



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY
FIRST MINISTER
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
MONDAY 2 MARCH 2015
ROOM 21, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

- Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
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)
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 1 only

The meeting began in closed session at 1.32 pm.

1. Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsperson Bill

Draft Ombudsman and Commissioner for Complaints (Amendment) Bill

The Committee considered the draft Ombudsman and Commissioner for Complaints (Amendment) Bill which would extend the maximum period for which an acting Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and an acting Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints may hold office.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Long Title.

Agreed: The Committee agreed Clauses 1 - 3.

The Committee moved to consideration of the Commentary on Clauses as part of the Explanatory and Financial Memorandum.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 1 - 7: Introduction; Background and Policy Objectives.

Mr Lyttle joined the meeting at 1.36pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 8 - 20: Issue and Policy; Options Considered; and Consultation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 21 - 22: Retrospective effect.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the commentary on the clauses.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 23 - 27: Financial effects of the Bill; Human Rights and Equality; and Legislative Competence.

Correspondence from the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety following his receipt of the draft Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsperson Bill in confidence, which raised concerns in relation to own initiative investigations and the exercise of professional judgement in the field of social care. Members noted that the Committee had previously considered these matters when they were raised originally by the Minister's predecessor, and that the Committee was content with the policy decision at that time. Members noted that discussions on the Minister's concerns were ongoing at official level.

Mrs Hale joined the meeting at 1.40pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that discussions would continue at an official level; that this matter will be brought back to the Committee for further consideration and a draft response to the Health Minister prepared for agreement by the Committee before the Bill was introduced.

Correspondence from a member of the public

Members noted correspondence from a member of the public regarding the handling of an historical complaint by the Ombudsman's office, requesting that the Committee take the concerns raised into consideration in its deliberations on the NIPSO Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Ombudsman to seek comment on the arrangements for reviewing decisions; and how often these procedures are invoked.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to check with the Ombudsman that he has had sight of all of the information sent to the Committee by the complainant, and that nothing further is to be done in this case.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the individual and advise that, while the Committee does not involve itself with individual cases, further information is being sought from the Ombudsman on the arrangements for reviewing cases in such circumstances.

Competition and Markets Authority

Members noted correspondence from the Competition and Markets Authority regarding draft advice for Higher Education providers with regard to consumer protection law.

Mr McIlveen left the meeting at 1.45pm.

The meeting moved into open session at 1.46 pm

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

3. Chairperson's Business

OECD Public Governance Review

The Chair advised Members that he had attended a meeting on 23 February hosted by OECD as part of its Public Governance Review.

Ballynafeigh Community Development Association

The Chair advised that he met informally with representatives from Ballynafeigh Community Development Association on Wednesday 25 February along with the Deputy Chair and Brenda Hale, and relayed the issues discussed.

Committee Invitations

The Committee noted the list of current invitations.

4. Draft Minutes of the meetings held on 18 February 2015

Agreed: The draft minutes of the proceedings of 18 February 2015 were agreed by the Committee.

5. Matters Arising

Children's Services Co-operation Bill

Members noted the list of stakeholders that had responded to date to the Committee's call for evidence in relation to its scrutiny of the Children's Services Co-operation Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the submissions on the Committee's webpages.

Members considered a note provided by Daniel Greenberg to assist the Committee's scrutiny of the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to provide an amended version of Mr Greenberg's note to the Bill Sponsor Mr Steven Agnew MLA in advance of his evidence session with the Committee.

Members noted that, when bringing a Bill forward, a Department will provide its Committee with a Delegated Powers Memorandum, providing further information on the delegated legislation included within the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a Delegated Powers Memorandum on the delegated powers contained within the Bill from the Bill sponsor.

Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted papers that had been provided by Suffolk Community Forum at the previous meeting which gave more information about the Suffolk Community Pocket Plots initiative.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the papers in its Inquiry report.

List of Outstanding Correspondence

The Committee noted the list of outstanding correspondence.

6. Correspondence

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.

Maze Long Kesh

The Committee noted the Maze Long Kesh Development Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for 2013/14

Child Poverty Strategy

The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the Child Poverty Strategy

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the response in the papers for the Committee stage of the Children's Services Co-operation Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the response to the Committees for Education, Health Social Services and Public Safety and Social Development.

Age Discrimination

The Committee noted a Written Statement to the Assembly from the First Minister and deputy First Minister on Age Discrimination Legislation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed request further information including: the timing of the consultation and the consultation length; anticipated date for the introduction of the legislation and a copy of the timetable for passage of the legislation; and the rationale for excluding young people from the remit of the proposed legislation. The Committee also agreed to invite junior Ministers to provide a briefing on this matter.

7. European Issues – Committee's European Priorities for 2015

The Committee considered its submission to the Committee Report on Assembly EU Priorities for 2015 which included an update on its work in this area for 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bring the draft for agreement at its next meeting.

8. Draft Forward Work Programme

Agreed: Members agreed to commence the meeting on 4 March 2015 at 1.30pm.

Agreed: Members agreed to meet at the Ballymoney Resource Centre on 11 March 2015, beginning at 2pm.

9. Any Other Business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an update on the administration of the Minority Ethnic Development Fund.

10. Date, Time and Location of next meeting

The next meeting will be held at 1.30pm in Room 30 on Wednesday 4 March 2015.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.59 pm.

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