



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY
FIRST MINISTER
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 21 JANUARY 2015
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
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 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)

The meeting began in closed session at 2.00 pm.

1. Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsperson Bill

The Committee considered matters relating to the draft Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsperson (NIPSO) Bill, and in particular concerns raised by the Northern Ireland Office regarding the operation of clause j81 - the disclosure of information. At the meeting of 14 January 2015 the Committee agreed, by majority, to delay taking action on the letter from the Northern Ireland Office, dated 17 December 2014, until the next scheduled meeting on 21 January 2015.

The Committee considered a proposed three-stranded approach to dealing with the matter raised by the Northern Ireland Office, whilst making the necessary arrangements for the introduction of the Bill to the Assembly. The Committee noted a

copy of the letter from the Chairperson to the Secretary of State requesting formal consent on relevant provisions before the Bill is submitted to the Speaker for introduction.

Ms Fearon joined the meeting at 2.02pm.

Mr Spratt joined the meeting at 2.03pm.

Ms McGahan proposed the motion: “*That the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister does not engage further with the Secretary of State on the issues of draft clause j81.*”

The Committee divided on the motion proposed by Ms McGahan:

Ayes 2;

Noes 5;

AYES

Ms Fearon

Ms McGahan

NOES

Mrs Hale

Mr McIlveen

Mr Moutray

Mr Nesbitt (Chair)

Mr Spratt

Agreed: The Committee agreed to pursue the proposed three-stranded approach with regard to dealing with the matter raised by the Northern Ireland Office on draft clause j81 - disclosure of information, whilst making the necessary arrangements for the introduction of the Bill to the Assembly.

Mr Spratt left the meeting at 2.08pm.

Mr McIlveen left the meeting at 2.09pm.

Mr Maskey joined the meeting at 2.10pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed Paragraph 11 (Restrictions on subsequent employment of the NIPSO) and Paragraph 13 (General Powers) of Schedule 1.

Mr Moutray left the meeting at 2.12pm.

Mr Lyttle joined the meeting at 2.14pm.

The meeting moved into open session at 2.15pm.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

3. Chairperson's Business

Inquiry into Building a United Community - Stakeholder event

The Chairperson reminded Members of the Stakeholder event scheduled for Wednesday 28 January at 2.30pm with regard to the Inquiry into Building a United Community. The Committee noted the table plan and agenda for the event, and the Chairperson asked Members to indicate their availability to participate.

Assembly Committee European Priorities

The Chairperson reminded the Committee of its role in co-ordinating the annual report on Assembly Committee European Priorities.

Agreed: Members agreed to commission Assembly Research to undertake an analysis of the European Commission work programme to identify areas of potential interest for each statutory committee.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward the RaISe analysis of the European Commission work programme to statutory committees once it is available.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request input from relevant stakeholders including the Department, Northern Ireland's MEPs, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee.

Landscape Futures Seminar

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the invitation to issue in the name of the Committee; and to circulate the invitation to other statutory committees.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to make opening remarks at the event.

Community Relations Council

The Committee noted correspondence from the Community Relations Council regarding their Annual Report and Accounts for year ended 31 March 2014. The Council also offered to provide an oral briefing to the Committee on the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Mr Chris Lyttle would co-ordinate an informal meeting with the Community Relations Council which would be open to all Members to attend.

Committee Invitations

The Committee noted the list of current invitations.

4. Draft Minutes of the meetings held on 14 January 2015

Agreed: The draft minutes of the proceedings of 14 January 2015 were agreed by the Committee.

5. Matters Arising

Children's Services Co-operation Bill

The Committee noted that Second Stage of the Children's Services Co-operation Bill was scheduled for plenary business on Monday 26 January, and would then be referred to COFMDFM for Committee Stage.

Agreed: The Committee approved a public advertisement and text for inclusion on its webpages for publication if the Children's Service Co-operation Bill passes Second Stage on Monday 26 January, and is subsequently referred to COFMDFM for Committee Stage.

Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry

The Committee noted a response from the Department to its request for a briefing from officials on the recent judgement by Justice Treacy on the provision of legal advice for victims giving testimony to the HIA Inquiry, which advised that as the ruling is to be appealed it would not be possible for officials to attend the Committee.

Mr Spratt returned to the meeting at 2.27pm.

The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding its request for sight of a scoping paper with regard to women aged 18 or over who were resident in Magdalene Laundries, and subsequent research into Mother and Baby Homes.

List of Outstanding Correspondence

The Committee noted the list of outstanding correspondence.

6. Correspondence

Victims and Survivors Services

The Committee noted a response from OFMDFM regarding the issue of individuals under threat from paramilitaries.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that the situation be resolved with urgency.

Employers for Childcare

The Committee noted correspondence from Employers for Childcare regarding childcare costs and which highlighted the results of a recent survey.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask what action it is taking to raise awareness of the support available to parents towards the cost of childcare.

Ms Fearon left the meeting at 2.36pm.

7. Draft S.R. – The Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse (Amendment of Terms of Reference) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015

As the Committee was content with the draft order the Chairperson read the following into the record:

“That the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister has considered draft SR The Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse (Amendment of Terms of Reference) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 and recommends that it be affirmed by the Assembly. “

8. SL1 – Proposed Fair Employment (Specification of Public Authorities) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2014

Agreed: The Committee was content for the rule to be made.

9. Inquiry into Building a United Community – Briefing by Professor Shirlow and Professor Hamber

Professor Peter Shirlow, Queens University Belfast and Professor Brandon Hamber, Ulster University joined the meeting at 2.40 pm.

Professor Peter Shirlow and Professor Brandon Hamber appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Inquiry into Building a United Community, The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

Ms Fearon returned to the meeting at 2.43pm.

Mr Attwood joined the meeting at 2.50pm.

The witnesses agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues.

The witnesses left the meeting at 4.00pm

10. Child Poverty

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 4.01 pm.

Mr McIlveen left the meeting at 4.01pm.

Mr Maskey left the meeting at 4.01pm.

Mr Henry Johnston, Mrs Janis Scallon and Mrs Janet Smyth appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Child Poverty Report and Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

Mr Spratt left the meeting at 4.19pm.

Mrs Hale left the meeting at 4.39pm.

The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues.

The witnesses left the meeting at 4.55 pm

11. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme up to March 2015.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Date, Time and Location of next meeting

The next meeting will be held at 2.00pm on Wednesday 4 February 2015, in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 4.56 pm.

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