



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Communities

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 6 June 2024

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Ms Ciara Ferguson (Deputy Chairperson) MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
Ms Sian Mulholland MLA (via Zoom)
Mr Brian Kingston MLA

Apologies: Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson) MLA
Mr Andy Allen MBE MLA
Ms Kellie Armstrong MLA
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA
Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA

In Attendance: Ms Emer Boyle (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Sean McCann (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Chris McAfee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Tracey McCaughey (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced in open session at 10.02a.m.



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1. Apologies

Apologies are listed above.

2. Chairperson's Business

On behalf of the Committee and Committee Staff, the Deputy Chairperson extended sincere condolences to the Committee Chairperson, Colm Gildernew, and his wider family following the tragic death of his nephew Fiachra.

3. Draft Minutes

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that, due to a lack of quorum, a decision on the draft minutes from the meeting on 30 May would be deferred until the meeting on 13 June 2024.

4. Matters Arising

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that, due to a lack of quorum, items initially for consideration under Matters Arising at today's meeting would be deferred for consideration at the meeting on 13 June 2024.



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5. Departmental briefing on Budget 2024/25

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting:

Cherrie Arnold, Finance Director

Gavin Patrick, Finance Director

A question and answer session followed the officials' briefing and the main areas of discussion were enforcement, the collection of arrears, training for staff, engagement with the Department of Justice and the Courts Service, fees and the progress of similar legislation in GB.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the officials for briefing the Committee.

6. Departmental briefing on the Child Support Enforcement Bill

The following officials joined the meeting:

John Noble, Head of Social Security Policy, Legislation and Decision-Making Division

Ros Agnew, Deputy Director, Child Maintenance Service

A question and answer session followed the officials' briefing and the main areas of discussion were the budget for new social housing homes, the Supporting People budget, discretionary support, capital projects that may be delayed or cancelled due to lack of funding, staff vacancies, Jobstart, the impact of the budget on arm's length bodies and climate change.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the officials for briefing the Committee.



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7. Briefing by Cliff Edge Coalition

The following representatives joined the meeting:

Sarah Corrigan, Director of Innovation & Engagement – Law Centre NI

Siobhan Harding, Policy Officer – Women's Support Network

Jonny Currie, Northern Ireland Network Lead – The Trussell Trust

Stephen Morrison, Policy Coordinator – Housing Rights

A question and answer session followed the representatives' briefing and the main areas of discussion were welfare reform mitigations, the impact of the Departmental budget, Local Housing Allowance, the impact of the 5 week wait for payment of Universal Credit, the need for a renaming, and better promotion of, the Universal Credit Contingency Fund and the 2 child benefit cap.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for briefing the Committee.

8. SR 2024/119 - The Social Security State Pension Age Claimants Closure of Tax Credits Amendment Regulations NI 2024

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that, due to a lack of quorum, a decision on this Rule would be deferred until the meeting on 13 June 2024.

9. SR 2024/123 - The Smoke Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarms for Private Tenancies Regulations (NI) 2024

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that, due to a lack of quorum, a decision on this Rule would be deferred until the meeting on 13 June 2024.



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10. SL1 – The Pensions (2005) (Codes of Practice) (Revocation) Order (NI) 2024

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that, due to a lack of quorum, a decision on this proposed Rule would be deferred until the meeting on 13 June 2024.

11. Correspondence

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that, due to a lack of quorum, consideration of correspondence from today's meeting would be deferred until the meeting on 13 June 2024.

12. Forward work programme

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that, due to a lack of quorum, consideration of the forward work programme would be deferred until the meeting on 13 June 2024.

13. Any other business

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that, due to a lack of quorum, there would be no opportunity to raise any other business.



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14. Date, time and location of the next meeting

The next meeting is at 10.00a.m. on Thursday 13 June, in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.15p.m.

Ciara Ferguson MLA
Deputy Chairperson, Committee for Communities