



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY 30 January 2014
Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: 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
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 Alex Maskey MLA (Chairperson)

The Deputy Chairperson declared the meeting open to the public at 10.04am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 The Deputy Chairperson informed the Committee that a letter had been received from the Speaker, noting that a Section 44 notice had been issued to the NI Housing Executive requiring the release of the unedited draft Campbell Tickell Report.

Mr Campbell joined the meeting at 10.05am

Mr Dickson joined the meeting at 10.06am

3.2 The Deputy Chairperson noted that at the meeting of 23rd January 2014, the Committee proposed the agreed the motion:

“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.”

He noted that there had been some discussion at that meeting about potentially writing to OFMDFM expressing concern over the delay to bringing Welfare Reform legislation to the floor of the Assembly, but that there was no action tied to the motion. He asked the Committee whether the intention was to write to the Department of OFMDFM.

The motion was proposed:

“That the DSD Committee writes to OFMdFM to draw Ministers’ attention to the motion agreed by the DSD Committee at its meeting on 23 January 2014”.

The Committee divided: Ayes 5; Noes 3; Abstentions 0

AYES:

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

NOES:

Mr Mickey Brady
Mrs Dolores Kelly
Mr Fra McCann

The motion was carried.

3.3 The Deputy Chairperson reminded members that a series of meetings had been held in members' constituencies and that it had been proposed that the meeting of 20 March be held in Newry. Members were content.

4. Landlord Registration Implementation – Departmental Briefing

Gregory Campbell MLA and Dolores Kelly MLA expressed interests related to this briefing.

The following officials joined the meeting at 10.13am:

- Stephen Johnston, Housing Affordability, DSD
- Avril Hiles, DSD

The officials briefed the Committee on the implementation of the Landlord Registration Scheme.

Mr Copeland joined the meeting at 10.21am

There followed discussion about the role of NI Direct and councils in registration and members expressed concerns about potential shortcomings in the Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department expressing concern that there was no incentive for landlords to register before February 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarity on what categories of people would be classified as landlords and therefore required to register as such.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to recommend that the Landlord Registration Amendment Regulations are brought forward to ensure that landlords are required to update their details whenever a change occurs.

5. The Social Security (Crediting and Treatment of Contributions and National Insurance Numbers) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

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

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

The following official joined the meeting at 11.12am:

- Michael Pollock, Social Security Policy & Legislation, DSD

The official briefed the Committee on the Regulations.

The Committee discussed the regulations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department giving a working example of the divergence in Local Housing Allowance rates in East Antrim.

The official left the meeting at 11.48am.

The Committee considered the above mentioned Statutory Rule.

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Social Development has considered Statutory Rule SR303/2013 The Housing Benefit (Executive Determinations and Local Housing Allowance) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, has no objection to the Rule.

7. Correspondence

7.1 The Deputy Chair drew members' attention to a response from Committee for the Environment, stating that the Committee's request for the inclusion of the economic impact of wind energy in the Terms of Reference for its Inquiry into Wind Energy would be a concern more suitably directed to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for the Environment to emphasise its position that the economic impact of wind energy is included in its terms of reference, and to write to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment expressing its concerns.

7.2 The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Finance and Personnel, regarding the monitoring of departmental savings delivery plans.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Finance and Personnel seeking clarity on the impact of savings on frontline services.

7.3 The Committee considered DFP's Report on the Consultation Exercise on the Future of Rate Rebate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to DFP and ask how particular issues raised in paragraphs 43 and 44 of the report would be addressed by the Department.

7.4 The Committee agreed to action remaining correspondence as outlined on the correspondence memo.

8. Forward Work Programme

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

9. Any Other Business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an update from the Department for the Environment on the progress of BMAP.

Mr Alex Maskey

**Chairperson, Committee for Social Development
6th February 2014**