



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY 3 April 2014
Room 29, Parliament Buildings

- Present: Mr Alex Maskey MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Ms Paula Bradley MLA
Mr Gregory Campbell MLA
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr Michael Copeland MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Mr Sammy Wilson MLA
- In Attendance: Dr Kevin Pelan (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Todd (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stewart Kennedy (Clerical Supervisor)
- Apologies: Mr Mickey Brady MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

The meeting opened to the public at 9.35am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into closed session to discuss correspondence received from the Department in relation to the Committee Inquiry

Closed Session 9.35am

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note correspondence received by Department and proceed with today's evidence sessions as scheduled.

Open Session 9.42am

The Chairperson declared the meeting open to the public.

Gregory Campbell MLA joined the meeting at 9.43am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as noted above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 20 March were agreed.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 The Chairperson informed members that he, the Deputy Chairperson and the Committee Clerk met with representatives from Law Centre NI and NICVA on Monday regarding Welfare Reform and habitual residency regulations.

3.2 The Chairperson noted an invitation to an event with the Director of Campus Planning and Development at University of Massachusetts today in Parliament Buildings. He noted that apologies had been sent on behalf of himself and the Deputy Chair, but that members of the Committee could attend if they wished.

4. Matters Arising

There were no Matters Arising.

5. SL The Employment and Support Allowance (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

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

6. SL The Jobseekers Allowance (Schemes and Assisting Persons to Obtain Employment) Regulations (NI) 2014

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further information on the proposed Subordinate Legislation prior to taking a decision as to whether it is content for the Rule to be made.

7. SR 52 / 2014 The Domestic Energy Efficiency Grants (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

Agreed: The Committee had queries regarding the subordinate legislation and agreed to defer consideration of the Rule and seek further information from the Department.

8. SR 98 The Housing Benefit (Habitual Residence) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2014

The following officials joined the meeting at 9.55am:

- Anne McCleary, Director, Social Security, Policy & Legislation, DSD
- Michael Pollock, Social Security, Policy & Legislation, DSD

The Departmental officials briefed the Committee on the details of the Regulations and addressed members' queries.

Following discussions, the Chairperson read the following motion:

That the Committee for Social Development has considered the Statutory Rule SR 98 / 2014 The Housing Benefit (Habitual Residence) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2014 and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report has no objections to the Rule.

The Committee divided:

Ayes 4;

Noes 4;

Abstentions 0.

AYES:

Mr Jim Allister

Ms Paula Bradley

Mr Gregory Campbell

Mr Stewart Dickson

NOES:

Mr Michael Copeland

Mrs Dolores Kelly

Mr Alex Maskey

Mr Fra McCann

The outcome of the vote was noted.

The officials left the meeting at 10.08am.

COMMITTEE INQUIRY

9. Evidence Session with Mr Nelson McCausland, Minister for Social Development.

The Minister joined the meeting at 10.08am.

The Minister read the affirmation:

I, Nelson McCausland, do solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the evidence I shall give shall be truthful and honest, and that I will give the Committee all such information and assistance as I can to enable it to discharge its responsibilities.

The Minister took questions from the Committee in respect of the Committee's Inquiry.

Trevor Clarke MLA joined the meeting at 10.50am.

The Minister left the meeting at 11.46am

This session was recorded by Hansard.

Proceedings were suspended at 11.46am.

Proceedings recommenced in public session at 11.56am.

The Chair declared the meeting open to the public. The following members were present:

Mr Alex Maskey MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Jim Allister MLA

Ms Paula Bradley MLA

Mr Gregory Campbell MLA

Mr Trevor Clarke MLA

Mr Michael Copeland MLA

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA

Mr Fra McCann MLA

Mr Sammy Wilson MLA

10. Evidence Session with Mr Stephen Brimstone, Special Adviser to Minister McCausland

Mr Brimstone joined the meeting at 11.56am.

Mr Brimstone read the affirmation as follows:

I, Stephen Brimstone, do solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the evidence I shall give shall be truthful and honest, and that I will give the Committee all such information and assistance as I can to enable it to discharge its responsibilities.

Mr Brimstone took questions in relation to the Committee's Inquiry.

Mr Brimstone left the meeting at 1.11pm.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

Proceedings were suspended at 1.11pm.

Stewart Dickson MLA left the meeting at 1.11pm.

Gregory Campbell MLA left the meeting at 1.11pm.

Proceedings recommenced in public session at 1.42pm.

The Chairperson declared the meeting open to the public. The following Members were present:

Mr Alex Maskey MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Ms Paula Bradley MLA
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr Michael Copeland MLA
Mr Sammy Wilson MLA

11. Evidence Session with Mr Will Haire, Permanent Secretary for the Department for Social Development.

Mr Will Haire, Permanent Secretary, DSD joined the meeting at 1.42pm.

Mr Haire read the affirmation as follows:

I, Will Haire, do solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the evidence I shall give shall be truthful and honest, and that I will give the Committee all such information and assistance as I can to enable it to discharge its responsibilities.

Fra McCann MLA joined the meeting at 1.45pm.

Mr Haire took questions in relation to the Committee's Inquiry.

Sammy Wilson MLA left the meeting at 2.06pm.

Mr Haire left the meeting at 2.39pm.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

12. Evidence Session with Messrs Jim McKeag and Ian Young, Turkington Holdings Ltd

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.40pm:

- Mr Jim McKeag, Managing Director, Turkington Holdings Ltd.
- Mr Ian Young, former Divisional Manager, Turkington Holdings Ltd.

Mr McKeag read the oath as follows:

I swear by Almighty God that the evidence I shall give shall be truthful and honest, and that I will give the Committee all such information and assistance as I can to enable it to discharge its responsibilities.

Mr Young read the oath as follows:

I swear by Almighty God that the evidence I shall give shall be truthful and honest, and that I will give the Committee all such information and assistance as I can to enable it to discharge its responsibilities.

Mr McKeag and Mr Young took questions in relation to the Committee's Inquiry.

The officials left the meeting at 2.56pm.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

Trevor Clarke MLA left the meeting at 2.57pm.

13. SR 89/2014 The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

The Committee had no objections to the Regulations and the Chairperson read the following into the record:

'That the Committee for Social Development has considered the Statutory Rule SR 89/2014 The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Automatic Enrolment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report recommends that it be confirmed by the Assembly.'

14. SR 93/2014 Occupational Pension Schemes (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

The Committee had no objection to the Regulations and the Chairperson read the following into the record:

'That the Committee for Social Development has considered the Statutory Rule SR 93/2014 Occupational Pension Schemes (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report has no objections to the Rule.'

15. Correspondence

- 15.1 The Chairperson noted that the Department has provided the Committee with a web link to Dr Litchfield's review of the Work Capability Assessment and advised that the Committee is scheduled to receive a briefing from the Department on the outcome of Dr Litchfield's analysis at its meeting on 29 May 2014.
- 15.2 The Committee noted the rest of the correspondence as outlined in the correspondence memo.

16. Forward Work Programme

Members queried the current position with regards to hearing evidence from Michael Sands and the BBC in respect of the Committee's Inquiry.

The Chair confirmed that Michael Sands would not be available to brief the Committee until 17 April 2014 at the earliest. He confirmed that all evidence requested from the BBC to date has been received.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme as drafted.

17. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The next meeting of the Committee for Social Development will take place on Thursday 10 April at 10.00am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 3.01pm.

Alex Maskey
Chairperson, Committee for Social Development

10 April 2014