



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Communities

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 3 March 2022

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Ms Kellie Armstrong MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Andy Allen MBE MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Paula Bradley MLA
Mr Mark Durkan MLA
Mr Paul Frew MLA
Ms Áine Murphy MLA
Ms Aisling Reilly MLA
Mr Stephen Dunne MLA
Ms Ciara Ferguson MLA

Apologies:

In Attendance: Dr Janice Thompson (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Sean McCann (Assistant Clerk)
Ms Antoinette Bowen (Clerical Officer)



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In Attendance by Video or Teleconference: Ms Rachel Ashe (Clerical Supervisor)

The Deputy Chairperson, Kellie Armstrong, assumed the Chair. The meeting began at 9.06 am in public session. The following Members were present at the start of the public session: Kellie Armstrong (Deputy Chairperson), Andy Allen, Paul Frew, Áine Murphy, Ciara Ferguson and Paula Bradley.

Declaration of Interests

Paul Frew declared an interest as a private landlord.

Andy Allen declared an interest as a private landlord.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's Business.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 24 February 2022.



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4. Matters Arising

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that they had received a Departmental response regarding the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) January Monitoring bid.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request the following;

- Further details regarding what is being funded, especially regarding the thermal installation programme;
- The length of time this will take;
- When this will be rolled out; and
- The number of households in need of work that will benefit from this funding

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that they had received a response from CCEA on the need for education in schools regarding gambling.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting that any guidance notes in relation to the forthcoming Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Bill are sent to CCEA.

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that they had received a response from the Minister of Finance regarding the recent additional funding announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to in relation to encourage it to bid for this funding to launch further energy support payment schemes and to ask that additional schemes are launched for those households who fall outside the remit of the two existing schemes.

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that they had received a Departmental response regarding addressing unacceptable behaviour in applications for social housing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for further information on the following;

- The additional forms of assistance available for those that are excluded due to anti-social behaviour;



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- Whether the Department has a statutory duty to help those evicted from social housing due to anti-social behaviour; and
- Whether a cross-departmental strategy is in place to deal with anti-social behaviour.

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that they had received a Departmental response regarding NIHE funding for adaptations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask the following;

- Whether the Warranted Builders' Scheme is still the most effective means to provide a list of potential builders;
- The number of times people have had to use builders not on the list;
- Whether the list of builders on the Warranted Builders' Scheme represents an even geographic spread across NI; and
- Whether a review is planned for the Warranted Builders' Scheme and the Disabilities Grant.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed that these issues should be included in the Committee's Legacy Report.

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that they had received a Departmental response regarding Access and Inclusion Programme Guidance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to clarify when the new tender process will commence for the Access and Inclusion Programme and to request that the Committee has advance sight of it.

Aisling Reilly joined the meeting at 9.41 am.

Mark Durkan joined the meeting at 9.41 am.

5. Briefing by the Department on the Women in Community Transformation Programme (WICT)

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed the following Officials to the meeting:

David Sales



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Sharon McCullough

The Officials briefed the Committee and participated in a question and answer session with Members.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the Officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to;

- Forward the Training for Women's Network's email to the Department for comment; and
- To write to Hospitality Ulster to enquire what actions they are taking to support the 'Ask for Angela' Programme.

Stephen Dunne joined the meeting at 10.06 am.

6. Briefing by the Department on the Supporting People Programme

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed the following Officials to the meeting:

Heloise Brown

Emma Stockman

The Officials briefed the Committee and participated in a question and answer session with Members.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the Officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a full breakdown of all the Supporting People Projects across NI and their respective geographic locations.

Paula Bradley left the meeting at 10.25 am.

The meeting was adjourned at 10.25 am.

The meeting recommenced in public session at 10.35 am.



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Due to witnesses experiencing technical issues, the Committee agreed to move to other agenda items and to return to the remaining briefings when the technical issues had been resolved.

7. SL1 – Social Security (Industrial Industries) (Prescribed Diseases) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2022

Agreed: The Committee was content for the Department to proceed to make the Rule.

