



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 6 November 2014

Room 29, Parliament Buildings

- Present: Mr Mickey Brady MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Ms Paula Bradley MLA
Mr Gregory Campbell MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Mr Sammy Wilson MLA
- In Attendance: Dr Kevin Pelan (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Ashleigh Mitford (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stewart Kennedy (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Richard Reid (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies: Mr Alex Maskey MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Michael Copeland MLA
Mr Sammy Douglas MLA

The meeting began in closed session at 10.06am.

The Committee discussed issues relating to the attendance of witnesses to give oral evidence and the release of relevant documents to the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Brian Rowntree regarding his decision not to give oral evidence to the Committee.

The Committee discussed the former Minister's decision not to release the fact-finding report into the DSD Minister's Special Adviser.

The motion was proposed: *That the Committee write to the current Minister for Social Development requesting that he provides the Committee with the fact-finding report into the DSD Special Adviser.*

Ayes 3;

Noes 4;

Abstentions; 0

AYES:

Ms Paula Bradley MLA

Mr Gregory Campbell MLA

Mr Sammy Wilson MLA

NOES:

Mr Mickey Brady MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Jim Allister MLA

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Mr Fra McCann MLA

The motion fell.

The motion was proposed: *That the Committee write to the Minister for Social Development requesting that he provides the Committee with the fact-finding report into the DSD Special Adviser and advising the Minister that should he not release the report the Committee is minded to obtain its release by issuing of a section 44 notice.*

Ayes 4;

Noes 1;

Abstentions 0.

AYES:

Mr Mickey Brady MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Jim Allister MLA

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Mr Fra McCann MLA

NOES:

Mr Sammy Wilson MLA

The motion was carried.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Social Development as per the agreed motion.

The meeting opened in public session at 11.53am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

2. Chairperson's business

The Deputy Chairperson noted that the Department would be presenting the Regeneration Bill to the Executive today.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to begin Committee Stage of the Regeneration Bill following Christmas Recess.

3. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2014

Agreed: The draft minutes were agreed.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 *Agreed:* The Committee agreed to hold a strategic planning session following its meeting of 20 November 2014.

4.2 *Agreed:* The Committee agreed to review evidence relating to its Inquiry at its meeting of 27 November 2014.

5. Correspondence

5.1 The Committee noted correspondence received from the Department for Social Development in relation to its Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider this correspondence in more detail when conducting its review of Inquiry evidence.

5.2 The Committee considered a written briefing from the Social Security Agency in relation to trials of the new Financial Support Service.

5.3 The Committee noted an invitation to Committee members to attend a meeting on 20 November 2014 with community and voluntary workers involved in the Community Development and Health Network training programme.

Agreed: Members agreed to contact Committee staff or the Assembly Outreach Office if they intend to join this meeting.

5.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for Finance and Personnel providing further detail regarding the delay in the resolution of the planned maintenance contracts settlement between DSD and NIHE.

6. Forward Work Programme

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

7. Proposed Statutory Rule: SR 263/2014 The Jobseekers Allowance (Habitual Residence) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

The Committee had no objections to the Rule.

The Deputy Chairperson read the following motion into the record:

That the Committee for Social Development has considered Statutory Rule SR 263/2014 The Jobseekers Allowance (Habitual Residence) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, has no objections to the Rule.

8. 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 – evidence session with Michael Sands, DSD

The following witness joined the meeting at 12.06pm:

- Michael Sands, Deputy Director, Housing Group, DSD

The Committee took evidence from the witness.

Stewart Dickson MLA left the meeting at 12.32pm.

The witness left the meeting at 12.40pm.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

Proceedings were suspended at 12.40pm.

Gregory Campbell MLA left the meeting at 12.40pm.

Proceedings recommenced in public session at 1.15pm, in Room 29 Parliament Buildings.

Present: Mr Mickey Brady MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Ms Paula Bradley MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Mr Sammy Wilson MLA

The Chairperson declared the meeting open to the public.

9. Introduction of the Pensions Bill – Departmental Briefing

The following officials joined the meeting at 1.15pm:

- Anne McCleary, Director, Social Security, Policy and Legislation Division, DSD
- Gerry McCann, Social Security, Policy and Legislation Division, DSD
- Seamus Cassidy, Social Security, Policy and Legislation Division, DSD
- Gillian McMaster, Social Security, Policy and Legislation Division, DSD

The officials briefed the Committee on the draft Northern Ireland Pensions Bill and took questions from members.

Agreed: The Department agreed to provide the Committee with further information regarding people of pensionable age with dependants.

The officials left the meeting at 1.41pm.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

10. 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 – evidence session with Peter Cooke, former Red Sky Managing Director

The following witness joined the meeting at 1.42pm:

- Peter Cooke, former Managing Director, Red Sky Group

The Committee took evidence from the witness.

The witness left the meeting at 2.49pm.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking a copy of minutes relating to a meeting between the NI Housing Executive and Red Sky, referred to by Mr Cooke in his evidence.

11. Any other business

None.

12. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 13 November 2014 at 10.00am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 2.51pm.

Alex Maskey
Chairperson, Committee for Social Development
13 November 2014