



# Northern Ireland Assembly

## COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITIES

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday 5 March 2020  
Room 29 Parliament Buildings**

Present: Paula Bradley MLA (Chairperson)  
Kellie Armstrong MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Andy Allen MLA  
Jonathan Buckley MLA  
Mark Durkan MLA  
Sinead Ennis MLA  
Robin Newton MBE MLA  
Emma Sheerin MLA  
Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

In Attendance: Kevin Pelan (Assembly Clerk)  
Sean McCann (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Antoinette Bowen (Clerical Supervisor)  
Oliver Bellew (Clerical Officer)

*The meeting commenced in open session at 10:02 a.m.*

#### **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies to record.

#### **2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson advised members of the cancellation of the proposed Departmental briefing on the outcome of the consultation on Liquor Licensing.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to write to the Minister outlining the Committee's disappointment and to ask when a briefing on this issue might take place.

The Chairperson advised members of the delay in Departmental responses coming back to the Committee. The Committee was awaiting responses, some of which dated back to 30 January and this was a breach of the agreed deadline of 10 working days or a response.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to write to the Department asking why these replies have been delayed and when the Committee might expect responses.

The Chairperson advised members that the Clerk of the Committee for Finance has asked for all committees schedule a budget briefing before Easter recess.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to request a Departmental budget briefing at its meeting on 2 April.

### **3. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 27 February 2020.

### **4. Matters Arising**

Members noted correspondence from the Ombudsman in relation to Committee queries into the Department's administration of PIP.

A Member raised the issue of the recent launch of a consultation on PIP and the lack of notification from the Department.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to write to the Department asking that the Committee is formally notified in future whenever consultations are launched.

Members noted correspondence from Advice NI on Universal Credit and implied consent.

### **5. Correspondence**

The Committee considered a letter and briefing paper from The Friends of Knock Iveagh regarding damage at Knock Iveagh in County Down.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for comment.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) regarding proposed changes to liquor licensing.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to CAMRA requesting a briefing paper.

The Committee noted the following:

- I. Copy of HM Government ‘The Future Relationship with the UK’ the UK’s approach to Negotiations.
- II. A copy of the Social Security Advisory Committee consultation on DWP engagement of Disabled people in policies and practices that affect them.
- III. Ofcom launch of new dedicated website.
- IV. Carnegie UK Trust publication ‘Natural Capital Account for Derry City and Strabane District.
- V. Memo for Clerk of the Committee for Finance on the Budget process.
- VI. Copy of correspondence to the Department from the Committee for Education regarding Nurture Provision.

## **6. Briefing by Deputy Secretary for Engaged Communities**

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 10:06 a.m.

Moira Doherty, Deputy Secretary for Engaged Communities  
Kathryn Hill, Director of Active Communities  
Maeve Walls, Director of Voluntary and Community Division  
Sharron Russell, Director of Culture

The following interests were declared:

Kelly Armstrong MLA declared an interest as a relative to Moira Doherty, Deputy Secretary for Engaged Communities and as a former employee in the Community and Voluntary Sector.

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA declared an interest as a former Minister of DCAL.

Andy Allen MLA declared interests as a Charity Trustee and as a participant in Disability Sport.

The officials provided the Committee with an overview of the work of Engaged Communities Group.

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

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek the following:

- A briefing at a future meeting on the Department’s next steps once it has considered its options and decided on the way forward on the recent judgement on the appeal of the delegation of decision-making relating to the Charity Commission.
- Further information as to whether Sport NI has cut funding to local councils.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

## **7. Legislative Consent Motion – Westminster Pension Bill**

Carál Ní Chuilín left the meeting at 12:20 p.m.

The Chairperson advised members that the Bill was introduced on 7 January 2020, with second reading on 28 January 2020 and Committee stage in the House of Lords started on 24 February 2020.

The Chairperson further advised members that the Bill includes provisions, which relate to devolved matters and subject to Executive approval, it is intended to seek support for a Legislative Consent motion to enable the Bill to legislate for some aspects of private pensions in Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to write to the Department requesting a briefing at its meeting on 12 March.

## **8. Consideration of Secondary Legislation**

### **SL1 - The Pension Protection Fund and Occupational Pension Schemes (Levy Ceiling and Compensation Cap) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content for the Rule to be made.

### **SL1 - The Guaranteed Minimum Pension Increase Order (Northern Ireland) 2020**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content for the Rule to be made.

### **The Social Security Revaluation of Earnings Factors Order (Northern Ireland) 2020**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content for the Rule to be made.

### **SL1 - The Automatic Enrolment (Earnings Trigger and Qualifying Earnings Band) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content for the Rule to be made.

### **SL1 - The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (General Levy) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020**

*Agreed:* Members were content for the Rule to be made.

The Chairperson informed members that this was Emma Sheerin's final Committee meeting as she was joining another committee. The Chairperson thanked Emma for her contributions on the Committee and wished her well.

Emma Sheerin left the meeting at 12:25 p.m.

### **SL1 – The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (NI) 2020**

The Chairperson advised members that a Departmental response had been received to Committee queries on whether the lump sum payments referred to in the regulations would have an impact on the payment of Universal Credit.

Members were content with the response.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content for the Rule to be made.

### **SL1 – The Social Security Up-rating Regulations (NI) 2020**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content for the Rule to be made.

### **SL1 – The Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2020**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content for the Rule to be made.

### **SL1 – The Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2020**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content for the Rule to be made.

Carál Ní Chuilín returned to the meeting at 12.29 p.m.

## **9. Any Other Business**

There was no AOB to record.

## **10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting will be on Thursday 12 March at 10.00 a.m. in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting adjourned at 12.30 p.m.*

**Ms Paula Bradley MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Communities**