



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for Justice

### Minutes of Proceedings

**THURSDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2024**

**Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast**

**Present:**

Joanne Bunting MLA (Chairperson)

Deirdre Hargey MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Doug Beattie MLA

Maurice Bradley MLA

Alex Easton MLA

Sinéad Ennis MLA

Ciara Ferguson MLA

Justin McNulty MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Stewart Dickson MLA

**In Attendance:**

Caroline Perry (Assembly Clerk)

Kathy O'Hanlon (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Jonny Redpath (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Aaron Pakenham (Clerical Supervisor)

The Chairperson welcomed the Members to the first meeting of the Committee for Justice.

*The Committee agreed to start the meeting in closed session to discuss a number of protocols and procedures.*

*The meeting commenced at 1.31pm in closed session.*

**1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

**2. Scrutiny of Subordinate Legislation and the Role and Functions of the Examiner of Statutory Rules**

The Examiner of Statutory Rules, Angela Kelly, briefed the Committee on its scrutiny of subordinate legislation and outlined her role and functions.

The Senior Assistant Clerk to the Committee for Justice outlined a proposed approach to manage, within the statutory time periods available, the backlog of Statutory Rules that were laid by the Department of Justice since March 2022.

*Sinéad Ennis joined the meeting at 2.07pm.*

**3. Staff Contact Details**

The Committee noted the Justice Committee staff contact details.

#### **4. Committee Protocols**

The Committee discussed a number of protocols and procedures, covering arrangements for Committee meetings; the Committee induction plan; outcomes of an effective Committee; correspondence and requests for meetings that are not linked to the Committee's strategic priorities or statutory duties; the approach to meeting preparation and witness questioning; the protocol on conduct and courtesy at Committee meetings; and the Committee's approach to the use of social media.

*Sinéad Ennis left the meeting at 2.13pm.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that Committee meetings will be held in public session unless the Committee agrees that there is an overriding reason for proceedings to be closed.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the induction plan.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed an approach to dealing with correspondence and requests for meetings that are not linked to strategic priorities or statutory duties.

*The meeting moved into public session at 2.17pm.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the oral evidence session with Richard Pengelly, the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Justice, would be recorded by Hansard.

#### **5. Committee Membership**

The Committee noted details of the membership.

*Sinéad Ennis rejoined the meeting at 2.19pm.*

## **6. Declaration of Members' Interests**

The Chairperson advised the Committee that all Assembly Members are required to register relevant financial and other interests in the Register of Members' Interests.

The Chairperson informed Members of the requirement in Standing Order 69(5) that:

"A member who has

(a) a financial interest in any matter; or

(b) a relevant interest in any matter,

must declare that interest before taking part in any proceedings of the Assembly relating to that matter."

The Chairperson advised that, in particular, there is a requirement to declare any interests that might reasonably be thought by others to influence the Members' approach to the matter under consideration.

The Chairperson advised that "proceedings of the Assembly" included meetings of the Committee for Justice and that, as this was the first meeting of the Committee, Members should ensure that any financial or other interests that relate to the remit of the Committee, or that are likely to be relevant to a substantial part of its work, are drawn to the attention of the Committee.

The Chairperson advised Members that failure to register and/or declare an interest may be an offence under section 43 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

*Deirdre Hargey declared an interest in relation to an immediate family member who works for the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service.*

*Joanne Bunting declared an interest in relation to an immediate family member who works in the legal profession.*

*Joanne Bunting declared an interest in relation to previously having been a trustee of the RUC George Cross Foundation.*

The Chairperson reminded Members that the rules governing the registration and declaration of interests are contained in "The Code of Conduct and The Guide to the

Rules relating to the Conduct of Members” and that further advice and guidance is available from the Clerk of Standards.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Clerk of Standards will provide an informal briefing on requirements in relation to declaring interests in Committees before next week’s meeting.

## **7. Committee Procedures**

The Committee noted guidance papers on:

- the Powers and Operation of Statutory Committees for Chairpersons and Members;
- the Role of Committee Chairpersons; and
- the Role and Functions of the Committee Secretariat.

The Chairperson drew the attention of Members to guidance on privilege and matters sub judice and advised that, under section 50 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, for the purposes of the law of defamation, absolute privilege applies equally to:

- the making of a statement in proceedings of the Assembly; and
- the publication of a statement under the Assembly’s authority.

The Chairperson advised that privilege also extends to meetings of the Committee but that absolute privilege does not extend to press conferences or statements made to the press.

The Chairperson informed Members that they should be aware of the potential problems associated with discussing a matter that is sub judice and that the sub judice rule is contained in Standing Order 73.

