



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY 9 October 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 Stewart Dickson MLA
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Mr Sammy Wilson MLA
- In Attendance: Dr Kevin Pelan (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Ashleigh Mitford (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Todd (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stewart Kennedy (Clerical Supervisor)
- Apologies: None

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

1. Apologies

Apologies were as noted above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2014 were agreed.

3. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's Business.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 The Chairperson noted that Sammy Douglas replaced Trevor Clarke on the Committee, effective 6 October 2014, and welcomed Mr Douglas to the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to outgoing Committee member Trevor Clarke MLA thanking him for his contribution to the Committee.

4.2 The Chairperson referred members to an email from Mr Douglas which stated that he had decided to exempt himself from Committee meetings where evidence would be taken in respect of the Committee's Inquiry, due to a potential conflict of interests.

4.3 The Committee noted a letter from Michael Jennings who was scheduled to give evidence on 6 November.

Agreed: Following a letter from BDO outlining potential legal complications in giving evidence, the Committee agreed to cancel an oral briefing from Michael Jennings scheduled for 6 November 2014 and to seek further written evidence.

4.4 The Chairperson referred members to the agenda for its meeting on 16 October.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to take a briefing from Assembly Legal Services in respect of the fact-finding exercise into the DSD Special Adviser at its meeting on 16 October 2014.

Sammy Wilson MLA joined the meeting at 10.08am.

4.5 The Chairperson noted that an event sponsored by the Committee for Business in the Community will no longer be held in Parliament Buildings, as a room was not available for this event.

4.6 The Committee discussed a request to sponsor an event for the Simon Community

Agreed: The Committee agreed to sponsor an event for the Simon Community in Parliament Buildings on 27 November 2014, during Homelessness Awareness Week, for the launch of their new 'App'.

4.7 The Chairperson noted that members had been invited to participate in a conference to be held by the Housing Rights Service on 6 November 2014 and asked members to inform Committee staff if they intended to participate.

4.8 The Chairperson noted, following a query raised at the meeting of 2 October 2014, that it is the responsibility of members to declare an interest in any agenda item, if they think it is relevant. He noted that, if members were uncertain whether to declare an interest, or considered that another member had reason to declare an interest but failed to do so, that a query should be raised with the Clerk of the Committee for Standards and Privileges.

Mr McCann advised the Committee that he had previously made representations on behalf of constituents in respect of the quality of work by Red Sky.

5. 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, Phase 3 – evidence session with Councillor Jenny Palmer

The following witness joined the meeting at 10.17am:

- Cllr Jenny Palmer, Board Member, NIHE

The Committee took evidence from the witness.

Dolores Kelly MLA joined the meeting at 10.30am.

The witness left the meeting at 12.46pm.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

Proceedings were suspended at 12.46pm.

The Chairperson left the meeting at 12.46pm.

Proceedings recommenced in public session at 1.04pm, in Room 29 Parliament Buildings.

Present: Mr Mickey Brady MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Jim Allister MLA
 Ms Paula Bradley MLA
 Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
 Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
 Mr Fra McCann MLA

The Deputy Chairperson declared the meeting open to the public.

6. 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, Phase 3 – evidence session with Dr John McPeake, Former Chief Executive, NIHE

The following witness joined the meeting at 1.04pm:

- Dr John McPeake, Former Chief Executive, NIHE

The Committee took evidence from the witness.

The witness left the meeting at 1.32pm.

Dolores Kelly MLA left the meeting at 1.32pm.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

7. SL1 The Jobseekers Allowance (Habitual Residence) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

Agreed: The Committee was content with the Department's proposal to make the Statutory Rule.

8. Correspondence

8.1 *Agreed:* The Committee agreed to reply to a letter from Church Leaders seeking a meeting with the Chairperson in relation to the impact of Welfare Reform, noting the Finance Minister's intention to commission a report into the impact of the reforms and indicating that it would be more timely to meet after this report has been released.

8.2 *Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note correspondence as outlined on the correspondence memo.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme as drafted.

10. AOB

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite departmental official Michael Sands to give oral evidence to the Committee.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Social Development will take place on 16 October 2014 at 10.00am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.36pm.

Alex Maskey
Chairperson, Committee for Social Development

16 October 2014