



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER 2020

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Paul Givan MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Doug Beattie MLA
Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA*
Ms Jemma Dolan MLA
Mr Gordon Dunne MLA
Mr Paul Frew MLA
Ms Emma Rogan MLA
Ms Rachel Woods MLA

* This Member attended the meeting via video conferencing.

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Leanne Johnston (Assistant Clerk)
Mrs Allison Mealey (Clerical Supervisor)

The meeting commenced at 1.32 p.m. in public session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the oral evidence session should be reported by Hansard.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Joint letter from the Ministers of Justice and Finance dated 6 December 2020

Ms Naomi Long, Minister of Justice and Mr Peter May, Permanent Secretary, Department of Justice joined the meeting at 1.32 p.m.

The Minister of Justice outlined the issues referred to in the joint correspondence from her and the Minister of Finance and the request that the Committee did not move its amendment at Further Consideration Stage of the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the Minister of Justice and the Permanent Secretary for their attendance.

The meeting was suspended at 3.20 p.m. to address a technical issue.

The meeting recommenced at 3.30 p.m.

Present: Mr Paul Givan MLA (Chairperson)
 Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Doug Beattie MLA
 Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA*
 Mr Gordon Dunne MLA
 Mr Paul Frew MLA

3. Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Clause 27 - Civil Legal Aid

Sonya McMullan, Regional Services Manager, the Women’s Aid Federation joined the meeting at 3.30 p.m.

Ms McMullan addressed the civil legal aid provision in the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

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

Ms Rogan rejoined the meeting at 3.44 p.m.

Ms Dolan rejoined the meeting at 3.51 p.m.

Ms Woods rejoined the meeting at 3.52 p.m.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked Ms McMullan for her attendance.

The Committee agreed to move into closed session at 4.28 p.m. to receive advice from the Assembly Bill Clerk.

4. Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Committee Amendments for Further Consideration Stage – Advice from the Assembly Bill Clerk

Ms Stephanie Mallon, Assembly Bill Clerk, joined the meeting to provide advice on the current Committee amendment and potential alternative amendments for Further Consideration Stage of the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Mallon for her advice.

The meeting moved into public session at 5.52 p.m.

5. Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Consideration of Committee Amendments for Further Consideration Stage

The Committee discussed its position in relation to its current amendment and an alternative amendment in relation to the commencement of Clause 27 for Further Consideration Stage of the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill in light of the additional information provided by the Minister of Justice and the Permanent Secretary during the oral evidence session.

The question was put that the Committee would withdraw Amendment 15 on the Marshalled List of Amendments for Further Consideration Stage which provided for Clause 27 as made at Consideration Stage to commence at the same time as Chapters 1 and 2 of the Bill and bring forward a new amendment at Further Consideration Stage to provide for the Commencement of Clause 27 twelve months after the Bill receives Royal Assent.

The Committee divided: Ayes 5; Noes 4

AYES

Ms Sinéad Bradley

Mr Gordon Dunne

Mr Paul Frew

Mr Paul Givan (Chairperson)

Ms Rachel Woods

NOES

Mr Doug Beattie

Ms Linda Dillon (Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Jemma Dolan

Ms Emma Rogan

Agreed: The Committee agreed to withdraw Amendment 15 from the Marshalled List of Amendments for Further Consideration Stage and bring forward the new amendment as proposed.

Mr Beattie left the meeting at 5.56 p.m.

Members outlined their reasons for the stance they had adopted in relation to the new Committee amendment.

4. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 10 December 2020 at 2.00 p.m. in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 6.00 p.m.

Mr Paul Givan MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Justice