



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Communities

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 9 May 2024

Meeting Location: First Steps Women's Centre, Dungannon

Present:

- Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson) MLA
- Ms Ciara Ferguson (Deputy Chairperson) MLA
- Ms Kellie Armstrong MLA
- Mr Andy Allen MBE MLA
- Mr Brian Kingston MLA
- Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
- Ms Sian Mulholland MLA

Apologies:

- Mr Maurice Bradley MLA

In Attendance:

- Ms Emer Boyle (Assembly Clerk)
- Mr Sean McCann (Assistant Clerk)
- Ms Katie Egan (Clerical Supervisor)
- Mrs Tracey McCaughey (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced in open session at 10.04am



Northern Ireland Assembly

1. Apologies

Apologies are listed above.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed Members that on Tuesday 7 May, he had attended an event on community wealth building.

Sian Mulholland joined the meeting at 10.07a.m.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Minister to ask whether work is ongoing on a publicly owned land / asset register and if it can be shared with the Committee and also requesting that the Minister raise the urgent need for an updated register of publicly owned land and assets with Executive colleagues.

The Chairperson informed Members that on Tuesday 7 May, he had attended an event held by Craic Theatre and he passed his congratulations to all involved in the organisation of a great event.

3. Draft Minutes

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a copy of the draft minutes from the meeting on 2 May 2024.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes as drafted.



Northern Ireland Assembly

4. Matters Arising

Members noted a reply from the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations in relation to voluntary house sales by housing associations and the number of housing association planning applications rejected because of objections by NI Water.

Members noted a copy of individual communications in relation to hybrid working arrangements for people working for the Department for Communities.

5. Briefing by First Steps Women's Centre

The following representatives joined the meeting:

Michael McGoldrick, CEO

Natalia Snitko, Volunteer and student

A question and answer session with Members followed and the main topics of the discussion were funding streams, staff retention, childcare, transport, social return on investment, the rigidity of funding streams and the impact of Brexit.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for briefing the Committee.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to ask for an update on any work ongoing in relation to reviewing the model for grant funding arrangements, to outline Committee concerns about the impact of salary freezes in C&V organisations and to ask that, where grants and contracts are awarded, whether there is a stipulation that the living wage should be paid?



Northern Ireland Assembly

6. Correspondence

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a correspondence memo with proposed actions set out.

Kellie Armstrong raised the Advice NI letter in relation to help for health service charges' provision.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Minister for Health to state that the Committee is concerned that those impacted are coming to harm whilst the current arrangements persist and continue to incur additional expenditure. The Committee would like the Department for Health to make the necessary legislative changes to help these health service charges to ensure parity between Northern Ireland and GB.

7. Forward work programme

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a copy of a forward work programme.

Sian Mulholland asked if the Arts Council could be added to the list of the organisations that wished to brief the Committee at a future meeting.

8. Any other business

There was no other business.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

9. Date, time and location of the next meeting

The next meeting is at 10am on Thursday 16 May, in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 11.07a.m.

Colm Gildernew MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Communities