The Chairperson advised that any matters in respect of which legal proceedings are “active” should not be referred to in Committee proceedings (except to the extent permitted by the Committee Chairperson) and that, in such cases, the matter awaiting adjudication should not be prejudiced by comment in a public session of a committee meeting.

The Chairperson drew Members' attention to the guidance on the language and simultaneous interpretation arrangements that have been put in place by the Assembly Commission, which allow for simultaneous and passive interpretation of Irish and Ulster Scots spoken in Assembly proceedings.

#### **8. Guidance on Timescales for Interaction between Assembly Committees and Departments**

The Committee noted guidance on interaction between Committees and Departments, which set out timescales for the provision of information and evidence between Departments and Committees.

#### **9. Subordinate Legislation: Delegation of Technical Scrutiny to the Examiner of Statutory Rules**

The Committee noted the guidance paper on Handling Subordinate Legislation (Statutory Rules).

*Agreed:* The Committee for Justice resolves, under Standing Order 43, to delegate to the Examiner of Statutory Rules the technical scrutiny of Statutory Rules referred to the Committee under the above-mentioned Standing Order.

The Committee further resolves that, in carrying out this function, the Examiner shall be authorised to report her technical findings on each Statutory Rule to the Assembly and to the relevant Department, as well as to the Committee itself, and to publish her report.

#### **10. Committee for Justice Legacy Report (2017-2022)**

The Committee noted the 2017-2022 Justice Committee Legacy Report, which set out its key activities, outputs and achievements.

## **11. Key Issues in the Justice Sector — Research and Information Service (RaISe)**

The Committee noted the Research and Information Service (RaISe) paper, which provided an overview of key issues in the Justice sector.

## **12. Overview Briefing on the Department of Justice**

Richard Pengelly, Permanent Secretary of the Department for Justice, joined the meeting at 2.27pm.

He provided an overview of the structure, responsibilities and budget of the Department of Justice.

The oral evidence was followed by a question-and-answer session.

The Permanent Secretary agreed to provide further information on several issues.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the Permanent Secretary for his attendance and he left the meeting.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Committee Clerk would make a list of the issues that were to be followed up on with the Department and would ask the Department to provide the information.

## **13. SR 2022/212 — The Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered SR 2022/212 The Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022, which amends The Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 to create new prescribed purposes for which an ‘Enhanced’ check may be undertaken by AccessNI along with a check of the Barred lists, in relation to hosts for the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and those under the age of 16 residing in the host premises.

*Agreed:* The Committee for Justice considered SR 2022/212 The Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report, had no objection to the Rule.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to ask the Department for more information on the checks required for those working within hotel or other settings used to house those who have arrived in Northern Ireland from Ukraine or refugees and asylum seekers from other countries.

#### **14. SR 2022/213 — The Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered SR 2022/213 The Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 which amends the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) Order (Northern Ireland) 1979 to require those seeking to provide accommodation under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and those aged over 16 residing with the host or sponsor in the premises being provided to self-disclose spent convictions.

*Agreed:* The Committee for Justice considered SR 2022/213 The Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report, had no objection to the Rule.

#### **15. SR 2022/217 — The Police Service of Northern Ireland (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2022**

The Committee considered SR 2022/217 The Police Service of Northern Ireland (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2022, which amends the Police Service of Northern Ireland Regulations 2005 and the Police Service of Northern Ireland Police Service of Northern Ireland Reserve (Injury Benefit) Regulations 2008 to include 19 September 2022 in the definition of public holidays for 2022, reflecting the announcement of a public holiday on 19 September 2022 for the State Funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.



*Agreed:* The Committee for Justice considered SR 2022/217 The Police Service of Northern Ireland (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2022 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report, had no objection to the Rule.

**16. SR 2022/218 — The Magistrates' Courts (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered SR 2022/218 The Magistrates' Courts (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022, which amends the Magistrates' Court Rules to provide for the practice and procedures to be followed when conducting a committal hearing, following the the abolition in committal proceedings of preliminary investigations and mixed committals by the Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Act 2022.

*Agreed:* The Committee for Justice considered SR 2022/218 The Magistrates' Courts (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report, had no objection to the Rule.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to ask the Department for its assessment of the impact of the change to committal proceedings on the defence.

The Committee noted SR 2022 No. 221 The Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (Commencement No. 1) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022.

*Justin McNulty left the meeting at 3.32pm.*

**17. SR 2022/158 — The County Courts (Financial Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered SR 2022/158 The County Courts (Financial Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022, which amended the upper jurisdictional limit of the Small Claims Court from £3,000 to £5,000.

