



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for the Economy

## Minutes of Proceedings

23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022

**Meeting Location:** Senate Chamber

**In Attendance:** Dr Caoimhe Archibald (MLA (Chairperson))  
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA  
Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA  
Mr John O'Dowd MLA  
Mr Stephen Dunne MLA  
Ms Claire Sugden MLA  
Mr Peter Weir MLA  
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

**In Attendance:** Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Thomas Armstrong (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Aaron Pakenham (Clerical Officer)

**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)  
Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

The meeting commenced at 10:06am in open session.



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Members agreed to move to agenda item 1

### 1. Apologies

None.

### 2. Draft Minutes

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the Minutes from 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the Record of Decisions from 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

### 3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson expressed her condolences and that of all Committee Members to the family, friends and party colleagues of the former Committee Member Christopher Stalford MLA following his death earlier in the week.

**Agreed:** Members agreed that Agenda Item 5, the departmental briefing on City Deals, would be postponed due to time pressures.

**Agreed:** Member agreed that the meeting would be suspended at 10.30am to allow Members to attend to business in the Chamber.

**Noted:** Members noted a letter from the Speaker regarding legislative pressures.

Members agreed to move to Agenda Item 6.

### 6. Matters Arising

**Noted:** Member noted correspondence from the Chair of the Independent Review of Invest NI and from the Minister regarding the appointment of a review panel.



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**Noted:** Members noted that an informal meeting would take place on 10<sup>th</sup> March with the Chair of the Independent Review of Invest NI.

**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Equality Commission regarding the HSS Scheme.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the Minister regarding the summary of responses to the consultation on Heat Networks: Building a Market Framework.

**Agreed:** Members noted Correspondence from the Minister regarding the commencement of the initial stage of the Review of the Further Education Delivery Model and agreed to write to the Department for further information on co-ordination with the overall review of education.

**Agreed:** Members noted a response from the Department regarding the SL1 The Domestic Abuse Information-sharing with Schools and the inclusion of FE colleges and agreed to write to the Department for further information around pilots.

**Agreed:** Members noted a response from the Department regarding Committee queries around the evaluation of the HSS Scheme and agreed to write to the Department to seek high level information around the level of spend across Council areas.

Members agreed to move to Agenda Item 7.

### 7. Onshore Fracking (Prohibition) Bill

Members noted that the Committee has invited the Bill proposer, Áine Murphy MLA, and an expert from the Geological Survey to discuss the Bill and its objectives at next week's Committee meeting.



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**8. SL1 - Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2022**

Members considered SL1 - Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2022.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed it was content with the policy intent of the SL1.

The meeting was suspended at 10.25am.

The meeting re-commenced at 11.20am in open session.

Members agreed to move to Agenda Item 9.

**9. The Provisional Late Payments (Commercial Transactions) Common Framework**

Members noted a RaISe Briefing Paper on the Provisional Late Payments (Commercial Transactions) Common Framework.

**10. Correspondence**

**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Department for Communities to the Committee for Communities regarding energy prices rises.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the AERA Committee to DfE regarding the prospect of extension of Covid-19 support schemes.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Health regarding the Disabled Student Allowance scheme.

**Agreed:** Members noted correspondence from the Chairpersons' Liaison Group regarding its report on Strengthening Committee Scrutiny and agreed to respond thanking its members for their work, noting the recommendations made in the Report, and indicating that this Committee will consider the application of those recommendations that Members see as relevant and appropriate to the Committee's function.



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**Noted:** Members noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules - Thirteenth Report of Session 2021-2022.

**Agreed:** Members noted correspondence from an individual regarding queries about Fibrus Broadband and agreed to forward to the Department for a response on the issues raised.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance to the Minister for the Economy regarding Covid Support for the Hospitality Supply Chain.

**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Department to the Committee for Finance regarding the closure of the RHI Scheme.

**Noted:** Members noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules - Fourteenth Report of Session 2021-2022.

**Agreed:** Members noted correspondence from an individual regarding support for the hair and beauty sector and agreed to write to the Department to ask what support can be provided.

**Agreed:** Members noted correspondence from an individual regarding concerns around EU Surcharges on items purchased from the UK and agreed to forward to the Department for a response on the issues raised.

The meeting was suspended at 11.25am.

The meeting re-commenced at 11.30am in open session.

Members agreed to move to Agenda Item 4.

#### **4. Employment (Zero Hours Workers and Banded Weekly Working Hours) Bill-Women's Regional Policy Group**

Members received a briefing from:



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<b>Clare Moore</b>	Group Member, Women's Policy Group
<b>Alexa Moore</b>	Group Member, Women's Policy Group
<b>Alex Brennan</b>	Group Member, Women's Policy Group
<b>Caoimhe McNeill</b>	Group Member, Women's Policy Group

Key issues discussed included: the impact of zero hour contracts and precarious employment on women; the contribution of women to the economy; potential loopholes in the Bill; protection of women in the workplace and calls for other policy commitments within New Decade New Approach to be fulfilled.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to write to the Department in relation to the Department for the Economy related issues raised in the Feminist Recovery Plan and to forward the plan to other Committees to ask them to take the same action in relation to their own Departments.

The witnesses left the meeting at 12.19pm

## 11. Any Other Business

**Agreed:** Members discussed the issue of Invest NI withdrawing funding offers to investors because of budget uncertainty and agreed to invite Invest NI to provide an urgent briefing in relation to this.

**Agreed:** Members discussed the ongoing strike action by the University and Colleges Union within local universities and agreed to ask the universities what progress is being made in resolving the dispute.

## 12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting



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The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

**The meeting was adjourned at 12.10pm.**

**Dr Caoímhe Archibald MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for the Economy**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022**