



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

29 February 2024

Meeting Location: Room 30

Present:

Philip McGuigan MLA (Chairperson)

David Brooks MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Patrick Brown MLA

Jonathan Buckley MLA

Sorcha Eastwood MLA

Declan Kearney MLA

Present by Video:

Steve Aiken MLA

Emma Sheerin MLA

Apologies:

Joanne Bunting MLA

In Attendance:

Ms Marie Austin (Assembly Clerk)

Ms Sinead Kelly (Senior Assistant Clerk)

Mr Oliver Bellew (Assistant Clerk)

Ms Marion Johnson (Assistant Clerk)

Ms Suzanne Patton (Clerical Officer)

In Attendance by Video:

Ms Leigh Gibson (Senior Assistant Clerk)

The meeting commenced at 10:02 a.m. in open session.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Joanne Bunting MLA.

2. Committee Procedures – Communication with Members on Technology Updates

The Committee noted a written briefing from the Director of Parliamentary Services outlining the improvements to technology within the Assembly, including arrangements for simultaneous and passive interpretation of Irish and Ulster Scots.

The Committee noted that Members wishing to have their comments interpreted during Committee proceedings should inform the Clerk at least five days in advance of the meeting.

3. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 22 February 2024.

Emma Sheerin joined the meeting at 10.05am.

5. Matters Arising

Correspondence from the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee

Members considered correspondence to the Chairperson, from Sir William Cash CH MP, Chairperson of the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee, asking to meet the Committee to discuss respective ways of working and to explore how the European Scrutiny Committee can support the scrutiny to be carried out by the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should make arrangements for a meeting with the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that any engagement/education programme to be developed should be balanced to include engagement with both Brussels/European bodies and Westminster bodies.

6. UK-EU Divergence

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 10.08am:

Dr Lisa Claire Whitten Research Fellow; School of History, Anthropology,
Philosophy and Politics; Queen's University,
Belfast

Joël Reland Research Associate; UK in a Changing Europe

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the issue of UK-EU dual divergence.

Declan Kearney joined the meeting at 10.11am.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Reland for his attendance.

Mr Reland left the meeting at 11.01am.

Dr Whitten agreed to provide information on the potential out workings of the application of the Stormont Brake.

The Chairperson thanked Dr Whitten for her attendance.

Dr Whitten left the meeting at 11.16am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Professor David Phinnemore, Queen's University, Belfast, asking him to provide examples of Association Agreements between the European Union and European Economic Area States and European Free Trade Association States, and smaller territories, where comparisons could be drawn with Northern Ireland and lessons could be learned.

7. Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted a response from the Minister for the Economy to the Committee's letter of 16 February 2024, highlighting the potential challenges for his Department in responding to requests for advice from the Committee in relation to EU legislation.

8. Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

9. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 7 March 2024 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:18a.m.

Philip McGuigan, MLA

Chairperson, Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee