



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

14 March 2024

Meeting Location: Room 30

Present:

Philip McGuigan MLA (Chairperson)

Steve Aiken MLA

Patrick Brown MLA

Joanne Bunting MLA

Declan Kearney MLA

Emma Sheerin MLA

Present by Video:

David Brooks MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Jonathan Buckley MLA

Sorcha Eastwood MLA

Apologies:

There were no apologies.

In Attendance: Ms Marie Austin (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Sinead Kelly (Senior Assistant Clerk)
Mr Oliver Bellew (Assistant Clerk)
Ms Marion Johnson (Assistant Clerk)
Ms Suzanne Patton (Clerical Officer)
Ms Shelley Garner (Clerical Officer)

In Attendance by Video:

Ms Leigh Gibson (Senior Assistant Clerk)

The meeting commenced at 10:02 a.m. in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 7 March 2024.

3. Matters Arising

European Parliament Recess Dates

Members were advised of the impact of European Parliament recess dates on the publication of EU acts and the work of the Committee.

Committee Engagement

Members were advised that a private virtual meeting with the House of Lords European Affairs Sub-Committee on the Windsor Framework had been arranged for 21 March 2024 in Room 30 at 10:00am, with the Committee meeting starting at 10:45am.

Members were reminded that the Committee will also host an in-person meeting with Members of the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee following next week's Committee meeting.

4. COM (2023) 395 Proposal to amend Regulation (EU) 2017/852 on Mercury – The British Dental Association

The following representatives of the British Dental Association, Northern Ireland, joined the meeting at 10.06am:

Tristen Kelso	Director, British Dental Association, Northern Ireland
Roz McMullan	Chair, Northern Ireland Council, British Dental Association
Ciara Gallagher	Chair, Northern Ireland Dental Practice Committee, British Dental Association

The representatives briefed the Committee as part of its evidence gathering exercise in relation to COM (2023) 395, a proposal to amend Regulation (EU) 2017/852 on Mercury.

The evidence session was followed by a question and answer session.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The representatives agreed to provide information on the EU Member states that have signed up to the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The representatives left the meeting at 11.27am.

Joanne Bunting left the meeting at 11.28am

Agreed: Given that a number of the issues raised during the evidence session fall within remit of the Department of Health, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, and the Executive Office, the Committee agreed to forward a link to the Hansard of the oral evidence session to the departments, and to copy their respective Committees.

Joanne Bunting joined the meeting at 11.29am

Agreed: In anticipation of a notification being received when the EU act is published in the Official Journal, the Committee agreed to request legal advice from Legal Services and an initial departmental assessment of impact from the Executive Office, and to schedule evidence sessions when the completed templates have been received.

Members discussed the approach to gathering evidence in relation to the proposed EU Act and other actions.

The question was put that the Committee should follow its agreed processes and continue to gather evidence in relation to COM (2023) 395: proposal to amend Regulation (EU) 2017/852 on Mercury.

The Committee divided: Ayes 5; Noes 4; Abstain 0

AYES

Mr Philip McGuigan
Mr Declan Kearney
Ms Emma Sheerin
Ms Sorcha Eastwood
Mr Patrick Brown

NOES

Mr Steve Aiken
Ms Joanne Bunting
Mr David Brooks
Mr Jonathan Buckley

Agreed: That the Committee would follow its agreed processes and continue to gather evidence in relation to COM (2023) 395: proposal to amend Regulation (EU) 2017/852 on Mercury.

The question was put that, given the Committee's commitment to early engagement, to also write to the Joint Consultative Working Group to inform of the

significant issues raised in relation to COM (2023) 395: proposal to amend Regulation (EU) 2017/852 on Mercury, and continue the evidence gathering exercise.

The Committee divided: Ayes 6; Noes 3; Abstain 0

AYES

Mr Steve Aiken

Ms Joanne Bunting

Mr David Brooks

Mr Jonathan Buckley

Ms SORCHA Eastwood

Mr Patrick Brown

NOES

Mr Philip McGuigan

Mr Declan Kearney

Ms Emma Sheerin

Agreed: That, given the Committee's commitment to early engagement, to also write to the Joint Consultative Working Group to inform of the significant issues in relation to the COM (2023) 395: proposal to amend Regulation (EU) 2017/852 on Mercury, and continue the evidence gathering exercise.

5. Correspondence

5.1. Members noted a response from Professor David Phinnemore, Queen's University Belfast, to the Committee's request for examples of Association Agreements between the EU and European states, where comparisons could be drawn with Northern Ireland, and lessons could be learned.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the response to the Committee for the Executive Office for information.

5.2 Members considered a response from the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Assembly, to the Committee's request for information on the resources that will be made available to support the work of the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Assembly Commission regarding future funding.

6. Chairperson's Business

No business was raised.

7. Any Other Business

A Member referenced the new EU act that was notified to the Assembly on 21 February 2024, on geographical indication protection for craft and industrial products. It was noted that an applicability motion had not been tabled.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Speaker and the Executive Office for an update on the position now that the deadline had passed for an applicability motion to be placed on the Order Paper.

8. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 21 March 2024 at 10:45am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, due to the public holiday on 18 March 2024, meeting papers should issue on 19 March 2024.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.54 am.

Philip McGuigan, MLA

Chairperson, Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee