



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 30 September 2026

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Phillip Brett MLA

Ms Sinéad Ennis MLA

Ms Deborah Erskine MLA

Mr Timothy Gaston MLA

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Online:

Ms Sinéad McLauglin MLA

Apologies:

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

In Attendance: Mr Nick Mitford (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Aoife Keating Fitzpatrick (Snr Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Sarah-Anne McKinley (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Neil Porter (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.11pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declarations of Interest

Deborah Erskine declared an interest as having a family member who is a Minister of a religious order.

Stewart Dickson declared an interest as being an elder in a religious order.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Informal Meeting with Survivors Together

The Chairperson advised Members that she and the Clerk met with representatives from Survivors Together on Wednesday 23 September 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for further information regarding the promotional funding for HIA Redress scheme. Also to ask what assessment has been made in relation to the potential impact of the ongoing budget uncertainty on the funding provided to support organisations for victims and survivors.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to request an update on the Committee's previous correspondence regarding COSICA, including

the current status of the recruitment process for a replacement including any indicative timescales.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to HIA Support Service organisations; Victim and Survivor Service (VSS), WAVE Trauma Centre and Advice NI to seek an update on any funding pressures they may be experiencing and the impact these may be having on service provision.

3.2 Drumcree Dispute

The Chairperson advised Members that she would facilitate an opportunity under Any Other Business for Members to make any comments in relation to the Drumcree dispute following consideration of the substantive items of business.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 23 September 2026.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 TEO – Consultation on Truth Recovery Inquiry Rules and Redress Scheme Regulations

The Chairperson advised Members that the consultations are now live for the draft Inquiry Rules and Redress Regulations. These will underpin the operation of both the Inquiry and the Redress Scheme. Both consultations will be live for eight weeks and will close on 17 November 2026.

The Chairperson also advised Members that the Department announced the appointment of Rachel Langdale KC, as Chair Designate of the Truth Recovery Public Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Ms Langdale to congratulate her on her appointment and offer the Committee's support as required.

6. Oral Briefing Historical Clerical Childhood Abuse (HCCA) – Review of records held & Investigation into experiences of victims and survivors of HCCA: Report Authors

The witnesses joined the meeting at 2.21pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Dr Helga Sneddon, Director, Outcome Imps
- Professor Máiréad Enright, Professor of Law, Loughborough University (*online*)
- Tim Chapman, Visiting Professor, University of Strathclyde

The witnesses provided an oral briefing on two reports in relation to HCCA, The Review of Records Held and the Investigation into Experiences of Victims and Survivors.

Timothy Gaston left the meeting at 2.35pm and returned at 2.41pm.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 2.48pm and returned at 2.53pm.

Carál Ní Chuilín left the meeting at 3.08pm and returned at 3.11pm.

Sinéad Ennis left at 3.18pm and returned at 3.22pm.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

The witnesses left the meeting at 3.23pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to AccessNI to seek clarification on the disclosure check categories currently available and to ask whether additional categories could be introduced to ensure greater inclusivity for individuals working in faith based settings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Charity Commission to ask whether all churches are required to register as charities in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Safeguarding Board to request an update on the work of the Interfaith Committee, including its current membership and efforts to increase church participation. Also to request further information on the safeguarding systems available to faith based organisations and any gaps identified by the Board in ensuring that safeguarding guidance is effectively reaching faith based organisations including independent churches.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to take a short comfort break and suspend the meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 3:28pm.

Proceedings continued in open session at 3.35pm with the following Members present: Paula Bradshaw, Chairperson, Stewart Dickson, Phillip Brett, Sinéad Ennis, Deborah Erskine, Timothy Gaston, Carál Ní Chuilín and Sinéad McLaughlin (online).

7. Oral Briefing: Historical Clerical Childhood Abuse (HCCA) – The Dromore Group

The witness joined the meeting at 3.36pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Mr Tony Gribben, Representative, The Dromore Group (*online*)

The witness provided an oral briefing on HCCA and developments since the publication of the HCCA research reports.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 3.37pm and returned at 3.43pm.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witness for his attendance.

The witness left the meeting at 4.24pm.

