



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday 20 November 2014
Room 29, Parliament Buildings**

Present: Mr Mickey Brady MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Gregory Campbell MLA
Mr Maurice Devenney 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)
Mr Richard Reid (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Alex Maskey MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradley MLA
Mr Michael Copeland MLA

The meeting began in closed session at 10.12am.

The Committee received training on budget scrutiny from the Public Finance Scrutiny Unit of the Assembly's Research and Information Service.

The meeting opened in public session at 10.44am.

Jim Allister MLA joined the meeting at 10.44am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

2. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2014

Agreed: The draft minutes were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 The Deputy Chairperson noted that Mr Maurice Devenney MLA has replaced Mr Sammy Douglas MLA on the Committee and welcomed Mr Devenney to the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Sammy Douglas MLA, thanking him for his contribution to the Committee.

3.2 The Deputy Chairperson noted that the meeting agenda included a closed session to discuss planning of its work programme.

3.3 The Deputy Chairperson noted that representatives from the Community Development and Health Network would attend to observe this morning's meeting and that members were invited to meet with them afterwards in Parliament Buildings.

Sammy Wilson MLA joined the meeting at 10.47am

4. Social Security Agency Claimant Satisfaction Survey – briefing by the Social Security Agency

The following officials joined the meeting at 10.53am.

- Lisa Hamilton-Sturdy, Senior Communications and Engagement Manager, Social Security Agency
- Shirley Oguz, Communications and Engagement, Social Security Agency

The officials discussed the results of the Social Security Agency's Claimant Satisfaction Survey, noting that feedback from respondents was broadly positive, and took questions from members.

There was discussion around the selection of samples for the survey and the fact that the method of data collection meant that some of the issues addressed in the survey could not be explored in more detail, at this stage.

The officials acknowledged that this survey is intended only to give a broad overview and that they will be building on this work by carrying out subsequent detailed surveys.

Fra McCann MLA joined the meeting at 11.34am.

The officials left the meeting at 11.39am.

5. Correspondence

- 5.1 The Committee noted an invitation from Shelter NI to attend a lecture by the Executive Director of the Irish Council for Social Housing on 26 November 2014.
- 5.2 The Committee noted correspondence from UNISON expressing concern over possible cuts to the Supporting People Fund.
Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from UNISON in the new year, and to seek information from the Department on the Supporting People fund.
- 5.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Department addressing the Committee's queries following a briefing on the Pensions Bill.
Agreed: The Committee agreed to action the rest of the correspondence as outlined on the correspondence memo.

6. Forward Work Programme

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

7. Any Other Business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an update from the Department on its Empty Homes Strategy, including whether targets had been met, and to look into similar schemes in Liverpool.

The meeting moved into closed session at 11.44am.

The Committee discussed its work programme for the new year, including the projected timetable for conclusion of the Inquiry, the anticipated legislative programme and priorities for committee-led work.

Agreed: the Committee agreed that it should aim to complete Committee Stage of the Pensions Bill within the statutory 30 working-day period, which ends on 20 January 2015. However, the Committee also agreed that it would lay a motion requesting an extension of Committee Stage to 26 March 2015. This is to build in flexibility, should other items on the Committee's agenda impact on meeting this deadline.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule briefings on Tuesdays, beginning on Tuesday 25 November, until Christmas Recess to take evidence in relation to its consideration of the Pensions Bill.

8. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 25 November 2014 at 9.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.35pm.

Alex Maskey
Chairperson, Committee for Social Development
27 November 2014