



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY 16 January 2014
Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Alex Maskey MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Mickey Brady MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Ms Paula Bradley MLA
Mr Gregory Campbell MLA
Mr Michael Copeland MLA
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Mr Sammy Wilson MLA

In Attendance: Dr Kevin Pelan (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Orme (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Todd (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stewart Kennedy (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Allison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

The Committee began in closed session at 10.02 am.

The Chairperson declared the meeting open to the public at 10.34 am.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 9th January were agreed.

3. Chairperson's Business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to undertake a strategic review of the Committee's forward work programme at the next meeting.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Inquiry Evidence Review

The Chairperson reminded Members that the next meeting will include a discussion reviewing the oral and written evidence received to date in relation to the Committee's Inquiry. The Chairperson further informed Members that Committee staff had met with the Permanent Secretary and Departmental officials on 14th January to discuss its approach to facilitating the Committee during Phase 2 of the Inquiry. A paper provided by the Department will be discussed at next week's meeting.

4.2 Planned Maintenance Contracts.

The Chairperson proposed that the Committee ask the Speaker to issue a Section 44 notice to obtain access to the draft Campbell Tickell Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed, pursuant to Section 44(7) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, to write to the Speaker requesting him to issue a Section 44 notice to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in order to acquire a copy of the draft Campbell Tickell Report.

Point 4.2, the decision to invoke Section 44, was recorded by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite NIHE Chair Donald Hoodless and DSD Permanent Secretary Will Haire to brief the Committee in relation to the single tender action which procured the services of Campbell Tickell.

It also agreed to discuss with Mr Hoodless his written response to the Committee regarding his previous appearance before Committee.

4.3 The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee has received an update on the NIHE's award of double-glazing contracts. Members agreed to request that the Department provide details on when the contracts are due to start and in what areas.

4.4 The Chairperson reminded members that at last week's meeting, Members agreed to respond to the Committee of the Environment's request for input into its inquiry into wind energy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed on amendments to the draft memo and for the memo to be issued.

4.5 The Chairperson informed members that the Committee was intending to schedule a briefing from the Department on the 2015-16 budget in late January or early February, however, the Executive is having further budget discussions at that time so it will be finalised later than anticipated. The Department have advised that it will not be in a position to brief the Committee on the budget until March.

4.6 The Chairperson reminded Members that at last week's meeting, the Department had offered to deliver an informal briefing on social housing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would not take the informal briefing, but that it would request that the Department deliver the formal briefing on this matter (currently scheduled for 27 February) on an earlier date.

4.7 The Chairperson noted that the Department has written to inform the Committee that a Housing Repossessions Taskforce has been established, with the objective of "engaging with stakeholders and identifying actions to mitigate the impact of repossessions and, where possible, prevent them occurring in the first place". The Committee welcomed the formation of the Taskforce, and expressed a desire to be kept informed of the Taskforce's work.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to share any relevant information gathered at its stakeholder event on Repossessions, held on 6 June 2013, with the Department.

4. Fuel Poverty Thematic Action Groups – Departmental Briefing

The following officials joined the meeting at 11.00 am:

- Michael Scott, Firmus Energy (Chair of Group on Prevention)
- Claire Carson, PowerNI (Chair of Group on Targeting)
- Eilish O'Neill, DSD (Chair of Group on Opportunities)

The officials briefed the Committee.

The officials then took questions from Members.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

5. Housing Allocations – Briefing from Department and Consultants

The following officials joined the meeting at 11.50 am:

- Deirdre Ward, Deputy director, Housing Division, DSD
- Dr Heloise Brown, Head of Housing Research, DSD
- Professor Paddy Gray, Consultant, University of Ulster

- Ursula McAnulty, Consultant, University of Ulster
- Michaela Keenan, Consultant, University of Ulster

The officials briefed the Committee.

The officials then took questions from Members.

Michael Copeland MLA left the meeting at 12.29 pm.

Gregory Campbell MLA left the meeting at 12.47 pm.

This session was recorded by Hansard

6. Correspondence

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Department has written with an update on the January Monitoring Round – specifically, regarding a late bid to the Department of Finance and Personnel for £2.5 million of capital funds for the Urban Regeneration and Community Development Group.

The Committee noted the rest of the correspondence as outlined in the Correspondence Memo.

7. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson advised members that a revised Forward Work Programme has been drafted to account for agenda items which have been postponed to allow for next week's Review of Inquiry Evidence.

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

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

9. Adjourn

The next meeting of the Committee for Social Development will take place on Thursday 23 January 2014 at 10.00 am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.54 pm.

Mr Alex Maskey

**Chairperson, Committee for Social Development
23rd January 2014**