



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Justice

Minutes of Proceedings

11 November 2021

Meeting Location: The Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Robin Newton MLA

Ms Rachel Woods MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Sinéad Ennis MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Doug Beattie MLA

Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA

Ms Jemma Dolan MLA

Mr Peter Weir MLA

Apologies: Ms Emma Rogan MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)

Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Clerk)

Mr Stephen Corr (Clerical Supervisor)



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In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Senior Assistant Clerk)

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Oral Evidence Sessions on the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill and the Committee's Informal Deliberations on the Protection from Stalking Bill should be reported by Hansard.

1. Apologies

As above.

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

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2021.

3. Matters Arising

None.



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4. Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill – Oral Evidence from Christian Action Research and Education (CARE)

The following representatives from CARE NI joined the meeting at 2:06 p.m.

Lauren Agnew, Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation Policy Officer,
CARE NI

Rebecca Stevenson, Policy Officer, CARE NI

Ms Agnew and Ms Stevenson outlined a number of key issues in relation to the trafficking and exploitation provisions of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill.

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The representatives agreed to provide further information on several issues discussed during the session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

5. Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill – Oral Evidence from Representatives of the Migration Justice Project

The following representatives from the Migration Justice Project joined the meeting at 2:42 p.m.

Liz Griffith, Senior Research and Policy Officer, Law Centre (NI)

Noelle Collins, Area Manager, Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid

Jill Robinson, Founder and Co-ordinator, Flourish NI

Orla Gardiner, Victims of Slavery Support Service Team Manager, Migrant Help



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

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

Robin Newton MLA joined the meeting at 2:51 p.m.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The representatives agreed to provide further information on several issues discussed during the session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

6. Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill – Oral Evidence from the National Society for the Protection of Cruelty against Children (NSPCC) and Barnardo’s

The following representatives from the NSPCC and Barnardo’s joined the meeting at 3:31 p.m.

Trása Canavan, Senior Policy and Public Affairs Lead, Barnardo’s NI

Natalie Whelehan, Policy and Public Affairs Manager for Northern Ireland, NSPCC

Orla O’Hagan, Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer for Northern Ireland, NSPCC

Ms Canavan and Ms Whelehan 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.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.



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Doug Beattie MLA left the meeting at 3:37 p.m.

Sinead Ennis MLA left the meeting at 3:50 p.m.

The representatives agreed to provide further information on one issue discussed during the session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

7. Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill – Oral Evidence from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY)

The following representatives joined the meeting at 4:32 p.m. via StarLeaf.

Koulla Yiasouma, NI Commissioner for Children and Young People

Jacqueline Melville, Policy and Research Officer, NICCY

Ms Yiasouma 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.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The representatives agreed to provide further information on one issue discussed during the session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to refer the issues raised in the evidence sessions to the Department of Justice and, where necessary, other relevant Departments for a response.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Committee Clerk would liaise with the Assembly Bill Clerk regarding the provision of advice on the suggested amendments covered in the written and oral evidence and the scope of the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that a copy of the Barnardo's Report: 'Not a world away - The sexual exploitation of children and young people in Northern Ireland' should be provided to all Committee Members.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Justice when the wording of its proposed amendments will be available.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the text of the Department of Justice amendment to extend the scope of the current law on abuse of trust with Barnardo's and the NSPCC when available to enable both organisations to submit further views and comments on this issue.

8. Protection from Stalking Bill – Further Deliberations on the Bill Clauses and possible amendments

The Committee considered further information provided by the Department of Justice on Clauses 2 and 17 and a range of issues not currently covered in the Bill.

The following officials were available via Starleaf to provide clarification of any issues if required:

Brian Grzymek, Deputy Director, Criminal Justice Policy and Legislation Division, Department of Justice

Andrew Laverty, Head of Criminal Law Branch, Criminal Justice Policy and Legislation Division, Department of Justice

Barbara Compston, Criminal Justice Policy and Legislation, Department of Justice



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The Committee welcomed the undertaking by the Minister of Justice to bring forward the amendments to make provision for data collection, mandatory training and a requirement for the Department to report on the operation of the offence that the Committee wishes to see included in the Bill.

The Committee noted that the Department may not be in a position to share the final text of the amendments before Committee Stage ends on 10 December 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed, as a contingency, to ask the Assembly Bill Clerk to prepare draft amendments on data collection, mandatory training and a requirement for the Department to report on the operation of the offence and it would consider the text of the Department's amendments when available.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Bill Clerk to prepare a draft amendment to build on the obligation already provided for in the Bill at Clause 17 to issue guidance about the exercise of the Chief Constable's functions relating to Stalking Protection Orders or Interim Stalking Protection Orders so that it also covers the stalking offence, similar to the requirement relating to guidance provided for in the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it is content with the text of the amendment to Clause 17, provided by the Department, to implement the proposal by the Assembly Examiner of Statutory Rules that the guidance should be laid in the Assembly.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Bill Clerk was available to discuss the proposed amendments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the meeting would move into closed session, in accordance with normal practice, after the rest of the agenda items had been considered, to receive advice from the Bill Clerk on the proposed amendments.

