

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2013
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Paul Frew MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Joe Byrne (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Mr William Irwin MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr Kieran McCarthy MLA
Mr Ian Milne MLA
Mr Robin Swann MLA

Apologies: Mr Oliver McMullan MLA

In attendance: Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk
Ms Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk
Mr Mark O'Hare, Clerical Supervisor
Ms Dagmar Walgraeve Clerical Officer
Mr Mark Allen, Assembly Researcher (for item 5)

2.53 p.m. The meeting commenced in Open Session

1. Apologies

Apologies are noted above.

The Committee noted the absence of Mr Oliver McMullan due to illness and wished him a speedy recovery.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised Members that Mr Ian Milne's Declaration of Interests has been tabled for information.

The Chairperson advised Members that there has been a delay with the Reservoirs Bill coming to the Committee due to legal complexities and it will likely be October or November 2013 before it is introduced.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee is due to participate in the implementation of fully electronic meetings on 24 September and 1 October 2013. The IS Office will be supporting the meetings on both dates should any issues arise.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that a formal meeting has been arranged with the Grocery Adjudicator for Monday 30 September 2013 at 11.00 a.m. in Room 30.

3. Minutes of the meetings held on 2 July 2013

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 2 July 2013.

.

4. Matters arising

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel on the Financial Provisions Bill 2013 which is seeking formal submissions from Assembly committees. The Committee agreed to write to the Chairperson of the Finance and Personnel Committee to reaffirm that there are no issues within the Bill relevant to the Department.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 3 July 2013 from the Department regarding issues raised at the meeting on 18 June 2013. The Committee agreed to request that the Department keeps the Committee informed of any progress of the civil case, Smyth V USPCA. The Committee further agreed to ask the Department if they intend to conduct a review of the Welfare of Animals legislation given the issues raised in this case.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 11 July 2013 from the Department on the Computer Modelling Report on Test, Vaccinate or Remove. The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing on the implementation of the model.

- Agreed:* The Committee noted the correspondence dated 27 August 2013 from Farmers for Action which suggests a Bill to legislate for farm gates prices in Northern Ireland. The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask if it would consider proposing such a Bill for the Executive Legislative Programme. The Committee also agreed to inform the Bill Office of the proposal and noted that it is awaiting research on the issue.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the copied correspondence dated 2 July 2013 from the Minister to the Mourne Farmers Group on a range of issues.
- Agreed:* The Committee noted the correspondence dated 3 July 2013 from the Department which provides an update on the Badger Sett Survey in County Down. The Committee agreed to write to the Department how they intend to engage with farmers who are not participating in the survey and to advise if a reduction in participants will have an adverse effect on the survey.
- Agreed:* The Committee noted the written brief from the Department on Public Service Pension Provision and agreed to write to seek an oral briefing on the Department's future intentions with regard to this.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the correspondence dated 11 July 2013 from the Department regarding issues raised at the meeting on 25 June 2013.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the copied correspondence dated 15 August 2013 from the Department to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment on Horizon 2020.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the copied correspondence dated 17 July 2013 from the Department to the Committee for the Environment on Wind Energy.
- Agreed:* The Committee noted the correspondence dated 18 July 2013 from the Department regarding issues raised at the meeting on 2 July 2013. The Committee agreed to forward an extract of the letter to Mr Thompson regarding the initiative he has proposed regarding the detection of TB in badgers, using sniffer dogs.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the correspondence dated 22 July 2013 from the Department regarding issues raised at the meeting on 25 June

2013 on a new system to control TB in badgers as suggested by Farmers for Action.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 23 July 2013 from the Department on Explanatory Memorandum on EU Legislation – Plant Health.

Noted: The Committee noted the DARD Investment Strategy Report for July 2013.

Noted: The Committee noted the NFU Press Release on the badger cull in Somerset.

Noted: The Committee noted the copied correspondence dated 28 August 2013 from the Minister to Shane O'Neill regarding the Lough Neagh Co-operation Project.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 3 September 2013 from the Department which provides an update on Schmallerberg Virus.

Noted: The Committee noted the update from the Department on Ash Dieback.

3.00 p.m. Mr McCarthy joined the meeting.

5. Agri-Food Strategy: Oral Briefing RalSe

The Assembly Research Officer, Mark Allen briefed the Committee on the “Going for Growth” – Agri-Food Strategy.

3.11 p.m. Mr Milne left the meeting.

3.25 p.m. Mr Buchanan left the meeting.

3.26 p.m. Mr Irwin joined the meeting.

3.33 p.m. Mr Milne rejoined the meeting.

3.40 p.m. Mr Swann left the meeting.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further research on the evidence taken from farmers in other regions

6. The African Horse Sickness regulations (NI) 2013 – Written Brief

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the amendment to the policy and that it should move to the next legislative stage.

7. SR – The Sea Fish Industry (Harbour and Landing Dues) Scheme (NI) 2013

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered the SR 2013/21: The Sea Fish Industry (Harbour and Landing Dues) Scheme and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules Report, recommends that it be confirmed by the Assembly.

8. SR – The Fishing Boats (Satellite-Tracking Devices) Scheme (NI) 2013

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2013/212 – The Fishing Boat (Satellite Tracking Devices) Scheme (NI) 2013 and has no objections to the rule.

9. End of Session Report

Agreed: The Committee agreed the End of Session Report and agreed to publish it on the committee website.

10. Correspondence

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 1 July 2013 from the Committee for Finance and Personnel which provides an Assembly Research paper on financial forecasting by Northern Ireland departments. The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask what additional funding allocated in October was for and why it was not used.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 10 July 2013 from the Committee for Finance and Personnel on Departmental Savings Delivery Plans up to March 2013. The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an explanation on the various

measures impacted due to a forecast of under achievement in 2014/15.

Agreed: The Committee noted the copied correspondence dated 23 July 2013 to DARD from Millar, McCall and Wylie Solicitors in relation to a complaint on the management of Strangford Lough. The Committee agreed to request that the Department advises of any further developments.

Agreed: The Committee noted the copied correspondence dated 2 August 2013 from the Ulster Farmers Union to the Minister highlighting recent bereavements in the farming community. The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing with the Health and Safety Executive and the Farm Safety Partnership.

Noted: The Committee noted the invitation from the Department to the annual postgraduate studentship seminar on 18 September 2013.

Noted: The Committee noted the Schmallenberg Virus update from the Department.

Noted: The Committee noted the emailed correspondence from the clerk regarding the press release on the financial assistance to fishermen.

Noted: The Committee noted the invitation from AFBI to a seminar on “The Potential Impact of Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Policy on Agri-Food Sectors in NI” which takes place on 11 September 2013.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 21 August 2013 from the Department detailing a series of public consultation events for the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. The Committee agreed to request the Assembly Research Officer to attend one of the events on behalf of the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee noted the Explanatory Memorandum on European Union Legislation and agreed to forward document 10460/13, 11641/13 and 12242/13 to the Department for comment on the potential implications for Northern Ireland and a summary of interaction with DEFRA and other EU bodies.

11. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

12. AOB

There was no other business.

13. Date, time and place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 17 September 2013 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 3.48 p.m.

Paul Frew, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date