



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 9 March 2022

Meeting Location: Room 30 Parliament Buildings

Present: Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Trevor Lunn MLA
Ms Emma Sheerin MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Pádraig Delargy MLA
Ms John Stewart MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Easton MLA

Apologies:

Ms Diane Dodds MLA

In Attendance: Mr Michael Potter (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Sarah-Anne McKinley (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Alison Belshaw (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Christopher McAfee (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.06pm in open session.

1. Apologies

As above. Diane Dodds MLA was required in the Chamber for the Integrated Education Bill, necessitating her absence from the Committee meeting.

Pat Sheehan MLA delegated his vote to Emma Sheerin MLA until joining the meeting.

2. Chairperson Business

The Chairperson updated the Committee in relation to correspondence received from the Executive Office in relation to the official apology for victims and survivors for historical institutional abuse. The public apology will be offered to victims and survivors on Friday 11 March at 12.30pm in the Assembly Chamber of Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson updated the Committee in relation to correspondence from the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) in relation to the official apology for victims and survivors for historical institutional abuse. VSS and community partners will be in attendance at the apology event on 11 March 2022 to provide emotional support.

The Chairperson updated the Committee in relation to a draft press release supporting the official apology for victims and survivors for historical institutional abuse.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue the draft press release supporting the official apology.

The Chairperson raised concerns with the Committee in relation to the Ukrainian conflict and related refugee crisis.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an update on the draft Refugee Integration Strategy and to ask what will the Executive Office is doing to help those Ukrainian refugees seeking asylum in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Home Office to ask for the relaxation of visa requirements for those Ukrainian refugees seeking asylum to the United Kingdom.

The Chairperson updated the Committee that only four members were available for the group photo of Members for the Committee legacy report.

This has now been arranged for Monday 14 March 2022 with a time to be confirmed with Members

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 2 March 2022.

4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson updated the Committee that the presentation from the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) on their survey regarding tackling violence on women and girls at last week's meeting was sent through to the Committee.

The Chairperson commented on International Women's Day being celebrated on the 8 March 2022 and how events were held across Northern Ireland to mark the occasion.

5. Committee Legacy - Consideration of draft Report

The Committee considered the draft Committee Legacy Report for the 2017-2022 mandate.

The Chairperson updated the Committee that the Committee group photograph will also be included in the final report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that they were content with the draft report subject to the group photograph being included.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that appendices be added when the relevant statistical information is available.

6. Forward Work Plan

The Chairperson updated the Committee in relation to correspondence received from junior Minister Kearney regarding the work of junior Ministers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to re-issue the invitation to junior Minister Middleton to brief the Committee.

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme for the remainder of March 2022.

7. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Communities in relation to the draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office regarding the role of the Junior Ministers.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Chris Lyttle MLA in relation to the Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill and the request to Committee on the remaining Bill stages.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Commons Procedures Committee regarding their recent visit to Parliament Buildings.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Chair of Rosetta Trust in relation to recommendations for the review of the Redress Process.
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lords Sub-Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/ Northern Ireland to Baroness Williams regarding the Nationality and Borders Bill.
- vii. The Committee noted a report from the Committee on the Administration of Justice titled 'Can Stormont Rollback the Home Office Hostile Environment Legal Research Report.'

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Committee on the Administration of Justice to brief the Committee on its report findings.

- viii. The Committee noted an invitation from Retail NI in relation to the Future High Street Summit.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office regarding the Historical Institutional Abuse Review of the Redress Board.

8. Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill: Department of Education– Oral Briefing

The Department of Education joined the meeting at 2.37pm.

- Mr Mark Bailey, Director of Education Workforce Development, Department of Education
- Ms Alison Chambers, Director of Promoting Collaboration and Tackling Disadvantage, Department of Education

The Department of Education officials briefed the Committee in relation to the Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill.

Emma Sheerin left the meeting at 2.54pm

Emma Sheerin returned to the meeting at 2.57pm

The oral evidence session was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the Department of Education officials for their attendance.

9. Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill: Bill Sponsor - Oral Briefing

The Bill Sponsor joined the meeting at 3.11pm.

- Mr Chris Lyttle MLA

The Bill Sponsor briefed the Committee in relation to the Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill.

Trevor Lunn left the meeting at 3.37pm

Trevor Lunn returned to the meeting at 3.52pm

The oral evidence session was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the Bill Sponsor for his attendance.

10. Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill: Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service (RalSe) - Oral Briefing

The Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service (RalSe) joined the meeting at 3.39pm.

- Dr Orla Drummond – Research Officer, Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service.

The Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service briefed the Committee in relation to the Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill.

Emma Sheerin left the meeting at 3.45pm

Emma Sheerin returned to the meeting at 3.49pm

The oral evidence session was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Dr Drummond for her attendance.

11.Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill: Consideration of Evidence

The Committee considered both the written and oral evidence received in relation to the Bill.

The Chairperson updated Members that the Call for Views in relation to the Bill closed on the 7 March 2022 and that 388 responses were received.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the written and oral evidence received.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move on to the clause by clause scrutiny of the Bill.

12.Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill: Formal Clause-by-Clause Consideration

The Committee carried out its formal clause by clause consideration of the Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill.

Pat Sheehan joined the meeting at 4.02pm

Clause 1 revokes Article 71 of the 1998 Order.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Clause 1 of the Bill as drafted.

Clause 2 and the Schedule make consequential amendments to the 1998 Order and the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Clause 2 and Schedule of the Bill as drafted.

Clause 3 provides for the Bill to be brought into force by the Executive Office.

The Committee proposed an amendment to Clause 3 of the Bill. Clause 3 of the Bill reads:

3.—(1) *‘The preceding provisions of this Act come into operation on such day or days as the Executive Office may by order appoint (subject to subsection (2)).*

(2) The preceding provisions of this Act come into force at the end of the period of 12 months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed if by that time no order has been made under subsection (1) bringing the preceding provisions of this Act into operation.'

Agreed: The Committee agreed to change the following the preceding provisions of the Act to come into force at the end of the period of 24 months rather than 12 months to Clause 3 of the Bill.

The amendment agreed by the Committee will read as follows:

2) The preceding provisions of this Act come into force at the end of the period of 24 months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed if by that time no order has been made under subsection (1) bringing the preceding provisions of this Act into operation.'

Clause 4 gives the Bill its short title "The Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill."

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Clause 4 of the Bill as drafted.

The Committee considered the Long Title as drafted: "A Bill to remove the exemption for school teachers from the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998; and for connected purposes".

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Long Title of the Bill as drafted.

The Chairperson advised Members that the formal clause by clause scrutiny of the Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill had concluded.

13. Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill: Consideration of Bill Report

The Committee considered a draft of the report on the Committee Stage of the Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that to finalise the report at its meeting on 10 March 2022.

14. Any Other Business

None.

15. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

An extraordinary Committee meeting will be held virtually on Thursday 10 March 2022 at 9:00am.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.17pm

Sinéad McLaughlin MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office