Members noted that the statutory period had expired and the Rule therefore could not be annulled.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to ask both the Department and the Lady Chief Justice for their assessment of the impact the increase in jurisdiction has had, including whether there have been any judicial resourcing implications or any indications that the concerns noted by the Lady Chief Justice regarding equality of arms have been realised.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted SR 2022 No. 158 The County Courts (Financial Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022.

*Justin McNulty rejoined the meeting (virtually) at 3.39pm.*

#### **18. SR 2022/233 — The County Courts (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered SR 2022/233 The County Courts (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022, which will amend the County Court Rules (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 to reflect the change in jurisdiction in the small claims court from £3,000 to £5,000.

*Agreed:* The Committee for Justice considered SR 2022/233 The County Court (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report, had no objection to the Rule.

#### **19. SR 2022/243 — The Damages for Bereavement (Variation of Sum) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered SR 2022/243 The Damages for Bereavement (Variation of Sum) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022, which will increase bereavement damages to be paid by defendants in circumstances where they are found to be liable in negligence for causing a person's death from £15,000 to £17,200 with effect from 1 November 2022, in line with inflation.

*Agreed:* The Committee for Justice considered SR 2022/243 The Damages for Bereavement (Variation of Sum) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report, had no objection to the Rule.

**20. SR 2022/252 — The County Court (Amendment No. 2) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered SR 2022/252 The County Court (Amendment No. 2) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022, which will amend the County Court Rules (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 to provide a procedure for applications for summary judgement for all or part of a claim after a Notice of Intention to Defend has been lodged and prescribe the procedure for applications for provisional damages for personal injuries.

*Agreed:* The Committee for Justice considered SR 2022/252 The County Court (Amendment No. 2) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report, had no objection to the Rule.

**21. SR 2022/254 — The Family Proceedings (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered SR 2022/254 The Family Proceedings (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022, which amends court rules to enable a special measures direction to be made in the High Court or county court hearing family proceedings for a party or witness who is, or is at risk of, being subjected to abusive behaviour carried out by a party, relative of a party or a witness who is personally connected to them.

*Agreed:* The Committee for Justice considered SR 2022/254 — The Family Proceedings (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report, had no objection to the Rule.

**22. SR 2022/255 — The Magistrates' Courts (Domestic Proceedings) (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered SR 2022/255 The Magistrates' Courts (Domestic Proceedings) (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022 which amends court rules to enable a special measures direction to be made in the Magistrates' court hearing specified family proceedings for a party or witness who is, or is at risk of, being

subjected to abusive behaviour carried out by a party, relative of a party or a witness who is personally connected to them.

*Agreed:* The Committee for Justice considered SR 2022/255 The Magistrates' Courts (Domestic Proceedings) (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2022 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report, had no objection to the Rule.

The Committee noted SR 2022/253 (C. 25) The Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Commencement No. 3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022.

### **23. Northern Ireland Policing Board Retention and Disposal Schedule**

The Committee considered the Northern Ireland Policing Board Retention and Disposal Schedule, which is required to be laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly under section 8(2) of the Public Records Act (Northern Ireland) 1923, and in accordance with the Rules of the Disposal of Documents Order 1925, by the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* The Committee for Justice was content with the Northern Ireland Policing Board Retention and Disposal Schedule.

### **24. Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 Codes of Practice — Department of Justice Draft Consultation Paper**

Members were advised that the Department is proposing to undertake a consultation on three Codes of Practice under the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) 2002 and that a range of new powers are to be made at the end of April in relation to cryptoasset related items and cryptoassets. Members were further advised that updates to the Codes are required following changes to POCA arising from the commencement of provisions in the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023.

*Agreed:* The Committee will consider the summary of the consultation responses and the proposed way forward.

## 25. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme.

## 26. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered a Ministerial statement from the Minister of Justice announcing the publication of research on potential over-representation in the youth justice system in Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request an update from the Department on the actions it has taken as a result of the research.

- ii. The Committee considered the summary of responses that were received by the Department of Justice following a public consultation on increasing the minimum age of criminal responsibility in Northern Ireland from 10 years to 14 years..

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request an update from the Department on its proposed actions in response to the consultation.

- iii. The Committee considered the action plan that was published by the PSNI on tackling violence against women and girls.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request an update from the PSNI on the progress of the action plan.

- iv. The Committee considered correspondence relating to an ongoing court case regarding a historic boundary dispute and allegations of fraud. Members were advised that the full bundle of correspondence can be provided on request.

- v. The Committee considered a series of emails from an individual that were sent to the Committee office's email address. Members were advised that some of the emails appeared to contain threats to named individuals and that the emails had been forwarded to the PSNI. *Agreed:* The Committee agreed

that future items of correspondence from this individual would not be included in meeting packs. *Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the reports mentioned below from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) are to be included in future relevant meeting packs.

