



## Northern Ireland Assembly

### COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITIES

#### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday 16 September 2020**

**Room 29, Parliament Buildings**

Present:	Kellie Armstrong MLA (Deputy Chairperson) Andy Allen MBE MLA Robin Newton MBE MLA Sinéad Ennis MLA Fra McCann MLA
Present: Starleaf	Paula Bradley MLA (Chairperson) Mark Durkan MLA Jonathan Buckley MLA
In Attendance:	Janice Thompson (Assembly Clerk) Sean McCann (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Oliver Bellew (Clerical Officer)

*The meeting commenced in open session at 14:01 p.m.*

#### **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies to record.

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

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting and referred to the Chair on Starleaf to take Chairperson's Business. The Chair informed members that she had appeared on the Politics Show on Sunday past and Good Evening Ulster to talk about the Committee's support for funding for the Arts Sector.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to invite the Arts Council to brief on Covid-19 funding at a future meeting.

The Chairperson informed members that the Chairpersons' Liaison Group (CLG) met on 15 September 2020. At that meeting it was agreed that Committees may now consider arranging external meetings and visits, taking into account the appropriate risk assessments for Covid-19 and any relevant Covid restrictions at that time.

*Agreed:* Members agreed that the Committee Secretariat investigates the possibility of external meetings or visits at suitable venues.

The Chairperson also informed members that at the CLG meeting it was agreed that all Committees will revert back to their former meeting days and times by early October.

*Robin Newton joined the meeting at 2.06p.m.*

### **3. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9 September 2020.

### **4. Matters Arising**

The Deputy Chairperson advised members that they had been provided with a draft note of the Committee's Strategic Planning Day.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to the proposed actions in the note of the strategic planning day.

*Mark Durkan joined the meeting at 14.10 p.m.*

The Committee noted a Departmental letter in relation to the transfer of welfare reform powers from Westminster back to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Committee noted a Departmental letter in relation to the concordat between the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

The Deputy Chairperson informed members that they had been provided with amendments to the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal Bill) Legislative Consent Motion (LCM).

The Deputy Chairperson further informed members that Departmental officials were available to update the members on the changes since the Committee last considered the LCM.

As there were technical difficulties with this agenda item, it was agreed that it would be revisited later in the meeting.

## **5. Briefing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Independent Review of PIP**

The following interests were declared:

Andy Allen declared an interest as he recently met Ms Cavanagh, as an Ulster Unionist Party representative, to discuss the 2<sup>nd</sup> Independent Review of PIP.

Kellie Armstrong declared an interest as she recently met Ms Cavanagh, as an Alliance Party representative, to discuss the 2<sup>nd</sup> Independent Review of PIP.

Ms Marie Cavanagh, Independent Reviewer, joined the meeting.

Ms Cavanagh briefed the Committee on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Independent Review of PIP.

This was followed by a question and answer session with members.

The Deputy Chair thanked Ms Cavanagh for her attendance.

## **6. Matters Arising**

The Deputy Chairperson advised members that they would return to Matters Arising and that they had been provided with amendments to the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal Bill) Legislative Consent Motion (LCM).

The Deputy Chairperson further informed members that Departmental officials were available to update the members on the changes since the Committee last considered the LCM.

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting:

Mr Gerry McCann, State and Private Pensions & EU  
Ms Anne McCleary, Social Security Policy and Legislation

The Departmental officials briefed the Committee on the amendments.

*Agreed:* The Committee was content to support the revised LCM when it is debated in plenary.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the Departmental officials for their attendance.

## **7. Assembly Research Briefing on the Pension Schemes Bill**

Ms Eleanor Murphy, Research and Information Services (RaISe), joined the meeting.

Ms Murphy briefed the Committee on her Research Bill Paper on the Pension Schemes Bill.

This was followed by a question and answer session with members.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked Ms Murphy for her attendance.

## **8. SR 2020/192 – The Private Tenancies (Coronavirus Modifications) Regulations (NI) 2020**

The following interests were declared:

Andy Allen declared an interest as a Private Sector Landlord.

Robin Newton declared an interest as a Private Sector Landlord.

The Committee considered SR 2020/192 – The Private Tenancies (Coronavirus Modifications) Regulations (NI) 2020, which responds to the present outbreak of coronavirus in Northern Ireland and protects tenants from eviction during the present emergency period.

*Agreed:* The Committee considered SR 2020/192 – The Private Tenancies (Coronavirus Modifications) Regulations (NI) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules Report, had no objection to the rule.

## **9. Correspondence**

Members considered an invitation to visit the Lacada Brewery in Portrush.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to note the invitation until the Committee Secretariat has investigated the possibility and taken further advice on holding external meetings and visits.

The Committee noted the following:

- I. Annual Report 2019/2020 – Discretionary Support Commissioner.
- II. NILGOSC Annual Report and Accounts 2019/2020.
- III. Pivotal Paper “Priorities for Recovery”, a briefing paper for the NI Executive’s return from recess.
- IV. Copy of Edward & Co Solicitors briefing paper for a meeting with the Department of Communities on 4 September 2020.
- V. Invitation to the launch of the re-opening of the Armagh Planetarium’s upgraded facilities.
- VI. Request to brief the Committee on the effect of the Executive’s Covid-19 measures on individuals who live with intellectual disability.
- VII. Child Poverty Annual Report 2019-2020.

## **10. Forward Work Programme**

Members noted that, at the meeting on 23 September, the Committee will be briefed by Departmental officials on the Pension Schemes Bill and on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive investment challenge.

## **11. Any Other Business**

The Committee Chairperson reminded members to switch their mobile phones off airplane mode when leaving the Committee meeting as it interfered with the Covid-19 track and trace app.

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

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 23 September at 14:00 p.m. in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting adjourned at 15:41 p.m.*

**Ms Kellie Armstrong MLA**  
**Deputy Chairperson, Committee for Communities**