



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY 6 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 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)

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland MLA
Ms Dolores Kelly MLA

The Chairperson declared the meeting open to the public at 10.14am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 30th January were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 The Chairperson advised the Committee that Mr Michael Sands, Deputy Director of Housing at DSD, is still currently unavailable to give evidence to the Committee, but that Committee staff will continue to liaise with the Department on this matter.

3.2 The Department has responded to the Committee's request for a timetable outlining the progress, to date, of negotiations with contractors.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to NIHE emphasising the need for negotiations to be brought to a conclusion as quickly as possible.

3.3 The Committee noted that the Department has provided the terms of reference that it has developed for compiling papers to assist in the Committee's consideration of Phase 2 of the Committee Inquiry. The Chairperson advised the Committee that Committee staff will be meeting with the Department concerning this issue.

3.4 The Chairperson advised Members that NIHE have provided the draft Campbell Tickell report and a supporting document to the main report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer next week's briefing with Mr Hoodless and Mr Haire, in order to allow for further consideration of the draft Report.

3.5 The Committee also considered the NIHE's request that the draft report be treated as confidential. The Committee noted that a number of issues had to be clarified with the NIHE on this request.

Agreed: To facilitate dissemination of the report to members the Committee agreed, in the interim to treat the draft report as confidential, and to discuss this request in more depth at its meeting on 13 February.

Stewart Dickson MLA joined the meeting at 10.27 am.

Sammy Wilson MLA joined the meeting at 10.27 am.

Gregory Campbell MLA joined the meeting at 10.36 am.

3.5 The Chairperson clarified for members that the Landlord Registration Regulations were approved by the Assembly on 24 September 2012.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information on the search facility available via the landlord database.

3.6 The Committee for Finance and Personnel has sent a memo to all Statutory Committees regarding a briefing they received from DfP on the Budget Bill and Spring Supplementary Estimates, in advance of the Supply Resolution debate on Monday 10 February. The Department is due to brief the Committee on the budget in March, but no date has yet been scheduled. The Chairperson informed Members that Committee Chairs will be speaking on this matter on Monday, and that he will be raising the issue of money handed back in recent monitoring rounds.

4. Housing (Anti-Social Behaviour and Secure Tenancy) Bill – Departmental Briefing

The following officials joined at 10.42 am:

- Deirdre Ward, Deputy Director of Housing Policy, Research & Legislation, DSD

- Dr Heloise Brown, Head of Housing Policy, Research & Legislation, DSD
- Stephen Baird, Policy and Legislation Manager, DSD

The officials briefed the Committee, which expressed a range of concerns about the proposals.

In general members felt that, while recourse to a short secure tenancy would in theory assist with anti-social behaviour, experience suggested that it will not be sufficient to deal expeditiously with people who are engaged in anti-social behaviour.

Members suggested that short term tenancies, if taken forward, should be a starting point for addressing anti-social behaviour while others drew attention to the application of demoted tenancies used in England as a more robust approach.

The lack of support for people affected by anti-social behaviour was also raised by members, as was a suggestion that residents should be better engaged by the department during the consultation.

Members also highlighted the regulatory gap, as regards anti-social behaviour in relation to the private rented sector which is a recipient of a large amount of housing benefit.

The department indicated that it would brief the Committee following the conclusion of the consultation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for the number of introductory tenancies that have failed and also to ask the department to consider an extension to the deadline for the consultation.

Trevor Clarke MLA joined the meeting at 11.01 am.

The officials left the meeting at 11.36 am.

This briefing was recorded by Hansard.

5. Housing Supply Forum – Departmental Briefing

The following officials joined the meeting at 11.37 am:

- Stephen Martin, Deputy Director of Housing Policy Delivery, DSD
- Mrs Frances Rushe, Housing Division, DSD
- Mr Gerard Rushe, Housing Division, DSD

The officials briefed the Committee.

Members noted that the first meeting of the forum had already taken place and the expectation was that a report would be produced in about a year's time. Members were also informed that a number of subgroups would likely be established that would include other organisations that are not part of the core membership of the forum.

Members asked whether the forum would consider housing supply in the context of 'shared space' but was advised that the forum was not part of the Together Building a United Community initiative. Officials noted that through this initiative DSD has a commitment to develop 10 new shared neighbourhoods.

Members noted that, other than the Council of Mortgage Lenders, there were no lenders such as banks on the forum and suggested that this should be considered.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting a full list of consultees.

Jim Allister MLA left the meeting at 12.08 pm.

The officials left the meeting at 12.12 pm.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

6. Travellers Design Guide – Departmental Briefing

The following officials joined the meeting at 12.13 pm:

- Stephen Martin, Deputy Director of Housing Policy Delivery, DSD
- Eilish O'Neill, DSD

The officials briefed the Committee.

The Committee acknowledged that this was a technical document that reflected development and policy changes, made since 1997, in how accommodation is provided.

Members noted that the Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment, which will help plan future accommodation needs and inform decision-making, is currently being drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for clarification on the planning application process where the site specifications have changed from the original application e.g. number of pitches.

Gregory Campbell MLA left the meeting at 12.24pm.

The officials left the meeting at 12.28pm.

7. SR18/2014 The Charities (2008 Act) (Commencement No. 5) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014

The Chairperson indicated that the Committee received advance notification of this Commencement Order at the meeting of 23 January. The Order brings into operation provisions of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 relating to annual returns by charities and certain other matters.

The Committee noted the Commencement Order.

8. Correspondence

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to note the correspondence, as outlined in the correspondence memo.

9. Forward Work Programme

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

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Adjourn

The next meeting of the Committee for Social Development will take place on Thursday 13 February 2014 at 10.00 am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.18 pm.

Mr Alex Maskey

**Chairperson, Committee for Social Development
13th February 2014**