



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 1 July 2026

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Phillip Brett MLA

Ms Deborah Erskine MLA

Mr Timothy Gaston MLA

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

Ms Áine Murphy MLA

Online:

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Apologies:

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

In Attendance: Mr Trevor Allen (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Aoife Keating-Fitzpatrick (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Sarah-Anne McKinley (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Neil Porter (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As indicated above.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Chairperson's Business

Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalane Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Bill completed its Final Stage on 30 June, marking a significant milestone for victims and survivors.

The Chairperson advised Members that a press release to highlight the Bill completing its Final Stage had been drafted by the Communications team.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue the press release as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Chair of Consultative Forum to thank her for her work on the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Truth Recovery Programme Director to thank him and his team for their work on the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for a timeframe of when the Redress Scheme is expected to be in operation.

3.1 Consultative Forum to Minister of Health – Adoption Records

The Chairperson advised Members that she received correspondence from the Chair of the Victims and Survivors Consultative Forum to the Minister for Health, seeking a meeting to discuss access to adoption records in the context of the forthcoming Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Chair of the Victims and Survivors Consultative Forum to advise of the Committee's most recent correspondence to the Health Minister on the matter and to request that the Forum keep the Committee updated should a meeting take place with the Minister of Health.

3.2 Minister for Communities – Access to Records

The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee received a reply from the Minister for Communities to its correspondence of 1 May 2026 regarding PRONI and access to records.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing from PRONI following completion of work on Phase 3 of the Truth Recovery Programme.

3.3 Voice of Justice Alliance – Meeting Request

The Chairperson advised Members that she received correspondence from Voice of Justice Alliance, seeking an introductory meeting given the Committee's role in matters relating to equality, good relations, racial equality and social inclusion.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an informal meeting with the Chair and deputy Chair in the first instance.

3.4 Survivors Together – Meeting Request

The Chairperson advised Members that she received correspondence from Survivors Together seeking a meeting to discuss their concerns around the long-term financial commitment from TEO and COSICA.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister requesting a response to the outstanding correspondence of 6 March 2026

regarding COSICA, and to arrange an informal meeting with Survivors Together and the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 24 June 2026.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 & 5.6 Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR) – Follow up Queries and Minister for Foreign Affairs & Trade – ICRIR

The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee received a response from the ICRIR to the Committee's correspondence of 17 June 2026 regarding follow-up queries from their oral briefing session. The Committee also received a response from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to its correspondence of 18 June 2026 in relation to the ICRIR.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to clarify the number of requests for information made by the ICRIR to An Garda Síochána and to invite the Minister to attend a future Committee meeting to provide oral evidence on the matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the ICRIR outlining the position of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade in relation to requests for information from ICRIR and to seek the Commissioner's views on this matter.

5.2 Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission - Invitation

The Chairperson reminded Members that, at its meeting on 17 June 2026, the Committee agreed to invite the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) to provide an oral briefing on its views regarding the ICRIR. The Chairperson advised Members that a response had now been received to the

Committee's correspondence of 17 June 2026, in which the Commission declined the invitation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the NIHRC to invite them again to attend a future Committee meeting and to highlight that the Equality Commission appeared before the Committee in light of the Dillon judgment, and that the NIHRC had previously appeared before the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee as part of its inquiry into the legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

5.3 Draft Press Release – Victims' Payment Scheme

The Chairperson reminded Members that at its Strategic Planning meeting the Committee agreed to issue a press release to highlight the Victims' Payment Scheme's closure to new applications in August 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule issuing of the press release for 16 July 2026.

5.4 Equality Commission – Engagement with Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS)

The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee had received a response to its correspondence of 24 June 2026, asking whether any engagement had taken place between the Equality Commission and the NICS. The Chairperson further advised that the Commission had confirmed that it had not engaged with the NICS regarding its decision to withdraw from participation in Pride parades.

The Committee noted this item.

5.5 Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA) – Working Paper

The Chairperson advised Members that COSICA has developed a new working paper on the need for a child abuse prevalence study in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite COSICA to provide oral evidence to the Committee on the study. Following that briefing, the Committee will consider whether any further requests should be commissioned from RalSe on this area.

