



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY 11 September 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 Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
- In Attendance: Dr Kevin Pelan (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Claire McCanny (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Todd (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stewart Kennedy (Clerical Supervisor)
- Apologies: Mr Gregory Campbell MLA
Mr Michael Copeland MLA
Mr Sammy Wilson MLA

The Chairperson declared the meeting open to the public at 10.00am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as noted above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2014 were agreed.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson noted the Minister's comments in the Assembly that the Committee was not adequately addressing a range of social development issues due to its focus on the current Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Chair to write to the Minister on behalf of the Committee challenging the Minister's position.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 *Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Committee's response to the Departmental Solicitor's Office should be issued.

4.2 *Agreed:* The Committee agreed to cancel the briefing from the Department on its business plan and to address the impact of the reduced budget on business plan targets at the briefing on the October monitoring round at its meeting of 25 September.

4.3 The Committee noted that next week's meeting was scheduled to last a full day due to the high volume evidence sessions scheduled.

4.4 *Agreed:* Members agreed to submissions in relation to Phase 3 of its Inquiry being published on the Committee's page on the Assembly website.

4.5 *Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the BBC requesting that they appear before the Committee to give evidence in relation to Phase 3 of its Inquiry.

4.6 *Agreed:* Also in respect of Phase 3 of its Inquiry, the Committee agreed to write to East Belfast constituency MLAs regarding correspondence they may have had with the Minister regarding the termination of the Red Sky contract with the NIHE.

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 – Phase 2 – evidence session with the Northern Ireland Audit Office

The following officials joined the meeting at 10.08am:

- Mr Kieran Donnelly, Comptroller and Auditor General, NIAO
- Mr Tomas Wilkinson, Director, NIAO
- Mr Brandon McMaster, Director, NIAO
- Ms Anu Kane, Audit Manager, NIAO

The officials briefed the Committee on issues relating to the adequacy of actions proposed by the Minister, DSD and the NIHE to address previous, well documented failings in relation to procurement and contract management – Phase 2 of the Committee's Inquiry.

Following this briefing, the NIAO officials took questions from the Committee on Phase 2 of the Inquiry.

The officials left the meeting at 11.18am.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

The Chairperson left the meeting at 11.18am

The Deputy Chairperson took the Chair at 11.18am.

6. The Affordable Warmth Scheme – Departmental Briefing

The following officials joined the meeting at 11.20am.

- Ms Eilish O’Neill, Social Inclusion Housing Division, DSD
- Mr Stephen Martin, Deputy Director Housing Policy Delivery, DSD

The officials briefed the Committee on the Department’s new Affordable Warmth Scheme.

The Committee broadly welcomed this scheme and the officials then took questions from members.

The officials left the meeting at 11.47am.

7. Developer Contributions for Affordable Housing – Departmental Briefing

The following officials joined the meeting at 11.48am.

- Mr Stephen Martin, Deputy Director Housing Policy Delivery, DSD
- Ms Frances Rushe, Housing Division, DSD
- Ms Heather McKinley, DSD

The officials briefed the Committee on its consultation into Developer Contributions for Affordable Housing and noted that Northern Ireland is the only region of the UK without such a scheme. They also noted that a similar scheme exists in the Republic of Ireland.

Members questioned officials on a number of issues.

Some members expressed concern over the timing of this proposal giving the sluggish recovery in the property development sector here. Others noted that such a proposal wasn’t new and had its origins in the Semple Report published in 2007.

The Committee noted that the consultation proposals are still under consideration.

The officials left the meeting at 12.30pm.

8. SL1 The Jobseekers Allowance (Maternity Allowance) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

Agreed: The Committee was content for the Department to make the proposed Statutory Rule.

9. Correspondence

9.1 Members noted a letter from the Department reaffirming the NIHE's assertion that the maintenance budget will be spent.

9.2 *Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the rest of the correspondence as outlined on the correspondence memo.

10. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed the FWP as drafted.

11. AOB

There was no other business.

12. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Social Development will take place on 18 September 2014 at 10.00am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.35pm.

Alex Maskey
Chairperson, Committee for Social Development

18 September 2014