



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for The Executive Office

## Minutes of Proceedings

**Wednesday 21 May 2025**

**Meeting Location:** Room 30, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

- Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)
- Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Mr Timothy Gaston MLA
- Mr Harry Harvey MLA
- Mr Brian Kingston MLA
- Ms Áine Murphy MLA

**Online:** Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

**Apologies:**

- Sinéad McLaughlin MLA
- Ms Claire Sugden MLA

**In Attendance:** Mr Nick Mitford (Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Sarah-Anne McKinley (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Neil Porter (Clerical Supervisor)  
Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)

*The meeting commenced at 2.33pm in public session.*

### **1. Apologies**

As above.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson advised the Committee that she has accepted an invitation to attend the next meeting of the Interparliamentary Forum, which will be held in Westminster on 12 June 2025.

### **4. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 14 May 2025.

### **5. Matters Arising**

#### **5.1 Draft response to Correspondence - Gender perspective in the Truth Recovery Process**

The Committee considered a draft response to the Committee's correspondence of the 30 April regarding gender perspective in the Truth Recovery Process.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to issue the draft response on behalf of the Committee.

## **6. Update from overseas bureaus: Beijing, Washington & Brussels – Oral Briefing**

The witnesses joined the meeting at 2.34pm in person and online.

Members received a briefing from:

- Kerry Curran, Director, Northern Ireland Bureau, China
- Aodhán Connolly, Director, Office of the Northern Ireland Executive, Brussels
- Richard Cushnie, Director/Counsellor, Northern Ireland Bureau, North America
- Tom Reid, Inter-Governmental & Internal Relations, the Executive Office

The witnesses provided an update on the overseas bureaus.

Brian Kingston declared an interest as having visited Washington DC and Shenyang in China when Lord Mayor in 2016.

The oral briefing session was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

*The witnesses left the meeting at 4.11pm.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the First and deputy First Minister to request the following information:

- Details as to why third-generation children of individuals with terrorist-related convictions from Northern Ireland are being refused entry into the United States by U.S. Customs and Border Protection.
- Details regarding the value for money of the Northern Ireland Bureau in China, including how the spend of public funds are assessed regarding its effectiveness.
- The Committee put on record its concern surrounding the lack of visibility around social media and communication regarding the work of the overseas

bureaus. The Committee also requests further information regarding the Communications Plan for the bureaus, including a timeframe for when it will be published.

- An update on the timeline for the draft Investment Strategy, including when it is expected to be submitted to the Executive for consideration.
- Details on the reported persecution of Christians in China, and whether the Northern Ireland Bureau in China is aware of these reports.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to take a short comfort break and suspend the meeting.

*The meeting was suspended at 4.20pm.*

*The meeting resumed at 4.27pm in closed session.*

## **7. Feedback on draft final report: Inquiry into Gaps in Equality Legislation**

*The meeting moved into closed session at 4.27pm.*

*The meeting moved into open session at 4.33pm.*

Members discussed the second draft of the final report for the Inquiry.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed for the parties to submit any outstanding responses to the Clerk by Wednesday 28 May.

## **8. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee noted a response from Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council to the Committee's correspondence from the 8 May requesting details of the allocation of Local Change Fund in relation to Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider further action when all responses have been received from all local council areas.

- iii. The Committee noted a response from the Department for Infrastructure to the Committee's correspondence from the 26 March to ascertain whether their Department has a role delivering the Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy; and if so, how much funding was bid for and/or earmarked by their Department and for what activities for the Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy, given it has been identified as a priority in the Programme for Government.
- iv. The Committee noted a response from the Committee for Justice to the Committee's correspondence from the 26 March to ascertain whether their Department has a role delivering the Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy; and if so, how much funding was bid for and/or earmarked by their Department and for what activities for the Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy, given it has been identified as a priority in the Programme for Government.
- v. The Committee noted a response from the Department for Communities to the Committee's correspondence from the 26 March to ascertain whether their Department has a role delivering the Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy; and if so, how much funding was bid for and/or earmarked by their Department and for what activities for the Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy, given it has been identified as a priority in the Programme for Government.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider further action when responses have been received from all Statutory Committees.

- vi. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office to the Committee's correspondence requesting information on a Trauma Informed Approach in relation to HIA.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to VSS to congratulate them on becoming the first organisation here to be accredited with a Silver 'Trauma-informed: Working with Trauma Quality Mark,' in recognition of their approach to identifying and responding to the needs of victims and survivors.

- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the EU Affairs Manager on the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee - Annual report 2024.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to add the report as a relevant paper for the EU session on the 28 May.

- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office regarding its response to the Covid-19 inquiry module one report.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that they keep the Committee updated on the feedback once completed in response to the Module one recommendations.

Carál Ní Chuilín declared an interest as being Minister for Communities between June 2020 to December 2020.

- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from Pivotal including a report titled 'Achieving greater integration in Northern Ireland: Young people's voices' and a request to meet with the Committee to talk about the issues and ideas in the research project about how to achieve greater integration in education, housing and communities.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange, in the first instance, an informal meeting with the Clerk to discuss this work, with a view to arranging a further briefing with the Committee at a later date.

- x. The Committee noted a response to the Committee's correspondence from the 11 April requesting information in relation to the variances in the outturns between the January and February Outturn and Forecast Outturn.
- xi. The Committee noted a news release from the Executive Office - First Minister, deputy First Minister and Minister for Education marking the beginning of construction of the Strule Shared Education Campus in Omagh.
- xii. The Committee noted a response from the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service to the Committee's correspondence of the 14 April requesting information on the Kings Honours List.

xiii. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules thirty-ninth report.

There were no rules for the attention of the Committee.

xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lords Scrutiny Committee regarding communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Commission work programme 2025 .

xv. The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lords Scrutiny Committee regarding the decision of the Joint Committee to add EU legislation to the Windsor Framework on the protection of geographical indications for craft and industrial products and amending Regulations (EU) 201 7/1 001 and (EU) 2019/1753.

xvi. The Committee noted a response from the Department for Communities to the Committee's correspondence of the 14 April regarding HIA and Personal Independence Payments.

## **9 Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered the draft forward work programme.

The Committee noted an update from the Assistant Clerk in relation to a confirmed oral briefing for next week's meeting from the Department on the Truth Recovery and Redress Bill, to provide a policy update on this work.

The Committee noted an update from the Clerk regarding the addition of an agenda item for next week's meeting which will be the Strategic Investment Board's Retention and Disposal Schedule. This will be considered in the same way as secondary legislation and the Committee has a role in scrutinising the actions of their respective Departments. While Retention and Disposal Schedules fall to the Committee for Communities, the Strategic Investment Board is an Arm's Length Body of the Executive Office and so is considered by both Committees.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to proceed with the remaining briefings as set out in the forward work programme.

## **10 Any Other Business**

None

## **11 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 28 May at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 4.44pm.*

**Paula Bradshaw MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office**

**Wednesday 21 May 2025**