



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

29 APRIL 2020

ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

10:00am

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

In Attendance: Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Angela McParland (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Stewart Dickson

The meeting began at 10:03m in open session.

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Minutes

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Minutes from the 22nd April 2020.

3. Chairpersons Business

Agreed: To write to the Permanent Secretary asking for a status report on the Department's staffing and capacity as a result of Covid-19, including any delays in key strategies or programme of work.

4. Ministerial Briefing – Economic Impact of Covid-19

The Minister joined the meeting at 10.04am

Members received a briefing from:

Mrs Diane Dodds, Minister for the Economy, Department for the Economy.

Key issues discussed included: the work of the Department in supporting business during the current Covid-19 crisis including gaps in the grant schemes; the launch of the RHI consultation tariff review and the commitment to close the RHI Scheme; an update on the Magee College business case; an update on City Deals; the impact of Covid19 on the aviation industry; and support being offered to students in further education.

The representative left the meeting at 11.04am

5. Oral Briefing by the Federation of Small Businesses – Update on Economic Impact of Covid-19

The representative joined the meeting at 11.04am

Members received a briefing from:

Mr Roger Pollen, Head of External Affairs, Federation of Small Businesses.

Key issues discussed included: the dramatic impact of the lockdown restrictions on those businesses who have close client contact; the gaps in support by the Executive for certain sectors; the impact on social enterprises; and the need for guidance on how businesses could reopen safely to help re-start the economy.

Agreed: the Committee will raise the issues discussed with the Department and will consider the results of the latest FSB survey once it is published.

The representative left the meeting at 11.42am

6. Oral Briefing by Queen's University, Belfast & Ulster University – Update on the Impact of Covid-19

The representatives joined the meeting at 11.42am

Members received a briefing from:

Professor Ian Greer, President and Vice-Chancellor, Queen's University Belfast
Professor Paul Bartholomew, Interim Vice-Chancellor, Ulster University

Key issues discussed included: the role that the Universities will play in economic recovery and growth; the potential operating losses due to Covid-19; the anticipated reduction in international students; the impact of the cap on student numbers and the ability of the Universities to compete with those in GB; and the success of University staff in supporting students and moving to online learning.

Agreed: the Committee agreed to raise the issues discussed with the Department.

Agreed: the Committee agreed to write to the Economy, Finance and Health Ministers urging them to sign-off on the project before the General Medical Council's 30th May deadline.

The representative left the meeting at 12.32pm

7. Matters Arising

Agreed: Members agreed to deal with Budget Matters as the first item in Matters Arising.

The representative joined the meeting at 12.33am

Members received a briefing from:

Colin Lewis, Head of Management Services & Regulation Group, DfE
Stephen McMurray, Finance Director, DfE

Key issues discussed included; the revising of the budget in light of the current Covid-19 crisis; the revised timeline for the budget process; understanding the scale of funding that may be required by arm's length bodies due to Covid-19 pressures; and the importance of getting the budget right to help the economic recovery.

The representative left the meeting at 12.54pm

Noted: Members noted a joint letter from the Economy and DAERA Minister to the UK Government Minister for Business, Energy and Clean Growth. regarding details

of key requirements, agreed by both Departments, for Northern Ireland in respect of the Single Electricity Market and carbon emission trading in the UK-EU Free Trade Agreement negotiations.

Agreed: to request that the Committee receives a copy of the response.

Noted: Members noted an update from NITA following their briefing session last week.

Agreed: Members agreed that the Clerk will circulate a summary of the Committee's position on the budget to Members which will inform the Chair's speech in the budget debate on 5th April.

8. SR 2020/68 The Working Time (Coronavirus)(Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Members considered SR 2020/68 The Working Time (Coronavirus)(Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Question put and agreed:

"That the Committee for the Economy has considered SR 2020/68 The Working Time (Coronavirus)(Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and has no objection to the Rule, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report."

9. SR 2020/70 The Statutory Paternity Pay, Statutory Adoption Pay and Statutory Shared Parental Pay (Normal Weekly Earnings etc.) (Coronavirus)(Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Members considered SR 2020/70 The Statutory Paternity Pay, Statutory Adoption Pay and Statutory Shared Parental Pay (Normal Weekly Earnings etc.) (Coronavirus)(Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Question put and agreed:

"That the Committee for the Economy has considered SR 2020/70 The Statutory Paternity Pay, Statutory Adoption Pay and Statutory Shared Parental Pay (Normal Weekly Earnings etc.) (Coronavirus)(Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) and has no objection to the Rule, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report."

10. Examiner of Statutory Rules – Seventh Report of Session 2019 - 2020

Members noted the seventh report of 2019-20 by the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

11. Correspondence

Agreed: the Committee agreed to move to agenda item 12.

12. Forward Work Programme

Members considered the Forward Work Programme

Agreed: the Committee agreed to the Forward Work Programme.

13. Any Other Business

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Department regarding representation and accountability on the LRA and Tourism Recovery Groups.

14. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 6th May 2020 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 13.02pm

Dr Caoímhe Archibald
Chairperson
Committee for the Economy

6th May 2020