



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY  
FIRST MINISTER  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 2 SEPTEMBER 2015  
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

- Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)  
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Alex Maskey  
Ms Bronwyn McGahan  
Mr David McIlveen  
Mr Stephen Moutray  
Mr Jimmy Spratt
- Apologies: Mr Alex Attwood  
Mr Michael Copeland  
Ms Megan Fearon  
Mrs Brenda Hale
- In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)  
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)  
Mr Innis Mennie (Clerical Officer)  
Mr Alyn Hicks (Bill Team - item 1 only)  
Mr Ray McCaffrey (Assembly Research & Information  
Service - item 1 only)

*The meeting began in closed session at 2.03pm.*

**1. NIPSO Bill**

*Mr Alyn Hicks and the Assembly Researcher joined the meeting at 2.04pm.*

Assembly Research: Constituent Colleges

The Committee received a briefing from Assembly Research & Information Service on the status of 'constituent colleges' with regard to the theological colleges associated with Queen's University, Belfast along with St Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College, in relation to the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill.

*Mr McIlveen joined the meeting at 2.08pm.*

*Agreed:* Members agreed to invite representatives from the theological colleges to brief the Committee at the earliest opportunity regarding their inclusion within the remit of the Public Services Ombudsperson; or if this was not possible to gather the necessary evidence by other available means.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the Assembly Research paper to the Ad Hoc Committee on the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill for information.

*The Assembly Researcher left the meeting at 2.33pm.*

#### Draft amendments

The Committee noted a list of draft amendments from the drafter in response to comments from OFMDFM and the Office of Legislative Counsel; and a consolidated list of all draft amendments to date.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the consolidated list of draft amendments to the Ad Hoc Committee on the PSO Bill for information, and for the Bill Team to brief the Ad Hoc Committee on the Committee's decisions regarding comments and suggestions from the Office of Legislative Counsel.

#### General Teaching Council NI

The Committee noted correspondence from the General Teaching Council NI requesting that it be added to the list of authorities to fall under the remit of the Public Services Ombudsperson.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek the view of the Department of Education and the Committee for Education on this proposal; and to notify the Ad Hoc Committee of same.

#### Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development - correspondence

The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development requesting that the Rural Development Council be removed from the list of authorities to fall within the remit of the Public Services Ombudsperson.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content to remove the Rural Development Council from the list of authorities to fall within the remit of the Public Services Ombudsperson and would ask the Drafter to prepare an amendment.

### Northern Ireland Ombudsman - requested amendment to Schedule 1 of the PSO Bill

The Committee considered correspondence from the NI Ombudsman requesting an amendment to Schedule 1 of the Bill to permit delegation “to any other person”.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to ask the Drafter to prepare an amendment.

### Department of Justice - correspondence

The Committee noted copy correspondence from the Department of Justice to the Ad Hoc Committee on the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill requesting that the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust (PRRT) be added to the listed authorities in Schedule 3 to the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill relating to policing, criminal justice and law.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it would ask the Drafter to prepare an amendment to add the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust to be added to the listed authorities in Schedule 3.

### Correspondence relating to medical interests

The Committee noted correspondence from the Medical Protection Society regarding the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill; and correspondence from a Consultant Geriatrician in relation to provisions within the Bill.

The Committee noted correspondence and a submission from the British Medical Association on the Bill and the significance of JR55.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek legal advice on the issues raised.

### Complaints Standards Authority role for the Public Services Ombudsperson

The Committee noted a response from the NI Ombudsman following a request for a view on the potential financial implications of a Complaints Standards Authority role for the Public Services Ombudsperson.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to ask the drafter to prepare amendments to provide for a Complaints Standards Authority Role for the Public Services Ombudsperson along the lines of the Scottish model, with commencement of such provisions to be subject to the control of the Assembly Commission.

*Mr Hicks left the meeting at 3.01 pm.*

*The meeting moved into open session at 3.02 pm.*

## **2. Apologies**

Apologies were noted as above.

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

### Collaboration NI

The Committee noted an invitation to "Building New Collaborations" from Collaboration NI.

### Parenting NI

The Committee noted a letter sent to the First Minister and deputy First Minister from the Chairperson regarding Parenting NI and the Odyssey Programme, following an informal meeting with Parenting NI in July 2015.

### Equality Commission Seminar: Age Equality Law

The Chairperson advised Members that, at the end of August, he had participated in an event organised by the Equality Commission on proposals to end age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services; and that papers relating to the event would be circulated to Members in the papers for the next Committee meeting.

### Committee Invitations

The Committee noted the list of current invitations.

## **4. Draft Minutes of the meetings held on 1 July 2015**

*Agreed:* The draft minutes of the proceedings of 1 July 2015 were agreed by the Committee.

## **5. Matters Arising**

### List of Outstanding Correspondence

The Committee noted the list of outstanding correspondence.

## **6. Correspondence**

### Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment

The Committee noted correspondence from Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment regarding a visit to Northern Ireland by Stuttgart Region officials.

