



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

18 NOVEMBER 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)
Ms Maeve Holly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr David McClure (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

The meeting began at 10:07am in open session.

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Minutes

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Minutes from 11th November 2020.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed the members of an Informal meeting with the Law Society regarding the mediation services they offer.

Noted: Members noted the Clerks memo regarding the informal meeting with the Law Society in relation to the mediation services they offer.

Agreed: Members agreed to move to Item 16 on the agenda, the Special Report on the Committee's Micro Inquiry into the Macro Economic Picture.

Closed session start – 10.10

16. Micro Inquiry into the Macro Economic Picture

The Committee discussed the Special Report on the micro inquiry into the Macro Economic Picture, as well as the corresponding motion for debate.

Agreed: the Committee considered the report and agreed that it be printed.

Agreed: the Committee considered the motion for debate regarding the micro inquiry Special Report and agreed a form of words to be tabled with the Business Office.

Closed session finish – 10.27

4. Matters Arising

Agreed: Members agreed to wait to see what happens as the Minister will now conclude the applications process before doing anything.

Noted: Members noted the response from the Minister in relation to the issues raised by LAMP.

Agreed: Members agreed to arrange an informal meeting with QUB and UU. Members also agreed to arrange a meeting between the chairs of the Economy, Health, Communities and Executive Office Committee's.

Christopher Stalford left the meeting at 10.38am
Christopher Stalford returned to committee room at 10.44am

Noted: Members noted the response from the Minister in relation to the correspondence from the Committee regarding a dispute between the College Employers Forum and Trade Union Side on lecturer's pay and conditions of service.

Sinead McLaughlin left the meeting at 10.49am

Noted: Members noted the written statement from the Minister for Finance in relation to the 2020-21 October Monitoring and Covid-19 funding.

Noted: Members noted the DfE report on the financial impact of the 4-week circuit-breaker and agreed to raise the issue with Minister when she next briefs the Committee.

Noted: Members noted the advice and guidance from the Department in relation to coronavirus advice for students in higher education.

Noted: Members noted the advice and guidance from the Department in relation to coronavirus advice for students in further education.

Noted: Members noted the Clerk's memo from PAC to the Clerk of the Committee in relation to the acknowledgement of the Committee's intention to step aside in the interest of primacy in regards to the inquiry into the NIAO report.

Agreed: Members agreed to seek to seek a briefing with the UK Finance NI Committee.

Noted: Members noted the response from the FE Principals' Group in relation to Covid-19 and information collection.

Noted: Members noted the correspondence from Brain Donaldson, the spokesperson for ExcludedNI in relation to newly self-employed people not being able to receive support.

Noted: Members noted the response from the Minister in relation to HE Students travel over Christmas.

Agreed: Members agreed to wait to see what happens as the Minister will now conclude the applications process before doing anything.

Agreed: Members agreed to seek a briefing from the Departments in relation to the Transition of Young People into Careers (14-19) Project.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward the response from the Department in relation to the funding of the UU Belfast Campus to the PAC.

Agreed: Members agreed to share the update from the Department with the AERA Committee.

Noted: Members noted the Departments response in relation more information from Invest NI on the uptake of recent and ongoing Covid-related support schemes.

Noted: Members noted the Departments response in relation to assistance for travel agents.

Noted: Members noted the response from the Minister for Finance in relation to impact of the Covid-19 restrictions and extended CJRS.

Noted: Members noted the response from the Minister for Communities in relation to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on students living in HMOS, etc.

Noted: Members noted the correspondence from the British Retail Consortium in relation to the Trouble with Borders NIRC article.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to LAMP indicating that the Committee is not in a position to consider meeting with representatives until the application process for licences is complete.

Noted: Members noted the correspondence from the Ulster University in regards to the number of COVID-19 cases and how information is collected.

5. Departmental Written Briefing - Update on Project Stratum

Members considered the written briefing from the Department on Project Stratum.

Agreed: Members agreed to seek a briefing with the Department on Project Stratum and to seek regular updates and a timeline of completion for specific areas and postcodes.

6. Departmental Written Briefing - Consideration of responses to the DfE consultation on legislation to transpose the EU Gas Directive Amendment 2019/692 and related legislative changes

Members considered the written briefing from the Department on Consideration of responses to the DfE consultation on legislation to transpose the EU Gas Directive Amendment 2019/692 and related legislative changes.

