



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Justice

Minutes of Proceedings

30 September 2021

Meeting Location: The Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Ms Sinéad Ennis MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Jemma Dolan MLA

Mr Robin Newton MLA

Mr Peter Weir MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA

Ms Rachel Woods MLA

Apologies: Mr Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Doug Beattie MLA

Ms Emma Rogan MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)

Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Senior Assistant Clerk)



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In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Clerk)

Mrs Allison Mealey (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2:04 p.m. in open session.

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

1. Apologies

As above.

The Clerk informed the Committee that, under Standing Order 115(6), the Chairperson, Mervyn Storey MLA, had delegated authority to Peter Weir MLA to vote on his behalf, Emma Rogan MLA had delegated authority to the Deputy Chairperson, Sinéad Ennis MLA, to vote on her behalf and Jemma Dolan had delegated authority to the Deputy Chairperson, Sinéad Ennis MLA, to vote on her behalf during any absence during the Committee meeting.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2021.



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3. Matters Arising

Item 1 – Department of Justice correspondence requesting changes to the Committee Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department requesting changes to the Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 21 October 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the requested changes should be made to the Forward Work Programme.

Item 2 – Letter from an individual on the Legislative Consent Motion on the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill

The Committee noted a copy of the response which had been previously agreed by correspondence and submitted to the Committee for Finance on the scrutiny undertaken on the relevant provisions included in the Legislative Consent Motion on the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill.

The Committee also noted correspondence from an individual regarding pensions for prison officers which fall within wider public sector pensions for which the Department of Finance is responsible.

Item 3 – Response from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on the Proposed Legislative Consent Motion on the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill

The Committee considered a further response from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on the Proposed Legislative Consent Motion on the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

Robin Newton MLA joined the meeting at 2:10 p.m.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Justice and request clarification of a number of issues.

Item 4 - Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme

The Committee noted that arrangements were being made for the informal meeting with the Victims' Payments Board to discuss the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme and the arrangements for monitoring its operation to take place on 6 October 2021.

4. 2021/22 October Monitoring Round and Budget 2022-25 Process

The following officials joined the meeting via Starleaf at 2:14 p.m.

Deborah Brown, Director, Justice Delivery Directorate, Department of Justice

Andrea Quail, Head of Financial Planning, Strategy and Support, Department of Justice

Louise Blair, Head of Financial Planning and Support, Department of Justice

Ms Brown provided an outline of the Department's October Monitoring Round position and an overview of the Department's submission to the Department of Finance in relation to the information gathering exercise for the 2022-25 Budget process.

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

The officials agreed to provide further information on several issues raised during the session.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send questions not covered during the evidence session to the Department of Justice for a written response.



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Jemma Dolan MLA left the meeting at 2:56 p.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request the written views of the eight Justice Non-Departmental Public Bodies on the likely implications/pressures arising from potential budget scenarios being considered as part of the information gathering exercise for the 2022-25 Budget to assist the Committee's assessment of the position in due course.

5. Proposed Strategy for Supporting and Challenging Women and Girls in Contact with the Justice System – Results of the Consultation and Proposed Next Steps

The following officials joined the meeting via Starleaf at 2:58 p.m.

Steven McCourt, Deputy Director, Reducing Offending Division, Department of Justice

Paula O'Neill, Head of Reducing Offending Policy Unit, Department of Justice

Joanne McPadden, Policy Official, Reducing Offending Policy Unit, Department of Justice

Mr McCourt outlined the key issues arising from the consultation and the Department of Justice's proposed way forward in relation to the Strategy for Supporting and Challenging Women and Girls in Contact with the Justice System.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Jemma Dolan MLA rejoined the meeting at 3:11 p.m.



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The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to note the results of the consultation and to consider the draft Strategy and associated action plan for Supporting and Challenging Women and Girls in contact with the Justice System when provided by the Department of Justice.

6. Damages (Return on Investment) Bill – Summary of Committee Informal Deliberations

The Committee noted a summary of its informal deliberations on 23 September 2021 on the Clauses and Schedule of the Damages (Return on Investment) Bill and a range of other issues raised in the evidence received on the Bill.

The Deputy Chairperson advised Members that the Formal Clause by Clause consideration of the Bill would take place at the meeting on Thursday 7 October 2021.

7. The Civil Jurisdiction and Judgements (2005 Hague Convention and 2007 Hague Convention) (Amendment) Regulations 2022

The Committee noted information provided by the Department of Justice advising that the Minister of Justice had consented to the extension to Northern Ireland of the Civil Jurisdiction and Judgments (2005 Hague Convention and 2007 Hague Convention) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.



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8. Domestic Abuse Offence Training and Awareness Materials - Update

The Committee considered an update provided by the Department of Justice on the training and awareness materials being developed in preparation for the new domestic abuse offence coming into operation in late February 2022.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information from the Department of Justice on a number of issues relating to the training and awareness materials.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a further update in the New Year.

Peter Weir MLA left the meeting at 3:58 p.m.

9. Implementation of the Recommendations of the Gillen Review into Serious Sexual Offences in Northern Ireland - Update

The Committee considered an update provided by the Department of Justice on progress to deliver the Implementation Plan for the Gillen Review Recommendations in relation to Serious Sexual Offences cases which covered the current position and future plans for the main programme work streams and outlined the current position regarding funding and resources and the work of the Education and Awareness Group.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information on a number of issues including details of the positive impact the partially and fully implemented recommendations have had on victims.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a further update in early March 2022.



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10. Deaths Abroad - Final Report on the Commencement of Section 49(1) of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009

The Committee considered the final report by the Working Group appointed to explore the implications for the justice system of commencing section 49(1) of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and noted the work of the Kevin Bell Repatriation Trust in this area.

The Committee noted the information provided by the Department of Justice regarding the views of the Minister of Justice on a potential way forward in relation to this matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information from the Department of Justice regarding whether the possibility of managing expectations, if section 49(1) was to be commenced, had been fully explored.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral evidence session on this matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to provide an update on the position to Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP given his previous correspondence on behalf of an individual on this matter.

11. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the New Decade New Approach funding of £40million for the Unique Circumstances of Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Justice for its detailed spending proposals relating to the Unique Circumstances Funding.

The Committee noted the following:

- ii. A response from the Department of Justice providing further information in relation to SR 2021/129 The Rules of the Court of Judicature (Northern



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Ireland) (Amendment) 2021 and costs for applicants following the introduction of the on-line facility for probate applications.

- iii. Correspondence from the Department of Justice providing a copy of a consultation by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on a draft Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework.
- iv. The Investment Strategy Northern Ireland – Department of Justice Procurement Activity Report for September 2021.
- v. A response from the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland outlining the timescale for completion of the Review into the Operation of Care and Supervision Units in the Northern Ireland Prison Service and publication of the Report. When it is available consideration will be given to inviting the Chief Inspector and the Independent Monitoring Board to attend a Committee meeting to discuss the findings.

12. Chairperson's Business

None.

13. Any Other Business

None.

14. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 7 October 2021 at 2.00 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.



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The meeting was adjourned at 4:11 p.m.

Mervyn Storey MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Justice
7 October 2021