



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY
FIRST MINISTER
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2014
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Mr Leslie Cree
Miss Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr George Robinson

In Attendance: Ms Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)
Ms Roisin Kelly (Bill Clerk) Item 11 only
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 11 only
Mr Jonathan McMillen (Legal Adviser) Item 11 only

The meeting began in public session at 2.27 pm.

1. Apologies

As above.

Mr Maskey joined the meeting at 2.28pm.

2. Chairperson's Business

Commissioner for Older People

The Committee noted an invitation from the Commissioner for Older People to the launch of Appreciating Age – Valuing the Positive Contribution made by Older People in NI event in the MAC, Belfast on 1 October 2014.

Construction Employers Federation

The Chairperson advised the Committee that he had been invited to attend an Awards Gala Evening for the Construction Excellence Awards, hosted by the Construction Employers' Federation on 2 October 2014

Agreed: The Chairperson advised that he was unavailable to attend and opened the invitation to the Deputy Chairperson and other Members.

Ms Fearon left the meeting at 2.29pm.

Employers for Childcare

The Chairperson noted that a number of Members received an informal briefing from Employers for Childcare immediately before the meeting on the Childcare Payments Bill and associated Legislative Consent Memorandum.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the paper from Employers for Childcare with departmental officials in advance of the evidence session relating to the Legislative Consent Memorandum.

Whistleblowing

The Chairperson referred to a recent press article which reported whistleblower claims with regard to the Victims and Survivors Service.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek legal advice on matters relating to whistleblowing.

Committee Invitations

The Committee noted the list of current invitations.

3. Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2014

Agreed: The draft minutes of the proceedings of 10 September 2014 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

List of Outstanding Correspondence

The Committee noted the list of outstanding correspondence.

5. Correspondence

Investment Strategy Implementation Report to June 2014

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department providing an update report on the implementation of the Executive's Investment Strategy prepared by the Strategic Investment Board, which showed progress across all the investment pillars to June 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy the report to all Statutory Committees and the Public Accounts Committee for information.

Mr Spratt joined the meeting at 2.31pm.

Programme for Government 2011-15: Progress Reports

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department providing an update on progress against Programme for Government commitments, which was published online on 15 September 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to copy the report to all Statutory Committees for information.

Committee for Employment and Learning

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning including a copy of a Northern Ireland Assembly Research Paper on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Northern Ireland. Members noted that the Paper had been forwarded to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister for comment.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Assembly Director of Facilities which provided a direction from the Assembly Commission regarding the booking of functions and tours.

6. Legislative Consent Motion - Childcare Payments Bill

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 2.33 pm.

Ms Fearon returned to the meeting at 2.33pm.

Departmental officials Ms Margaret Rose McNaughton and Mr David McGowan appeared before the Committee for questions and discussion on the Legislative Consent Motion Childcare Payments Bill. The briefing was recorded by Hansard.

The Committee noted further information provided by Employers for Childcare and correspondence from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) with regard to the LCM.

Mr Attwood joined the meeting at 2.49pm.

Mr Spratt left the meeting at 2.52pm.

Mr Spratt returned to the meeting at 2.56pm.

Departmental officials left the meeting at 3.11pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information on the current uptake of the Childcare Voucher Scheme, including an assessment of the number of parents who may be worse off under the new proposed arrangements; the number of parents with children aged 12 years to 16 years who currently avail of the Childcare Voucher Scheme; and any further thinking on what additional protections can be put in place for those who may be disadvantaged by the new proposed scheme as part of a wider childcare strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to postpone consideration of its report on the LCM for two weeks; and to forward a copy of the ICTU correspondence to the Department for information.

7. Active Ageing Strategy

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 3.20 pm.

Mr Lyttle left the meeting at 3.20pm.

Departmental officials Ms Margaret Rose McNaughton, Mr Stephen Orr and Ms Janis Scallon briefed the Committee on the summary and analysis of responses to the consultation on the Active Ageing Strategy.

Questions and discussion followed.

Mr Lyttle returned to the meeting at 3.36pm.

Mr Attwood left the meeting at 3.43pm.

Departmental officials left the meeting at 3.44 pm.

8. COFMDFM End of Session Report

The Committee noted the draft End of Session Report for 2013/14

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members would consider the Report and forward any proposed amendments to the Committee Office for consideration at next week's meeting.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted a list responses received to date with regard to its Inquiry into Building a United Community, and instructions on how to access papers relating to the Inquiry through the Electronic Committee Pack system.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive a weekly update on submissions received to date; and that written submissions to the Inquiry would be uploaded to the Committee's webpages each Tuesday, except in exceptional circumstance where the Committee may be consulted before publications.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Community Relations Council requesting an extension to the closing date for written submissions to the Inquiry, and noted that similar requests had been received from others.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to extend the closing date for written submissions to its consultation to Friday 10 October 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask Assembly Research to compile a list of expert witnesses with regard to the Inquiry from whom it could consider requesting oral evidence.

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move the update on Together: Building a United Community from departmental officials from 8 October to 22 October.

10. Any Other Business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a meeting with Ministers regarding its concerns about the potential impact of the Westminster Childcare Payments Bill.

Mrs Hale left the meeting at 3.48pm.

The Committee moved into closed session at 3.49pm.

11. Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman

The Committee was briefed by the Ombudsman Bill Project Team on a number of issues that required clarification for the draftsman of the Bill, and on legal advice provided by the Assembly's Legal Services.

Mr Attwood returned to the meeting at 3.52pm.

Mr Moutray left the meeting at 3.56pm.

Mrs Hale returned to the meeting at 3.56pm.

Mr Moutray returned to the meeting at 4pm.

Mr Lyttle left the meeting at 4.09pm.

Mrs Hale left the meeting at 4.11pm.

Mr Spratt left the meeting at 4.12pm.

Mr Lyttle returned to the meeting at 4.19pm.

Mr Spratt returned to the meeting at 4.19pm.

Mr Moutray left the meeting at 4.25pm.

Mr Attwood left the meeting at 4.37pm.

Mr Attwood returned to the meeting at 4.40pm.

12. Date, Time and Location of next meeting

The next meeting will be held at 2.00pm on Wednesday 24 September 2014, in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 4.54pm.

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