



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Communities

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 15 October 2026

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

- Mr Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)
- Ms Nicola Brogan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Mr Andy Allen MBE MLA
- Mrs Kellie Armstrong MLA
- Mr Paul Boggs MLA (via Zoom)
- Mr Maurice Bradley MLA
- Mrs Pam Cameron MLA
- Mr Mark Durkan MLA (via Zoom)
- Mrs Sian Mulholland MLA

In Attendance:

- Mrs Emer Boyle (Assembly Clerk)
- Mrs Victoria Bourquin (Assistant Clerk)
- Mr Chris McAfee (Clerical Supervisor)
- Ms Katie Egan (Clerical Officer)
- Ms Patrice Morris (Senior Assistant Clerk)
- Ms Kathryn Black (Senior Assistant Clerk)



The meeting commenced in public session at 10.00 a.m.

1. Declarations of Interest

The following interests were declared:

Colm Gildernew - Member's Bill on mitigating the threat of homelessness, Charity Trustee, Member of the Public Accounts Committee.

Andy Allen – Charity Trustee, Private Sector Landlord, Trade Union Member.

Kellie Armstrong – Associate of Chartered Institute of Housing, Chair of All Party Group on Homelessness.

Maurice Bradley - Member of Harry Gregg Foundation, member of Coleraine and District League Management, member of North West Football Association, member of Irish Football Association Council.

Pam Cameron – Former Junior Minister with sight of Executive and cross-departmental policy, strategy and legislation.

2. Apologies

There were no apologies.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson highlighted correspondence received from the Minister on 13 October 2026 in regards to the Pensions Schemes Bill. The Chairperson further advised that the correspondence remained confidential and subject to a decision by the Executive and it could therefore not be further discussed at this time.



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The Chairperson then reminded Members of an informal meeting with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on Tuesday, 20 October in relation to its Poverty in NI 2026 report.

4. Draft Minutes

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a copy of draft minutes from the Committee meeting on 8 October 2026.

Agreed: That the minutes are agreed as drafted.

Andy Allen joined the meeting at 10.02a.m.

The Chairperson then informed Members that the next agenda item would take place in closed session to allow Committee for deliberations in relation to the Charities (Amendment) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into closed session for its Charities Bill deliberations.

The meeting moved into closed session at 10.03a.m.

5. Charities (Amendment) Bill: Committee Deliberations

The Committee considered the Clause by Clause table which detailed all the comments and evidence received as part of the Call for Evidence for Charities (Amendment) Bill.

The Bill Clerk joined the meeting to address any queries during the informal deliberations.

Members discussed Clauses 1 to 8 of the Bill, and the range of stakeholder views and comments received.

The Chairperson proposed that the meeting move back into public session to continue with the remainder of the agenda.



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The meeting resumed in open session at 11.00a.m. with all Members present.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland to further seek a more detailed view in relation to the potential impact of Clauses 3 and 8.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to seek further clarity on:

- Clause 2 - an indication of when the Committee should expect to receive the Department's final position in relation to the term "office-holder";
- Clause 3 - what is meant by the term "appropriate" under Clause 3(2)(b);
- Clause 4 - an indication of when the Committee should expect to receive an update in relation to the kinds of procedures operating in other jurisdictions in relation to the removal of trustees from office;
- Clause 6 - how circumstances involving employees acting under duress / direction, leading to automatic disqualification would be considered in the application of Clause 6 and whether the Department is satisfied that the Bill provides appropriate safeguards; and
- Clause 8 – whether the Department remains satisfied that registration with the Fundraising Regulator is sufficient for the purposes of Clause 8(2)(a) and, if so, and to provide an explanation for this.

6. Housing (Amendment) Bill: Oral evidence from Housing Rights

As the Chairperson is the sponsor of this Bill, the Deputy Chairperson, Nicola Brogan MLA, assumed the Chair for items 6 & 7.

The Deputy Chairperson drew Members attention to the Convention Rights Memorandum which had been provided and proposed that, as all the issues were all covered in this written briefing from Legal Services, that an oral briefing would not be required.

Agreed: That an oral briefing from Legal Services in relation to Convention Rights would not be required in relation to this Bill.

