



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY
FIRST MINISTER
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2014
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Ms Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Michael Copeland

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)
Ms Roisin Kelly (Assembly Clerk) Item 1 only
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 1 only

The meeting began in closed session at 2.01 pm.

1. Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsperson Bill

Ms Kelly and Mr Hicks joined the meeting at 2.01pm.

Mr Attwood joined the meeting at 2.02pm.

Ms McGahan joined the meeting at 2.05pm.

The Committee was briefed by the NI Public Service Ombudsperson Bill Project Team on emerging issues that required clarification for the progress of the Bill.

*Mr Attwood left the meeting at 2.27pm.
Mrs Hale joined the meeting at 2.32pm.*

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First and deputy First Ministers and the Ministers of Education; Employment & Learning; Environment, and Justice to update them on the position of the Bill; and to provide them with a copy of the Bill in confidence. The Committee also agreed to engage with the relevant statutory committees.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a number of drafting changes to the Bill and options regarding the commencement of provisions, and return to these issues at its next meeting.

Ms Kelly and Mr Hicks left the meeting at 2.33pm.

The meeting moved into public session at 2.36pm.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

3. Chairperson's Business

Contact a Family Northern Ireland

The Committee noted correspondence from Contact a Family NI inviting Members to the launch of the Counting the Costs Report, in the Long Gallery on Tuesday 2 December 2014.

Committee Invitations

The Committee noted the list of current invitations.

4. Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2014

Agreed: The draft minutes of the proceedings of 5 November 2014 were agreed by the Committee.

5. Matters Arising

Draft Budget 2015-16

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel advising of its process in producing a co-ordinated report on the Draft Budget 2015-16.

Members noted that it was not yet known when the spending plans for OFMDFM would be available on the Department's website.

Agreed: Given the short timeframe within which the Committee has to consider this matter, Members agreed to write to OFMDFM's sponsored bodies about their priorities for 2015-16 and the level of engagement they have had with the Department regarding the budget for 2015-16.

Members noted that RAISE would deliver a budget scrutiny training workshop at the beginning of the next meeting.

Financial Transactions Capital

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding underspend in the Financial Transactions Capital Budget, which indicated that there is a possibility that some of this ring-fenced money may be lost due to a lack of suitable projects coming forward.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to OFMDFM to enquire if there are any suitable projects for which the Department could utilise this funding.

Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted two additional submissions to its Inquiry into Building a United Community from the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

List of Outstanding Correspondence

The Committee noted the list of outstanding correspondence.

6. Correspondence

OFMDFM: Monitoring of Departmental Post Project Evaluations

The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the Department's outstanding Post Project Evaluation.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

The Committee noted correspondence from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland providing copies of its Annual Report and Accounts 2013-14.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Equality Commission to give an overview of their work at a future meeting.

NICS: Sickness Absence

Members noted a response from OFMDFM to correspondence regarding sickness absence within the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy to the correspondence to the Committee for Finance and Personnel, as part of its ongoing consideration of sickness absence across the NICS.

7. Good Relations – Belfast Islamic Centre

The Committee noted a response from the First Minister and deputy First Minister to correspondence regarding the Belfast Islamic Centre's proposals for a new Islamic Centre.

Representatives from the Belfast Islamic Centre joined the meeting at 2.43pm.

Dr Raied Al-Wazzan and Dr Wasif Naeem appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on proposals for a new Islamic Centre for Northern Ireland.

Mr Attwood returned to the meeting at 2.46pm.

Mr Maskey joined the meeting at 2.59pm.

The Representatives from the Belfast Islamic Centre left the meeting at 3.18 pm.

Mr Attwood and Mr Maskey left the meeting at 3.18pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the Ministerial correspondence with the Belfast Islamic Centre representatives for information.

Agreed: The Committee to ask OFMDFM if consideration could be given to appointing an official to liaise with the Belfast Islamic Centre on the project; and to ask what further assistance can be provided by the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to ask if she had any opportunity during recent trade missions to the Middle East to express the Executive's support for the construction of a new Islamic Centre; whether her Department could recommend any suitable contacts for the Belfast Islamic Centre with regard to pursuing funding from the Gulf States; and information on any discussions she has had with regard to air routes between Belfast and the Middle East.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Social Development to ask if his Department could establish contact

with the Belfast Islamic Centre with regard to assistance in respect of urban regeneration and opportunities for capital funding.

8. Inquiry into the Barroso Task Force - Departmental response

The Committee considered a written response from OFMDFM to the recommendations in the Committee's Inquiry into the Barroso Task Force.

Mr Maskey returned to the meeting at 3.20pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite officials to brief Members on progress in implementing the recommendations contained within the Barroso Taskforce Inquiry report at a future meeting.

9. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme up to Christmas recess.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time and Location of next meeting

The next meeting will be held at 2.00pm on Wednesday 19 November 2014, in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 3.22 pm.

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