Agreed: Members agreed to note prior to receiving the analysis of consultation responses.

7. SR 2020/251 The Posted Workers (Agency Workers) Northern Ireland (Order) 2020

Members considered SR 2020/251 The Posted Workers (Agency Workers) Northern Ireland (Order) 2020.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for the Economy has considered SR 2020/251 The Posted Workers (Agency Workers) Northern Ireland (Order) 2020 and recommends that it be confirmed by the Assembly, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ report.”

8. SL1 – The Further Education (Student Support) (Amendment etc) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Members considered SL1 The Further Education (Student Support) (Amendment etc) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Agreed: Members indicated that they are content with the policy implications of the proposed legislation.

9. SL1 - The Education (Student Fees and Support) (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Members considered SL1 The Education (Student Fees and Support) (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Agreed: Members indicated that they are content with the policy implications of the proposed legislation.

10. SL1 - Electricity Directive Regulations

Members considered SL1 Electricity Directive Regulations.

Agreed: Members indicated that they are content with the policy implications of the proposed legislation

11. Correspondence

Noted: Members noted the Minister’s correspondence to Excluded NI regarding people excluded from support.

Noted: Members noted the clerk to clerk memo from the Committee for Infrastructure.

Agreed: Members agreed to ask TEO Committee to share Mr Gove’s response to its request for information.

Noted: Members noted for the timebeing on the correspondence from the Finance Committee in regards an update on the ongoing development process for the proposed PEACE PLUS programme.

Agreed: Members agreed to hold an informal meeting with Velocity Worldwide in the aim to gain a greater understanding of the purposed idea for a digital funding grant scheme.

Agreed: Members agreed to hold an informal meeting with the representatives of the joint-committee of Northern Ireland Community Energy and Drumlin Wind Energy Co-operative.

Noted: Members noted the correspondence from the Labour Relations Agency introducing the new in-coming Chief Executive, Don Leeson.

Noted: Members noted the correspondence from a concerned individual in relation to the house party in Holyland while there are Covid restrictions in place.

Noted: Members noted the twenty-eighth report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules 2019-2020.

Agreed: Members agreed that the Clerk should bring back a response to the Committee for consideration at a future meeting.

Noted: Members noted the oral statement to the Assembly by Minister Ní Chuilín on 17th November 2020 in regards to the Discretionary Support Self-isolation Grant.

Noted: Members noted the statement from Minister Poots in relation to the sixteenth British Irish Council Ministerial meeting.

Noted: Members noted the statement from DAERA in regards to Basic Payment Scheme Simplifications and the direction of travel for future agricultural policy in NI including support payments.

Noted: Members noted the correspondence from an individual in regards the number of covid-19 cases within Ulster University.

Noted: Members noted the correspondence from an individual in regards the number of covid-19 cases within QUB.

Noted: Members noted the correspondence from Brian Donaldson of ExcludedNI in relation to the verification for limited company directors that missed out on furlough and SEISS.

Agreed: Members agreed to have an informal meeting with Speed Up Britain.

12. Forward Work Programme

Noted: Members noted the latest Committee forward work programme.

13. Any Other Business

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Minister regarding the issue with VAT on used cars post 31st December.

14. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 18th November 2020 in Room 29, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

15. Briefing from NICVA - Update on the NI European Social Fund Programme

The Witnesses joined the meeting at 11.00am

Members received a briefing from:

Mr Seamus McAleavey, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action;

Mr Geoff Nuttall, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action.

Stewart Dickinson left the meeting at 11.21am

Stewart Dickinson returned to committee room at 11.24am

Christopher Stalford left the meeting at 11.24am

Christopher Stalford returned to committee room at 11.33am

Key issues discussed included: the Committee found out that the VCSE sector receives £17.7m per year from annual EU funding. There are four key programmes that the funding covers: Rural Development Programme; ESF; Interreg; and PEACE. Other programmes include Erasmus, European Solidarity Corp, Life+ and Horizon 2020. The key concerns for the VCSE sector include lack of clarity, uncertainty around UKSPF and time running out to have replacement programmes designed and in place offering continued support to beneficiaries. Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis.

The Witnesses left the meeting at 11.30am

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.18pm

Dr Caoímhe Archibald
Chairperson
Committee for the Economy
25th November 2020