8. SL1 – Social Security (Medical Evidence) and Statutory Sick Pay (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2022

Agreed: The Committee was content for the Department to proceed to make the Rule.

9. SL1 – Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) (Requirements to refer Members to guidance etc.) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2022

Agreed: The Committee was content for the Department to proceed to make the Rule.

10. SL1 – The Occupational Pension Schemes (Charges and Governance) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2022

Agreed: The Committee was content for the Department to proceed to make the Rule.



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11. SL1 – The Occupational Pension Schemes (Fraud Compensation Levy) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2022

Agreed: The Committee was content for the Department to proceed to make the Rule.

12. SL1 – The Occupational Pension Schemes (Schemes that were Contracted-Out) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2022

Agreed: The Committee was content for the Department to proceed to make the Rule.

13. SL1 – The Draft Coronavirus Act (Alteration of the Expiry date of Provisions related to Local Authority Meetings) Order (NI) 2022

Agreed: The Committee was content for the Department to proceed to make the Rule.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to enquire if any legislation is planned to permit Councils to permanently continue hybrid meetings in the future.

Andy Allen left the meeting at 10.52 am.

The meeting was adjourned at 10.52 am to allow witnesses more time to resolve technical difficulties.

The meeting resumed at 10.57 am.

14. Briefing by Leonard Cheshire on Supported and Assisted Living

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed the following representatives to the meeting:



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Fiona McCabe

Diane Watson

The representatives briefed the Committee and participated in a question and answer session with Members.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add issues related to Supported and Assisted Living to the Committee's Legacy Report.

15. Briefing by Shelter NI

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed the following representatives to the meeting:

Tony McQuillan

Stella LePoidevin

Louise Slavin

The representatives briefed the Committee and participated in a question and answer session with Members.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to;

- Write to the Department to enquire how it enables and promotes partnership working with Councils to alleviate homelessness; and
- Request information from the All Party Group on Homelessness on Councils' responses to tackling homelessness.

Ciara Ferguson left the meeting at 11.20 am.



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16. Briefing by the Department on the Amendments to the Private Tenancies Bill

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed the following Official to the meeting:

David Polley

Eilish O'Neill

The Officials briefed the Committee on the Minister's proposed amendments for Further Consideration Stage of this Bill and participated in a question and answer session with Members.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the Officials for their attendance.

Paul Frew left the meeting at 11.38 am.

17. Correspondence

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that they had received a copy of the NI Human Rights Commission's draft Strategic Plan 2022- 2025. The Committee was content to note.

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that they had received correspondence from the Minister stating that she has taken the lead on the Period Products (Free Provision) Private Members' Bill, given the importance of the issue and in the absence of any other Minister taking the lead. The Committee was content to note.

The Committee was content to note the following items of correspondence:

- i. A copy of the NI Fiscal Council's report, 'Stakeholder Engagement and Future Work Programme';
- ii. A copy of the Investment Strategy NI Department for Communities Investing Activity Report for February 2022, from the Strategic Investment Board Ltd;
- iii. A copy of the SR 2002/63 (C.9) The Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Act (NI) 2002 Phase 2 Commencement from the Department; and



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- iv. A copy of the SR 2022/69 The Pension Fund and Occupational Pension Schemes (Levy Ceiling) Order (NI) 2022 from the Department.

Stephen Dunne left the meeting at 11.50 am.

18. Forward Work Programme

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that, at the meeting on 10 March 2022, the Committee will be briefed by the Northern Ireland Football League (NIFL), the Irish Football Association (IFA), a number of groups which promote women in sport, and the Women's Support Network.

19. Any Other Business

Members discussed the decision by the Department of Work and Pensions to not uphold the appeal to back-pay the £20 uplift for Universal Credit.

20. Date, Time and Location of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 10 March, 9.00 am in room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.06 pm.

Kellie Armstrong MLA
Deputy Chairperson, Committee for Communities