



# Northern Ireland Assembly

## COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITIES

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday 9 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

Present: Starleaf Fra McCann MLA  
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 14:15p.m.*

#### **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies to record.

#### **2. Declaration of Interests**

The following interest was declared:

Andy Allen MBE MLA declared an interest as a Private Sector Landlord.

### **3. Ministerial Briefing on Departmental Priorities**

The Minister for Communities, Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, Mr David Polley, Housing Supply Policy and Ms Eilish O'Neill, Project Leader, Private Rented Sector Review joined the meeting via Starleaf at 14:15p.m.

The following interest was declared:

Andy Allen MBE MLA declared an interest as a Charity Trustee.

*Robin Newton joined the meeting at 14.28p.m.*

The Minister provided the Committee with an update on the Departmental priorities.

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

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward a list of issues to the Minister that it wished to discuss at future Committee meetings.

The Chairperson thanked the Minister for her attendance.

### **4. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 8 July 2020.

### **5. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson informed members that she and the Deputy Chair had been asked to take part in an evaluation of the Cliff Edge Coalition. A meeting will be arranged soon and a note of the meeting will be brought back to the Committee for information.

The Chairperson informed members that she had received a letter signed by a number of groups representing the Arts sector in Northern Ireland. The letter highlights the need for urgent and significant financial intervention in the sector and requests that the Committee work with the Minister and the wider Executive to help secure the full financial package of £33 million for the Arts sector in NI.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to forward a copy of the letter to the Minister for reply.

Members noted an email from a member of the deaf community highlighting the ongoing unequal treatment of the deaf community in Northern Ireland compared to their counterparts in other neighbouring jurisdictions.

### **6. Matters Arising**

Members noted a Departmental letter in relation to applications to the Charity Commission.

## **7. Departmental briefing on the Liquor Licensing Bill Timeline**

The following Departmental Officials joined the meeting:

Mr Liam Quinn, Social Policy Unit  
Ms Martina Campbell, Social Policy Unit

The following interest was declared:

Mark Durkan MLA declared an interest as his family owns licensed premises.

The Departmental Officials briefed the Committee on the Liquor Licensing Bill Timeline and provided an update on the Consultation on Gambling Law.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to receive a further Departmental briefing when the draft Liquor Licensing bill is finalised.

*Agreed:* The Departmental Officials agreed to report back to the Committee on whether there are any planning issues with the proposed changes to drinking up time.

The Chairperson thanked the Departmental Officials for their attendance.

*Sinead Ennis left the meeting at 15.29pm*

## **8. Pension Schemes Bill – Draft Motion to Extend**

The Chairperson informed members that they had been provided with a draft motion to extend the Committee Stage of the Bill to 29 January 2021.

The Chairperson advised members that this is to allow for proper scrutiny of the Bill.

*Agreed:* Members agreed for the motion to be lodged with the Business Office.

*Sinead Ennis rejoined the meeting at 15.31pm*

## **9. Consideration of Proposals for Secondary Legislation**

SL1 - Down Royal Racecourse Designation as an Outdoor Stadium for the Purposes of Liquor Licensing Legislation

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

SL1 - Private Tenancies (Coronavirus Modifications) Regulations (NI) 2020

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

SL1 - Social Security (Income Related Benefits) (Persons of NI – Family Members) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (NI) 2020

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

SL1 - The Pension Protection Fund (Moratorium and Arrangements for Companies in Financial difficulty) Regulations (NI) 2020

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

**10. SR 2020/147 – The Social Security (Electronic Communications) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2020**

The Committee considered SR 2020/147 - The Social Security (Electronic Communications) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2020, which allows electronic claims to be made for a social fund funeral payment, a social fund payment in respect of maternity expenses and maternity allowance.

*Agreed:* The Committee considered SR 2020/147 - The Social Security (Electronic Communications) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules Report, had no objection to the rule.

**11. SR 2020/148 – The Social Fund and Security (Claims and Payments) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2020**

The Committee considered SR 2020/148 - The Social Fund and Security (Claims and Payments) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2020, which amends the Social Fund Maternity and Funeral Expenses (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 (SR. 2005 No. 506), the Social Fund Cold Weather Payments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1988 (S.R. 1988 No. 368) and the Claims and Payments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987 (S.R. 1987 No. 465).

*Agreed:* The Committee considered SR 2020/148 - The Social Fund and Security (Claims and Payments) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules Report, had no objection to the rule.

**12. SR 2020/149 – The Social Security (Income-related Benefits) (Persons of NI Family Members) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2020**

The Committee considered SR 2020/149 - The Social Security (Income-related Benefits) (Persons of NI Family Members) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2020. These Regulations amend the income-related benefit regulations to reflect that family members of relevant persons of Northern Ireland can now apply for leave to enter, or remain, in the United Kingdom under Appendix EU to the immigration Rules made under section 3(2) of the Immigration Act 1971 (c.77) (“EUSS leave”).

