

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
End of Session Report 2013 – 2014

Membership and Powers

The Committee for Social Development is a Statutory Departmental Committee established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Belfast Agreement, section 29 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and under Standing Order 48.

The Committee has power to:

- consider and advise on Departmental budgets and annual plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- consider relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee stage of primary legislation;
- call for persons and papers;
- initiate inquiries and make reports; and
- consider and advise on any matters brought to the Committee by the Minister for Social Development.

The Committee has 11 members including the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, and a quorum of 5.

The membership of the Committee since 1 September 2012 has been as follows:

Mr Alex Maskey (Chairperson)

Mr Mickey Brady (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Jim Allister⁷

Ms Paula Bradley¹

Mr Gregory Campbell³

Mr Trevor Clarke⁸

Mr Michael Copeland

Mr Stewart Dickson¹¹

Mrs Dolores Kelly¹⁰

Mr Fra McCann

Mr Sammy Wilson^{2,4,5,6,9}

¹ With effect from 20 February 2012 Ms Paula Bradley replaced Mr Gregory Campbell

² With effect from 26 March 2012 Mr Alastair Ross replaced Mr Sammy Douglas

³ With effect from 01 October 2012 Mr Gregory Campbell replaced Mr Alex Easton

⁴ With effect from 01 October 2012 Mr Sammy Douglas replaced Mr Alastair Ross

⁵ With effect from 11 February 2013 Mr Sydney Anderson replaced Mr Sammy Douglas

⁶ With effect from 07 May 2013 Mr Sammy Douglas replaced Mr Sydney Anderson

⁷ With effect from 09 September 2013 Mr Jim Allister replaced Mr David McClarty

⁸ With effect from 16 September 2013 Mr Trevor Clarke replaced Ms Pam Brown

⁹ With effect from 16 September 2013 Mr Sammy Wilson replaced Mr Sammy Douglas

¹⁰ With effect from 30 September 2013 Mrs Dolores Kelly replaced Mr Mark H Durkan

¹¹ With effect from 01 October 2013 Mr Stewart Dickson replaced Mrs Judith Cochrane

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During the period 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014, the Committee for Social Development completed a substantial work programme including a total of 37 meetings. Of these meetings, 26 were held entirely in public, 7 were held partially in private session and 4 were held entirely in private session. Any business conducted in private session was concerned with taking legal advice or discussing politically sensitive issues relating to the Committee's ongoing Inquiry

In the 2013-14 session, the Committee held 2 [meetings](#) outside Parliament Buildings – one of these was the last of a series of visits to members' constituencies, and the other was held in Derry~Londonderry as part of the Assembly's commitment for each statutory Committee to hold an official meeting in the City of Culture.

The Committee's work programme during this period covered:

- [Primary Legislation](#) – committee consideration stage
- [Subordinate Legislation](#) – consideration and approval
- [Budget Scrutiny](#)
- [Policy Scrutiny](#)
- Conducting an evidence-based [Inquiry](#)
- Reports produced on primary legislation and the Committee's Inquiry
- [Engagement](#) with stakeholders

In March 2014 the Committee held an 'away day' to identify its strategic priorities. This included a briefing on the strands of the Social Housing Development Programme, with a view to working collaboratively with the Department for Social Development.

The Committee identified a number of strategic objectives. However, due its commitment to complete the current Inquiry as expeditiously as possible and the time commitment involved, these could not be addressed as comprehensively as the Committee would have wished.

Details of the key items of business considered by the Committee during the session are given in the following report:

Primary Legislation

- *Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill*

The purpose of the Bill is to regulate pavement cafes in Northern Ireland, introducing a mandatory licence for premises serving food and drink wishing to provide an outdoor furnished area for its customers.

Throughout the Committee stage of the Bill, the Committee received 23 written submissions to the call for evidence for this Bill and took oral evidence from 8 stakeholders, including groups representing traders and groups representing those with mobility issues and visual impairments who may be affected by pavement cafes.

The Committee broadly welcomed the Bill, seeing the benefit of regulating an already common practice. The Bill was debated in the Assembly on 4 March 2014, where six departmental amendments were agreed. Some of these were brought about as a result of recommendations made by the Committee, and the Bill received Royal Assent on 12 May 2014.

The Committee published its report on the Licensing of Pavement Cafes Bill on 12 December 2013. The full report is available online [here](#).

Subordinate Legislation

The Committee considered 46 proposed statutory rules associated with pensions and social security, such as child support, as well as regulations relating to Business Improvement Districts. Where necessary the Committee sought additional information and briefings from officials and other stakeholders before reaching a decision.

The Committee considered 62 statutory rules that were laid in the Assembly.

Budget Scrutiny

The Committee has been mindful of difficulties resulting from the continuing poor economic climate and has worked closely with the Department throughout the session to ensure that best use is made of the available resources. The Committee has been concerned at the lack of spend on new social housing and has raised this issue with the Department on a number of occasions, particularly following the agreement in the Assembly in March that 4,000 new social homes should be built. The Committee continues to work with the Department on this issue.

