



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for Justice

### Minutes of Proceedings

**Thursday 29 May 2025**

**Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast**

**Present:**

Joanne Bunting MLA (Chairperson)

Maurice Bradley MLA

Stephen Dunne MLA

Connie Egan MLA

Ciara Ferguson MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Deirdre Hargey MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Danny Baker MLA

Doug Beattie MLA

Justin McNulty MLA

**In Attendance:**

Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)

Thomas McKillop (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Gareth Black (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Jonny Redpath (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Stephen Corr (Clerical Supervisor)

Aaron Pakenham (Clerical Officer)

*The meeting commenced at 2.02pm in public session.*

**Agreed:** That the oral evidence session with Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland on its report ‘Transforming the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland: A strategic overview’, and the oral evidence sessions with the Department of Justice on the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill and the Crime and Policing Bill Legislative Consent Memorandums would be recorded by Hansard.

*Danny Baker declared an interest in relation to an immediate family member who works for the Probation Board for Northern Ireland.*

*Joanne Bunting declared an interest in relation to an immediate family member who works in the legal profession.*

*The Chairperson noted that a number of Committee Members are members of the All Party Group on Access to Justice.*

## **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

## **2. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 22 May 2025.

### **3. Matters Arising**

#### **3.1 The Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (Codes of Practice) Order 2025**

The Chairperson referred Members to a list of questions that had been forwarded to the Department of Justice prior to an oral evidence session with officials on the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (Codes of Practice) Order 2025 and advised that, as requested, the Department had indicated which questions were its responsibility and which are the responsibility of the PSNI; and further advised that those questions have since been sent to the PSNI.

**Agreed:** To note the list of questions and to consider further when responses have been received from the Department and the PSNI.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Minister of Justice has requested to meet informally with her and the Deputy Chairperson to discuss the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (Codes of Practice) Order 2025 and that a note of the meeting would be taken and shared with the Committee.

**Agreed:** Members were content that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson should accept the meeting request.

**Agreed:** To ask the PSNI and the Police Federation for Northern Ireland for their views on the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (Codes of Practice) Order 2025, with particular reference to gender.

#### **3.2 Justice Bill: Roundtable Event**

The Chairperson reminded Members that a roundtable event on the Justice Bill with grassroots organisations is scheduled to take place on 5 June 2025.

The following Members indicated that they will attend: Danny Baker; Doug Beattie; Joanne Bunting (Chairperson); Stephen Dunne; Connie Egan; and Deirdre Hargey (Deputy Chairperson).

Ciara Ferguson stated that she was unable to attend the event due to commitments with the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee.

#### **4. Transforming the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland — Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland oral evidence**

Jacqui Durkin, Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI), and David MacAnulty, a Lead Inspector with CJINI joined the meeting at 2.08pm.

*Maurice Bradley joined the meeting at 2.09pm.*

The witnesses provided oral evidence on the CJINI report ‘Transforming the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland: A strategic overview’.

*Justin McNulty joined the meeting at 2.30pm.*

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses and they left the meeting at 3.20pm.

*Justin McNulty left the meeting at 3.20pm.*

**Agreed:** To schedule an oral evidence session with the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Justice to discuss issues raised in the CJINI report.

**Agreed:** To ask the Department of Justice, in advance of the proposed oral evidence session with the Permanent Secretary, to provide a summary of each of the strategies that are referred to in the CJINI report; for a time frame for the development of the action plan; what plans there are to engage with partners; how the action plan will fit with the Department’s corporate plan; how the strategies can be aligned with budgets; and how the Criminal Justice Board can be supported to improve collaboration across the Department.

#### **5. Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill — Legislative Consent Memorandum — Department of Justice oral evidence**

*Justin McNulty returned to the meeting at 3.28pm.*

Debbie Corry, Head of the Organised Crime Branch; Fiona Scullion, Head of the Policing, Strategy and Engagement Branch; and Matthew Bunting, a Policy Adviser joined the meeting at 3.28pm.

The witnesses provided oral evidence on the Legislative Consent Memorandum for the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses and they left the meeting at 3:56pm.

**Agreed:** To ask the Department of Justice to provide the Committee with a copy of the updated human rights memorandum from the Home Office in relation to compatibility with Article 2.

