities.

Mr Copeland:

Are the youngest group also the lowest earners?

Mr O'Reilly:

Yes, they are. The Social Security Agency has 50% of the lowest-earning staff in the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Mr Copeland:

Are you content that your duty of care to the well-being of your staff is being monitored and that staff are being rotated so that they are not exposed for long periods of time to positions that may harm them?

Mr O'Reilly:

Jobs in the Social Security Agency or the child maintenance enforcement division are stressful. Staff are dealing with the most vulnerable people in society. In some ways, those jobs are stressful but, for a lot of our staff, they are also the most rewarding, because they can see that they are making a contribution by trying to help to improve people's lives. So the issue can be considered from both ends of the spectrum. However, we are very mindful as an employer to have mechanisms in place to support our staff, support our managers and try to address the issues that cause unnecessary stress.

Mr F McCann:

As far as I know, the most recent review of empty homes was in 2006. I know that we have gone through the economic downturn since then and hundreds of houses in many areas are laying

empty, which has a dereliction effect on adjoining houses. Would it not be better to order another review of the figures for empty homes in the North? That would give a better base from which to begin. A lot of people just walked away from their homes and left them lying empty, and it is almost impossible to get them back to do any work.

Secondly, you spoke about a report on the future of the Housing Executive. Will you give us some insight into the content of that report? Thirdly, when it comes to sickness benefit, I know from my time on Belfast City Council that people on long-term illness absence can skew the figures and make them look worse than they are.

Mr McCausland:

You are looking for good value in the number of questions. *[Laughter.]*

I want to consider an empty homes strategy that was worked up some time ago. It may need to be tweaked to address the issue, but we all agree that something needs to be done, for all the reasons that we outlined.

The previous Minister outlined some of the key points of the Housing Executive review some time ago. I emphasise that it is very much PWC's report, not mine or the Department's. It is the consultants' report. They will bring it forward, and then you and others will comment on it, after which we will produce something as a result. Clearly, they are looking at the differing roles and remits in the Housing Executive and how they should be configured. They will also be looking at whether some such roles could be done in a different and more effective way. That includes how to configure everything from a landlord to commissioner, inspection, regulatory and policy roles. I had a general briefing on the review the other day; I have not seen the report. PWC was making a few final changes, and the report will probably be through within days and with you shortly. It would be better for the review's producers rather than officials to brief the Committee.

The Chairperson:

On our first day briefing, we received information projecting that £450 million to £500 million will be removed from the economy here as a result of welfare reform over the comprehensive spending review (CSR) period. To do anything about that is outside your gift. However, in

working with other Departments, are there any longer-term projections about how that may be addressed cross-departmentally?

Mr Haire:

We are working with DEL to try to get a better handle, in particular, on the labour market implications of that. It is a difficult area. That fairly broad figure came out of some Treasury projections, but exactly how that will impact on us has not been established. We are also trying to work through how it impacts on the housing structure, because housing benefit works itself through rents.

Right across the system, all the devolved Administrations are trying to get a handle on the issue. We recognise that it is a complex series of changes that could impact many policy areas. For example, the implications of the changes, because of the number of people coming out of economic inactivity, are quite significant to the work that is continuing on the economic strategy, led by Minister Foster. The system will present such people into the labour market again. Those will be very significant impacts on, for example, the nature of the jobs and skills that we will need to try to generate here. It is early days, but it will be an issue, and it is important that we get some sense of the nature of the impacts and report that to you in the coming months.

Mr Douglas:

First, I congratulate you on your new post, Minister, and I wish you all the best. I am encouraged this morning by your message about working with the most disadvantaged and the most vulnerable people in our communities. As an Assembly, we will be judged on how we help people who are in need. From your day-to-day experience in north Belfast, you see the growing levels of poverty, deprivation and unemployment. Later on, we will be talking about an invite from Basil McCrea, the Chairperson of the Committee for Employment and Learning. He is interested in the review into young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS) and early years provision and is talking about setting up a working group.

You spoke about the challenges relating to social security, child maintenance, economic development, housing and a whole range of issues. People talk about the things that get them up in the morning or keep them awake at night. I know that it is early days, but what are the two or

three big-ticket challenges that you face? Do you want to set up a working group or some sort of task force to deal with certain issues? In the past, we have talked about the challenge of working with other Departments to make sure that they buy into our strategy. I am sorry for that long-winded question.

Mr McCausland:

We clearly need much more cross-departmental working in certain areas. You identified NEETS and early years provision. Neighbourhood renewal needs to be about looking at issues holistically. What are schools doing? What is being done to help parents, to support families and to give young people a purpose in life in order to get into some sort of training or employment? I have been in the Department only for a few weeks, but I want a review of neighbourhood renewal so that we can make it more effective.

Those are general issues, but there are certain areas in the Province in which there are really serious issues and in which communities have got down to a level that is unacceptable. I have in mind whether there is a way in which we could have a more targeted approach to those areas of greatest disadvantage. You are right; I see them in north and west Belfast, but there are issues in Londonderry, Craigavon and right across the Province.

Mr Copeland:

I have a brief question, given that you mentioned the PWC report. Given the increasing concern about the use of external consultants, are there any plans to review how things may be done in-house in future, rather than being done through external consultations?

Mr McCausland:

Consultants should be used only after careful and due consideration. They should not be the automatic first port of call. However, some issues require independent thinking. Having met and listened to the folk who were doing that, I was impressed by their understanding. Some consultants give the answer that people want to get, and you almost have to tell them the answer.

Mr Douglas:

No. *[Laughter.]*

Mr McCausland:

I know that that will come as a shock; it will take Gregory Campbell a long time to recover from that shock.

I was impressed by their insight into the matter. They have obviously worked in those fields across on the mainland. I will not steal their thunder; I will leave it to them, and you can make your assessment afterwards. We will not go for consultants automatically. That was not my practice previously, and it will not be now.

The Chairperson:

There are no further questions. I am sure that members are saving them up for later on. I thank the Minister, Tommy and Will, and the officials whom you have with you, for being here this morning and making your presentation to the Committee. As I said earlier, we look forward to working with you in the time ahead in a spirit of co-operation, albeit with robust attention to our scrutiny role. Thank you.