



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for The Executive Office

## Minutes of Proceedings

**Wednesday 14 May 2025**

**Meeting Location:** Room 30, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

- Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)
- Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Mr Timothy Gaston MLA
- Mr Harry Harvey MLA
- Mr Brian Kingston MLA
- Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
- Ms Áine Murphy MLA

**Online:**

- Sínead McLaughlin MLA
- Ms Claire Sugden MLA

**Apologies:** None

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

*The meeting commenced at 2.01pm in public session.*

### **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest,

### **3. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson updated Members that she met with Marie Breen-Smyth earlier that morning to discuss her appointment as the new chair of the Consultative Forum, as well as the work of the Forum and the upcoming Truth Recovery & Redress Bill.

The Clerk will issue a note of the discussion to Members in due course.

### **4. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 7 May 2025.

### **5. Matters Arising**

#### **5.1 Strategic Priorities Proposed Programme of Work 2025-2027.**

The Chair reminded the Committee that at last week's meeting Members agreed for the Committee team to update the Draft Strategic Priorities – Proposed programme

of work 2025 to 2027, including the requested formatting and content changes for consideration at today's meeting.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the updated Strategic Priorities - Proposed programme of work 2025 to 2027.

## **6. Victims Payment Scheme – Stakeholder Panel Session – Oral Briefing**

The witnesses joined the meeting at 2.06pm in person and online.

Members received a briefing from:

- Andrée Murphy, Deputy Director, Relatives for Justice
- Ruairí Howarth, TPDPS Caseworker Manager, Relatives for Justice
- Kenny Donaldson, Director, South East Fermanagh Foundation
- David Taylor, Welfare & Advice Officer, ELY Centre
- Ivan Bingham, Welfare Support Officer, ELY Centre
- Sandra Peake, CEO, WAVE Trauma Centre

The witnesses provided an update on the Victims Payment Scheme.

The oral briefing session was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

*Áine Murphy left the meeting at 3.24pm and returned at 3.25pm.*

*The witnesses left the meeting at 3.25pm.*

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

*The meeting suspended at 3.25pm and resumed at 3.38pm.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to combine the next two oral evidence sessions with the Victim's Payment Board and the Victims and Survivors Service.

## **7&8. Victims Payment Scheme – Department Officials and Payment Board President – Oral Briefing**

The witnesses joined the meeting at 3.39pm.

Members received a briefing from:

- The Hon. Mr Justice McAlinden, President, Victims Payment Board
- Paul Bullick, Secretary, Victims Payment Board
- Patrick Gallagher, Director of Victims and Survivors, the Executive Office
- Andrew Walker, CEO, Victims and Survivors Service

The witnesses provided an update on the Victims Payment Scheme.

The oral briefing session was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

*Áine Murphy left the meeting at 4.27pm and returned at 4.32pm.*

*Carál Ní Chuilín left the meeting at 4.43pm.*

*The witnesses left the meeting at 5.00pm.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the written submission and Hansards from today's oral evidence sessions with the Justice Committee.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request the following information:

- That they undertake a mapping exercise of applications received under the Victim's Payment Scheme, to include a breakdown of successful and unsuccessful applications by geographical location.
- Details of the communication strategy in place to mark the four-year anniversary of the Scheme in August 2025, and what specific efforts are being made to reach individuals living outside the UK who may be eligible to apply.
- Will funding be made available beyond the application deadline of 31 August 2026, and if so, what plans are in place for the use of this funding?

- Update on the recruitment for process for the new Commissioner for Victims and Survivors.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Justice to request the following information:

- To put on record its concern regarding the absence of a case management system for processing applications under the Scheme. The Committee also agreed to ask what plans are in place to implement such a system, given the current limitations of the existing portal.
- Further information of the upcoming structural review of the Scheme including what will be included in this review.
- Further details of the recent audit of the Victim's Payment Board and to ask if these results could be shared with the Committee.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Secretary of State to ask whether there are any plans to extend the Scheme beyond the application deadline of 31 August 2026.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister to ask whether there are any plans to extend the Scheme beyond the application deadline of 31 August 2026.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Ely Centre, WAVE, SEFF, the Ashton Centre, Relatives for Justice, and the Victims and Survivors Service to seek their views on what should be included in a communication strategy for the remainder of Scheme.

## **9. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee noted a response to the Committee's correspondence of the 30 April regarding gender perspective in the Truth Recovery Process.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider a further response from the Committee via the Clerk.

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Infrastructure including a copy of a letter from the Minister of Finance regarding disaggregation of £425 million allocation made by the Executive to deliver priorities within the Programme for Government.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note this item of correspondence and to write to the Department to ask following disaggregation of £425 million allocation made by the Executive to deliver priorities within the Programme for Government, how will the £2 million allocated for EVAWG be spent.

- iv. The Committee noted a response from Mid and East Antrim Borough Council to the Committee's correspondence from the 8 May requesting details of allocation of Local Change Fund in relation to Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider further action when all responses have been received from all local council areas.

- v. The Committee noted SR No. 78 The Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 / SR No. 78 Explanatory Memorandum. This is for information only and not subject to Assembly procedure.
- vi. The Committee noted a press release from the Executive Office News – First Minister and deputy First Minister officially open the first phase of a £100 million investment programme in Belfast International Airport.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department for the Economy to ask whether the £100 million investment included any public funding as part of the overall investment package.

- vii. The Committee noted a Webinar invitation from the Children's Law Centre on Incorporating the UNCRC – Making Children's Rights Real.

- viii. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office to the Committee's correspondence from the 19 March regarding the Budget Sustainability Plan.
- ix. The Committee noted a response from the Department for Health to the Committee's correspondence from the 14 April in relation to end of life care for Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Paymaster General and Minister for The Cabinet Office to Chairs of the House of Lords European Affairs Committee and Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee seeking their agreement on a renewal of the EU scrutiny arrangements which were agreed previously by those Committees in October 2022.
- xi. The Committee noted a press release from the Executive Office from the First Minister and deputy First Minister congratulating Pope Leo XIV on his election as the head of the Catholic Church.

## **10. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered the draft forward work programme.

The Committee noted an update from the Assistant Clerk in relation to arrangements for next week's meeting. The Committee will have an informal working lunch with WAVE, Adopt NI and VSS to provide an overview of their role supporting survivors of Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses in Northern Ireland. The formal Committee meeting will then start at the later time of 2.30pm.

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

## **11. Any Other Business**

A Member asked if there was any further information on role of Junior Ministers and information on the projects and areas of responsibility they are currently engaged in.

The Clerk updated the Committee that this information had been requested from the Department.

## **12. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 21 May at 2.30pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 5.16pm.*

**Paula Bradshaw MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office**

**Wednesday 14 May 2025**