**Agreed:** To ask the Department of Justice to provide updates to the Committee regarding any forthcoming Regulations to be made under clause 32(8).

Deirdre Hargey raised her party's concern about the excepted and reserved powers in the Bill, which it considers to be draconian in nature and which the Assembly has no role in scrutinising.

*Danny Baker left the meeting at 3.58pm.*

Debbie Corry returned to the meeting at 3.59pm to answer further questions.

The Chairperson thanked the witness and she left the meeting at 4.04pm.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee for the Economy is content to support the request for legislative consent for the provisions relating to the validation of fees charged in relation to qualifications.

**Agreed:** That the Committee for Justice was content with the proposal to extend the provisions listed below to Northern Ireland by way of a Legislative Consent Motion:

- the sharing of information;
- offences relating to articles for use in serious crime;

- breach of an Interim Serious Crime Prevention Order in non-terrorist cases; and
- validation of fees charged in relation to qualifications.

The Chairperson advised Members that a draft report on the Legislation Consent Memorandum will be prepared for consideration by the Committee at the meeting on 5 June 2025.

## **6. Crime and Policing Bill — Legislative Consent Memorandum — Department of Justice oral evidence**

The Chairperson referred Members to a response from the Department of Justice to the Committee's request for information on whether the requirement to notify could act as a deterrent; details of the categories of offender and whether they relate to offence or risk; and if all categories of offenders will be treated the same after 15 years.

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee had asked the PSNI for clarification regarding whether they would inform a partner of a registered sex offender who had been discharged from notification requirements that they had previously been on the register and that a response has not yet been received.

Debbie Corry, Head of the Organised Crime Branch; Fiona Scullion, Head of the Policing, Strategy and Engagement Branch; and Lorraine Ferguson-Coote, Head of the Criminal Policy Unit joined the meeting at 4.04pm.

The witnesses provided oral evidence on the Legislative Consent Memorandum for the Crime and Policing Bill.

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

Deirdre Hargey raised her party's concern about the excepted and reserved powers in the Bill, which it considers to be draconian in nature and which the Assembly has no role in scrutinising.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses and they left the meeting at 4.34pm.

**Agreed:** That the Committee for Justice was content with the proposal to extend the provisions listed below to Northern Ireland by way of a Legislative Consent Motion:

- an offence of cuckooing;
- an updated offence to deal with advice or guidance on creating child sexual abuse material;
- management of sex offenders;
- administering etc. harmful substances (including by spiking);
- encouraging or assisting serious self-harm;
- electronic devices for use in vehicle offences;
- proceeds of crime relating to confiscation;
- proceeds of civil recovery, costs and expenses;
- international law enforcement data sharing agreements; and
- criminal liability of bodies and partnerships.

The Chairperson advised Members that a draft report on the Legislation Consent Memorandum will be prepared for consideration by the Committee at the meeting on 5 June 2025.

**Agreed:** To ask the Committee for Health to keep the Committee for Justice apprised of any developments regarding a potential second LCM on the Crime and Policing Bill, which officials had indicated may be brought forward before the summer recess.

## **7. Justice Bill — written papers**

### **7.1 Justice Bill: Requests for Further Information**

The Committee noted a paper from the Committee for Justice team collating a list of the Committee's requests for information on the Justice Bill and the responses received to date.

## **8. SR 2025/80 — The Electronic Monitoring Requirements (Responsible Officer) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025**

The Committee considered a Statutory Rule that will prescribe the organisations authorised to provide electronic monitoring services in Northern Ireland.

The Committee noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had raised no concerns with regard to the technical aspects of the Rule.

**Agreed:** The Committee for Justice considered SR 2025/80 — the Electronic Monitoring Requirements (Responsible Officer) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025 and had no objection to the Rule.

**Agreed:** To schedule an oral evidence session during the next Assembly session with Department of Justice officials for an update on the electronic monitoring transformation project and the implementation of the Statutory Rule.

## **9. Police Service of Northern Ireland Review, Retention and Disposal schedule**

The Committee considered the Police Service of Northern Ireland's Review, Retention and Disposal Schedule, which is subject to the negative resolution procedure.