The Committee also noted correspondence from Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment to OFMDFM regarding updates from the Office of the NI Executive in Brussels (ONIEB); and the subsequent response from OFMDFM.

*The Chairperson left the meeting at 3.05pm and the Deputy Chairperson took the Chair.*

#### ONIEB Director's Report

The Committee noted the ONIEB Director's Report for January to June 2015.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the report to statutory committees for information.

#### Committee for Finance and Personnel

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel providing an Assembly Research and Information Service paper on Departmental Financial Forecasting.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the paper to OFMDFM for comment on the Department's performance, taking note of the caveats contained within the paper.

#### Committee for Finance and Personnel

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel on Sickness Absence in the NI Public Sector.

#### Delivering Social Change

The Committee noted the Delivering Social Change (DSC) Stakeholder Updates for June and July 2015.

The Committee noted a response from OFMDFM providing further information on DSC Signature Programmes including the Numeracy and Literacy Signature Programme, the Parenting Support Signature Programme, and the three Atlantic Philanthropies Signature programmes, following a briefing from officials on 27 May 2015.

#### Social Investment Fund

The Committee noted a response from OFMDFM regarding Social Investment Fund projects, following a briefing from officials on June Monitoring on 3 June 2015.

The Committee noted a response from OFMDFM regarding the Social Investment Fund, following the briefing from officials on 27 May 2015.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request clarification from OFMDFM of the Freedom of Information grounds used to decline the release of the Gateway Reviews to the Committee.

#### OFMDFM Annual Reports and Accounts

The Committee noted the OFMDFM Annual Report and Accounts for 2014 -15.

#### T:BUC Summer Camps Funding

The Committee noted correspondence from OFMDFM regarding funding for the Summer Camps Pilot Programme.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to ask OFMDFM for the full list of organisations involved with the Summer Camps Pilot Programme.

#### Sexual Orientation Strategy

The Committee noted correspondence from OFMDFM on the Sexual Orientation Strategy consultation analysis.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed ask OFMDFM for more detail on next steps, including timescales.

#### Tax-Free Childcare

The Committee noted correspondence from OFMDFM on Tax-Free Childcare and the Childcare Voucher Scheme, following an agreement from officials to undertake an estimate of the numbers of families who would potentially be disadvantaged by the introduction of the Coalition Government's Tax-Free Childcare Scheme. Members acknowledged the work undertaken by officials to provide the information.

The Committee also noted correspondence from OFMDFM on a legal challenge to the UK Government's proposals for the delivery of Tax-Free Childcare, which has delayed its introduction to early 2017.

#### Programme for Government 2011-15

The Committee noted a response from OFMDFM regarding the Department's Programme for Government Commitments, following a briefing from officials on 17 June including: information on the new PfG reporting mechanism; clarification on the spend to date and allocation of funds under PfG Commitment 33 - Childcare Strategy; and information on when the PfG reporting tool was last refreshed.

#### Commissioner for Victims and Survivors

The Committee noted correspondence from OFMDFM regarding the appointment of a new Commissioner for Victims and Survivors.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to invite the new Commissioner for Victims and Survivors to brief the Committee at the earliest opportunity.

#### OFMDFM/ISNI Procurement Activity Report

The Committee noted the OFMDFM Procurement Activity Report for July 2015.

#### Childcare Strategy

The Committee noted correspondence from OFMDFM on the launch of consultation on Childcare Strategy.

*Agreed:* The Committee will consider holding a stakeholder event on the Childcare Strategy at an appropriate time.

#### Disability Strategy

The Committee noted the Executive's Disability Strategy Annual Report for 2013-14.

#### NI Human Rights Commission

The Committee noted a response from OFMDFM regarding a proposal from the NIO to reduce the budget allocation to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC), following a briefing from NIHRC to the Committee in May 2014.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the response from OFMDFM to NIHRC for information.

#### Delivering Social Change

The Committee noted a copy of the response from OFMDFM to the Committee for Education regarding the DSC Literacy and Numeracy Signature Programme.

#### Minority Ethnic Development Fund

The Committee noted a copy letter from Stronger Together to the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the Ethnic Minority Development Fund.

#### Northern Ireland Ombudsman

The Committee noted the NI Assembly Ombudsman Resource Accounts for 2014-15.

#### NI Human Rights Commission

The Committee noted the NIHRC's report on Alternative Care and Children's Rights in NI.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the Report to the Committee for Health Social Services and Public Safety, the Committee for Education and the Committee for Justice.

## **7. Draft Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme for September–October 2015.

## **8. Any Other Business**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek an update from OFMDFM on the review of the Flags Protocol, and progress on the establishment of the Commission on Flags and Identity outlined in the Stormont House Agreement.

## **9. Date, Time and Location of next meeting**

The next scheduled meeting of the Committee is at 2.00 pm in Room 30 on Wednesday 9 September 2015.

*The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 3.14pm.*

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