



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

9 SEPTEMBER 2020

ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

10:00am

Present:

- Dr Caoímhe Archibald (Chairperson)
- Ms Sinéad McLaughlin (Deputy Chairperson)
- Mr Stewart Dickson
- 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)
- Mr David McClure (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
- Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)
- Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

The meeting began at 10:04am in open session.

1. Apologies

As noted above.

The Chairperson welcomed Stewart Dickson back to the Committee after a period of absence due to illness.

2. Minutes

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Minutes from 15th July.

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Record of Decision from 15th July.

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Minutes from 18th August.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson raised the issue of an extension to the Coronavirus Job Retention ('Furlough') Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Agreed: the Committee agreed to write to the UK Government requesting an extension to both schemes.

4. Oral Briefing from the Department for the Economy: Bids to the Executive

The officials joined the meeting at 10.07am

Members received a briefing from:

Sharon Hetherington,

Director of Finance, Department for the Economy

Michelle Scott,

EU Exit – International Trade, Department for the Economy

Pearse McCann,

EU Exit Resources, Department for the Economy

Key issues discussed included: the funding bids to the Executive & economic recovery, how the bids will result in jobs and boost town centres, the need for balance in recovering - encouraging new entrepreneurs whilst also supporting existing businesses and the recently opened Digital Selling Capability Grant.

The officials left the meeting at 11.35am

Agreed: to write to the Economy and Finance Minister regarding options for funding to be made available to Business's in Northern Ireland through the HRMC database.

Christopher Stalford left the meeting at 11.36pm

5. Matters Arising

Noted: Members noted a response from the NIO on the establishment of the Business Engagement Forum and its work.

Agreed: to write to the NIO thanking them for their response.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Minister for Communities regarding support for the North-West 200.

Agreed: to write to the Department seeking an update on its plan for events in 2021.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Minister for Communities regarding the safe re-opening of business and town centres.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the North-South interconnector.

Agreed: to write to the Minister for Infrastructure seeking an update on when a decision will be made.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Department regarding a local cargo company and the impact Covid-19 has had on them.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Department regarding a local coffee shop and the impact Covid-19 has had on them.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Department on the timeline for the Energy Strategy.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Department regarding job losses at Titanic Belfast.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Department's Solicitor's Office to Local Retailers regarding the Retail, Tourism and Leisure Grant Scheme.

Agreed: to forward the response to the Department seeking clarification.

Noted: Members noted follow up papers from Money and Pensions Services.

Noted: Members noted a report commissioned by the Department on "Institutional Design to Support and Integrated Economic, Skills and Innovation Policy Agenda".

Noted: Members noted correspondence from Coach Operators NI requesting to brief the Committee.

Agreed: to arrange an informal meeting with the Chair and Deputy Chair

Noted: Members noted a response from the Association of British Insurers.

Agreed: to write to the ABI seeking an update on insurance for fleet vehicles not in active service

6. SI - The Prohibition on Quantitative Restrictions and Equivalent Measures (Cessation) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020

Members considered a Ministerial letter explaining that as no agreement has been reached on what protections will apply in the UK Internal Market she is not in a position to provide consent for the SI.

7. SL1 – The Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Members considered SL1 – The Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

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

8. SL1 - Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Relevant period) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Members considered SL1 - Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Relevant period) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

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

9. SR 2020/117 The Northern Ireland Screen Commission (Funding) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020

Members considered SR 2020/117 The Northern Ireland Screen Commission (Funding) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for the Economy has considered SR 2020/117 The Northern Ireland Screen Commission (Funding) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ report has no objection to the Rule.”

10. SR 2020/145 The Education (Student Support) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Members considered SR 2020/145 The Education (Student Support) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for the Economy has considered SR 2020/145 The Education (Student Support) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ report has no objection to the Rule.”

11. SR 2020/178 The Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (Coronavirus, Calculation of a Week’s Pay) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Members considered SR 2020/178 The Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (Coronavirus, Calculation of a Week’s Pay) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for the Economy has considered SR 2020/178 The Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (Coronavirus, Calculation of a Week’s Pay) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ report has no objection to the Rule.”

12. Departmental Consultation - Transposition of the 2019 Electricity (Recast) Directive ((EU) 2019/944)

Noted: Members noted the Departmental Consultation on Transposition of the 2019 Electricity (Recast) Directive ((EU) 2019/944).

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Department to indicate that the Committee will act as “super consultee” and will seek an oral briefing on the results on the consultation prior to legislation coming before the Assembly.

13. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: Members agreed to the draft committee forward work programme.

14. Correspondence

Noted: Members noted a response from the Minister of Finance regarding the paper the Committee forwarded from the Londonderry Chamber regarding PPE Procurement.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the reopening, recovery and rebuilding of the Economy.

Noted: Members noted a copy of correspondence from the Minister for Finance to the Chair of the Finance Committee regarding 2020-21 COVID-19 Urgent Allocations.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Health to the Department for Economy regarding financial support for carers unable to work during the pandemic due to caring responsibilities but with no access to furlough.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee for and Committee for Health with regards to the Londonderry Chamber paper on PPE Procurement.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from ExcludedNI, a lobby group formed to engage with elected representatives in the interests of those that could not access emergency COVID-19 funding.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee in the Welsh Parliament to the UK Business Secretary and Secretary of State for Wales. The Committee is concerned about the inadequate timeframe and engagement with devolved legislatures on the UK Internal Market White Paper.

Noted: Members noted a request from Development Trusts NI to brief the Committee on their recently published report ‘From Coronavirus to Community Wealth: Building Back Better in NI’ in collaboration with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies.

Noted: Members noted a request from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission Business and Human Rights Forum to give evidence to the Committee on its Action Plan.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from a parent concerned that her son has a place on a Construction Engineering course but that there is no recruitment for apprentices by construction companies.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from a student at QUB regarding the impact of Covid-19 on teaching and access to facilities and impact on future prospects and requesting that students should not have to pay full fees this year.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from an individual regarding A Level results outlining that there was no allowance for students re-sitting AS modules or for ‘special circumstances’ such as illness.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from a business owner regarding the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and the exclusion of some businesses who have been unable to access any support during the pandemic.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Speaker regarding the establishment of the Youth Assembly and encouraging Committees in the future to seek the views of the Youth Assembly to get a broader perspective.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Energy Efficiency Group NI regarding what it believes is a lack of vision in the current energy policy and concern at the timeframe for policy measures to result in any support for the industry.

Noted: Members noted a press release regarding the Ulster University School of Medicine at Magee and the recruitment of doctors for September 2021.

Noted: Members noted the ISNI Investing Activity report for 30th August 2020.

Noted: Members noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules Seventeenth report.

Noted: Members noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules Eighteenth report.

Noted: Members noted a press notice from the Utility Regulator announcing Mr John French as the new Chief Executive.

Noted: Members noted a report by the Economic and Social Research Institute on cross-border trade in Ireland.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Arts Sector regarding the impact of Covid-19 and the importance of the sector to economic recovery.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Managing Director of a travel agency and tour operator business regarding access to Covid-19 financial support and the severe impact of the pandemic on the operation of the business.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from an airline pilot who was made redundant regarding the differences in the assistance available in England through the 'Rapid Response Service' as compared to Northern Ireland.

Noted: Members noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules nineteenth report.

15. Any Other Business

The Committee agreed to write to the Minister seeking an update on the LCM for the Trade Bill.

16. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 16th September 2020 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.28pm

Dr Caoimhe Archibald
Chairperson
Committee for the Economy
16th September 2020