The Committee noted the following:

- vi. correspondence from the Minister of Justice on the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 regarding a written Ministerial statement on the extraction of information from electronic devices and the code of practice;
- vii. correspondence from the Minister of Justice regarding a written Ministerial statement on the inter-governmental agreement on criminal justice co-operation.
- viii. correspondence from the Minister of Justice on the statutory guidance regarding the Protection from Stalking Act (Northern Ireland) 2022;
- ix. correspondence from the Minister of Justice explaining why a legislative consent motion was not being recommended regarding the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill;
- x. correspondence from the Minister of Justice explaining why it was not possible to seek a legislative consent motion for the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill;
- xi. correspondence from the Department of Justice regarding a report by the Prison Service Pay Review Body;
- xii. correspondence from the Department of Justice outlining the restorative justice revised protocol 2023 and a review of the 2007 protocol for community-based restorative justice schemes.
- xiii. correspondence from the Department of Justice on the summary report on the joint consultation by DoJ and the Department of Health regarding a draft domestic and sexual abuse strategy;

- xiv. correspondence from the Department of Justice regarding an addendum to the seven-year action plan on the stopping domestic and sexual violence and abuse strategy;
- xv. correspondence from the Department of Justice outlining its response to recommendations in the NIAO report 'Reducing Adult Reoffending in Northern Ireland';
- xvi. correspondence from the Department of Justice regarding the reports of the appointed person for Northern Ireland for 2021-22 and 2022-23 in relation to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002;
- xvii. correspondence from the Department of Justice stating that a fundamental review has commenced regarding criminal legal aid;
- xviii. correspondence from the Department of Justice stating that a trustee was appointed to the Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Foundation;
- xix. correspondence from the Department of Justice about the competition to appoint the Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland;
- xx. correspondence from the Department of Justice regarding Cyber Crime, Modern Slavery and Sentencing and the findings from the 2021-22 NI Safe Community Telephone Survey;
- xxi. correspondence from the Department of Justice about an anti-social behaviour consultation launched by the Department and the Department for Communities;
- xxii. correspondence from the Department of Justice on its and NISRA's report 'First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland 2021-22';
- xxiii. correspondence from the Department of Justice on its and NISRA's report Victim and Witness Experience of the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice System – Key Findings 2022/23';
- xxiv. correspondence from the Department of Justice on its and NISRA's report 'Northern Ireland Youth Justice Agency Annual Workload Statistics 2022/23';

- xxv. correspondence from the Department of Justice on its and NISRA's report 'Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland (2020/21 Cohort)';
- xxvi. correspondence from the Department of Justice on its and NISRA's report 'The Northern Ireland Prison Population 2022/23';
- xxvii. correspondence from the Department of Justice on its and NISRA's report 'Youth Engagement Statistics for Northern Ireland - April 2022 to March 2023';
- xxviii. correspondence from the Clerk to the Senedd to the Clerk to the NI Assembly advising that the Senedd did not approve the Legislative Consent Motion on the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill;
- xxix. correspondence from the Clerk to the Scottish Parliament to the Clerk to the NI Assembly advising that the Scottish Parliament did not consent to the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill;
- xxx. correspondence from the Clerk to the Scottish Parliament to the Clerk to the NI Assembly advising that the Scottish Parliament did not consent to the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill;
- xxxi. correspondence from the Clerk to the Senedd to the Clerk to the NI Assembly advising that the Senedd did not approve the legislative consent motion on the Illegal Migration Bill;
- xxxii. correspondence from the Clerk to the Scottish Parliament to the Clerk to the NI Assembly advising that the Scottish Parliament did not consent to the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill;
- xxxiii. correspondence from the Clerk to the Senedd to the Clerk to the NI Assembly advising that the Senedd did not approve the legislative consent motion on the Energy Bill;
- xxxiv. correspondence from the PSNI outlining a press statement regarding data sharing with the Home Office on immigration;
- xxxv. correspondence from the Department of Health regarding operator guidance relating to the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Act (Northern Ireland) 2023;



