



# Northern Ireland Assembly

## COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**THURSDAY 20 February 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 Stewart Dickson MLA  
Ms Dolores Kelly MLA  
Mr Fra McCann MLA  
Mr Sammy Wilson MLA

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

Apologies: None

The meeting opened to the public at 10.02 am.

#### **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

#### **2. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The draft minutes of the meeting held on 13 February were agreed.

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

- 3.1 The Chairperson noted that the briefing with NIHE Chair, Mr Donald Hoodless, and DSD Permanent Secretary, Mr Will Haire, had been postponed; this briefing will be scheduled, at earliest, for the meeting of 6 March.
- 3.2 The Chairperson advised the Committee that he and the Deputy Chairperson had met with Mr Haire in order to clarify concerns regarding the Department's delivery of papers to the Committee. The Chairperson advised that this had been a frank discussion of the Committee's views on the provision of papers and there was a commitment from the Department to facilitate the Committee's requests in a timely and comprehensive fashion.

*Gregory Campbell MLA joined the meeting at 10.05am.*

### **4. Matters Arising**

- 4.1 The Chairperson drew Members' attention to an Inquiry Folder containing relevant and up-to-date information pertaining to Phase 1 of the Committee Inquiry.  
*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to have Committee staff schedule further Inquiry evidence sessions on the basis of the updated Inquiry folder.
- 4.2 The Chairperson suggested that, following his and the Deputy Chairperson's meeting with the Permanent Secretary, Committee staff should liaise with the Department to determine the most expedient approach to Phases 3 of the Inquiry before issuing letters requesting written evidence.  
Members inquired as to the status of Committee correspondence with the BBC; the Clerk advised that no response had been received to a letter sent by the Committee after the meeting of 23 January.  
*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to contact the BBC for an update on this matter.
- 4.3 The Chairperson noted that, at the previous meeting, Members had agreed to host an event in Parliament Buildings: the 'Aiming Higher' graduation service and noted that the event is scheduled for 3 April in Room 115.
- 4.4 The Chairperson reminded Members that the meeting of 20 March is due to take place in Bagenal's Castle, Newry. The Chairperson informed Members that a programme will be developed for the afternoon.

### **5. Consideration of responses to Statutory Committee Inquiries**

#### **5.1 OFMDFM Committee Consultation on the European Work Programme 2014.**

The Chairperson noted that the OFMDFM Committee have included a Research Paper outlining the European Commission's Work Programme for 2014, and has requested the Committee's views on its European priorities for the year ahead. The Chairperson advised that the paper raised two issues relevant to Social Development – the Labour Mobility Package and the European Accessibility Act. The Chair also referred members to a paper prepared by the clerk on possible European-linked issues that are relevant to its remit.

*Agreed:* To notify the OFMDFM Committee of its European priorities as identified in the clerk's paper.

**5.2 OFMDFM Committee Signature Programmes.** The Chairperson noted that the OFMDFM Committee held a stakeholder event in November 2013 on the Delivering Social Change Signature Programmes. As the Department for Social Development is leading the Nurture Units and Social Enterprise Units Programmes, the OFMDFM Committee is seeking the Committee's comments on the views raised by stakeholders on these particular programmes. The Chairperson advised that a joint response from DSD and the Department for Employment and Learning on the Nurture Unit had been received by the Committee; he further advised that the Clerk has prepared a draft response for the Committee's consideration.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the response to the OFMDFM Committee.

**5.3 CAL Committee – Inclusion in the Arts of Working Class Communities.** The Committee agreed to issue a nil response to this Inquiry.

**5.4 Employment and Learning Committee: Post School Provision for Individuals with Learning Difficulties.** The Chairperson advised Members that the Employment and Learning Committee has sought responses on this matter from all Departments and Statutory Committees. As recommended by the Employment and Learning Committee, Social Development Committee staff has written to the Department asking that the Committee be copied into their response to this Inquiry.

*Agreed:* The Committee will wait until receiving this response before replying to the Employment and Learning Committee.

## **6. Consideration of Forward Work Plan**

6.1 The Chairperson reminded Members that at the previous meeting, the Committee received a briefing from the Committee Researcher regarding the Northern Ireland Housing Conference. He advised members that the Committee may wish to consider these issues for inclusion in its Forward Work Plan.

6.2 The Chairperson drew Members' attention to correspondence from Simon Community and Housing Rights Service separately inviting the Committee to informal briefings. The Chairperson indicated that the Committee may wish to address a range of housing issues in its consideration of social housing reform and that these organisations could brief the committee as part of that work programme.

*Agreed:* To write to these organisations advising them of the Committee's intention to engage with stakeholders as part of its wider work on housing issues.

## **7. SL1 The Social Security Pensions (Low Earnings Threshold) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Subordinate Legislation**

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

## **8. SL1 The Social Security Pensions (Flat Rate Accrual Amount) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014**

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

**9. SL1 The Social Security Revaluation of Earnings Factors Order (Northern Ireland) 2014**

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

**10. SL1 The Automatic Enrolment (Earnings Trigger and Qualifying Earnings Band) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014**

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

**11. Correspondence**

The Committee noted correspondence as outlined on the correspondence memo.

**12. Forward Work Programme**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Work Programme should be updated with dates for witnesses to brief the Committee, in relation to Phase 1 of the Inquiry.

*Agreed:* That the Committee considers a more strategic approach to its work programme given the pressures of the current Inquiry.

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

**13. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

The next meeting of the Committee for Social Development will take place on Thursday 27 February 2014 at 10.00 am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 10.27 am.

**Alex Maskey**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Social Development**

**27 February 2014**