



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 5 February 2015
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 Maurice Devenney MLA
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
Mr Fra McCann 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 Wilson MLA

The Chairperson declared the meeting open to the public at 10.09am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as noted above.

Agreed: The Committee noted that Michael Copeland MLA will be replaced on the Committee by Roy Beggs MLA and agreed to write to Mr Copeland thanking him for his contribution to the Committee.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2015 were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 The Chairperson noted that following clause-by-clause consideration and evidence sessions, the Committee would move into closed session for its initial consideration of the draft report into Phase 2 of its Inquiry.

3.2 The Committee received correspondence in relation to its Section 44 notice requiring the release of the fact-finding report into the DSD Special Adviser.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Speaker advising that it had agreed to an extension to the deadline for the production of the fact-finding report to 5pm on 12 February 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Social Development to inform him of this extension and to advise that he and/or his officials may make representations to the Committee on this matter at its meeting on 12 February.

3.3 *Agreed:* The Committee agreed to convene a meeting at 11.00am on Monday 9 February 2015 to take a briefing from DSD officials on the Minister's proposed amendments to the Welfare Reform Bill.

3.4 *Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek clarity from DSD on the £12m 'headroom' included in the Spring Supplementary Estimates in advance of the debate on Supply Resolutions on Monday 9 February 2015.

4. Pensions Bill – Final clause-by-clause consideration

The following officials joined the meeting at 10.44am:

- Gerry McCann, Social Security, Policy and Legislation Division, DSD
- Seamus Cassidy, Social Security, Policy and Legislation Division, DSD
- Doreen Roy, Social Security, Policy and Legislation Division, DSD

Dolores Kelly MLA left the meeting at 10.44am.

The officials briefed the Committee on further issues raised by Cruse Bereavement Care.

The Committee conducted its formal clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill.

Agreed: Clauses 1 to 54 were agreed as drafted.

Agreed: Schedules 1 to 20 were agreed as drafted.

Agreed: The long title of the Bill was agreed as drafted.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

The officials left the meeting at 11.08am.

5. Budget Cuts – Briefing by West Belfast Partnership Board

The following officials joined the meeting at 11.09am:

- Geraldine McAteer, CEO, West Belfast Partnership Board

- Gerry McConville, Chairperson, West Belfast Partnership Board
- Glenda Davies, Sandy Row Community Group
- Breige Arthurs, South Belfast Partnership Board

Alex Maskey MLA declared an interest as a former member of the West Belfast Partnership Board.

Fra McCann MLA declared an interest as a former member of the West Belfast Partnership Board.

Mickey Brady MLA declared an interest as a member of the Committee of the Confederation of Community Groups, Newry.

The representatives briefed the Committee on their concerns about the potential impact of the proposed cuts to the Neighbourhood Renewal budget outlined in the Department's 2015-16 spending and savings proposals.

The representatives also informed the Committee that Partnerships had already been advised of cuts to specific organisations and programmes of up to 40%.

The representatives took questions from the Committee and discussed services provided by community organisations, the importance of funding and the value for money represented by these groups.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the department to seek clarification on the details of proposed budget cuts to these services.

The officials left the meeting at 12.20pm.

Proceedings were suspended at 12.20pm.

Proceedings resumed in public session at 12.39pm.

Present: Mr Alex Maskey MLA (Chairperson)
 Mr Mickey Brady MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Jim Allister MLA
 Ms Paula Bradley MLA
 Mr Maurice Devenney MLA
 Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
 Mr Fra McCann MLA

6. Fuel Poverty – Briefing by National Energy Action

The following officials joined the meeting at 12.39pm:

- Pat Austin, Director, National Energy Action
- Paul Wallace, Development Manager, National Energy Action

Fra McCann MLA joined the meeting at 12.40pm.

The officials briefed the Committee on the current fuel poverty landscape and the termination of the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP).

The officials took questions from members. The Committee noted that some of the issues raised at today's briefing were addressed in a letter received from the Department in response to a previous query.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a letter relating to the Affordable Warmth Programme to the NEA representatives.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to review correspondence it has previously received from the Department in relation to Affordable Warmth.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment for further information regarding the ending of NISEP.

The officials left the meeting at 1.12pm

7. SL1 The Annual Up-Rating of Pensions and Benefits

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

8. SR 19 The housing Benefit (Income from Earnings) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 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 SR19 the Housing Benefit (Income and Earnings) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report has no objections to the Rule.

9. Correspondence

9.1 *Agreed:* The Committee noted correspondence from Ballynafeigh Community Development Association and agreed to write to DSD in relation to a delay in responses to applications for funding.

9.2 The Committee noted correspondence from DSD in relation to Affordable Warmth.

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

10. Forward Work Programme

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

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Social Development will take place on Monday 9 February 2015 at 11.00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting moved into closed session at 1.17pm.

The Committee considered the draft report on Phase 2 of its Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bring forward any suggested amendments to the report in advance of the meeting on 12 February 2015.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.21pm.

Alex Maskey

Chairperson, Committee for Social Development

12 February 2015