**Agreed:** To ask the PSNI how it differentiates between "indefinite" and "permanent" retention; for details of how the schedule differs from the previous version; whether changes will be required should certain provisions in the Justice Bill be passed; for information on minimum retention periods in relation to domestic abuse and child sexual abuse and exploitation; and for the Northern Ireland Policing Board's views on the schedule.



## **10. Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 — Report on Section 29 — Department of Justice written paper**

The Committee noted a draft report from the Department of Justice that it is required to lay before the Assembly under section 29 of the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 (DACP Act).

**Agreed:** To consider the report during the scheduled evidence session on 19 June 2025 with Departmental officials on domestic abuse issues and post-legislative scrutiny of the DACP Act.

## **11. Enabling Access to Justice Programme — Taxation of Remuneration for High Court Bail Applications — Department of Justice written paper**

The Committee considered a paper from the Department of Justice advising that it had hoped to provide the Committee with a draft consultation paper regarding taxation reform, with particular reference to the development of proposals regarding remuneration of High Court bail applications, but that the consultation will not now be issued before the summer recess.

**Agreed:** To ask the Department of Justice to clarify when the consultation will take place and to remind it of the Committee's concerns regarding conducting consultations during summer; and whether the matters being consulted on relate to the taxation provisions in the Justice Bill.

## **12. Correspondence**

- A copy of two reports from the Department of Justice on the cost of crime and the economic cost of paramilitarism in Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** To seek a breakdown of the costs across key areas.

**Agreed:** To follow up on issues raised in the reports during the oral evidence session that the Committee has agreed to schedule with the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Justice.

- Copies of a number of SL1s from the Department of Finance in relation to the commencement of powers for the Legal Services Oversight Commissioner.

**Agreed:** To ask the Committee for Finance to share the responses it receives to its requests for further from the Department of Finance, the Law Society of Northern Ireland and the Bar of Northern Ireland with the Committee.

**Agreed:** To ask the Department of Finance for a reassurance that the role of the Legal Services Oversight Commissioner will not be expanded; how duplication of work that the Law Society of Northern Ireland and the Bar of Northern Ireland conduct will be avoided; and whether the efficiency and effectiveness of the office of the Legal Services Oversight Commissioner will be subject to review.

**Agreed:** To ask the Department of Justice for its views on whether the office of the Legal Services Oversight Commissioner might be more appropriately located under the Justice remit and, if so, whether that might result in conflicts of interest.

- Copies of the Hansard reports from the Committee for The Executive Office's evidence sessions regarding the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme.

**Agreed:** To forward the Hansard reports to the Department of Justice and to ask it to respond to the concerns and issues raised during those evidence sessions, particularly with regard to how assessments are conducted by Capita.

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- A copy of the Department of Finance commissioning letter for the 2025-26 June Monitoring Round.

- Correspondence from the Committee for Finance providing a copy of the guidance given to Departments to facilitate the production of their five-year business plans.
- Correspondence from the Northern Ireland Policing Board with a copy of the response to the Public Accounts Committee regarding PSNI Fleet management.
- An individual complaint that had previously been considered by the Committee.

### **13. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered an updated forward work programme.

**Agreed:** To proceed with the sessions in the updated forward work programme, subject to the changes as agreed at today's meeting.

The Chairperson advised that she had recently attended the launch of the Open University research report "Learnings from 'Why Riot?': Addressing the whys beneath youth violence," which highlighted the positive impact of the programme in keeping some young people out of the criminal justice system.

**Agreed:** To schedule an oral evidence session with youth workers who are involved in the programme.

### **14. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson's advised Members that she received an invitation from the Bar of Northern Ireland to attend an exhibition in its premises.

**Agreed:** That the Chairperson should attend the exhibition.

### **15. Any other Business**

Maurice Bradley and Justin McNulty confirmed that they plan to attend the roundtable event on the Justice Bill with grassroots organisations on 5 June 2025.

### **16. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

Members were advised that next meeting will take place on Thursday 5 June 2025 at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings, which will be in advance of the roundtable event.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee meeting pack will be issued on Tuesday 3 June 2025.

The Meeting was adjourned at 5.00pm.

**Joanne Bunting MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Justice**