9. 2021-22 October Monitoring Round and the Budget 2022-25 Process – Information gathering process

The Committee noted further information provided by the Department of Justice on the October Monitoring bids and allocations, the Budget 2022-25 capital bids and the current timetable for the draft Budget 2022-25.



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10. Committee Forward Work Programme – December 2021

The Committee considered a list of items of business that the Department of Justice wished it to consider during December 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule the work items requested by the Department on the dates indicated with the caveat that the oral evidence session on the Review of Hate Crime legislation may need to be deferred until January 2022 if Bill work necessitates this.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the oral evidence session on the responses to the consultation on non-fatal strangulation legislation and proposed way forward with Department of Justice officials currently scheduled for the meeting on 25 November should be moved to the meeting on 2 December 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the attendance of Public Prosecution Service (PPS) officials at the meeting on 25 November on the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill would also provide an opportunity to discuss the recently published PPS Statistical Bulletin: Cases Involving Sexual Offences 2020/21.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Women's Aid had asked to provide oral evidence on the Justice (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Bill on an individual basis rather than as part of the joint oral evidence session with representatives of the range of organisations who contributed to and endorsed the joint submission provided by the Women's Policy Group NI.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, given the very limited time available to take oral evidence on the Bill, it was content with the arrangements for the oral evidence sessions that had already been agreed but would welcome any further information or written comments Women's Aid may wish to submit in writing.

11. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered a response from the Department of Justice setting out its position regarding the findings and recommendations of the Regulation



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and Quality Improvement Authority Report (RQIA) of a Review of Services for Vulnerable Persons Detained in Northern Ireland Prisons.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Committee Clerk should liaise with the Clerk of the Committee for Health regarding the potential for a joint oral evidence session on the RQIA Report findings and recommendations and how these will be addressed by the Departments of Justice and Health.

- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding a personal court case.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise that the individual should contact one of their constituency MLAs for advice and to consider engaging with their legal representative about the matter.

- iii. The Committee considered the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CIJNI) Report on “How the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland Treats Females in Conflict with the Law”.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Justice for a response to the findings of the CIJNI report and a copy of the action plan to address the recommendations.

- iv. The Committee considered an invitation to Members to attend the 50th Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) Annual General Meeting on 18 November and notification of the pending retirement of the current NIACRO Chief Executive.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to thank NIACRO for the invitation which unfortunately is at the same time as the scheduled Committee meeting and to wish the Chief Executive Officer well when she retires.



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The Committee noted the following:

- v. A response from the Department of Justice providing information on the work being undertaken in relation to a planned Justice Bill for introduction in the next Assembly Mandate.
- vi. Correspondence from the Department of Justice providing the publication dates for the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Quarterly Official Statistical Bulletins.
- vii. A response from the Department of Justice providing the two most recent suites of performance dashboards in relation to case processing times for criminal cases dealt with at courts in Northern Ireland.
- viii. Correspondence from the Committee for Health to the PSNI seeking information on any investigations relating to the conduct and work of former Belfast Trust Neurologist Dr Michael Watt.
- ix. The NI Assembly All Party Group on Reducing Harm Related to Gambling Inquiry Report on the Future Regulation of Gambling in Northern Ireland.

12. Chairperson's Business

None.



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13. Any Other Business

Ms Sinéad Bradley informed the Committee that she had tabled an amendment to the Damages (Return on Investment) Bill.

14. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 18 November 2021 at 2.00 p.m. in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was suspended at 5:37 p.m.

The meeting recommenced at 5:41 p.m. in closed session.

Present: Mr Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Robin Newton MLA

Ms Rachel Woods MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Sinéad Bradley MLA

Ms Jemma Dolan MLA

Mr Peter Weir MLA



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Protection from Stalking Bill – Further Deliberations on the Bill Clauses and possible amendments (continued)

Ms Stephanie Mallon, Assembly Bill Clerk, attended the meeting to discuss the potential amendments to the Protection from Stalking Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Bill Clerk should prepare draft amendments relating to data collection, mandatory training and to place a requirement on the Department to report on the operation of the offence including specifically regarding on-line and off-line offences and in relation to Clause 17 for consideration at the meeting on 18 November 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to inform the Department of the draft amendments that the Bill Clerk was preparing on its behalf.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Mallon for her advice.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

Mervyn Storey MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Justice

18 November 2021