



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

9 DECEMBER 2020

ROOM 29, 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
 - Ms Claire Sugden
- In Attendance:
- Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)
 - Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
 - Mr David McClure (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
 - Ms Maeve Holly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
 - Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)
 - Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies:
- Mr John Stewart

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

1. Apologies

The Chairperson informed Members that John Stewart sent an apology and the Committee sends its best wishes to him for a speedy recovery.

2. Minutes

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Minutes from 2nd December 2020.

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Record of Decisions from 2nd December 2020.

The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 4.

4. Briefing from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council - Broadband provision and Project Stratum

The witness joined the meeting at 10.09am

Members received a briefing from:

Alison McCullagh,

Chief Executive, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council;

Key issues discussed included: the roll out of Project Stratum and what it will look like for rural areas, the current poor internet speeds in the District Council area and the impact this is having on Businesses and family's as more aspects of modern life move online and the issue of why some of the worst affected areas will be last to receive ultra-fast broadband from the project.

The witness left the meeting at 10.47am

Agreed: to write to Fermanagh and Omagh District Council asking that they provide their mapping exercise showing the gaps in areas that will not be covered by Project Stratum

Agreed: to write to the Department seeking clarification on several areas that were discussed.

Agreed: to arrange a briefing in the new year from the Department and Fibrus regarding Project Stratum.

The Committee agreed to return to agenda item 3.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson updated Members on the informal meeting with Velocity Worldwide last week.

Agreed: to forward the presentation onto the Department and Invest NI for comment.

The chairperson informed Members of correspondence from an individual regarding the newly Self-Employed Support Scheme.

Agreed: to write to the Department to ask for comment on the issues raised and whether criteria for the scheme is being modified

The Chairperson advised Members that the proposed date for the Skills Micro-Inquiry is Thursday 28th January 2020.

Noted: Members noted the Clerks memo and the date and format for the Skills Micro-Inquiry.

The Chairperson informed Members of a response from the Minister regarding taxi's and coach operators being excluded from the CRBSS Part 2.

Agreed: to write to the TEO Taskforce highlighting that the support isn't consistent with other sectors and state that the Department of Infrastructure support only covers overhead costs and not loss of income.

The Chairperson informed Members of a response from the Minister regarding access to the Student Hardship Fund.

Agreed: to write to the Minister asking that the criteria for the Fund are relaxed and that the application process is simplified.

The Chairperson advised Members of correspondence last week from Future Screens NI requesting to brief the Committee.

Agreed: to arrange a briefing with Future Screens NI.

The Chairperson raised an issue regarding the Implementation of the NI Protocol that is due to be announced later today.

Agreed: to write to the SoS asking what engagement there has been with local business on this matter.

5. Matters Arising

Noted: Members noted a response from the Minister regarding the impact of the new Covid-19 restrictions.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Minister regarding the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Department regarding the Revision of Proposals for the Health and Safety (Consequential Amendments) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Minister for Communities regarding the licensing and registration of clubs.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Department regarding the Revision of Proposals for the Health and Safety (Consequential Amendments) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

6. Provisional Common Framework for Chemicals and Pesticide

Members considered a number of papers regarding the Provisional Common Framework for Chemicals and Pesticide.

Agreed: to seek the views of HSENI/NILGA/Solace NI on how this will impact on them.

Agreed: to forward the papers onto the AERA Committee.

7. Update on the Shared Prosperity Fund

Members considered a number of papers regarding the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Agreed: to write to stakeholders seeking their views on the information released so far.

Agreed: to write to the SoS, Shadow SoS and Lord Kinoull asking that they lobby to ensure NI has full replacement of ESF funding and highlighting that a Barnett consequential will not match ESF funding and that ‘funding plus’ will be required.

Agreed: to write to the sister Committee’s in Scotland and Wales asking what their role around the Prosperity Fund is.

8. SI - The European University Institute (EU Exit) Regulations 2021

Members considered correspondence from the Minister advising that the Minister of State for Universities advising of their intention to bring forward The European University Institute (EU Exit) Regulations 2021 and seeking the Department’s consent.

Noted: Members noted the correspondence from the Minister.

9. SR 2020/295 The Education (Student Fees and Support) (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Members considered SR 2020/295 The Education (Student Fees and Support) (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for the Economy has considered SR 2020/295 The Education (Student Fees and Support) (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and has no objection to the Rule, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ report.”

10. SR 2020/296 The Further Education (Student Support) (Amendment etc) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Members considered SR 2020/296 The Further Education (Student Support) (Amendment etc) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for the Economy has considered Members considered SR 2020/296 The Further Education (Student Support) (Amendment etc) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and has no objection to the Rule, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ report.”

Agreed: to write to the Student Loan about NI students who tick the Irish box on their application and face further ID checks.

11. SL1 - Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Suspension of Liability for Wrongful Trading and Extension of the Relevant Period) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Members considered SL1 - Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Suspension of Liability for Wrongful Trading and Extension of the Relevant Period) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

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

The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 15.

15. SL1 – The Education (Student Support, ETC.) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021

Members considered SL1 – The Education (Student Support, ETC.) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021.

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

The Committee agreed to move back to agenda item 12.

12. Correspondence

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the Analysis of Forecast Outturn.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the House of Lords EU Committee to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury regarding an EU proposal for regulation to establish the EU Single Window Environment for Customs.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the House of Lords EU Committee to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster regarding the Withdrawal Agreement.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from RHANI regarding the 2020 RHI NI Tariff Review.

Agreed: to forward to the Department for comment and ask that they provide a written update on RHI tariffs and the scheme in general.

Noted: Members noted an invitation from the NIHRC to attend the launch of the NI Human Rights Commission 2020 Annual Statement.

Agreed: to let the Committee Office know if they wish to attend.

Noted: Members noted the thirty-third Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules 2019-2020.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from Dalradian Gold extending an offer to present to the Committee on their recently commissioned Socio-Economic Impact Review.

Agreed: to defer a briefing until the current inquiry completes its work and to respond to Dalradian in those terms.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Mitie Group in relation to the acquisition of Interserve FM.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from an individual regarding the localised restrictions grant.

Agreed: to forward the correspondence onto the Department for a response.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from an individual regarding the spread of Covid-19 in schools and universities.

13. Any Other Business

Members discussed the various issues around planning that had been raised by various stakeholders during the recent Committee events.

Agreed: to write to the Minister for Infrastructure highlighting planning issues arising from recent Committee events.

14. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

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

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 11.49am

Dr Caoímhe Archibald
Chairperson
Committee for the Economy
16th December 2020