



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITIES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 23 September 2020

Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Paula Bradley MLA (Chairperson)
Kellie Armstrong MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Andy Allen MBE MLA
Robin Newton MBE MLA
Sinéad Ennis MLA
Fra McCann MLA

Present: Starleaf Mark Durkan MLA
Jonathan Buckley MLA

In Attendance: Janice Thompson (Assembly Clerk)
Sean McCann (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Antoinette Bowen (Clerical Supervisor)

The meeting commenced in open session at 14:02 p.m.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies to record.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson and Deputy Chair provided Members with a brief overview of their meeting in relation to an evaluation of the Cliff Edge Coalition.

The Chairperson informed Members that on Monday 21st September the Minister for Communities announced the opening of a £1million Covid-19 Safe Sports Packs Fund to help clubs with the safe return to sport.

The Chairperson stated that although the fund is welcome, the Committee was not made aware of it before the Minister's announcement.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Minister asking that the Committee receives advance notice of any future announcements.

The Chairperson also informed Members that they had recently received a briefing paper from the NI Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) on the Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill Legislative Consent Motion.

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Department had briefed the Committee at its meeting on 16th September on the changes to the Legislative Consent Motion and that the Committee had agreed to support the Legislative Consent Motion in plenary.

Agreed: Members agreed to note the NIHRC Report.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 September 2020.

4. Matters Arising

Members noted a final copy of the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill.

5. Departmental Briefing on the Housing Executive Investment Challenge

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting:

Mr Paul Price, Programme Manager for the Social Housing Reform Programme
Ms Heloise Brown, Rent Project Manager.

The Departmental officials briefed the Committee on the Housing Executive Investment Challenge.

Robin Newton joined the meeting at 14:14 p.m.

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

Agreed: The Departmental officials agreed to provide the Committee with a breakdown of the Housing Executive's historical debt and with further information on progress on the development of a 'Housing Outcome' for the Programme for Government.

The Chairperson thanked the Departmental officials for their attendance.

6. Departmental Briefing on the Pension Schemes Bill

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting:

Mr Gerry McCann, State and Private Pensions & EU
Ms Doreen Roy, State and Private Pensions.

The Departmental officials briefed the Committee on the Pensions Schemes Bill.

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

Agreed: The Departmental officials agreed to forward clarification on whether Master Trusts must be based in the UK.

The Chairperson thanked the Departmental officials for their attendance.

7. Departmental Briefing on the Consultation Outcome Report on the Regulation of Gambling in Northern Ireland

The following interest was declared:

Paula Bradley declared an interest as a member of the All Party Group on Reducing Harm Related to Gambling.

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting:

Ms Martina Campbell, Social Security Policy and Legislation
Mr Michael McAvera, Social Policy Unit.

The Departmental officials briefed the Committee on the Consultation Outcome Report on the Regulation of Gambling in Northern Ireland.

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

The Chairperson thanked the Departmental officials for their attendance.

Agreed: Members agreed that this item should be discussed further at the meeting on 30 September with a view to drafting a Committee response to the Department.

8. Correspondence

Members considered a request from the Women's Regional Consortium to brief on their Research Paper – The Impact of Universal Credit on Women.

Agreed: Members agreed to invite the Women's Regional Consortium to brief the Committee at a future meeting.

The Committee noted the following:

- I. Care NI briefing paper to All Party Group on Reducing Harm Related to Gambling.
- II. Chartered Institute of Housing NI request to brief the Committee on their Report – Rethinking Social Housing: The Next Steps.
- III. Copy of Covid-19 Funding Allocations.
- IV. Copy of Historical Abuse Inquiry document retention and disposal schedule.
- V. BBC Annual Report and Accounts.
- VI. Social Fund Account for the year ended 31 March 2019.
- VII. Copy of Retention and Disposal Schedule for the Attorney General and Further Education Colleges Sector.
- VIII. Departmental Letter re Taking Action on Climate Risk Improving Governance and Reporting by Occupational Pension Schemes Consultation.
- IX. Ulster Supported Employment Ltd Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2020.
- X. Chairpersons’ Liaison Group response to Committee queries regarding Funding for Disability Employment.

9. Forward Work Programme

Members noted that, at the meeting on 30 September, the Committee will be briefed by the Minister for Communities on Departmental priorities. The Committee will also be briefed by the Department on the October Monitoring Round and by the Workers Pension Trust on the Pension Schemes Bill.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time and Place of the Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 30 September at 14:00 p.m. in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 16:04 p.m.

Ms Paula Bradley MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Communities