5.6 First Minister and deputy First Minister – Oral Briefing

The Chairperson advised Members that the First and deputy First Minister responded to the Committee's correspondence of 24 June 2026 advising that the First Minister will be attending the ceremony to mark the start of Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in Dublin, and the deputy First Minister will be attending the commemoration of the Somme in France on Wednesday 1 July 2026.

The Committee noted this item.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Committee team should liaise with the Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer (DALO) to confirm dates for oral evidence sessions with the First Minister and deputy First Minister from September 2026 to the end of the mandate.

6. Oral Briefing – Race Relations Update – Departmental Officials

Agreed: The Committee agreed for Hansard to record the oral evidence session.

Officials joined the meeting at 2.29pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Orla McStravick, Director of Race Relations and Integration, TEO
- Colin Moffett, Director, Civil Contingencies and Strategic Risk Management, TEO
- Gavin King, Head of T:BUC District Councils, Camps & Interventions, TEO

Officials provided an update briefing on TEO's work in relation to Race Relations.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 2.27pm and returned at 2.34pm.

Stewart Dickson left the meeting at 3.12pm.

Áine Murphy left the meeting at 3.12pm and returned at 3.19pm.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked officials for their attendance.

Officials left the meeting at 3.22pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to TEO in the following terms:

- That TEO should conduct a scoping exercise to better understand the community factors contributing to racist disorder within the specific context of Northern Ireland.
- To seek clarification regarding the timing of an email issued to groups on the Monday 8 June 2026 in relation to T:BUC camps whilst civil unrest was ongoing.
- In relation to council engagement meetings, how many occasions have MEARS attended such meetings when officials from TEO were also present.
- How the £500,000 response fund will be allocated and spent, including the intended areas of expenditure and the criteria for distributing the funding.

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

The meeting was suspended at 3:22pm.

Proceedings continued in open session at 3.30pm with the following Members present: Paula Bradshaw, Phillip Brett, Deborah Erskine, Timothy Gaston, Claire Sugden, and Áine Murphy. Stewart Dickson and Sinéad McLaughlin online.

7. Oral Briefing: RalSe – Ending Violence Against Women & Girls (EVAWG) Inquiry Scoping Paper

Officials joined the meeting at 3.31pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Annabel Reid, Senior Research Officer, RalSe

- Kathryn Barr, Research Officer, RalSe

Officials briefed the Committee on its Scoping Paper for a potential Committee Inquiry into EVAWG.

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

The Chairperson thanked officials for their attendance.

Officials left the meeting at 3.56pm.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 3.56pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, if Committee Stage of Claire Sugden's Members Bill is referred to the Committee in the Autumn, there will be insufficient time to consider the Bill and conduct an Inquiry. Therefore, the Committee will hold a roundtable event with recipients of Local and Regional Change funding before March 2027, to assess the impact of the funding. A committee report will be produced of the event, published and forwarded to TEO.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask RalSe to follow up with the Committee on any relevant data relating to EVAWG that is due to be published in the autumn.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to review the RalSe paper to identify relevant questions that could be used when questioning Departmental officials at a future meeting on the EVAWG Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include EVAWG in its legacy report as a potential area of Inquiry to be considered and taken forward by the successor Committee.

8. Delegated Legislation – SL1: The Salaries (Public Services Ombudsman) Order (Northern Ireland) 2026.

The Committee considered a proposal by the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission to make a Statutory Rule relating to the salary payable to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee considered a response from Goggleminds to the Committee's correspondence of 10 June 2026 in relation to EVAWG and the Small Business Research Initiative.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek further information on which organisations are currently piloting, or have plans to pilot, the AVA training simulation platform in Northern Ireland as part of the funding provided to Goggleminds. The Committee also agreed to request details of the outputs of the programme, the organisations involved in its delivery, and the number of participants accessing it.

- iii. The Committee considered a response from TEO to the Committee's correspondence of 4 June 2026 asking whether any resources could be made available to the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors (CVS) to support research into the demographics of victims and survivors in Northern Ireland, or whether TEO has any plans to commission such research that groups could access.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this correspondence to write to the Department asking that they keep the Committee updated on any engagement between TEO officials and CVS once final proposals are developed.

