



## COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY

### RECORD OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY CORRESPONDENCE

31st MARCH 2020

*This Record of Decisions was made under:*

**Assembly Standing Order 115. Temporary provision for statutory committees**

(1) This Standing Order contains temporary provisions relating to committees established under Standing Order 48, and supersedes paragraphs (3)-(6) of Standing Order 46 and paragraphs (5) and (7) of Standing Order 49.

(8) A committee may agree to make decisions (including a decision not to meet) without meeting.

*The Committee for the Economy has agreed that it will not meet again until Members agree otherwise, and has agreed that decisions will be made via correspondence.*

(9) This paragraph applies where a committee has agreed, or proposes to make, a decision without meeting:

a) Before a decision is to be taken, the chairperson must:

(i) inform members of the subject matter of the decision;

(ii) provide members with such supporting information as the chairperson considers relevant;

(iii) allow a reasonable time for members to consider the subject matter and supporting information; and

seek consensus among members on the decision.

*This Record of Decisions is made with reference to paragraphs (9) and (12) above and below.*

(12) A general record of the proceedings of a committee shall be maintained by the Committee Clerk.

**AGREEMENT WAS RECEIVED BY CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS:**

Dr Caoímhe Archibald (Chairperson)  
Ms Sinéad McLaughlin (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Gordon Dunne MBE  
Mr Gary Middleton  
Mr John O'Dowd  
Mr John Stewart  
Ms Claire Sugden

**2. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed the draft Minutes of the meetings held on 18<sup>th</sup> March and 23<sup>rd</sup> March.

**3. Chairperson's Business**

*Agreed:* Members noted the response from the Minister to the Chair's written question of 3<sup>rd</sup> February in relation to fossil-fuel based power stations and agreed to request more detailed information.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to seek a response from the Department in relation to the correspondence from an Employment Law Consultant including additional information on the following issues:

- Further clarity around essential business, furloughed employees and safe distancing, particularly for the food sector.
- The options available to employees who have been told by their doctor to 'shield' for 12 weeks due to a vulnerable condition; the obligations on employers in this regard; and whether employees will be entitled to pay and, if not, statutory benefits.

*Noted:* Members noted the response from NIE Networks regarding business planning in relation to Covid-19.

**4. Ministerial Briefing- Economic Impact of Covid-19**

*Agreed:* Members noted a copy of the oral statement by the Minister to the Assembly on 24<sup>th</sup> March in relation to the Covid-19 response and agreed to request further clarification regarding the support measures for limited companies affected by Covid-19.

**5. Tourism Ireland Briefing**

*Agreed:* Members agreed that the Tourism Ireland oral briefing would be re-scheduled and a written briefing would be forwarded once it is available.

**6. Irish Congress of Trade Unions – Written Briefing**

*Agreed: Members noted the written briefing from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and agreed to forward to the Department for comment and for consideration by the newly established forum comprising of departments, business and trade unions.*

## **7. Matters Arising**

*Agreed: Members agreed to seek a response from the Utility Regulator in relation to the issues raised in the correspondence from Paul Frew MLA.*

*Noted: Members noted the summary of the 'Customs Capacity Study' and that this would be considered further as part of the Committee event on the NI Protocol planned for May 2020. It was also noted that businesses are reluctant to make arrangements until final trading arrangements are known.*

*Agreed: Members noted the research paper requested by the Deputy Chair on 'Northern Ireland Qualifications per constituency area' and agreed that this would be considered as part of the future discussions on the 14-19 Strategy.*

*Noted: Members noted the response from the Comptroller and Auditor General to the letter forwarded by the Committee raising concerns regarding financial support provided by Invest NI to the Bradley Group and that this would be reviewed as part of the Auditor General's 2019-20 financial audit of Invest NI.*

*Noted: Members noted the Ministerial response to a written question on the Cornwall and Buglass reports forwarded by the Renewable Heat Association.*

## **8. SL1: The Education (Student Support) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2020**

*Agreed: that the Committee is content with the policy implications of the proposed legislation.*

## **9. SL1: The Northern Ireland Screen Commission (Funding) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020**

*Agreed: that the Committee is content with the policy implications of the proposed legislation.*

## **10. Ulster University Economic Policy Centre – Automation in Northern Ireland**

*Noted: Members noted the report by the Economic Policy Centre in relation to the impact of automation across the various sectors in Northern Ireland and that this should be considered at a later date in the context of skills.*

## **11. EU Exit and Impact on Northern Ireland's Services Trade – Evidence from Services Trade Restrictiveness Indices**

*Agreed: Members noted the report commissioned by the Department examining the impact of EU exit on the services trade and agreed to request a briefing at a later date.*

## 12. Correspondence

*Agreed: Members noted the correspondence from the Minister regarding the Westminster Environment Bill and agreed to request that the Committee be kept informed.*

*Agreed: Members noted the correspondence from the Minister regarding the inclusion of Northern Ireland related amendments within the Electricity and Gas (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 and agreed to request that the Committee be kept informed.*

*Agreed: Members noted the correspondence from the Committee on Procedures requesting a view from Committees on the review of the process for Legislative Consent Motions and agreed a response be sent.*

*Agreed: Members considered the correspondence from the Clerk of the Finance Committee regarding the Executive budget and timeline and agreed to forward the template to the Department for a response by week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> April. Members expressed concern regarding the tight deadlines in relation to the budget and the ability for Committee to provide adequate scrutiny in the current climate.*

*Agreed: Members considered correspondence from an individual regarding a perceived lack of activity on the history and philosophy of science and technology within universities and agreed to forward to the Department for a response.*

*Agreed: Members noted correspondence from Enterprise Northern Ireland and agreed that it be forwarded to the Department for comment and that the oral briefing by Enterprise NI and the FSB scheduled for next week will be rescheduled.*

*Agreed Members noted correspondence from the Renewable Heat Association on security of supply chain and business cash flow for the agri-food sector and agreed that this be forwarded to the Department for a response.*

*Agreed: Members agreed that the correspondence from an individual on the publishing of the RHI Inquiry report and the competitiveness of Northern Ireland poultry farmers be forwarded to the Department for a response.*

*Noted: Members noted the fourth report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.*

*Noted: Members noted a response from the Department in relation to the member of the public who raised concerns regarding staffing in the Brexit Group.*

*Noted: Members noted the paper by Research Services outlining a Standardised Scrutiny Approach for Assembly Statutory Committees engaging on the Executive Budget 2020-21.*

*Noted: Members noted correspondence from Queen's University providing contact details to be used during the partial shutdown of the University.*

*Agreed: Members noted correspondence from a member of the public regarding Ulster University accommodation charges following campus closure. Members noted that whilst*

*this has been resolved students who are privately renting are experiencing similar problems and agreed to write to the Department for comment.*

**13. SR 2020/42 The Employment Rights (Increase of Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020**

SR 2020/42 The Employment Rights (Increase of Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020.

*Question put and agreed:*

*“That the Committee for the Economy has considered The Employment Rights (Increase of Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020 and has no objection to the Rule, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ report.”*

*ENDS*

*Approved by the Chairperson via correspondence*

---

**Dr Caoímhe Archibald**  
**Chairperson**  
**Committee for the Economy**

**Date: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020**