



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY 29 May 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 Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr Michael Copeland 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)

Apologies: Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA

The meeting began in closed session at 10.06am.

The Chairperson declared the meeting open to the public at 10.53am.

Michael Copeland MLA left the meeting at 10.54am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as noted above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 15 May were agreed.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson note that the 2014 Survey of Services provided by the Assembly Commission is underway and encouraged members to complete this before the closing date of 6 June.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 The Chairperson noted that the Committee motion on a prayer of annulment in respect of SR133/2014 would be debated in the Assembly on Monday 2 June. He noted that he would speak to the motion as Chair of the Committee and members of the Committee may wish to contribute to the debate.

4.2 The Chairperson noted that next week's Inquiry evidence session would be taken in the afternoon to facilitate the attendance of the Chair of the NIHE and Chair of the NIHE Audit Committee, and that regular Committee business would be dealt with in the morning.

4.3 *Agreed:* The Committee agreed to meet on Tuesday 10 June to review Inquiry evidence relating to phase 1 of its inquiry.

4.4 The Chairperson noted that the Committee had agreed to cancel its meeting of 12 June to facilitate members' attendance at a housing conference that day, and that a number of members had indicated their intention to attend.

5. Committee Inquiry into allegations, arising from a BBC NI 'Spotlight' programme aired on 3 July 2013, of impropriety or irregularity relating to NIHE-managed contracts and consideration of any resulting actions – Evidence Session with NIHE Officials

The following officials joined the meeting at 11.00am:

- Mr Trevor McCartney, Director of Corporate Services, NIHE
- Ms Gay Ireland, Head of Corporate Assurance Unit, NIHE
- Mr John McVeigh, Head of Internal Audit, NIHE

The officials gave evidence in respect of Phase 2 of the Committee's Inquiry and took questions from the members.

Trevor Clarke MLA joined the meeting at 11.01am.

Michael Copeland MLA joined the meeting at 11.11am.

The Chairperson left the meeting at 11.36am and the Deputy Chairperson took the Chair.

Gregory Campbell MLA left the meeting at 11.37am.

The Chairperson joined the meeting at 11.42am and took the Chair.

The officials left the meeting at 12.01pm.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

6. June Monitoring Round – Departmental Briefing

The following officials joined the meeting at 12.01pm:

- Mr Andrew Hamilton, Deputy Secretary, DSD
- Mr Jim Wilkinson, Director of Housing, DSD
- Mr Stephen McMurray, Director of Finance, DSD
- Mr Ian Snowden, Director, North West Development Office

The officials briefed the Committee on the Department for Social Development's June Monitoring Round and commented on the Main Estimates for 2014/15. They then took questions from the Committee.

The officials left the meeting at 12.32pm.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

7. Welfare Reform: Employer Engagement – Departmental Briefing

The following officials joined the meeting at 12.33pm.

- Mr Brian Doherty, Director, Universal Credit, Social Security Agency
- Ms Geraldine Brereton, Director, Organisational Change, Social Security Agency

The officials briefed the Committee on the Social Security Agency's plans for engaging with employers on Universal Credit following the introduction of Welfare Reform and took questions from the Committee.

Members expressed some concern about the timing of engagement programme given that the Welfare Reform Bill has yet to be passed by the Assembly.

Officials acknowledged this point but noted that they were working on the assumption that the Bill would be passed at some stage and it was therefore necessary to raise awareness among employers about the potential impact of Universal Credit in anticipation of this happening

Jim Allister MLA left the meeting at 12.45pm.

The officials left the meeting at 12.46pm.

8. SL1 The Social Security (Recovery of Benefits) (Lump sum payments) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

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

9. SL1 The Child Support (GB Reciprocal Arrangements) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

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

10. SR 138/2014 The Child Support, Pensions and Social Security (2000 Act) (Commencement No. 12) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014

The Committee noted the commencement order.

11. SR 140/2014 The Social Security (Maternity Allowance) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

The Committee considered the Statutory Rule and the Department's response to the Committee's queries regarding the SL1 relating to the regulations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the regulations until a briefing by departmental officials could be arranged to provide further clarification on some aspects of the regulations.

12. Correspondence

- 12.1 *Agreed:* Members agreed that they would consider the Work and Families Bill and raise any comments before the deadline of 23 June.
- 12.2 The Committee agreed remaining correspondence as outlined on the correspondence memo.

13. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee was content with the Forward Work Programme to be amended to reflect an additional Inquiry session on Tuesday 10 June in closed session and the rescheduling of the Department's briefing on its response to Dr Litchfield's review of Work Capability Assessment to 26 June.

14. Any Other Business

- 14.1 *Agreed:* With reference to the June Monitoring Round briefing, the Committee agreed to write to the NI Housing Executive and ask for a profile of the proposed spend of its maintenance allocation for this year.

14.2 *Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the NI Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) asking for their comments on the current barriers to building additional social homes and the progress made to address these..

The next meeting of the Committee for Social Development will take place on 5 June 2014 at 10.00am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.52.

Alex Maskey
Chairperson, Committee for Social Development

5 June 2014