



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY
FIRST MINISTER
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 15 JANUARY 2014
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Miss Megan Fearon
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr George Robinson
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Leslie Cree
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Stephen Moutray

In Attendance: Mrs Shauna Mageean (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Keith McBride (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)
Mr Ray McCaffrey (Researcher – Item 10)
Mr Michael Heery (Researcher – Item 10)

The meeting began at 2.03 pm in public session

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairperson's Business

NI Public Service Ombudsman Proposals

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman would be allowed to remain in the room during the closed session briefings from the Assembly's Research and Information Service on elements of the Committee proposals for a NI Public Services Ombudsman.

Committee on the Administration of Justice

The Committee considered a request from the Committee on the Administration of Justice to brief the Committee on its report "Unequal Relations".

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and any interested Members would meet informally with the Committee on the Administration of Justice to discuss its report.

Attorney General for Northern Ireland

The Committee considered an invitation to the Chairperson from the Attorney General for Northern Ireland to attend a colloquium on model rules for EU administrative procedures on Friday 7 February 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson would attend subject to diary constraints.

Current Invitations

The Committee noted the list of current invitations.

3. Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2013

Agreed: The draft minutes of the proceedings of the 11 December 2013 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

Victims and Survivors Service – Internal Audit

The Committee noted a response from the Department to the Committee's request for sight of an Internal Audit Report on the Victims and Survivors Service advising that it does not intend to publish or release the document.

Mr Maskey joined the meeting at 2.11 p.m.

Strategic Investment Board

The Committee considered a response from the Strategic Investment Board providing information on staffing costs and the use of consultants.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Strategic Investment Board to seek further information on staffing costs and to schedule a briefing on the work of the Strategic Investment Board.

Committee for the Environment

The Committee noted a response from the Committee for the Environment advising that it will keep the Committee notified of any issue regarding the role of the Commissioner for Complaints during its scrutiny of the Local Government Bill.

5. Correspondence

Committee for Finance and Personnel

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel in relation to the 2015-16 Budget process.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel providing details of outstanding Post Project Evaluations.

Committee for the Environment

The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for the Environment advising of its intention to carry out an Inquiry into Wind Energy and seeking the Committee's comments on the Inquiry.

The Chairperson declared an interest as an owner of a wind turbine.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask if there is an Executive policy on wind turbines on Departmental land.

Mr Lyttle joined the meeting at 2.15 p.m.

Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment to the Department in relation to its Renewable Energy Inquiry.

Save the Children

The Committee noted a copy of a Report by Save the Children on closing the education achievement gap in Northern Ireland.

Investing Activity Report

The Committee noted December's Investment Strategy Investing Activity Report.

Ilex Annual report and Accounts 2012/13

The Committee noted a copy of Ilex's Annual report and Accounts 2012/13.

Report on the Review of the Attorney General's Office

The Committee noted a response from the Department to the Committee's request for a briefing on the policy options arising from the Review advising that the Department does not think it is appropriate for officials to brief the Committee at this time.

List of Outstanding Issues

The Committee noted the list of outstanding issues.

6. Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission joined the meeting at 2.21 p.m.

Mr Attwood joined the meeting at 2.21 p.m.

Representatives from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, Mr John Corey - Interim Chair, Ms Virginia McVea - Director, Mr David Russell – Deputy Director and Mr Colin Caughey – Policy Worker briefed the Committee on its Annual Statement 2013. Questions and discussion followed. The Commission agreed to provide further information in relation to its forward work programme and Historical Institutional Abuse.

The Chairperson declared an interest as a Member of the All-Party Group on UNSCR 1325

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission left the meeting at 3.14 p.m.

Miss Fearon left the meeting at 3.14 p.m.

7. Barroso Taskforce Desk Officer Update

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department on the Barroso Taskforce Desk Officers' Quarterly Report for July to September 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request sight of briefing papers provided by the Social Cohesion Desk Officer to support organisations hoping to apply for EU funding.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to forward the update to all statutory committees.

8. Proposed Fair Employment (Specification of Public Authorities) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2014

The Committee considered the proposed statutory rule on the Fair Employment (Specification of Public Authorities) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to notify the Department that it was content with the draft statutory rule.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme.

The meeting moved into closed session at 3.28 p.m.

10. Ombudsman Proposals

The Committee was briefed by Researchers from the Assembly's Research and Library Services on the power of own motion investigations and relative costs of investigating complaints.

The Northern Ireland Ombudsman joined the meeting at 3.50 p.m.

Mr Robinson left the meeting at 4.24 p.m.

Miss Fearon re-joined the meeting at 4.26 p.m.

The Northern Ireland Ombudsman, Dr Tom Frawley and the Deputy Ombudsman, Ms Marie Anderson briefed the Committee in relation to own motion and systemic investigations. Questions and discussion followed.

The Northern Ireland Ombudsman left the meeting at 4.28 p.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Committee staff would draw up an options paper for consideration in relation to own motion and systemic investigations.

The Committee noted a response from the Rt. Hon Andrew Robathan MP, on behalf of the Secretary of State, to the Committee's request for a preliminary indicative view on certain excepted matters in the Committee's proposals.

The Committee noted Sinn Féin's opposition to the need to involve the Secretary of State.

11. Any Other Business

Atlantic Philanthropies and Peace III funding

Members raised the issue of the upcoming end of funding by Atlantic Philanthropies and PEACE III and the effect this would have on victims groups and a number of other organisations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Committee would bring this issue up at next week's meeting with junior Ministers.

12. Date, Time and Location of next meeting

The next meeting will be held at 2 p.m. on Wednesday 22 January 2014, in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 4.35 p.m.

Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA
Chairperson,
Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister