



# Northern Ireland Assembly

## COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday 26 February 2015**  
**Room 29, Parliament Buildings**

- Present: Mr Alex Maskey MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Mickey Brady MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Jim Allister MLA  
Mr Roy Beggs MLA  
Ms Paula Bradley MLA  
Mr Gregory Campbell MLA  
Mr Maurice Devenney MLA  
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA  
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA  
Mr Sammy Wilson MLA
- In Attendance: Dr Kevin Pelan (Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Alice McKelvey (Legal Services)  
Mrs Ashleigh Mitford (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Stewart Kennedy (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Richard Reid (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies: Mr Fra McCann MLA

The Chairperson declared the meeting open 10.05am.

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were as noted above.

#### **2. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The draft minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2015 were agreed.

### **3. Matters Arising**

**3.1** The Chairperson drew members' attention to correspondence from the Minister in relation to the DSD Special Adviser Fact-finding Report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to consider the correspondence in closed session

**3.2** The Chairperson drew members' attention to further information from the Department regarding the Rinmore stock transfer.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to consider this as a substantive agenda item at next week's meeting.

**3.3** The Committee considered a list of stakeholders who provided a written response to the Committee's call for evidence on the Regeneration Bill.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to schedule NILGA, NICVA, Juno Planning and Environmental Ltd and The Fermanagh Trust to give oral evidence to the Committee.

**3.4** The Committee noted correspondence from the Social Security Agency regarding Interviews under Caution.

### **4. 'Advising, Supporting, Empowering. A Strategy for the delivery of Generalist Advice Services 2015-2020' - Departmental Briefing**

The following officials joined the meeting at 10.10am:

- Michael Donnelly, Voluntary and Community Unit, Department for Social Development
- Harry Armstrong, Voluntary and Community Unit, Department for Social Development

*Ms Dolores Kelly MLA and Mr Sammy Wilson MLA joined the meeting at 10.15am*

The officials briefed the Committee on the consultation 'Advising, Supporting, Empowering. A Strategy for the delivery of Generalist Advice Services 2015-2020'.

The Committee noted the low level of attendees at the public consultation events.

Members questioned the officials on a number of issues including how the Strategy will address the longstanding issues in respect of the appeals process and how the Department will effectively resource the advice sector.

Members referred the officials to the recent assurances made by the Minister around the advice sector during the consideration stages of the Welfare Reform Bill. Members asked the officials to comment on the work being carried out by the Department to meet these assurances.

The Committee noted the importance of the advice sector and acknowledged service providers as being key partners.

## **5. Supporting People Fund – Briefing by Unison**

The following representatives joined the meeting at 10.12am:

- Brian Pelan, Local Organiser, Unison
- Niall McCarroll, Branch Secretary, Unison
- Emma Devine, First Housing
- Susan Scullion, Triangle Housing
- Moira Wilson, Family Works Counselling

*Ms Paula Bradley MLA declared an interest as a member of Unison.*

*Mr Roy Beggs MLA declared an interest as a committee member of a sure start programme.*

The representatives briefed the Committee on their concerns in relation to the terms and conditions of employment of workers in the community and voluntary sector.

The representatives took questions from the Committee and discussed the proposal to include a social clause in funding applications for community and voluntary organisations to ensure better terms and conditions for frontline staff.

*Mr Mickey Brady MLA left the meeting at 11.44am*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed for the Chairperson to meet with Unison representatives at a later date to help inform and prepare Terms of Reference for a piece of work which the Committee will consider for inclusion in its forward work programme.

*Mr Sammy Wilson MLA left the meeting at 12.02pm*

The representatives left the meeting at 12.04pm

*Mr Stewart Dickson left the meeting at 12.06pm*

## **6. SL1 The Social Security (Claims and Payments) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015**

*Agreed:* The Committee was content for the Rule to be made

## **7. SL1 The Automatic Enrolment (Earnings Trigger and Qualifying Earnings Band) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015**

*Agreed:* The Committee was content for the Rule to be made

## **8. SL1 The Child Support (Miscellaneous and Consequential Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015**

*Agreed:* The Committee was content for the Rule to be made

**9. SL1 The Occupational Pension Schemes (Levies) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2015**

*Agreed:* The Committee was content for the Rule to be made

**10. SL1 The Jobseekers Allowance (Extended Periods of Sickness) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015**

*Agreed:* The Committee was content for the Rule to be made

**11. SL1 Social Security (Low Earnings Threshold) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015**

*Agreed:* The Committee was content for the Rule to be made

**12. SL1 Social Security Pensions (Flat Rate Accrual Amount) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015**

*Agreed:* The Committee was content for the Rule to be made

**13. SL1 The Social Security Revaluation of Earnings Factors Order (Northern Ireland) 2015**

*Agreed:* The Committee was content for the Rule to be made

**14. SR 64 The Pneumoconiosis etc (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2015**

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 the Statutory Rule SR 64 The Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules report, recommends that it be affirmed by the Assembly.”*

**15. SR 65 The Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) Regulations (NI) 2015**

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 the Statutory Rule SR 65 The Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations*

*(Northern Ireland) 2015 and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules report, recommends that it be confirmed by the Assembly.”*

## **16. Correspondence**

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

## **17. Forward Work Programme**

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

*Ms Paula Bradley MLA and Mr Sammy Wilson MLA left the meeting at 12.10pm*

**The Chairperson suspended the meeting at 12.10pm**

**The meeting moved into closed session at 12:36pm**

*Mr Stewart Dickson MLA re-joined the meeting at 12.36pm*

## **18. Committee Inquiry – Phase 3**

The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister for Social Development regarding the DFP fact-finding report into the alleged actions of the Minister’s Special Adviser.

The Committee noted that the Minister did not intend to share further material in relation to the Report.

*Ms Paula Bradley MLA re-joined the meeting at 12.46pm*

*Mr Sammy Wilson MLA re-joined the meeting at 12.48pm*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to invite the Minister to meet with the Chairperson to agree to a mechanism of arbitration. This would involve inviting the Lord Chief Justice to appoint a High Court Judge to examine the fact-finding report in the context of the section 44 notice and to determine if further information should be disclosed.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Speaker to request that the notice issued under section 44 (7) of the 1998 Act be extended until 5pm on Thursday 5 March 2015.

*Mr Gregory Campbell MLA, Mr Maurice Devenney MLA, Mr Sammy Wilson MLA and Mr Stewart Dickson MLA left the meeting at 13.39pm*

The motion was proposed:

*That the Committee for Social Development publishes the redacted version of the DFP fact-finding report into the alleged actions of the Minister’s Special Adviser on its website.*

The Committee divided:

Ayes; 4

Noes; 1

Abstentions; 0

Did not vote; 1

AYES:

Mr Alex Maskey MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Jim Allister MLA

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA

NOES:

Ms Paula Bradley MLA

DID NOT VOTE:

Mr Roy Beggs MLA

The motion was carried.

### **19. Committee Inquiry – Review of Evidence Phase 3**

The Committee noted a number of items of evidence in relation to Phase 3 of its Inquiry.

The Committee was content to consider a first draft report at its meeting on 5 March 2015.

### **20. Committee Inquiry – Phase 2 Report**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to keep paragraph 55 in the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed draft minutes of proceedings to be included in the appendices of the Report

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that its Report be embargoed until 13 March 2015

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Report be printed.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to issue a Press Release on its Report on Phase 2 of its Inquiry.

### **21. Date, time and place of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Social Development will take place on 5 March 2015 at 10.00am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 13:54pm

**Alex Maskey**

**Chairperson, Committee for Social Development**

**5 March 2015**