



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Communities

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 6 November 2025

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

- Ms Nicola Brogan (Deputy Chairperson) MLA
- Mr Andy Allen MBE MLA
- Mrs Kellie Armstrong MLA
- Mr Maurice Bradley MLA
- Mr Mark Durkan MLA (via Zoom)
- Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
- 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 10.00a.m.



Northern Ireland Assembly

1. Declarations of Interest

The following interests were declared:

Nicola Brogan – Member of the Committee for Infrastructure.

Maolíosa McHugh – Chairman of pre-school Naíscoil na Deirge, Treasurer Conrad na Gaeilge na Deirge.

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.

2. Apologies

Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson) MLA

Mrs Pam Cameron MLA

3. Chairperson's Business

The Deputy Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee had held an event on the Sign Language Bill with members of the deafblind community on 23 October and wanted to place on record thanks to Deafblind UK and to SENSE for their attendance and help with preparations and logistics.

4. Draft Minutes

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a copy of draft minutes from the meeting on 23 October 2025.

Agreed: That the minutes are agreed as drafted.

5. Matters arising

Kellie Armstrong joined the meeting at 10.05 a.m.



Northern Ireland Assembly

Plans to Future Proof House Building and Retrofitting

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Mid Ulster Council, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, and;

Department of Finance - Reform of Building Regulations

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department for Communities, Department of Finance and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to request a briefing from relevant officials who are working on the cross-departmental group which has remit over futureproof housing and retrofitting.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department of Economy requesting if any officials from this Department are involved in a cross-departmental group which has remit over futureproof housing and retrofitting.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department of Finance to request the legislative timetable in relation to bringing forward updated building regulations which will futureproof housing and retrofitting and to request a briefing on how these regulations will be implemented in support of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive retrofitting strategy.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive - Priority Need Policy Amendments

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to ask what guidance is provided to Arm's Length Bodies in relation to the use of correct, modern and appropriate language in published materials.

Department for Communities - Task and Finish Group Benefit Fraud and Error

Agreed: That a briefing is arranged for a future meeting in closed session.

Department for Communities - Statutory Instrument - amendments to Social Security Legislation

Agreed: Committee is content to receive the additional information in relation the SI in the form of a written briefing in the first instance.

Northern Ireland Office - UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Northern Ireland Office requesting an in-person briefing from NIO officials on the detail and criteria being developed for



Northern Ireland Assembly

the new Local Growth Fund. Members are particularly interested to hear detail on:

- The rationale for the decision to change the ratio of funding for capital
- Eligibility criteria
- Whether there will be any bridge-funding
- How the fund is being co-designed / developed

Department for Communities – The Northern Ireland Football Fund Performance Programme – Feedback to applicants

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to request a copy of the minutes of meetings between the Department and the football clubs who were unsuccessful at this stage.

Department for Communities – The Northern Ireland Football Fund

Agreed: That Legal Advice is sought on whether documents received from other sources (and not redacted) can be subject to an embargo by the Department.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to request how much of the allocated £36.2 million that will be assigned to Grassroots, Youth, Disabled and Women's football.

Committee for Communities - Draft response to Committee for Infrastructure on the Water Sustainable Drainage Bill

Agreed: That the response is amended to include a request from the Committee for Landlords of Social Housing tenants to be able to apply for the Flood Protection Grant.

Derry City and Strabane District Council – Anti Poverty Strategy

Agreed: That a briefing is arranged for a future meeting.

The Committee noted the following items:

Source	Subject Matter
Department for Communities	UK Government position on Gambling Advertising



Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee on Procedures	Scrutiny for legislative amendments to transferred matters made by UK Government via Statutory Instrument
Committee for Finance	Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill

6. Correspondence

Two Individuals – Housing issues

Agreed: That responses are sent to both individuals indicating that the Committee cannot act on an individual's behalf and to suggest they contact the housing supplier directly or their local MLA.

Committee for Finance - Bytes Tech correspondence

Agreed: That a response is sent to the Committee for Finance advising that Committee has not received similar correspondence.

Committee for Finance - Communication from the Central Expenditure Division in the Department of Finance - December Monitoring Round

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to request sight of its bids into the monitoring round programme, to include an explanation of the "rebalancing" of £9.3 million.

Department for Communities - UK City of Culture 2029 & Department for Communities - UK Town of Culture 2028

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to ask if there will be any support available for teams across towns in northern Ireland who would be keen to submit a bid.