The Deputy Chairperson then welcomed the following Officials to the meeting:



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Jamie Miller, Head of Policy and Development, Housing Rights
Stephen Morrison, Policy Lead, Housing Rights
Faith Westwood, Policy Officer, Housing Rights

A question-and-answer session followed the briefing and the main areas of discussion were:

- Benefit of increase of 60 days
- Estimated costs associated with the Bill
- Impact of Bill on future legislation
- Housing supply
- Temporary accommodation uptake
- Previous social housing stock now in private ownership
- Comparison with other jurisdictions
- Regional numbers of homelessness
- A process timeline for 28 days
- Potential for cost savings as a result of the Bill
- Commencement period
- Savings in other jurisdictions
- Wider package of reform

7. Housing (Amendment) Bill: Oral evidence from Homeless Connect

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed the following Officials to the meeting:

Nicola McCrudden, CEO, Homeless Connect

Mark Baillie, Head of Policy and Programmes, Homeless Connect

A question-and-answer session followed the briefing and the main areas of discussion were:

- Estimated costs and savings of the Bill
- Engagement with Homelessness Commission
- Departmental bids for Homelessness funding
- Increase in visibility of homelessness



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- Whether a Co-Design approach will be applied by the Homelessness Commission
- Funding for the sector
- Cross Departmental role and impact on implementation
- Benefit of extension from 28 days to 60 days

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to request the Draft Terms of Reference of the Homelessness Commission.

The Deputy Chairperson proposed a short suspension.

The meeting suspended at 12.08p.m.

The meeting resumed in public session at 12.15p.m. with the following Members present: Colm Gildernew, Nicola Brogan, Andy Allen, Kellie Armstrong, Paul Boggs, Pam Cameron, Mark Durkan and Sian Mulholland.

The Chairperson resumed the Chair at 12.15p.m.

8. Conversion Practices (Criminalisation) Bill: Oral evidence from RalSe

The Chairperson welcomed RalSe Officials to the meeting.

Maurice Bradley rejoined the meeting at 12.34p.m.

A question-and-answer session followed the briefing and the main areas of discussion were:

- Transferable lessons from other jurisdictions
- Evidence gaps
- Protections and limitations of existing NI law
- “Avoidance of Doubt” clause in New South Wales
- Evidence of Conversion Practices in NI
- Inclusion of “real world” data



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- Threshold of harm
- Engagement with UK Government regarding pre-legislative scrutiny on the Westminster draft Bill
- Human Rights intersection with the Bill
- Low number of individuals involved in research
- Protections and balance of the Bill

Agreed: That The Christian Institute is asked to provide the data in relation to its Freedom of Information requests to the HSC Trusts.

The Chairperson then informed Members that the next agenda item would take place in closed session to allow the Committee to receive a briefing from Legal Services in relation to the Conversion Practices (Criminalisation) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into closed session to receive the briefing.

The meeting moved into closed session at 1.09p.m.

9. Conversion Practices (Criminalisation) Bill: Convention Rights Memorandum briefing from Legal Services

Andy Allen left the meeting at 1.10p.m.

The Legal Advisor briefed the Committee on the Convention Rights Memorandum for the Bill and a question-and-answer session followed the briefing.

Maurice Bradley left the meeting at 1.25p.m.

Agreed: That the Legal Advisor would return to the Committee at its meeting on 22 October 2026, and recommence their briefing from Clause 4.

The Chairperson proposed that the meeting move back into public session to continue with the remainder of the agenda.



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The meeting resumed in open session at 1.30p.m. with all Members present.

10. SL1 - The Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance (Claims and Payments) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Chairperson reminded Members that the SL1 was received on 6 October 2026, and therefore, would be considered under the new process for delegated legislation.

The Chairperson then informed Members that:

- The Committee team will issue a call for views on the SL1 using the standard survey on Citizen Space from 16 October 2026.
- The SL1, and any relevant papers from the Department will be published on the Committee website and notified to relevant stakeholders, alongside the relevant deadline, when available.
- The Committee would consider the SL1 on 12 November 2026 alongside responses to the call for views

Agreed: That the Committee is content to publish the Citizen Space call for views, publish the Departmental documents in relation to this SL1, and notify relevant stakeholders as appropriate.

Agreed: That the Committee will next consider this SL1 on 12 November 2026 alongside a summary of any comments and feedback received via Citizen Space.

The Chairperson then proposed that, as Agenda Items 11 and 12 related to the same SL1, these would be considered together under Agenda Item 12.

Agreed: That the Committee will consider Agenda Items 11 and 12 under Agenda Item 12.



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11. SL1 The Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

12. SR 2026/169 The Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Chairperson reminded Members that at its meeting on 1 October, the Committee agreed to consider this SR at this meeting due to it being laid sooner than expected.

The Chairperson then advised that the Draft SR and Explanatory Memorandum were not available when it was considered on 1 October 2026, but had been unexpectedly laid by the Department in the Business Office, 2 working days later.

The Chairperson then advised Members that due to the SR being laid prior to the Committee considering whether it was content for the Department to proceed to make the Rule, the Committee would move directly to whether it had any objection to the Rule.

Agreed: That the Committee for Communities has considered SR 2026/169 The Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026 and recommends that it be approved by the Assembly.