Sinead Ennis left the meeting at 4.24pm and returned at 4.26pm.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 4.25pm returned at 4.28pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for the following information:

- To seek clarification on the apparent disconnect between the findings of the research reports and communication with victims and survivors.
- To ask why the recommendations arising from the research reports have not been published and to request an update on the Department's proposed action plan for taking forward the six recommendations, including progress to date.
- To seek further information on the follow up meeting with victims and survivors that was due to take place on 11 September 2026, including the reasons for its postponement, what the new agreed date is and to highlight the impact that delays have on victim and survivors confidence in the process.
- To ask that any draft action plan is circulated, if possible, two weeks in advance of the rescheduled meeting and what steps are being taken to address concerns that victims and survivors may withdraw from the process due to a perceived lack of meaningful engagement.
- To ask how the Department is ensuring that its work addresses not only Historical Clerical Childhood Abuse but also current safeguarding concerns in faith settings.
- To request further information on the role and operation of the working group and sub-group structures, including why TEO is not participating in the sub-group.
- To request an update on the roadmap outlined in the Dromore policy paper, including the anticipated timeline for Ministerial decision on any Inquiry and the steps required to progress the matter further by the end of the year.
- To request an update on the work of the IDWG following the publication of the research reports.
- To ask whether any forensic financial analysis has been undertaken in relation to the institutions that may be affected by any Inquiry.
- To request an update on the written briefing on the work of the Independent Facilitator and an indication of when the Committee can expect to receive it.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister to request that they meet with victims and survivors, including the Dromore Group, to discuss the six recommendations arising from the research.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the Dromore Group's policy report to the Minister of Finance for information.

8. SL1: The Period Products (Executive Office Specified Public Service Bodies) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Committee considered SL1: The Period Products (Executive Office Specified Public Service Bodies) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026.

Timothy Gatson left the meeting at 4.30pm and returned at 4.33pm.

Agreed: The Committee was content with the Statutory Rule subject to ESR approval.

9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors regarding additional funding support for support organisations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this correspondence and agreed to write to the Department to request an update on the status of the Business Case for the additional funding and to highlight the impact the delays in agreeing a budget could have on the provision of support services for victims and survivors.

- iii. The Committee considered a response from the First Minister and deputy First Minister to its correspondence of 18 June 2026, regarding access to records relating to the Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses Inquiry and Redress Scheme, and the establishment of a permanent archive.

The Committee noted this item.

- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland (CPANI) in relation to the commencement of CPANI Statutory audit function on regulated Ministerial Public Appointment competitions.

The Committee noted this item.

- v. The Committee considered a response from The Executive Office to its correspondence of 18 May 2026 requesting sight of the Government Actuary's Department report on the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme and sight of the business case for the Victims' Support Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to arrange an oral briefing with Department officials.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to recirculate the recent correspondence received from the Victims' Payment Board and to consider any further actions at next week's meeting.

- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Victims' and Survivors Service (VSS) – First Annual Impact Report.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery - Findings report following an investigation into the Troubles-related death of Rory O'Kelly.
- viii. The Committee noted a Written Ministerial Statement from the First and deputy First Minister regarding the publication of the Northern Ireland Executive initial response to the Covid-19 Inquiry Module 3 Report Recommendations.
- ix. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for the Communities to the First Minister and deputy First Minister in relation to the Local Growth Fund – Investment Plan and Memorandum of Understanding.

- x. The Committee noted a news release from the First and deputy First Minister on behalf of NISRA - Northern Ireland population growth slows new figures show.
- xi. The Committee noted an invitation from the Committee for Finance to a Ribbon Display Ceremony on Monday 12 October at 11am to mark Baby Loss Week.
- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance - 2025-26 Public Expenditure Outturn and Forecast Outturn – August (R5) Position.
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from The Executive Office in relation to Common Frameworks.
- xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from NIA Legal Services - The 74th report from the Examiner of Statutory Rules. There are no rules for the attention of this Committee.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the draft forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to proceed with the remaining briefings as set out in the forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an informal meeting with the Truth Recovery Independent Panel as they are unable to attend Committee meeting on a Wednesday afternoon.

11. Any Other Business

The Committee discussed the ongoing Drumcree dispute and its impact on community relations within the local area.

Timothy Gaston proposed that the First Minister and deputy First Minister be invited to attend the Committee next week to discuss matters relating to good relations and

community cohesion within TEO. The Chairperson then put the question to the Committee that the proposal be agreed

The Committee divided: Ayes 6; Noes 2; Abstain 0

Ayes: Paula Bradshaw, Stewart Dickson, Phillip Brett, Deborah Erskine, Timothy Gaston and Sinéad McLaughlin.

Noes: Sinéad Ennis and Carál Ní Chuilín

The proposal was carried.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should liaise with Assembly Legal Services regarding the legal advice previously provided to the Committee on the questioning of the First Minister, to ensure that advice remains current and to include the advice in next week's meeting pack.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 7 October 2026 at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.05pm

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Chairperson, Committee for The Executive Office

Wednesday 30 September 2026