Briefings were received from departmental officials on the quarterly monitoring rounds in September 2013, and January and May 2014. This detailed examination of budgets contributed to ensuring that departmental financial targets were met.

Policy Scrutiny

The Committee received a briefing from the Department at its strategic planning day in March, where the importance of the Committee and the Department working collaboratively on housing was highlighted.

Committee Inquiry

On 4 July 2013 the Committee agreed to hold an Inquiry into allegations, arising from a BBC NI Spotlight programme aired on 3 July 2014, of impropriety or irregularity relating to NIHE managed contracts and consideration of any resulting actions. The Terms of Reference for this Inquiry were agreed at the Committee's meeting on 3 October 2013.

The Inquiry was split into three distinct phases, and the first of these to be addressed was 'Allegations that the Committee was misled by the Minister for Social Development over his decision to seek a review of the specification for the supply and fitting of double-glazing'.

The Committee considered a large volume of evidence documents and conducted oral evidence sessions with a range of Inquiry witnesses including the Minister, his Special Adviser and the DSD Permanent Secretary.

The Committee published a report into Phase 1 of its Inquiry on 3 July 2014. The report is available to view [here](#) and will be debated by the Assembly in September 2014.

Engagement

During 2013 -14, the engagement undertaken by the Committee was somewhat limited. This was primarily on account of the necessity to concentrate on the large volume of work to be undertaken in respect of evidence gathering and analysis for the Committee's Inquiry. At its strategic away day in March, the Committee identified important areas to focus on, of which housing was particularly prevalent. Issues such as Social Housing Development and homelessness are still of great importance to the Committee and the intention is that stakeholder engagement on these issues will be given greater prevalence in subsequent sessions.

Events

- 3 April 2014 – The Committee sponsored an event for Business in the Community, highlighting achievements of graduates of its 'Aiming Higher' business mentoring programme, which is designed to improve employability skills of 'looked after children'.

Visits

- 20 March 2014 – Members of the Committee visited the Three Ways Community Centre in Newry to see an example of regeneration in the area.
- 12 June 2014 – Members of the Committee attended a seminar on ‘Challenges and opportunities for public and private housing in Northern Ireland’.
- A visit to a Simon Community project, scheduled for 26 June 2014, had to be postponed due to the Committee’s agreement to print the report into Phase 1 of its Inquiry. The Committee did, however, take a briefing from representatives from the Simon Community and Council for the Homeless in lieu of this visit and committed to rescheduling this visit as it regards homelessness as an important issue to be addressed.

Meetings Outside Parliament Buildings

The Committee undertook the following external meetings in Members’ constituencies:

- 3 October 2013 – University of Ulster Magee Campus, Derry~Londonderry
The Committee held its meeting here as part of the Assembly’s commitment for all Statutory Committees to hold a meeting in the City of Culture
- 20 March 2014 – Bagenal’s Castle, Newry.
The Committee held its meeting in Newry following its decision, in the previous session, to hold a Committee meeting in each member’s constituency.



Members of the Committee for Social Development with Mayor of Newry & Mourne District Council

Committee Motions

The Committee raised an Assembly Motion to extend the Committee stage of the Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill to allow time to take all appropriate evidence in respect of the Bill and to allow effective scrutiny.

The Committee also raised a motion to annul two Statutory Rules throughout the year, although one of these motions was not moved.

Finally, the Committee raised a motion to debate the report on Phase 1 of its Inquiry in the Assembly in September 2014.

Key Priorities for Next Session

- Complete Phases 2 and 3 of the Committee's Inquiry into allegations made by BBC Spotlight programme
- Legislative Programme – amendments to the Welfare Reform Bill, Liquor Licensing

ANNEX A

Committee for Social Development

Expenditure for the period 1 September 2013 – 31 August 2014

Budget area	Details	Expenditure
Committee Travel – committee members and staff travel and subsistence in relation to visits and meetings outside Parliament Buildings	Includes the cost of committee visits to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• University of Ulster, Magee Campus• Bagenal's Castle, Newry	£1, 163.91
Printing of committee reports	Includes the cost of committee reports on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Committee Inquiry• Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill	£2, 111.61
Advertising – the cost of public notices relating to committee inquiries, the committee stage of Bills and meetings held outside Parliament Buildings	No public notices were issued in this session.	N/A
Consultancy support – the cost of specialist advisers appointed by the committee and commissioned research, also the cost of drafting Standing Orders	No specialist advisers employed or research commissioned during this session	N/A
General expenses	Cost of refreshments for committee meetings, working lunches, seminars, room hire, witness expenses, gifts provided by the committee during visits and conference fees for members	£1, 421.63
Total Expenditure		£4, 697.15