- iv. The Committee considered responses from the First Minister and deputy First Minister, and from the Department, to the Committee's

correspondence of 8 May and 12 June 2026 in relation to legal fees to date for the Irish Language Commissioner.

Timothy Gaston read into the record the breakdown of the legal fees spent by the Commissioner.

The Committee agreed to note these items.

- v. The Committee considered two items of correspondence from individuals in relation to threatening behaviour towards girls in a local school.

Agreed: The Committee agreed noted these items and agreed to forward the correspondence to the Minister of Education and the Education Authority, as the matters raised relate to decisions taken by the Education Authority and the school's Board of Governors.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to ask the Head of the Civil Service, when appearing before the Committee on 23 September 2026, about the possibility of developing an Equality Impact Assessment specifically to address issues relating to the EVAWG.

Deborah Erskine put on record that recent inspections within the school flagged no safeguarding concerns.

- vi. The Committee considered correspondence, and a follow-up letter, from an individual to the First Minister and deputy First Minister in relation to the Justice Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note these items and to forward to the Assembly's Information Standards Office to be responded to in accordance with procedures for the processing of requests pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding the Regional Balance Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department asking whether TEO has any views or comments on this Bill and whether there are any implications or any role for TEO arising from the Bill.

- viii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual in relation to the use of electric vehicle charges at Parliament Buildings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and to forward the correspondence to the Assembly Commission as the matter is currently under review by the Commission.

- ix. The Committee considered correspondence from the AERA Committee regarding the Hunting with Dogs Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department asking whether TEO has any views or comments on this Bill and whether there are any implications or any role for TEO arising from the Bill.

- x. The Committee considered a response from the Minister for Communities to its correspondence of 24 April 2026 in relation to the legal and operational requirements for a potential cross-agency data sharing framework with the New Foundations Programme, or to identify if there are any existing statutory powers that could be used to support improved service co-ordination for victims and survivors.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and to give further consideration to the correspondence when COSICA next attends a meeting of the Committee.

- xi. The Committee noted a Hansard Report of 17 June 2026 on the ICRIR May Review Report – 17 June 2026.
- xii. The Committee noted a response from the Minister for Communities to its correspondence of 12 June 2026 in relation to Grand Central Station.
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Justice regarding the Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime to be added to NIPSO's remit.
- xiv. The Committee noted a response from the First Minister and deputy First Minister to its correspondence of 24 April 2026 in relation to the Victims' Support Programme.
- xv. The Committee noted a response from the Department to its correspondence of 24 April 2026 in relation to EVAWG and the First Delivery Plan.

- xvi. The Committee noted a Written Statement from the First Minister and deputy First Minister, and a news release, on the Appointment of the new Police Ombudsman.
- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee of Finance in relation to its Inquiry into Performance and Culture of the NICS.
- xviii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Assembly's Legal Services and the 70th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules. There are no rules in the report for the attention of this Committee.
- xix. The Committee noted a report from Ulster University on 'Unlocking Northern Ireland's Potential'.
- xx. The Committee noted an ISNI Investing Activity Report dated 28 June 2026.
- xxi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Commissioner for Public Appointments on the publication of her Annual Report 2025-2026.
- xxii. The Committee noted a response from the Department to its correspondence of 21 May 2026 regarding Module 2 of the Covid Inquiry.
- xxiii. The Committee noted a Hansard Report of 24 June 2026 on the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.
- xxiv. The Committee noted a TEO News Release: 'Ministers welcome Public Inquiry and Redress Scheme Legislation'.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the draft forward work programme.

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, due to the volume of legislation currently being considered by the Justice Committee, it will schedule the previously cancelled concurrent meeting with the Justice Committee as a meeting of this committee.

11. Any Other Business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Head of the Civil Service asking for information on the scheduled review relating to the conduct of Jeffrey Donaldson during his tenure as a junior Minister in TEO. The Committee agreed to request clarification on when the review will be taken forward, the process, timescales involved, and the terms of reference for the review.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 9 September 2026 at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.29pm

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Chairperson, Committee for The Executive Office

Wednesday 9 September 2026