The Chairperson then proposed that, as Agenda Items 13 and 14 related to the same SL1, these would be considered together under Agenda Item 14.

Agreed: That the Committee will consider Agenda Items 13 and 14 under Agenda Item 14.

13. SL1 The Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

14. SR 2026/170 The Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026



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The Chairperson reminded Members that at its meeting on 1 October, the Committee agreed to consider this SR at this meeting due to it being laid sooner than expected.

The Chairperson advised that the Draft SR and Explanatory Memorandum were not available when it was considered on 1 October 2026, but were unexpectedly laid by the Department in the Business Office, 2 working days later.

The Chairperson then advised Members that due to the SR being laid prior to the Committee considering whether it was content for the Department to proceed to make the Rule, the Committee would move directly to whether it had any objection to the Rule.

Agreed: That the Committee for Communities has considered SR 2026/170 The Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026 and recommends that it be affirmed by the Assembly.

15. Matters Arising

Antrim + Newtownabbey Council - Affordable Housing Policy draft Plan Strategy and Local Development Plan Timetable;

Ards + North Down Council - Affordable Housing Policy draft Plan Strategy and Local Development Plan Timetable; and

Derry and Strabane District Council - Affordable Housing Policy draft Plan Strategy and Local Development Plan Timetable

Agreed: That a letter is sent to all Local Councils requesting target information in relation to affordable local housing numbers to be included in their Local Development Plans and to further detail whether or not they are being met.

Department for Economy - Housing (Amendment) Bill - request for further information



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Agreed: That a response is sent to the Department for Economy confirming it is seeking the information for a period of 5 years, in relation to costs.

Department for Communities - Home Heating Oil Scheme – Issues

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to ask whether individuals living in park homes which are rented via a landlord can avail of the Home Heating Oil Scheme.

16. Correspondence

**Committee for Infrastructure – Display of Flags and Emblems Bill;
Committee for Infrastructure - Harbours Bill; and
Committee for Infrastructure - Tree Protection Bill**

Agreed: That the Committee is content for the secretariat to review the Bills for intersection with Department for Community areas of responsibility and draft Committee response(s) for consideration, if appropriate.

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Source	Summary of content
Genspect	Conversion Practices (Criminalisation) Bill
Northern Ireland Humanists	Conversion Practices (Criminalisation) Bill
Department for Communities	Enhanced Disclosure Checks for Health Professionals Delivering Health Assessments
Assembly Business Office	National Museums Council NI Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26



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Assembly Business Office	National Museums NI Annual Report and Accounts 2025-26
IMTAC	Annual Report 2026 - The Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee
Department for Communities	Public Consultation - Proposed Changes to the Discretionary Support Scheme
Department for Communities	Public Consultation on the review of the Tenant Participation Strategy
Executive Information Service	Press release - Discretionary Support consultation launched
Department for Communities	PRONI Exhibition - USA250 The Ulster Legacy in America
IMTAC	Annual General Meeting -topics included Deaf, Disabled, older people and others - how to make transport and travel more accessible and inclusive
Committee for Finance	Supply of agency staff in NICS
Committee for Finance	Response from Department of Finance with reference to possibility that there is a policy locus for it in the provisions of the Charities (Amendment) Bill and if it is engaged in respect of the financial cost for the Bill
Committee for Finance	Response from Department of Finance with reference to possibility that there is a policy locus for it in the provisions of Housing Amendment Bill and if it is



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Source	Summary of content
	engaged in respect of the financial cost for the Bill
Committee for Finance	Response from Department of Finance with reference to possibility that there is a policy locus for it in the provisions of Conversion Practices (Criminalisation) Bill and if it is engaged in respect of the financial cost for the Bill
Individual	Charities (Amendment) Bill
Committee for Economy	Renewable Electricity Generation Bill
Core Issues Trust International Foundation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice X Out Loud	Conversion Practices (Criminalisation) Bill
Executive Information Service	Press release - Lyons appoints 11 new members to the Historic Buildings Council
Law Centre NI	Community Voices, Community Solutions research report
Executive Information Service	Lyons announces more support for repairs to historic churches

17. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson proposed that, following previous Committee agreement of 1 October 2026 to request written briefings for non-legislative agenda items up to and inclusive of 12 November 2026, be extended until the end of the calendar



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year, due to time constraints for Committee scrutiny with three Bills at Committee Stage.

Agreed: That the Committee receive written briefings instead of oral briefings for non-legislative agenda items, until the end of 2026.

The Committee then noted a copy of the Forward Work Programme.

18. Any other business

There was no other business.

19. Date, time and location of the next meeting

The next meeting is at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday 22 October 2026, in Room 29, Parliament Buildings, with an informal meeting at 1pm on Tuesday 20 October, in Room 29.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.39p.m.

Colm Gildernew MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Communities