



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY 7 November 2013

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 Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr Michael Copeland MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Mr Sammy Wilson MLA

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

Apologies: Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Ms Dolores Kelly MLA

The Chairperson declared the meeting open to the public at 10.02am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as noted above.

2. Draft Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 October 2013

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 24 October were agreed.

Sammy Wilson MLA joined the meeting at 10.03am.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson noted that the Participation and Practice of Rights Project has requested his involvement, as Chair of the Committee, in a panel discussion at an event it is holding on 27 November, but has so far not been able to confirm his attendance.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that he met with the Minister regarding Social Housing Reform on Tuesday 5 November, along with the Deputy Chair and Committee Clerk and outlined the key points discussed at the meeting.

4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson noted that the Committee had been due to hold its meeting of 28 November in the Everglades Hotel in Derry~Londonderry as part of the Conference of the Isles. As the Committee cannot be accommodated in a room in the same venue as the conference, the Committee agreed that it was content to hold this meeting in Parliament Buildings instead.

The Chairperson noted that the Department has invited members of the Committee to attend a stakeholder event on the Social Housing Reform Programme on 13 November and asked members to confirm whether they would be attending.

5. Committee Inquiry

The Chairperson advised that papers had been requested from the BBC regarding the Spotlight programme, but that the request is currently with the BBC's litigation team. The Committee agreed to write to the BBC formally again requesting the papers.

Members noted that in the correspondence provided by the Department of Social Development in relation to the inquiry, no email threads or relevant diary entries for meetings were included. The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting these.

Members were provided with a list of stakeholders for Phase 2 of the Inquiry and asked to consider these and confirm which witnesses they wish to call for Phase 2 of the Inquiry at next week's meeting.

Michael Copeland MLA joined the meeting at 10.18am.

6. Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill – consideration of issues and informal clause-by-clause

The following officials joined the meeting at 10.17am:

- Mr Liam Quinn, Head of Social Policy Unit, DSD
- Mr Gary McAlorum, Social Policy Unit, DSD

The Department addressed the Committee on the Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill, addressing each clause individually and allowing the Committee the opportunity to raise any concerns in relation to each clause.

The Committee raised concerns regarding the time period for response to consultation on licences, the grounds for refusal of licence applications, the duration of a licence, the appeal process and public liability insurance in relation to Pavement Cafés. A potential amendment was also suggested to Clause 14.

The Department noted that they would be proposing a number of minor technical amendments to the Committee and agreed to provide the Committee with these in advance of its meeting on 14 November.

The Chairperson advised that the Committee is scheduled to read its clause-by-clause response formally into the record at its meeting of 21 November 2013.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

The officials left the meeting at 11.17am.

7. Community Asset Transfer – Departmental Briefing

The following officials joined the meeting at 11.18am:

- Mr Roy McGivern, Head of Policy and Innovation, VCU
- Mr William Redpath, VCU
- Ms Bébhinn Ni Bhriain, VCU

The Chairperson noted that the Committee received a briefing from Development Trusts NI (DTNI) on Community Asset Transfer on 7 November.

The officials briefed the Committee on the new Community Asset Transfer framework, noting that there has been no policy framework in place to date and noting that the intention of the framework is to create an ‘enabling environment’ for community and voluntary groups.

Members noted that DTNI had expressed that there was a need for a champion on Community Asset Transfer within the Department. The officials noted that a steering group had been set up bringing together government Departments, and that these representatives would effectively fulfil that role. In response to a query on how DTNI is resourced, the officials explained that it is core funded by DSD until March 2015, but that this resourcing will have to be enhanced following this date.

There was further discussion about the process to determine which public assets were suitable for transfer to community groups rather than being sold on the open market. Members commented on a general tendency to favour quick financial results in favour of social economy projects, which may often yield more benefit in the long run. It was recognised that selling assets provide a financial return to the public purse but asset transfer could also provide a range of benefits to the community.

The officials acknowledged that the scheme was not necessarily suitable for smaller organisations and that a business case would need to show generation of revenue that could ensure sustainability and benefits to the community.

The officials left the meeting at 11.49am.

8. Supporting People Guidance – “Principles of a Person’s Own Home” – Departmental Briefing

The following officials joined the Committee at 11.50:

- Ms Eilish O’Neill, DSD
- Mr Finbar Cummins, DSD

The officials briefed the Committee on its Supporting People consultation document, ‘Principles of a Person’s Own Home’. They noted that that all respondents to the consultation acknowledged that it was important to ensure that vulnerable people are offered the same rights and protection as others.

Following the briefing, the Committee asked for an update on the 34 Special Needs Management Allowance (SNMA) funded schemes. The Department agreed to clarify the current situation in an update to the Committee but noted that 5 out of 34 schemes had demonstrated they were supported living schemes rather than residential care and between 12 and 15 schemes were currently in negotiation to determine their suitability to de-register. Officials also noted that it was likely that some of the 34 schemes would not fulfil the criteria for supported living and therefore not be able to de-register.

There was general discussion around the money provided by Supporting People and that supplied by SNMA, how closely DSD and DHSSPS work together on domiciliary care schemes and homelessness, particularly with reference to hostels. Members made specific reference to the criteria for excluding people from hostels and officials agreed to provide these.

There was some discussion regarding potential contradictions in the principles outlined in the Supporting People document but officials assured the Committee that the majority of schemes already comply with guidance and that each case is treated individually to find an acceptable balance between competing requirements.

Michael Copeland MLA left the meeting at 12.27pm.

The officials left the meeting at 12.29 pm.

9. Proposed Subordinate Legislation

SL1 The Domestic Energy Efficiency Grants (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

The Committee considered the above mentioned proposed Statutory Rule and agreed that it was content for the Rule to be made.

Statutory Rule: SR 250/2013 The Jobseeker's Allowance (Domestic Violence) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

The Committee considered the above mentioned Statutory Rule.

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Social Development has considered the Statutory Rule 250/2013 The Jobseeker's Allowance (Domestic Violence) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013, and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report, recommends that it be confirmed by the Assembly

10. Correspondence

The Committee noted the correspondence as outlined in the Correspondence Memo.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee was content with the proposed Forward Work Programme.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place at 10.00 am on Thursday 14th November in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.31pm.

Mr Alex Maskey

**Chairperson, Committee for Social Development
7 November 2013**