



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY
FIRST MINISTER
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH 2015
BALLYMONEY RESOURCE CENTRE, ACORN BUSINESS CENTRE,
BALLYMONEY**

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Mrs Brenda Hale
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
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
Mr Jonathan McMillen (Legal Adviser) Item 1 only

The meeting began in closed session at 2.00 pm.

1. Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsperson Bill

Mr Hicks and Mr McMillen joined the meeting at 2.00pm

The Committee returned to the policy concern regarding clause 41 of the draft NIPSO Bill, highlighted by the Secretary of State in relation to formal consent to the introduction of the NIPSO Bill; and considered the drafting options that had been requested to inform its deliberations. The Committee also noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Ombudsman providing comment on the correspondence from the Secretary of State.

Mr Attwood joined the meeting at 2.08pm.

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

Mr Spratt proposed the motion: *“That the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister supports the option of a memorandum of understanding.”*

The Committee divided on the motion proposed by Mr Spratt:

Ayes 5;

Noes 1;

Abstention 1.

AYES

Mrs Hale

Mr McIlveen

Mr Moutray

Mr Nesbitt (Chair)

Mr Spratt

NOES

Ms McGahan

ABSTENTION

Mr Attwood

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Bill team would liaise with the Secretary of State’s officials on the draft wording for a provision in the Bill that the NIPSO will agree a memorandum of understanding with the Secretary of State regarding the exercise of their functions in relation to clause 41.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, provided no technical issues arose with the draft wording, the Chair would write formally to the Secretary of State with an updated Bill and Explanatory and Financial Memorandum to seek formal consent for the introduction of the Bill; and to the Speaker requesting permission to introduce the NIPSO Bill and Ombudsman and Commissioner for Complaints (Amendment) Bill.

The meeting moved into open session at 2.23 pm.

Mrs Hale and Mr Spratt left the meeting at 2.23pm.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

3. Chairperson's Business

Institute of Research in Social Sciences

The Committee noted an invitation to a seminar on Redressing Historical Institutional Abuse: International lessons hosted by the Institute of Research in Social Sciences on 28 March 2015.

Committee Invitations

The Committee noted the list of current invitations.

4. Draft Minutes of the meetings held on 4 March 2015

Agreed: The draft minutes of the proceedings of 4 March 2015, as amended, were agreed by the Committee.

5. Matters Arising

Interaction Belfast

The Committee noted a copy of a letter sent to Ministers by the Committee Chair regarding funding for Interaction Belfast, and a response from the Department which indicated that the correspondence was currently under consideration.

List of Outstanding Correspondence

The Committee noted the list of outstanding correspondence.

6. Correspondence

Child Poverty

The Committee noted the Northern Ireland Executive Child Poverty Strategy Annual Report 2013-14.

Delivering Social Change

The Committee noted the Delivering Social Change update for February 2015.

Social Investment Fund

The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the Social Investment Fund.

Victims and Survivors

The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding individuals under threat from paramilitaries.

Conscience Clause Bill

The Committee noted a copy letter to Mr Paul Givan MLA from a member of the public regarding the proposed Conscience Clause Bill.

Committee for Employment and Learning

The Committee noted a copy letter to OFMDFM from the Committee for Employment and Learning regarding Action on Hearing Loss.

Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

The Committee noted a copy letter to OFMDFM from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment regarding the Executive Ministerial Sub Group on Regional Opportunities.

Committee for Finance and Personnel

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding the Civil Service Voluntary Exit Scheme.

7. European issues – Assembly Committee European Priorities 2015

The Committee considered its draft Report on the Assembly's European Priorities for 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to amend the report to reflect the response received from Committee for Education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Membership and Powers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the list of Appendices to be included in the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the report Introduction.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the report on Assembly Committee EU Priorities as amended.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the relevant extract from the minutes of this meeting detailing the Committee’s agreement of the report in the Appendices.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that this Report be the thirteenth report of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to the Assembly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to have a ‘Take Note’ debate on the report and agreed the following motion:

“That this Assembly notes the Report of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (NIA/225/11-16) on Assembly Committees’ European Priorities for 2015”.

8. OFMDFM Retention and Disposal Schedule

The Committee considered the Retention and Disposal Scheme for Employee Records for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister; and the Chairperson read the following into the record:

“That the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister has considered the Retention and Disposal Schedule for Employee Records for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, and has no objection to the schedule.”

9. Private Members Bill - Children’s Services Co-operation Bill

Mr Steven Agnew joined the meeting at 2.32 pm.

Mr Steven Agnew appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Children’s Services Co-operation Bill. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

The witness left the meeting at 3.13 pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that staff would prepare a plan for gathering oral evidence with regard to the Bill for consideration by the Committee; and Members were asked to notify the Committee Office of any particular organisations they wished to invite to give oral evidence on the Bill.

10. Inquiry into Building a United Community – Briefing by representatives from the Rural Community Network

Agreed: The Committee to include a summary note of the informal meeting with the Bytes Project in the Inquiry report and to upload it to the website.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to combine the two scheduled evidence sessions with representative organisations from the Rural Community Network.

Witnesses from representative organisations from the Rural Community Network joined the meeting at 3.15pm.

Mr Gerry Burns, Armoy Community Association; Mr Colin Craig, Corrymeela; Ms Charmain Jones, Rural Community Network; Ms Lynn Moffett Ballymoney Community Resource Centre; Ms Rose Smyth Causeway Rural and Urban Network; and Mr Sandy Wilson North Antrim Community Network appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Inquiry into Building a United Community, and specifically in relation to rural issues. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

Mr McIlveen left the meeting at 3.30pm. The Committee lost its decision-making quorum. In the absence of a decision-making quorum proceedings continued in accordance with Standing Order 49(5).

Mr McIlveen returned to the meeting at 3.38pm.

Ms McGahan left the meeting at 4.13pm. The Committee lost its decision-making quorum. In the absence of a decision-making quorum proceedings continued in accordance with Standing Order 49(5).

Mr Moutray left the meeting at 4.21pm.

As the quorum to take evidence was lost the Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 4.21 pm.

11. Date, Time and Location of next meeting

The next meeting will be held at 2.00pm on Wednesday 18 March 2015, in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

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