



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY  
FIRST MINISTER  
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY 14 JANUARY 2015  
SENATE CHAMBER, 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  
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)  
Ms Roisin Kelly (Assembly Clerk) Item 1 only  
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 1 only

*The meeting began in closed session at 2.06 pm.*

**1. Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsperson Bill**

*Ms Kelly and Mr Hicks joined the meeting at 2.07pm.*

The Committee considered the draft Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsperson (NIPSO) Bill and the draft Explanatory and Financial Memorandum.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed paragraphs 11 and 13 of the Explanatory and Financial Memorandum.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed further minor drafting amendments in the draft Bill.

*Mr Attwood joined the meeting at 2.10pm.*

Members considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Office dated 17 December 2014 in response to the request for an informal indication regarding issues requiring the Secretary of State's consent. The correspondence raised concerns regarding the operation of draft clause j81 - disclosure of information.

*Mr Moutray joined the meeting at 2.19pm.*

Ms McGahan proposed the motion: *"That the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister does not engage further with the Secretary of State on the issues of draft clause j81."*

The Chair asked for any further proposals.

Mr Attwood proposed that the motion be amended to: *"That the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister delays taking action on the letter from the Northern Ireland Office, dated 17 December 2014, until the next scheduled meeting of the Committee on 21 January 2015."*

The Committee divided on the amended motion proposed by Mr Attwood:

Ayes 5;

Noes 3;

AYES

Mr Attwood

Mr Lyttle (Deputy Chair)

Mr Moutray

Mr Nesbitt (Chair)

Mr Spratt

NOES

Ms Fearon

Ms McGahan

Mr Maskey

*Agreed:* That the Committee delays taking action on the letter from the Northern Ireland Office, dated 17 December 2014, until the next scheduled meeting of the Committee on 21 January 2015.

As the amended motion was agreed the motion proposed by Ms McGahan was not taken.

The Committee considered a draft response to correspondence from a member of the public with regard to the role of the NI Assembly Ombudsman's office and the publication of detailed investigation reports.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to send the draft response to the member of the public. The Committee also agreed to notify the Ad Hoc Committee that will be established to take the Committee Stage of the Bill of the correspondent's interest in the Bill.

Members noted correspondence from the Minister of the Environment indicating that he is content with the provisions in Schedule 8 of the NIPSO Bill, which will be applied to Part 9 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Members noted a request from the Committee for Education and the Committee for Employment and Learning for a copy of the draft Bill and Explanatory and Financial Memorandum to be provided in confidence.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the draft Bill and Explanatory and Financial Memorandum to the Committee for Education and the Committee for Employment and Learning in confidence.

*Ms Kelly and Mr Hicks left the meeting at 2.39pm.*

*The meeting moved into public session at 2.40 pm.*

## **2. Apologies**

Apologies were noted as above.

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

### The House of Lords Constitution Committee

The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lords Select Committee on the Constitution regarding a call for evidence to its inquiry on inter-governmental relations between the United Kingdom Government and the devolved administrations. The Chairperson advised that he had been invited to give oral evidence to the inquiry.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to advise the House of Lords Select Committee that the issues raised in the call for evidence are not matters that have been considered by the Committee, although the Committee may wish to explore these issues in the future; and to confirm that the Chairperson

would not be in a position to provide oral evidence on these issues at this time.

#### Policy Forum for Northern Ireland

The Committee noted an invitation to the Committee Clerk to a seminar on ‘The future of the energy sector in Northern Ireland: cost, supply and regulation’ on Thursday 17 September 2015.

#### NI Chair’s Forum

The Committee noted an invitation from the NI Chair’s Forum to its core events during 2015, including an invitation to the Committee Chairperson to a dinner with the Minister for the Environment on Wednesday 21 January 2015 to discuss issues of local government reorganisation and community planning.

#### Assembly Community Connect

The Committee noted an invitation from the Chair of Assembly Community Connect to a speed-networking event with the ‘Stop Peace Unravelling’ group from Corrymeela on Monday 26 January 2015. The Chair was also invited to present to the group on the Committee’s Inquiry into Building a United Community.

*Agreed:* Members were content for the Chair to speak to the group about the Committee Inquiry; and agreed to inform the Clerk of their availability to attend the speed-networking event.

#### Business in the Community

The Committee noted an invitation from Business in the Community to The Responsible Business Awards breakfast on Tuesday 27 January 2015.

#### Politics Plus - Legislative Scrutiny

The Committee noted an invitation to attend the launch of “Deconstructing Legislation - A Practical Guide to Legislative Scrutiny” by Daniel Greenberg, formerly UK Parliamentary Consul on Tuesday 27 January.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to arrange training with Daniel Greenberg on Legislative Scrutiny following the meeting on 11 February 2015.

#### Committee Invitations

The Committee noted the list of current invitations.

#### **4. Draft Minutes of the meetings held on 10 December 2014**

*Agreed:* The draft minutes of the proceedings of 10 December 2014 were agreed by the Committee.

