



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY
FIRST MINISTER
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2015
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Chris Hazzard
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Alex Maskey
Mr Stephen Moutray

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)

The meeting began in closed session at 2.32 pm.

1. NIPSO Bill

Mr Hicks joined the meeting at 2.33pm.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Ad Hoc Committee on the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill is due to complete Committee Stage on 30 September 2015.

Agreed: Members agreed to update the Assembly Commission on how any proposed amendments may impact upon its responsibilities detailed in the legislation.

Agreed: Members agreed to update the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on how any proposed amendments may impact upon its responsibilities detailed in the legislation; and

to provide a copy of the draft amendments agreed by the Committee to date.

Members noted that the Ombudsman and Commissioner for Complaints (Amendment) Bill, brought forward by the Committee to prevent a vacancy in the Ombudsman's office while the NIPSO Bill progresses, received Royal Assent in July; and that the Explanatory and Financial Memorandum had been amended to become the Explanatory Notes for publication online with the Act.

Mr Hicks left the meeting at 2.35pm.

2. Update on Departmental briefing request

The Chair advised Members that the Clerk has engaged with departmental officials regarding the possibility of a briefing on a response to the refugee/asylum seeker crisis, but that it had not been possible to determine when officials would be in a position to brief the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite NILGA and the NI Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers to brief Members on the current refugee/asylum seeker crisis.

3. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

The Chairperson advised Members that, as Mr Spratt was due to stand down as an MLA on Monday 28 September, this would be his final meeting with the Committee. The Chairperson thanked Mr Spratt for his contribution to the Committee and wished him well for the future. Mr Spratt placed on record his thanks to those who had been members of the Committee and Committee staff during his time as a member.

4. Chairperson's Business

NI Assembly Business Trust invitation

The Committee noted an invitation from the NI Assembly Business Trust and Queen's University Belfast to a briefing on the EU Referendum/Brexit debate which is to be held on Monday 28 September 2015.

Together: Building a United Community

Members noted that the Committee motion on its Report on the Inquiry into Building a United Community was scheduled for plenary business on Monday 28 September.

The Chairperson advised Members that the first report on the Good Relations Indicators had been published and was available on the OFMDFM website.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a briefing from officials on the first report on the Good Relations Indicators.

Mr Spratt left the meeting at 2.51pm.

Children's Services Co-operation Bill

Members noted that Consideration Stage of the Children's Services Co-operation Bill was scheduled for plenary business on Tuesday 29 September.

The Committee noted the list of current invitations.

5. Draft Minutes of the meetings held on 16 September 2015

Agreed: The draft minutes of the proceedings of 16 September 2015 were agreed by the Committee.

6. Matters Arising

Power to call for witnesses

Following a request from the Deputy Chairperson at the previous meeting, Members considered a paper on the powers of Committees to compel Ministers to attend meetings.

Agreed: The Deputy Chairperson agreed to bring forward a proposal regarding the basis on which the Committee may wish to exercise its powers under Section 44 of the NI Act 1998 for consideration at the next meeting.

List of Outstanding Correspondence

The Committee noted the list of outstanding correspondence.

7. Correspondence

Committee for Finance and Personnel: NAMA investigation

The Committee noted copy correspondence between the deputy First Minister and the Committee for Finance and Personnel, regarding the invitation to attend that Committee as part of its ongoing investigation into matters relating to NAMA.

8. Draft Forward Work Programme

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

Members agreed to provide staff with details of any organisations they think the Committee should hear from.

9. Programme for Government

Members noted the non-attendance of officials to brief the Committee on progress against the department's Programme for Government commitments for 2015-16.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Ministers to express its frustration regarding the non-attendance of officials at the Committee meeting, including the lack of formal forewarning; to advise that other organisations are keen to brief Members on work relevant to the Committee, and that the lack of forewarning resulted in a wasted opportunity to hear from those groups; and to seek an explanation for the non-attendance of officials so that Members can be better informed on how to proceed with future evidence sessions.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to seek a written update on the progress against the Programme for Government commitments for 2015-16.

The Chairperson read the following Programme for Government commitments, due for scrutiny at the meeting, into the record:

15	Maze/Long Kesh
16	The One Plan
17	Derry/Londonderry City of Culture 2013
26	Drawdown of competitive EU funds
31 & 32	Social Investment Fund
33	Childcare
34 & 37	Delivering Social Change
35	Social Protection Fund
38	Extend age discrimination legislation
41	Alleviating hardship advisory group
67	Together: Building United Community
77	Changes to post-2015 Government structures

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time and Location of next meeting

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

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 3pm.

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