- xxxvi. correspondence from the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law inviting a contribution to the call for evidence in relation to the Independent Commission on UK Public Health Emergency Powers;
- xxxvii. correspondence from the Independent Reporting Commission highlighting its fifth and sixth reports from December 2022 and December 2023 respectively;
- xxxviii. correspondence from the Lady Chief Justice about a vacancy in the Court of Appeal;
- xxxix. correspondence between Lord Jay of Ewelme, Chair of the House of Lords European Affairs sub-Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, and Jeremy Quin MP, Minister of State for the Home Office regarding scheduled substances and the NI Protocol;
- xl. correspondence from Lord Jay of Ewelme, Chair of the House of Lords European Affairs sub-Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, referring to a letter to Robert Jenrick MP, Minister of State for Immigration requesting an update on the Nationality and Borders Act 2022;
- xli. correspondence from Lord Jay of Ewelme, Chair of the House of Lords European Affairs sub-Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, referring to a letter to Robert Jenrick MP, Minister of State for Immigration regarding the implications of the European Travel Authorisation requirement, which included a letter from the NI Tourism Alliance;
- xlii. correspondence between Nigel Huddleston MP, Minister of State for International Trade and Lord Jay of Ewelme, Chair of the House of Lords European Affairs sub-Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, regarding import, export and transit measures for firearms;
- xliii. correspondence from Lord Jay of Ewelme, Chair of the House of Lords European Affairs sub-Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, regarding a letter to the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, Kemi Badenoch MP on import, export and transit measures for firearms;
- xliv. correspondence from the NIAO on its report 'Ministerial Directions in Northern Ireland';

- xliv. correspondence from the NIAO on its report 'The Judicial Review Process in Northern Ireland';
- xlvi. correspondence from the NIAO on its report 'Continuous Improvement Arrangements in Policing';
- xlvii. correspondence from the NI Chamber and BDO regarding the Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) for Q2 2022;
- xlvi. correspondence from the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council regarding the Sustainability Report 2022;
- xlix. correspondence from the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council regarding the Sustainability Report 2022: Special Focus – Health;
  - I. correspondence from the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council regarding the NI Executive's 2022-23 Budget: an update;
  - li. correspondence from the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council regarding the NI Executive's 2022-25 Budget: an assessment;
  - lii. correspondence from the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council regarding its response to the NI Affairs Committee's call for evidence on the funding and delivery of public services in Northern Ireland;
  - liii. correspondence from the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council regarding an initial summary of the NIO's 2023-24 budget for Northern Ireland;
  - liv. correspondence from the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council in relation to an updated estimate of the relative need for public spending in Northern Ireland;
  - lv. correspondence from the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council on its technical paper on improving the transparency of in-year monitoring;
  - lvi. correspondence from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) regarding its statement in response to the publication of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill;
  - lvii. correspondence from the Equality Commission and the NIHRC in relation to the annual report on the implementation of Article 2 of the Protocol 2021-2022;

- lviii. correspondence from the Equality Commission and the NIHRC in relation to the annual report on the implementation of Article 2 of the Windsor Framework 2022-2023;
- lix. correspondence from the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission regarding appointments to the Office of District Judge (Magistrates' Courts) in Northern Ireland; the appointment of a High Court judge; the appointment of a Master (King's Bench and Appeals); the appointment of the president of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal; the appointment of the vice-president of the Industrial Tribunals and the Fair Employment Tribunal; appointments of High Court and County Court judges; and the appointment of a district Judge (Magistrates' Courts);
- lx. correspondence from Ofcom regarding the launch of the consultation on the Online Safety Act 2023;
- lxi. correspondence from University College London, Constitution Unit regarding the report 'Public Preferences for Integrity and Accountability in Politics';
- lxii. correspondence from University College London, Constitution Unit and the Institute for Government regarding the report 'Rebuilding and Renewing the Constitution';
- lxiii. correspondence from University College London, Constitution Unit regarding the report 'The Future of Democracy in the UK - Public Attitudes and Policy Responses';
- lxiv. correspondence from Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) regarding its Investing Activity monthly reports for the Department of Justice for May 2022 to January 2024;
- lxv. correspondence from the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels regarding the 'Brussels Report – January to March 2022';
- lxvi. a list of Annual Reports and Accounts of various Justice organisations that had been laid in the Assembly Business Office since May 2022 and were available in the Committee Office.

## **27. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson advised Members that she and the Deputy Chairperson have received an invitation to meet with the Lady Chief Justice.

The Chairperson advised Members that she and the Deputy Chairperson have received an invitation to meet with the Justice Delivery Director and the Head of Finance from the Department of Justice.

## **28. Any other Business**

None.

## **29. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The Chairperson advised Members that the next Committee meeting will take place on 22 February 2024 at the earlier time of 1.40pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

Members were also advised that, prior to next week's meeting, a photo of the Members of the Committee for Justice, which will be published on the Committee's web page, will be taken and that Members will receive an invitation with the details of where this will take place.

*The Meeting was adjourned at 3.56pm.*

Joanne Bunting MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Justice