



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY  
FIRST MINISTER  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 4 DECEMBER 2013  
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

- Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)  
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Alex Attwood  
Mr Leslie Cree  
Miss Megan Fearon  
Mr Alex Maskey  
Ms Bronwyn McGahan  
Mr George Robinson
- Apologies: Mrs Brenda Hale  
Mr Stephen Moutray  
Mr Jimmy Spratt
- In Attendance: Mrs Shauna Mageean (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Keith McBride (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)  
Mrs Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)  
Mr Michael Scholes (Researcher) Item 7 only

*The meeting began at 2.04 pm in public session*

**1. Apologies**

As detailed above.

## **2. Chairperson's Business**

### Programme for Government Briefing

The Chairperson advised Members that the scheduled briefing on the Programme for Government would not be taking place as the Programme Board for the Programme for Government had not yet met and would not be meeting until the New Year. The Chairperson also advised Members that there are no Departmental papers for today's briefing on the Social Investment Fund. The Committee considered a draft press release and agreed to consider this later in the meeting.

### Current Invitations

The Committee noted the list of current invitations.

### Junior Ministers

The Chairperson advised Members that he had spoken with junior Ministers Bell and McCann to discuss future engagement with the Committee. The Chairperson advised that junior Ministers had agreed to come and brief the Committee on 8 January 2014 on Victims and Survivors issues and to discuss future engagement.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that due to the issues of cancelled briefings and lack of Departmental papers to invite junior Ministers to come to discuss these issues at next week's meeting.

## **3. Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2013**

*Agreed:* The draft minutes of the proceedings of the 27 November 2013 were agreed by the Committee.

## **4. Matters Arising**

### Sexual Orientation Strategy

The Committee considered a response from the Department advising that the draft Sexual Orientation Strategy is still under consideration by the Department

and that it is committed to publishing the strategy following a 12 week consultation period.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a timeline for the consultation and publishing of the strategy.

#### List of Outstanding Issues

The Committee noted the list of outstanding issues.

### **5. Correspondence**

#### Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

The Committee noted a copy of a response from the Department to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment in relation to the Barroso Desk Officers.

The Committee considered a response from the Department to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment in relation to its Inquiry into Renewable Energy.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the response to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

#### Proposals for the Committee's Ombudsman Bill

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for the Environment and the Committee for Justice to update them on progress of the proposed Bill.

The Committee considered a draft letter to the Secretary of State in relation to the limitations of the legislative competence of the Assembly.

*Mr Lyttle joined the meeting at 2.17 p.m.*

Ms McGahan proposed to replace the term "assistance and cooperation" with "preliminary indicative view".

The Committee divided

Ayes: Mr Attwood, Miss Fearon, Ms McGahan

Noes: Mr Cree, Mr Lyttle, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Robinson

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to send the letter as drafted.

#### Review of Attorney General's Office

The Committee considered a response from the Department to the Committee's request for a copy of the Report on the Review of the Attorney General's Office. The response advised that the Report was provided on an 'in confidence' basis and Ministers have no plans on releasing the substance of the Report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a briefing in closed session on the policy options contained within the Report.

#### Freedom of Information

The Committee noted a response from the Department in relation to the outcome of the monitoring of the Department by the Information commissioner's Office. The response indicates that the Commissioner has written to the Department informing them that he was closing the case due to the improvement in the Department's performance.

#### Civil Contingencies

The Committee considered a response from the Department to the Committee's request for a briefing on current civil contingencies arrangements and the Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit's Review of the June 2012 flooding.

*Miss Fearon left the meeting at 2.24 p.m.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a copy of the Report and an indicative timeline for when deliberations by the Department will be complete.

## **6. Social Investment Fund**

*Departmental officials joined the meeting at 2.26 p.m.*

*Mr Maskey joined the meeting at 2.26 p.m.*

The Chairperson passed on the condolences of the Committee to Mr Maskey on the death of his Mother.

Departmental officials briefed the Committee on the progress of the Social Investment Fund. Questions and discussion followed. Officials agreed to come back to the Committee on a number of issues.

*Mr Lyttle declared an interest as a member of the East Belfast Social Investment Fund Steering Group*

*Miss Fearon re-joined the meeting at 2.32 p.m.*

*Mr Maskey left the meeting at 3.03 p.m.*

*Miss Fearon left the meeting at 3.15 p.m.*

*Departmental officials left the meeting at 3.30 p.m.*

### Press Release

The Committee considered a draft press release in relation to the cancellation of a briefing on the Programme for Government.

Mr Nesbitt proposed that the press release be issued.

The Committee divided

Ayes: Mr Attwood, Mr Cree, Mr Lyttle, Ms McGahan, Mr Nesbitt

Noes: None

Abstentions: Mr Robinson

*Agreed:*               The Committee agreed to issue the press release.

## **7. EU Competitive Funding**

An Assembly researcher briefed the Committee on a Research Paper on European Competitive Funding.

*Agreed:*               The Committee agreed to forward the Research Paper to all statutory committees.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the Research Paper and key questions to the Department for response.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to chase up an outstanding response in relation to queries raised at the meeting of 25 October 2013

## **8. European Commission Work Programme 2014**

The Committee considered a Research Paper from the Assembly's Research and Information Service on the European Commission's Work Programme for 2014.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to consider this paper further at next week's meeting.

## **9. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

## **10. Any Other Business**

None

## **11. Date, Time and Location of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held at 2 p.m. on Wednesday 11 December 2013, in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 3.57 p.m.*

**Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA**  
**Chairperson,**

**Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister**