



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for Justice

### Minutes of Proceedings

25 November 2021

**Meeting Location:** Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

**Present:** Mr Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Robin Newton MLA

Ms Rachel Woods MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Mr Doug Beattie MLA

Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA

Ms Jemma Dolan MLA

Mr Peter Weir MLA

**Apologies:** Ms Sinéad Ennis MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Emma Rogan MLA

**In Attendance:** Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)

Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Senior Assistant Clerk)

Mr Stephen Corr (Clerical Supervisor)



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The meeting commenced at 2:01 p.m. in closed session.

**1. Protection from Stalking Bill – Consideration of Draft Amendments – Advice from the Assembly Bill Clerk**

Ms Stephanie Mallon, Assembly Bill Clerk, attended the meeting to outline the final text of the amendments discussed by the Committee at the meeting on 18 November 2021 in relation to Clause 17 of the Protection from Stalking Bill, to provide for data collection and mandatory training and to place a requirement on the Department to report on the operation of the offence.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Justice providing the text of the departmental amendments in relation to data collection, mandatory training and to place a requirement on the Department to report on the operation of the offence and outlining its position in relation to the Committee's proposed amendment to Clause 17.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its position in relation to each of the proposed amendments.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department outlining its position on each of the amendments and providing the relevant text of the Committee amendments.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Mallon for her advice.

The meeting moved into public session at 2.19 p.m.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Oral Evidence Sessions on the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill should be reported by Hansard.



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### 2. Apologies

As above.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that, under Standing Order 115(6), the Deputy Chairperson, Sinéad Ennis MLA, and Emma Rogan MLA had delegated authority to Jemma Dolan MLA to vote on their behalf.

### 3. Draft Minutes

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2021.

### 4. Matters Arising

#### Item 1 – Protection from Stalking Bill – Draft Amendments

The Chairperson advised Members that the Department would be informed that:

- the Committee intends to bring forward an amendment to Clause 17 to build on the obligations already in the Bill to issue guidance so that it also covers the effect of the Act and other matters and that it was content to support the Department's amendment to implement the proposal by the Examiner of Statutory Rules that the guidance should be laid in the Assembly.
- The Committee will support the Department's amendment on data collection.
- The Committee will support the Department's amendment on training but wants it expanded to cover reporting on the training and will bring forward an amendment to include this if necessary.



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- The Committee will support the Department's amendment on reporting on the operation of the Act but wants clarification on whether the breach offences are covered and wants to see further detail regarding Stalking Protection Orders and interim Stalking Protection Orders included and will bring forward an amendment to include this if necessary.

### **Item 2 – Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims Bill)**

The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People providing further comments following the oral evidence session on the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill on 11 November 2021.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Chair of the South East Area Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership providing further information on Child Abduction Warning Notices following the oral evidence session on 18 November 2021.

### **Item 3 – Committee Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted an updated Forward Work Programme reflecting the additional meeting and rescheduled work items agreed at the meeting on 18 November 2021.

The Committee noted that the written paper on a proposal for a Statutory Rule in relation to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal needed to be deferred from the meeting on 9 December and would be rescheduled in due course.



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**Item 4 – Correspondence from the Minister of Justice on the Northern Ireland Prison Service**

The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Justice outlining the current pressures facing the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the arrangements in place to manage these and noted that officials would brief the Committee if required.

**5. Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill – Oral Evidence from Victim Support NI**

The following representative from Victim Support NI joined the meeting at 2.28 p.m.:

Janice Bunting, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Victim Support NI

Ms Bunting outlined a number of key issues in relation to the provisions of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill and other issues.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Bunting for her attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request clarification from the Department of Justice on a number of issues discussed during the evidence session.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that a copy of the Law Commission's Consultation Paper on Intimate Image Abuse should be provided to all Committee Members.

**6. Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill – Oral Evidence from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission**

The following representatives from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission joined the meeting at 3.03 p.m.:



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Alyson Kilpatrick, Chief Commissioner, NI Human Rights Commission

Rhyannon Blythe, Director of Legal Policy, Research and Investigations, NI Human Rights Commission

Sarah Simms, Policy and Research Officer, NI Human Rights Commission

The witnesses outlined a number of key issues in relation to the provisions of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill and other issues.

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

Mr Weir left the meeting at 3.27 p.m.

The witnesses agreed to provide further information on a number of issues discussed during the evidence session.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to follow-up on the issues raised during the oral evidence session with the Department of Justice.

## **7. Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill – Oral Evidence from the Public Prosecution Service**

The following representative from the Public Prosecution Service joined the meeting at 3.32 p.m.:

Ciaran McQuillan, Assistant Director, Serious Crime Unit, Public Prosecution Service

Mr McQuillan outlined a number of key points in relation to the provisions of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill and other issues.



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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Mr McQuillan agreed to provide further information on one issue discussed during the evidence session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr McQuillan for his attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request clarification from the Department of Justice on an issue discussed during the evidence session.

### **8. Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill – Oral Evidence from the Police Service of Northern Ireland**

The following representatives from the PSNI joined the meeting at 4.24 p.m.:

Detective Chief Superintendent Anthony McNally, PSNI

Detective Chief Inspector Lindsay Fisher, PSNI

Detective Chief Superintendent Anthony McNally outlined a number of key points in relation to the provisions of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill and other issues.

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

Mr Beattie left the meeting at 4.48 p.m.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The representatives agreed to provide further information on a number of issues discussed during the evidence session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Justice for clarification of a number of issues discussed during the evidence session.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to raise the specific resourcing requirements highlighted by the PSNI to ensure the effective operationalisation of this legislation and the other Bills that have been brought forward by the Department which also create new offences with the Minister of Justice.

### **9. Chairperson's Business**

None.

### **10. Any Other Business**

#### **Item 1**

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs providing information on a webinar to be held by the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on the consultation on the draft Green Growth Strategy on 29 November 2021.

#### **Item 2**

On behalf of the Committee the Chairperson expressed condolences to the Deputy Chairperson, Sinéad Ennis, on the recent death of her mother.

### **11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 30 November 2021 at 3.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.





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The meeting was adjourned at 5.14 p.m.

**Mervyn Storey MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Justice**

**2 December 2021**