



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Justice

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 5 June 2025

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present:

Joanne Bunting MLA (Chairperson)

Deirdre Hargey MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Danny Baker MLA

Maurice Bradley MLA

Stephen Dunne MLA

Connie Egan MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Justin McNulty MLA

Apologies:

Doug Beattie MLA

Ciara Ferguson MLA

In Attendance: Kathy O’Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Thomas McKillop (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Jonny Redpath (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Aaron Pakenham (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.04pm in public session.

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

As above.

Justin McNulty provided an apology for the roundtable event on the Justice Bill with grassroots community organisations, which was scheduled to take place following the formal meeting.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 29 May 2025, subject to one amendment.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (Codes of Practice) Order 2025 — Informal meeting with the Minister of Justice

The Chairperson reminded Members that, at last week's meeting, the Committee agreed to her and the Deputy Chairperson attending an informal meeting with the Minister of Justice, at her request, to discuss the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (Codes of Practice) Order 2025.

The Committee noted a note of the informal meeting.

The Committee considered follow-up information that was provided by the Minister of Justice, which outlined potential options on how to proceed on this matter and asked that the Committee provides a response outlining its preferred option by Friday 13 June 2025.

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee is still waiting to receive responses from the Department, the PSNI and the Police Federation for Northern Ireland to questions that it asked.

Agreed: To ask each organisation to expedite its response to the Committee, if possible.

Agreed: To request legal advice on whether the Committee is being asked to agree only the proposed amendments to the Codes or whether it is being asked to agree to the amended Codes in their entirety.

Agreed: To ask the Department of Justice – further to the Minister's proposal that an interim annex could be put in place to make it clear that, while the substantive annex is under review, it is for the Chief Constable to decide if a person should be treated as male or female for the purposes of a search and that the dignity of all parties should be respected – to provide a draft of the interim annex and other relevant annexes, highlighting the changes that the Department proposes to make.

Agreed: To consider the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (Codes of Practice) Order 2025 at the meeting of 12 June 2025, subject to receipt of outstanding responses; and that it is not necessary to

include the full paperwork in the meeting pack as it is available in previous meeting packs.

4. Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill — Legislative Consent Memorandum — Committee report

The Chairperson referred Members to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's submission to the House of Lords on the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill.

Agreed: To ask the Department of Justice to confirm when it received the submission from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

The Committee considered a draft report on the Legislative Consent Memorandum for the provisions in the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill to be extended to Northern Ireland.

Title Page, Contents Page and Committee Membership and Powers Page

The Committee considered the Title Page, Contents Page and Committee Membership and Powers Page as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Title Page, Contents Page and Committee Membership and Powers Page.

Background

The Committee considered the Background section of the report (paragraphs 1 to 5) as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Background section of the report.

Provisions which require Legislative Consent

The Committee considered the Provisions which require Legislative Consent section of the report (paragraphs 6 to 8) as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Provisions which require Legislative Consent section of the report.

Committee Consideration

The Committee considered the Committee Consideration section of the report (paragraphs 9 to 26) as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Committee Consideration section of the report.

Conclusion

The Committee considered the Conclusion section of the report (paragraph 27) as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Conclusion section of the report.

Appendices

The Committee considered the Appendices section of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the Appendices be included in the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the minutes of this meeting (5 June 2025) to be added to Appendix 3 when agreed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the report on the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill Legislative Consent Memorandum to be published and issued to all MLAs.

The Chairperson advised Members that they will be notified when a date for the debate on the Legislative Consent Motion has been scheduled.

5. Crime and Policing Bill — Legislative Consent Memorandum — Committee report

The Committee considered a draft report on the Legislative Consent Memorandum for the provisions in the Crime and Policing Bill to be extended to Northern Ireland.

Title Page, Contents Page and Committee Membership and Powers Page

The Committee considered the Title Page, Contents Page and Committee Membership and Powers Page as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Title Page, Contents Page and Committee Membership and Powers Page.

Background

The Committee considered the Background section of the report (paragraphs 1 to 5) as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Background section of the report.

Provisions which require Legislative Consent

The Committee considered the Provisions which require Legislative Consent section of the report (paragraph 6) as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Provisions which require Legislative Consent section of the report.

Committee Consideration

The Committee considered the Committee Consideration section of the report (paragraphs 7 to 29) as drafted.

The Chairperson proposed a minor amendment to paragraph 11.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Committee Consideration section of the report, subject to one amendment.

Conclusion

The Committee considered the Conclusion section of the report (paragraph 30) as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Conclusion section of the report.

Appendices

The Committee considered the Appendices section of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the Appendices be included in the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the minutes of this meeting (5 June 2025) to be added to Appendix 3 when agreed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the report on the Crime and Policing Bill Legislative Consent Memorandum to be published and issued to all MLAs.

The Chairperson advised Members that they will be notified when a date for the debate on the Legislative Consent Motion has been scheduled.

6. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following item of correspondence:

- A copy of a report from the Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland into the death of a prisoner while under the custody of Maghaberry Prison.

The Chairperson reminded Members that the report was embargoed until 9 June 2025.

7. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson reminded Members that that the Committee had agreed to invite John Wadham, the Northern Ireland Policing Board's Human Rights Advisor, to provide evidence on the Justice Bill and that Mr Wadham has been scheduled to attend next week's meeting.

The Committee considered an updated forward work programme.

Agreed: To proceed with the sessions in the updated forward work programme.

8. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's Business.

9. Any other Business

There was no other business.

10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

Members were advised that next meeting will take place on Thursday 12 June 2025 at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into closed session to discuss the upcoming roundtable event with grassroots community organisations.

The meeting moved into closed session at 2.19pm.

Justin McNulty left the meeting at 2.19pm.

11. Roundtable Event with Grassroots Community Organisations pre-briefing

The Committee discussed the logistics of the roundtable event with grassroots community organisations on the Justice Bill.

The Meeting was adjourned at 2.37pm.

Joanne Bunting MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Justice