



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2020

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Paul Givan MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Doug Beattie MLA
Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA*
Ms Jemma Dolan MLA*
Mr Gordon Dunne MLA
Mr Paul Frew MLA
Ms Emma Rogan MLA
Ms Rachel Woods MLA

* These Members attended the meeting via video conferencing.

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Mrs Christine Darragh (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Miss Leanne Johnston (Assistant Clerk)
Mrs Allison Mealey (Clerical Supervisor)

The meeting commenced at 2.04 p.m. in public session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the oral evidence session should be reported by Hansard.

Ms Woods declared an interest in respect of an item of correspondence regarding the Mandatory Retirement Age for Devolved Judicial Office Holders.

1. Apologies

As above.

The Clerk informed the Committee that, under Standing Order 115(6), Jemma Dolan MLA had delegated authority to the Deputy Chairperson, Linda Dillon MLA, to vote on her behalf should she encounter connectivity problems with the video conferencing system.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2020.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Amendments

The Minister of Justice, Naomi Long MLA and Dr Veronica Holland, Violence Against the Person Branch, Department of Justice joined the meeting by video conferencing at 2.06 p.m.

The Minister outlined the purpose of her amendments to Clauses 9, 11 and 17 and her position in respect of the Committee's six amendments.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the Minister for her attendance and she left the meeting at 4.10 p.m.

Dr Holland remained to provide further clarification on a number of issues.

The Chairperson thanked Dr Holland for her attendance and she left the meeting at 4.36 p.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the Minister of Justice's proposed amendments to Clause 9.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to support the Minister of Justice's amendments to Clauses 11 and 17.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would proceed with its amendments at Consideration Stage on Tuesday 17 November 2020.

The Committee considered the information provided by the Minister in relation to the proposed timing of Further Consideration Stage and the likely short timeframe to liaise regarding potential further amendments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule consideration of any departmental amendments for Further Consideration Stage of the Bill at its meeting on 26 November 2020 and to provisionally schedule an additional meeting, if required, on Tuesday 1 December 2020.

5. Development and Implementation of a Statutory Registration Scheme for Legal Aid Practitioners in Northern Ireland

The Committee considered information provided by the Department of Justice on the development of a Statutory Registration Scheme for Legal Aid Practitioners in Northern Ireland, the primary purpose of which is to provide a system to assess the quality and value for money of legal aid services and improve transparency and accountability for services funded from the public purse.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information from the Department on a range of issues to assist its consideration of the proposals.

6. CJINI Report on the Review of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships in Northern Ireland – Update on the Recommendations

The Committee considered an update provided by the Department of Justice on progress to take forward the recommendations in the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland report on Policing and Community Safety Partnerships ‘Working Together for Safer Communities’.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information from the Department on a range of issues.

7. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Justice advising that she had asked the Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland to undertake a focused review of the operation of Care and Supervision Units in the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a copy of the Terms of Reference for the Review and information on what role the Independent Monitoring Board will have.

The Committee noted the following:

- ii. A response from the Department of Justice providing further information regarding the consultation to increase the Mandatory Retirement Age for Devolved Judicial Office Holders.
- iii. A response from the Department of Justice providing further information in relation to the Implementation Plan for the Gillen Review.
- iv. Correspondence from the Department of Justice on the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Quarterly Statistics bulletins for October on civil, criminal and family business across all court tiers and the schedule for bulletins to be published in November 2020.
- v. The Public Accounts Committee Report on Major Capital Projects.
- vi. A Public Prosecution Service press release and latest Statistical Bulletin on cases involving sexual offences, including rape.

- vii. The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service Investment Account Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020.
- viii. The Northern Ireland Prison Service Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20.
- ix. The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Annual Report and Accounts for year ended 31 March 2020.

8. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Chairpersons' Liaison Group had arranged a briefing session for Committee Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons on the scrutiny of EU Exit Common Frameworks and the most recent information provided by the NI Assembly EU Affairs Manager indicated that there are no legislative or non-legislative common frameworks in respect of justice-related matters.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request confirmation from the Department of Justice on the position in relation to justice related EU Exit Common Frameworks.

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 19 November 2020 at 2.00 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.01 p.m.

Mr Paul Givan MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Justice