



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 13 November 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)
Mr Richard Reid (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland MLA
Mr Sammy Douglas MLA

The meeting began in closed session at 10.05am.

The Committee discussed issues relating to Inquiry processes and conduct.

The meeting opened in public session at 10.29am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

2. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2014

Agreed: The draft minutes were agreed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to break from the scheduled agenda and take Inquiry evidence sessions prior to other Committee business, to better accommodate witnesses.

3. 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 Nelson McCausland MLA

The following witness joined the meeting at 10.30am:

- Nelson McCausland MLA, former Minister for Social Development

The Committee took evidence from the witness.

The witness left the meeting at 12.31pm.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

Proceedings were suspended at 12.31pm.

Proceedings recommenced in public session at 12.38pm, in 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

The Chairperson declared the meeting open to the public.

4. 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 Stephen Brimstone, DSD

The following witness joined the meeting at 12.38pm.

- Stephen Brimstone, DSD Special Adviser

The Committee took evidence from the witness.

Gregory Campbell MLA left the meeting at 1.26pm.

Stewart Dickson MLA left the meeting at 1.34pm.

The witness left the meeting at 1.52pm.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

Sammy Wilson MLA left the meeting at 1.53pm.

5. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson noted that he would deliver opening remarks at the Simon Community's event on 27 November to launch its new App. The Committee previously agreed to sponsor this event.

6. Matters Arising

6.1 The Chairperson noted that Cllr Jenny Palmer contacted the Committee Clerk requesting to appear before the Committee again to respond to evidence given by witnesses at the meeting of 6 November.

6.2 The Chairperson noted that Brian Rowntree provided the Committee with a written submission but continued to decline the invitation to appear before the Committee to give evidence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Brian Rowntree inviting him to attend a meeting to give evidence.

6.3 The Chairperson noted that the Committee would receive training on budget scrutiny from RaISE in closed session at the start of its meeting of 20 November 2014.

6.4 The Chairperson noted that Second Stage of the Pensions Bill would be debated in the Assembly on Tuesday 18 November and that it is anticipated that Committee Stage will begin on 19 November.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to discuss the option to seek an extension to Committee Stage of the Pensions Bill at its meeting of 20 November 2014.

7. Proposed Statutory Rule: SR 275/2014 The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

The Committee had no objections to the Rule.

The Chairperson read the following motion into the record:

That the Committee for Social Development has considered Statutory Rule SR 275/2014 The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report has no objections to the Rule.

8. Correspondence

8.1 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for Social Development stating his intention to introduce the Regeneration Bill on 8 December 2014.

8.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel seeking contributions to its co-ordinated report on the 2015-16 budget from all departmental Committees. The Chairperson noted that the Committee is scheduled to receive a briefing from on the Department's 2015-16 budget proposals at its meeting of 4 December 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to submit a contribution to the Committee for Finance and Personnel's report based on the Department's briefing on 4 December.

8.3 The Chairperson noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel highlighting concern over the department's failure to bid for money from the Financial Transactions Capital fund.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the Department address this issue at the briefing in relation to the budget on 4 December.

8.4 The Committee noted correspondence from BDO in response to the Committee's request for further information in relation to Phase 3 of its Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider this letter as part of its review of evidence on 27 November 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to action the rest of the correspondence as outlines on the correspondence memo

9. Forward Work Programme

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

10. Any Other Business

Agreed: That the clerk schedule evidence sessions with Michael Sands, Jenny Palmer and Stephen Brimstone and notify the witnesses that the evidence will be taken under oath/affirmation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek advice on the refusal of witnesses to answer members' question.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 20 November 2014 at 10.00am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 2.05pm.

Alex Maskey
Chairperson, Committee for Social Development
20 November 2014