



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY  
FIRST MINISTER  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2015  
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

- Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)  
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Alex Attwood  
Mrs Brenda Hale  
Ms Bronwyn McGahan  
Mr David McIlveen  
Mr Stephen Moutray  
Mr Jimmy Spratt
- Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland  
Ms Megan Fearon  
Mr Alex Maskey
- In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)  
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)  
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)  
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 1 only

*The meeting began in closed session at 2.02 pm.*

**1. Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsperson Bill**

The Committee noted the options to extend the period during which an acting Ombudsperson/Commissioner can hold office from 12 months to 24 months by either a short Bill or by amendments to the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsperson Bill.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to proceed with the option of introducing a short Bill to address this matter.

*The meeting moved into open session at 2.07 pm*

## **2. Apologies**

Apologies were noted as above.

## **3. Chairperson's Business**

### Budget Outcome 2015/16

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to invite officials to provide a briefing on the implications of the 2015/16 Budget allocation for OFMDFM and its Arm's-Length Bodies.

### Town Centre Futures Conference

The Committee noted an invitation to a conference supported by the Department for Social Development on Town Centre Futures which is to be held on Thursday 12 February 2015.

*Mr Lyttle MLA joined the meeting at 2.09pm.*

### Landscape Futures

The Chairperson reminded Members of the Landscape Futures event, sponsored by the Committee to be held on Monday 9 February at 12.30pm in the Long Gallery.

### Politics Plus - Legislative Scrutiny

The Chairperson reminded Members of the seminar on the subject of legislative scrutiny which will be led by Daniel Greenberg following the Committee on 11 February; and advised that the invitation to attend extended to party staff.

### Committee Invitations

The Committee noted the list of current invitations.

## **4. Draft Minutes of the meetings held on 21 January 2015**

The Chairperson advised that an amendment was required to the draft minutes of 21 January 2015 to indicate that the meeting moved into open session at 2.15pm.

*Agreed:* The draft minutes of the proceedings of 21 January 2015, as amended, were agreed by the Committee.

## **5. Matters Arising**

### Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry

The Committee noted correspondence from the Survivors and Victims of Institutional Abuse (SAVIA) regarding the Draft Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse (Amendment of Terms of Reference) Order (NI) 2015, debated in plenary on 3 February.

### Children's Services Co-operation Bill

Members noted that the Bill was now in Committee Stage and that public advertisements requesting comment on the Bill and its clauses were placed in the press last week.

Members also noted a list of relevant stakeholders which had been provided by the Assembly's Research and Information Service to which the Committee could write specifically seeking comment on the Bill. The Chairperson invited Members to suggest other stakeholders which could be added to the list.

*Mr Attwood MLA joined the meeting at 2.14pm.*

Members noted a draft letter to issue to stakeholders inviting comment on the Bill, and suggested the addition of a pro forma to focus responses on the key issues of the legislation.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to issue the letter and an accompanying pro forma to the stakeholders identified by Assembly Research; to NILGA on behalf of district councils; to all Departments; and to those organisations specifically listed at Clause 4 of the Bill.

### List of Outstanding Correspondence

The Committee noted the list of outstanding correspondence.

## **6. Correspondence**

### Monitoring of Savings Delivery Plans

The Committee noted a response from OFMDFM regarding its performance against its Savings Delivery Plans.

### Inquiry into Growth and Jobs with Lower Corporation Tax

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding the terms of reference and call for evidence for its Inquiry into Growth and Jobs with Lower Corporation Tax.

### EU Matters Newsletter

The Committee noted the latest issue of the EU Matters newsletter which had been prepared by the Assembly's EU Affairs Manager.

### Community Relations, Equality and Diversity

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) InterBoard Panel.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to include the response in the papers for its Inquiry into Building a United Community.

### Belfast Islamic Centre

The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding the Belfast Islamic Centre.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the response to the Belfast Islamic Centre.

### Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland

The Committee noted the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland Procurement Activity Report for January 2015 relating to OFMDFM.

### PSNI Equal Pay

The Committee noted correspondence from the Assembly and Executive Review Committee regarding a query from a member of the public about the equal pay situation for former NIO and PSNI staff.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Finance and Personnel and the Committee for Justice.

### Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland.

The Committee noted the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2014.

## The Consumer Council

The Committee noted the 'Consumer Outlook January 2015' produced by the Consumer Council NI.

### **7. Inquiry into Building a United Community – Briefing by NILGA representatives on the District Councils Good Relations Programme**

The Chairperson thanked those who had participated in the stakeholder event held on 28 January and the Committee discussed arrangements for the planned external meeting on Wednesday 18 February.

*Witnesses from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association joined the meeting at 2.21 pm.*

Alderman Tom Ekin, NILGA Vice President and Belfast City Council; Ms Sue Divin, Good Relations Officer, Derry City Council; and Ms Angela Askin, Good Relations Officer, Derry City Council appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Inquiry into Building a United Community. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

The witnesses agreed to provide further information on a number of issues as requested.

*The witnesses left the meeting at 3.12pm.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to OFMDFM to ask if the Department has accepted the recommendations contained within the NISRA evaluation of the District Council Good Relations Programme which was completed in 2012, and when those recommendations will be implemented.

### **8. Inquiry into Building a United Community – Briefing by NILGA representatives on Community Planning**

*Witnesses from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association joined the meeting at 3.13pm.*

Ms Karen Smyth Head of Policy NILGA, Ms Jackie Patton Mid and East Antrim Council and Ms Mary Kerr NI Strategic Migration Partnership appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Inquiry into Building a United Community. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

*Mr Attwood left the meeting at 3.17pm.*

*Mr Moutray left the meeting at 3.27pm.*

*Mrs Hale joined the meeting at 3.29pm.*

The witnesses agreed to provide further information on a number of issues as requested.

*The witnesses left the meeting at 3.42pm.*

*Ms McGahan left the meeting at 3.42pm.*

## **9. European Issues – Update on implementation of Barroso Taskforce Report Recommendations and NI Executive’s EU Priorities**

*Departmental officials joined the meeting at 3.43pm*

Dr Gerry Mulligan and Dr Paul Geddis appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the implementation of the recommendations from its report on the Barroso Taskforce and the NI Executive’s EU Priorities 2014/15.

*Mr Lyttle left the meeting at 3.48pm. The Committee lost its decision-making quorum. In the absence of a decision-making quorum proceedings continued in line with Standing Order 49(5).*

*Mr Lyttle returned to the meeting at 4.01pm.*

The officials agreed to provide further information on a number of issues as requested.

*The witnesses left the meeting at 4.25pm.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the following papers to Statutory Committees for information:

- 2013/14 European Priorities Implementation Report
- 2014/15 Statement of Priorities
- 2014/15 Mid-Year Review
- Correspondence on drawdown of European Funding
- The Director’s Report from the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek the following information from the Department:

- Specific timescales for the completion of the relevant stages of the priorities publication process;

- A timeline for completion and implementation of the benchmarking exercise and copy of results;
- The results of the FP7 benchmarking exercise completed in October;
- The results of the benchmarking of the Competitive and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP);
- Further information on what is meant by the target 'Provide Departmental Committee with a summary of all EU proposals impacting the Department twice yearly', including clarification of the RAG status attached to that performance target in the 2014/15 mid-year review; and
- Copies of the previous and future twice yearly briefs on dossiers of NI interest covering significant issues of importance to relevant parties.

## **10. European Issues – EU Commission Work Programme 2015**

Members noted an Assembly Research paper which provided an update on the actions points which the Committee had identified in the European Commission work programme as priorities for 2014.

The Committee noted an Assembly Research paper which provided an analysis of the European Commission work programme and identified areas of potential interest for each statutory committee. Members noted that this was been circulated to statutory committees as agreed at the previous meeting, to aid Committees in their identification of their EU Priorities for 2015.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to invite Assembly Research to provide an oral briefing on EU issues relevant to the Committee.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to forward the research paper to the House of Lords European Committee, and also to the relevant committees in the House of Commons, the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales for information.

## **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 pm in Room 30 on Wednesday 11 February 2015.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 4.30 pm.*

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