*Agreed:* The Committee considered SR 2020/149 - The Social Security (Income-related Benefits) (Persons of NI Family Members) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules Report, had no objection to the rule.

**13. SR 2020/162 – The Pension Protection (Moratorium and Arrangements for Companies in Financial Difficulty) Regulations (NI) 2020**

The Committee considered SR 2020/162 - The Pension Protection (Moratorium and Arrangements for Companies in Financial Difficulty) Regulations (NI) 2020, will, in certain circumstances, give the Board of the Pension Protection Fund (“the Board”) rights that are normally exercised by a pension scheme’s trustees or managers where they are creditors. Where the trustees or managers lose their rights as a result, the Board is required to consult with them.

*Agreed:* The Committee considered SR 2020/162 - The Pension Protection (Moratorium and Arrangements for Companies in Financial Difficulty) Regulations (NI) 2020 and recommended that it is approved by the Assembly.

**14. SR 2020/167 - The Statutory Sick Pay (General) (Coronavirus Amendment) (No.5) Regulations (NI) 2020**

The Committee considered SR 2020/167 - The Statutory Sick Pay (General) (Coronavirus Amendment) (No.5) Regulations (NI) 2020, amends the Statutory Sick Pay (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1982 (S.R. 1982 No. 263) to ensure that a person is entitled to statutory sick pay for the full period for which they are required to self-isolate and for the period a person is required to stay at home after testing positive for coronavirus.

*Agreed:* The Committee considered SR 2020/167 - SR 2020/167 - The Statutory Sick Pay (General) (Coronavirus Amendment) (No.5) Regulations (NI) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules Report, had no objection to the rule.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to write to the Minister to encourage her to remind Northern Ireland businesses to inform their employees of this Rule, and Statutory Rule 2020/186, to ensure that anyone who needs to self-isolate is aware that they can claim statutory sick pay.

**15. SR 2020/186 – The Statutory Sick Pay (General) (Coronavirus Amendment) (No.6) Regulations (NI) 2020**

The Committee considered SR 2020/186 - The Statutory Sick Pay (General) (Coronavirus Amendment) (No.6) Regulations (NI) 2020, amends Schedule 1 to the Statutory Sick Pay (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1982 (S.R. 1982 No. 263) to provide that a person is entitled to statutory sick pay if they -

- (a) have been notified that they are to undergo a surgical or other hospital procedure;
- (b) have been advised to stay at home for a period of up to 14 days prior to being

admitted to hospital for that procedure; and  
(c) stay at home pursuant to that advice.

*Agreed:* The Committee considered SR 2020/186 - The Statutory Sick Pay (General) (Coronavirus Amendment) (No.6) Regulations (NI) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules Report, had no objection to the rule.

## **16. Correspondence**

Members considered a response from the Minister of State for Northern Ireland to Committee queries on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to write to The UK Chancellor to ask what percentage of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be made available to Northern Ireland and how the fund will be allocated, by the Barnett Consequential or another formula.

Members considered a response from the Minister for Finance to Committee queries on the European Social Funds, funding for Disability Services.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to forward a copy of the responses on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund from the Minister of State for Northern Ireland and the Minister of Finance to the Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment.

The Committee considered a letter of concern regarding NI Housing Executive leasehold of owner occupied flats.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to forward a copy of the correspondence to the Department for comment.

Members considered a request from Creating Resilient Local Economies to brief the Committee on the Development Trusts NI report “From Coronavirus to Community Wealth, Building Back Better in NI”.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to consider this request when the Committee agrees a forward work programme in the context of the Departmental priorities.

Members considered a letter of concern regarding the deaf community in Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to forward a copy of the correspondence to the Department for comment.

The Committee noted the following:

- I. Charity Commission NI Annual Report and Accounts 2019/2020.
- II. Departmental Roundup document 28 August 2020.
- III. Investing Activity Report for Department for Communities 30 August 2020.

- IV. Copy of letter to the Chief Executive of the Charity Commission regarding 'Review of Engagement, Process and Reporting of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland as experienced by Lifesaving Charity Volunteers'.

### **17. Forward Work Programme**

Members noted that, at the meeting on 16 September, the Committee will be briefed by Assembly Research on the Pension Schemes Bill and the Committee will also be briefed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Independent Review of PIP.

The Committee also agreed to be briefed, at a future meeting, by Assembly Research on the issues arising from the Committee Strategic Planning day.

### **18. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

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

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 16 September at 14:00 p.m. in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting adjourned at 15:51p.m.*

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