



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 15 January 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 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 Maurice Devenney MLA

The meeting began in closed session at 10.04am.

- The Committee took legal advice in respect of its powers to compel the release of the fact-finding report into the DSD Special Adviser.

Sammy Wilson MLA joined the meeting at 10.11am.

The motion was proposed:

That the Committee for Social Development asks the Speaker to issue a Section 44 notice compelling the Minister for Social Development to release the DFP fact-finding report into the alleged actions of the Minister's Special Adviser.

The Committee divided:

Ayes; 6

Noes; 3

Abstentions; 0

AYES:

Mr Alex Maskey MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Mickey Brady MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Jim Allister MLA

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA

Mr Fra McCann MLA

NOES:

Ms Paula Bradley MLA

Mr Gregory Campbell MLA

Mr Sammy Wilson MLA

The motion was carried.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue a letter asking the Speaker to issue a Section 44 notice compelling the Minister for Social Development to release the DFP fact-finding report into the alleged actions of the Minister's Special Adviser.

- The Committee discussed issues raised in the BBC NI Spotlight programme of 3 July 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to discuss the issue of Rinmore again once further information on this matter has been received from the Department.

- The Committee considered the report on the LCM relating to the Westminster Pensions Schemes Bill, considered at the meeting of 8 January 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish its report on the LCM relating to the Westminster Pensions Schemes Bill.

The Chairperson declared the meeting open to the public at 10.37am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as noted above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2015 were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 *Agreed:* The Committee noted the proposed schedule for remaining sessions in relation to the Inquiry.

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 10.42am:

- Stephen Brimstone, Special Adviser, DSD

Mr Brimstone read the affirmation as follows:

I, Stephen Brimstone, do solemnly, sincerely and truly declare that the evidence I shall give shall be truthful and honest, and that I will give the Committee all such information and assistance as I can to enable it to discharge its responsibilities.

Mr Brimstone took questions in relation to the Committee's Inquiry.

Mr Brimstone left the meeting at 12.14pm.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

The meeting was suspended at 12.14pm.

The meeting resumed in public session at 12.21pm.

Present: Mr Alex Maskey MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Mickey Brady MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Ms Paula Bradley MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
Mr Fra McCann MLA
Mr Sammy Wilson MLA

A member referred to evidence given by Cllr Jenny Palmer at its meeting of 8 January 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to write to Alderman Brown for clarification on this matter.

Paula Bradley MLA joined the meeting at 12.23pm.

5. Tenant Priorities for Housing Services – Departmental Briefing

The following officials joined the meeting at 12.23pm:

- Jim Wilkinson, Director of Housing, DSD
- Madeleine Nelson, Landlord Project Director, DSD

The officials briefed the Committee on its 2014 survey of NIHE tenants' priorities for the future, as part of the Committee and Department's ongoing commitment to engagement in relation to the Department's Social Housing Reform Programme. The officials noted that this was a preliminary survey and that more detail will follow.

The officials took questions from the Committee. Members raised issues that they considered should be addressed in subsequent surveys.

Agreed: The Department agreed to write to the Committee to confirm what information survey respondents were given in relation to the Social Housing Reform Programme prior to completing the survey; how shared space would be considered in the Social Housing Reform Programme; and to address some additional issues raised during the briefing.

The officials left the meeting at 1.16pm.

6. Correspondence

- 6.1** *Agreed:* The Committee agreed to invite the Rural Resident's Forum to brief the Committee on issues of social housing in rural communities.
- 6.2** *Agreed:* The Committee agreed to give further consideration to a letter from NICEM regarding a complaint received about a member of SSA staff.
- 6.3** The Committee noted correspondence from the Housing Rights Service's Private Tenants' Forum.
- 6.4** The Committee agreed to action the rest of the correspondence as outlined on the correspondence memo.

7. Forward Work Programme

The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme as drafted.

8. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Social Development will take place on Thursday 22 January 2015 at 10.00am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.17pm.

Alex Maskey
Chairperson, Committee for Social Development

22 January 2015