



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY 23 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
Mrs 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)

1. Apologies

Mr Wilson MLA informed the Committee that he would be leaving the meeting early.

2. Draft Minutes

The Chair proposed an amendment to section 4.2 of the draft minutes of 16 January, changing point 4.2 to read:

“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 lodge a Section 44 notice with the Speaker of the Assembly in order to acquire a copy of the draft Campbell Tickell Report from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.”

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes as amended.

3. Chairperson’s Business

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee would address its regular business in open session. It would then move into closed session to review evidence received to date relating to the Committee’s Inquiry and to review its Forward Work Programme.

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA joined the meeting at 10.11 am.

Mr Michael Copeland MLA joined the meeting at 10.17 am.

The Committee discussed the veracity of recent statements relating to Welfare Reform and whether the Committee should write to the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister expressing its concerns regarding the delay in bringing the Bill back to the Assembly.

Following discussion on this issue, the motion was proposed:

“The DSD Committee, having worked towards agreement on the way forward with Welfare Reform, now expresses its concern at the delay in bringing the Bill to the floor of the Assembly, which has resulted in a £5 million per month fine on the Northern Ireland Executive.”

The Committee divided: Ayes 6; Noes 4; Abstentions 0.

AYES:

Mr Jim Allister
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mr Trevor Clarke
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Sammy Wilson

NOES:

Mr Alex Maskey
Mr Mickey Brady
Mr Michael Copeland
Mr Fra McCann

4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson advised members that Mr Donald Hoodless, Chair of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, has informed the Committee that he is not available to attend the Committee on 6th February, but is available for the 13th February.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from Mr Hoodless and Mr Will Haire, the Permanent Secretary, for the 13th February.

5. The Statutory Sick Pay (Maintenance of Records (Revocation) Regulations) (Northern Ireland) 2014

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Department has proposed a Statutory Rule – ‘The Statutory Sick Pay (Maintenance of Records (Revocation) Regulations) (Northern Ireland) 2014.’ The proposed Rule removes the Statutory Sick Pay record keeping obligations of employers, following the abolition of the Statutory Sick Pay Percentage Threshold Scheme in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the Statutory Rule until it has received further information from the Department on the issue.

6. SR 303 The Housing Benefit (Local Housing Allowance and Executive Determinations (Amendment) Regulations) (Northern Ireland) 2013

The Chairperson reminded Members that at last week’s meeting, the Committee had agreed to defer consideration of this Rule until it received the Department’s response to the query regarding the specific areas which will be targeted for the 4% uprating.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Department to brief the Committee, providing further clarity and detail on the particular areas receiving a 4% uprating.

7. The Charities (2008 Act) (Commencement No. 5) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Department had provided the Committee with a Commencement Order ‘The Charities (2008 Act) (Commencement No. 5) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014.’ The Committee noted the Order.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Charity Commission to update the Committee on the on-going process of registering organisations as charities.

8. Correspondence

8.1 The Department has advised the Committee that the Minister will present a paper to the Executive on 13th February regarding the transfer of DRD owned non-surplus car parks to DSD as part of the regeneration of the Mall West site, Armagh.

8.2 The Department has written to advise the Committee that the Ministry of Defence has brought forward amendments to Northern Ireland legislation falling under various Departments, including DSD, to provide access to passported benefits for Armed Forces Independence Payment (AFIP) payments.

8.3 The Northern Ireland Amusement Caterers Trade Association (NIACTA) has written to the Committee requesting a review of stakes and prizes.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the NIACTA to brief the Committee.

8.4 The Equality Coalition has written to the Committee regarding its concerns about the Department's failure to carry out screening and equality impact assessment of strategic housing policy centred around 'Facing the Future: Housing Strategy for Northern Ireland 2012-2017' policy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Equality Coalition and Department to brief the Committee on this issue.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson advised Members that the Forward Work Programme has been revised to account for re-scheduled meetings which were postponed to allow for this week's substantial closed session.

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

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Closed Session

The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee would enter closed session, in order to discuss the Forward Work Programme, and to review evidence received to date relating to the Committee Inquiry.

The next meeting of the Committee for Social Development will take place on Thursday 30th January 2014 at 10.00am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting moved into closed session at 10.38 am.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.35 pm.

Mr Alex Maskey

**Chairperson, Committee for Social Development
30th January 2014**