## **5. Matters Arising**

### List of Outstanding Correspondence

The Committee noted the list of outstanding correspondence.

## **6. Correspondence**

### Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission regarding their Annual Human Rights Statement 2014.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

### Community Relations Council

The Committee noted correspondence from the Community Relations Council providing information on funding given to the Leadership in a Diverse Society project.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the evidence base for its Inquiry into Building a United Community.

### Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe)

The Committee noted correspondence from the junior Ministers providing a briefing on the meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe) on 13 October 2014.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the briefing to the relevant Statutory Committees.

### South Armagh Childcare Consortium

The Committee noted correspondence from the South Armagh Childcare Consortium regarding an application for Bright Start programme funding; and noted that representation on the matter was being raised by Ms Megan Fearon MLA and by Mr Danny Kennedy MLA.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to ask Ms Fearon and Mr Kennedy to notify the Committee of any wider policy issues which may arise from their inquiries.

#### Barroso Task Force

The Committee noted correspondence from OFMDFM regarding recommendations in the Committee's Inquiry into the Barroso Task Force.

#### Committee for Finance and Personnel

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding Post Project Evaluations.

#### Strategic Investment Board

The Committee noted correspondence from the Strategic Investment Board regarding changes to the monthly report from the ISNI delivery Tracking System.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive future updates in the amended format.

The Committee also noted the Investing Activity Report for December 2014.

#### Department for Social Development

The Committee noted a response from the Department for Social Development regarding the Scheme for the Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings (SPED).

#### Delivering Social Change

The Committee noted the Delivering Social Change Stakeholder Update for December 2014.

#### Employers for Childcare

The Committee noted correspondence from Employers for Childcare to the Minister for Social Development regarding an awareness raising campaign.

#### Victims and Survivors Service

The Committee noted the Victims and Survivors Service monthly update for December 2014.

#### Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

The Committee noted the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Second Annual Progress Report on the implementation of the Rural White Paper Action Plan commitments referring to OFMDFM.

#### Programme for Government

The Committee noted a response from OFMDFM regarding the running costs for the Maze / Long Kesh site.

#### Draft Budget

The Committee noted a response from OFMDFM regarding the Draft Budget 2015/16.

#### Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

The Committee noted the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014.

#### Programme for Government

The Committee noted a response from OFMDFM regarding a number of Programme for Government (PfG) commitments.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the evidence base for its Inquiry into Building a United Community.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to refer a query regarding Community Relations, Equality and Diversity to the Department of Education.

The Committee also noted an update on progress against PfG Commitments which will be published on 19 January.

#### **7. SL1 – The Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse (Amendment of Terms of Reference) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014**

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

The Committee noted a ruling by Justice Treacy on a judicial review brought by a victim regarding the denial of legal representation at the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed invite Departmental officials to brief the Committee on the ruling and, in particular, the implications for those victims who have already given evidence to the Inquiry; and to request details of the number of victims who had requested legal representation and how many of these requests were denied.

#### **8. SL1 – The Salaries (Assembly Ombudsman and Commissioner for Complaints) Order (Northern Ireland) (No 2) 2014**

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

## **9. Inquiry into Building a United Community – Briefing by Professor Knox and Ms McWilliams**

*Professor Colin Knox and Ms Sarah McWilliams joined the meeting at 3.02 pm.*

Professor Colin Knox and Ms Sarah McWilliams appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Inquiry into Building a United Community, and specifically in relation to the evaluation of the Contested Spaces / Interface Programme, funded jointly by OFMDFM and Atlantic Philanthropies. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

*Mr Moutray left the meeting at 3.45pm.*

*The witnesses left the meeting at 3.50pm.*

*Mr Maskey left the meeting at 3.50pm.*

## **10. Private Members Bill - Children's Services Co-operation Bill**

*Mr Steven Agnew and Mr Ross Brown joined the meeting at 3.51 pm*

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

*Mr Moutray returned to the meeting at 3.54pm.*

*Ms McGahan left the meeting at 3.58pm.*

*Mr Maskey returned to the meeting at 4.06pm.*

*Ms Fearon left the meeting at 4.08pm.*

Mr Agnew agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues.

*The witnesses left the meeting at 4.42pm*

*Mr Attwood left the meeting at 4.42pm.*

## **11. Private Members Bill – Children's Services Bill**

Departmental officials Mrs Margaret Rose McNaughton and Mrs June Wilkinson appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Children's Services Co-operation Bill. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

*The witnesses left the meeting at 4.59pm.*

*Agreed:* Members agreed to ask Assembly Research to draw up a list of stakeholders to be contacted by the Committee regarding the Committee Stage of the Bill.

## **12. Draft Forward Work Programme**



The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme up to March 2015.

### **13. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

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

The next meeting will be held at 2.00pm on Wednesday 21 January 2015, in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 5.01 pm.*

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