Department for Communities - Draft Executive Disability Strategy

Agreed: That a briefing is arranged for a future meeting and as soon as possible.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

The Committee noted the following items:

Source	Summary of content
Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to DWP	Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/2865 as regards dates of application and transitional provisions within the scope of the Windsor Framework.
Committee for Finance	2025-26 September Outturn and Forecast Outturn
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission	Invitation to Annual Human Rights Statement 2025 on 08 Dec 2025
Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee	EU – Related Scrutiny Arrangements
Committee for The Executive Office	Newry Mourne and Down District Council - Redevelopment of the Marionvale site
Committee for The Executive Office	Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill – Access to records
Committee for The Executive Office	Removal of a British Citizen from Northern Ireland
Department for Communities	Invitation for reception for World Transplant Games - Team Northern Ireland

The Committee further noted the following items of tabled correspondence:



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Source	Summary of content
Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to DWP	Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament re chemical products
Assembly Communications Office	Media Clippings: re appointment of Language Commissioners and Housing Association Grant Cuts

7. SL1 – The Occupational Pension Schemes (Collective Money Purchase Schemes) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that the proposed rule would make minor technical changes linked to collective money purchase schemes under existing pensions legislation. The Rule would correct drafting errors and remove duplicated wording in the 2006 Employer Consultation Regulations and amend the 2014 Disclosure Regulations for collective money purchase schemes to tidy drafting and refine disclosure and publication requirements following initial implementation.

The Regulations are anticipated to commence on 4 December and are subject to the negative resolution procedure.

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed the following officials to the meeting:

Hayley Ward – Policy Lead

Keira McKeown – deputy Policy Lead

Agreed: That the Committee is content for the Department to proceed to make the Rule.

8. SR 2025/169 - The Social Fund (Child Funeral Fund) (No. 2) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2025

Agreed: That the Committee for Communities has considered SR 2025/169 - The Social Fund (Child Funeral Fund) (No. 2) (Amendment) Regulations (NI)



Northern Ireland Assembly

2025 and has no objection to the Rule, subject to the report from the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

9. Departmental briefing on the Community Infrastructure Fund

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed the following Departmental officials to the meeting.

Paul McNaught - Director of the Regional Development Office / Senior Responsible Owner for the Northern Ireland Community Infrastructure Fund

Rosheen Thompson - Deputy Director within the Regional Development Office / Programme Manager for the Northern Ireland Community Infrastructure Fund

Christo McConnell - Head of Branch for the for the Northern Ireland Community Infrastructure Fund

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

- Eligibility for the scheme
- Procurement
- Application Process and number of applications

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to advise that Members had received positive feedback in relation to the short first stage (expressions of interest) making it a more accessible process for community organisations.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to request the following:

- A breakdown of the 835 organisations which have expressed an interest, by geography and organisation.
- Confirmation of the membership of the Programme Board.
- A copy of the briefing or advice received by officials stating that they did not need to go out to public procurement to appoint an organisation to administer the fund.

The meeting was suspended at 11.12 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 11.20 a.m. with all Members present.



Northern Ireland Assembly

10. Departmental briefing on the Building Safety Policy

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed the following Departmental officials to the meeting.

Derek Kennedy, Director Residential Building Safety Division

Gerry McKibbin, Principal Residential Building Safety Division

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

- Regulatory fragmentation
- Timetable for future legislation
- Accountable Persons Scheme
- A single regulatory Body
- Application to public and private buildings (based on height)
- Local Councils preparedness

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to thank them for their ongoing work in this area and to request that consideration be given to the future Bill applying to all buildings over the specified height and not restricted to residential buildings.

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that the next agenda item would take place in closed session in order for the Committee to be briefed by the Bill clerk.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into closed session to undertake informal deliberations on the Bill.

The meeting moved into closed session at 11.50 a.m.

11. Sign Language Bill – Committee deliberations on the clauses of the Bill

The Committee considered the Clause by Clause table which detailed all the comments and evidence received as part of Clause 1 and 2 of its Sign Language Bill.

Mark Durkan left the meeting at 11.57 p.m.



Northern Ireland Assembly

Liz Marsh, Bill Clerk joined the meeting to address any queries during the informal deliberations.

Members discussed both Clauses 1 and 2 of the Bill, and the range of stakeholder views and comments received.

Sian Mulholland left the meeting at 12.36 p.m.

Sian Mulholland rejoined the meeting at 12.43 p.m.

Andy Allen left the meeting at 12.47 p.m.

The meeting resumed in open session at 12.53 p.m. with the following Members present:

Ms Nicola Brogan (Deputy Chairperson)

Mrs Kellie Armstrong

Mr Maurice Bradley

Mr Maolfosa McHugh

Mrs Sian Mulholland

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department requesting clarification and consideration of a number of amendments to Clauses 1 and 2 of the Bill.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Minister for Infrastructure to request pictorial signage be included in public transport stations and that conductors and staff receive deaf and deafblind awareness training.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to Translink to request pictorial signage be included in public transport stations and that conductors and staff receive deaf and deafblind awareness training.

12. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted a copy of the forward work programme.

13. Any other business

There was no other business.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

14. Date, time and location of the next meeting

The next meeting is at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday 13 November 2025, in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.58 p.m.

Colm Gildernew MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Communities