



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

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

- Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Ms Megan Fearon
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt
- Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Mr David McIlveen
Mrs Brenda Hale
- 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 2 only
Mr Jonathan McMillen (Legal Adviser) Item 2 only

The meeting began in public session at 1.41pm with the following Members present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson), Mr Alex Maskey, Ms Bronwyn McGahan and Mr Stephen Moutray. In the absence of a decision-making quorum proceedings commenced in line with Standing Order 49(5), and the Committee moved to the first evidence session.

1. Children's Services Co-operation Bill – briefing by the Health and Social Care Board

Witnesses from the Health and Social Care Board joined the meeting at 1.42pm.

Tony Rodgers, Assistant Director Social Care, Health and Social Care Board; and Maurice Leeson, Children's Services Planning Professional Advisor, Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Children's Services Co-operation Bill. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

Mr Attwood joined the meeting at 1.46pm.

Mr Spratt joined the meeting at 1.53pm.

The witnesses left the meeting at 2.17pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to release the Committee's Bill timetable and an amended technical note from Daniel Greenberg to the relevant officials in OFMDFM for their information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the papers relevant to the evidence session in its final Bill report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People to give evidence on the Bill.

The Committee moved into closed session at 2.18pm.

2. Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsperson Bill

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Finance and Personnel indicating that he is content with the provisions contained within the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsperson Bill, and that under section 63 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, he has recommended the Bill to the NI Assembly.

The Committee noted a response from the Secretary of State in relation to formal consent to the introduction of the NIPSO Bill, which highlighted a policy concern regarding clause 41 of the draft bill and suggested options to address it.

The Committee also noted correspondence from the Assembly Ombudsman (and fellow ombudsmen across the UK and in Ireland) regarding the Secretary of State's policy concern.

Mr Lyttle joined the meeting at 2.26pm.

Bronwyn McGahan restated the opposition of Sinn Féin to the provisions and operation of clause 41.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the issues raised and way forward at the next meeting.

Agreed: The Committee requested drafting options to inform its further deliberations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the correspondence from the Secretary of State with the Northern Ireland Ombudsman; and to share the correspondence from the Northern Ireland Ombudsman with the Secretary of State.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Ombudsman advising that he has accepted an invitation to give evidence to the Finance Committee of the National Assembly for Wales as part of its inquiry into strengthening the powers of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a transcript of the evidence session.

The meeting moved into open session at 2.48 pm

3. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

4. Chairperson's Business

Committee Invitations

The Committee noted the list of current invitations.

5. Draft Minutes of the meetings held on 2 March 2015

Agreed: The draft minutes of the proceedings of 2 March 2015 were agreed by the Committee.

6. Matters Arising

List of Outstanding Correspondence

The Committee noted the list of outstanding correspondence.

Consideration of EU Priorities 2015

Agreed: The Committee agreed its European Priorities for 2015; and agreed to include the information in its report on the Assembly's EU Priorities for 2015.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel which included information on the progress of the existing EU PEACE and INTERREG Programmes, as well as information on the new PEACE IV and INTERREG V Programmes.

7. Correspondence

Investment Strategy Northern Ireland

The Committee noted the OFMDFM Procurement Activity Report for February 2015

European Commission's REFIT process

The Committee noted correspondence from RSPB and Northern Ireland Environment Link regarding a European Commission directive on Communication on Regulatory Fitness and Performance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Committee for the Environment for information.

Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted correspondence from the Director of the Bytes Project thanking the Committee for the opportunity for young people from Bytes to attend an event with the Committee on Together: Building a United Community.

The Chairperson advised Members that he had received a phone call from Inter-Action Belfast advising that funding from the Community Relations Council has not been renewed beyond the end of March 2015.

Agreed: Members agreed to invite Inter-Action Belfast to write to the Committee providing detail of the situation; and to forward that letter with a brief cover note from the Committee Chair requesting the views of the Department on the situation and clarification of whether the Pathfinder funding scheme provide a short-term solution.

Mr Maskey left the meeting at 2.53pm.

OFMDFM Employee Records

The Committee noted the OFMDFM Retention and Disposal Schedule for Employee Records.

Devolution of Corporation Tax Powers

The Committee noted copy correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel, and from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, to the Secretary of State regarding the Corporation Tax (NI) Bill, and which raised concerns that local mutual and credit unions may potentially be disadvantaged in terms of not being granted exemption from the tax for 'back office activity'.

8. SL1 – The Sex Discrimination Order 1976 (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

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

9. SL1 – The Fair Employment and Treatment order (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

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

10. Victims and Survivors – Briefing by the Victims and Survivors Service

Witnesses from the Victims and Survivors Service joined the meeting at 2.48pm.

Mr Oliver Wilkinson, Interim Chairperson and Ms Margaret Bateson, Interim Chief Executive appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Victims and Survivors Service. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

Ms Fearon joined the meeting at 3.07pm.

The witnesses left the meeting at 3.39pm.

11. Victims and Survivors – briefing by Departmental officials

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 3.41pm.

Mr Ricky Irwin and Ms Patricia McIntyre appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on matters relating to victims and survivors. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

Ms McGahan left the meeting at 3.54pm.

Ms Fearon left the meeting at 4.09pm.

Mr Moutray left the meeting at 4.15pm. 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 Spratt left the meeting at 4.16pm and the meeting was suspended.

Ms Fearon returned to the meeting at 4.18pm and in the absence of a decision-making quorum proceedings resumed in line with Standing Order 49(5) with the following Members present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson), Mr Alex Attwood, Ms Megan Fearon and Mr Chris Lyttle.

The witnesses left the meeting at 4.23pm.

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 Ballymoney Resource Centre on Wednesday 11 March 2015.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 4.23pm.

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