



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Communities

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 19 June 2025

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson) MLA
Ms Nicola Brogan (Deputy Chairperson) MLA (via Zoom)
Mr Andy Allen MBE MLA
Mrs Kellie Armstrong MLA
Ms Sian Mulholland MLA
Mr Brian Kingston MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA (via Zoom)
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA (Via Zoom)

In Attendance:

Mr James Gilsenan (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Sean McCann (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Chris McAfee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Katie Egan (Clerical Officer)
Ms Patrice Morris (Senior Assistant Clerk)



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

1. Declarations of Interest

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Colm Gildernew – | Secretary, Brantry Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann |
| Sian Mulholland – | Preparing a Member's Bill on Lotteries for Communities |
| Maolíosa McHugh – | Member of APG on Gambling and Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann |
| Brian Kingston – | Member of the Committee for the Executive Office |

2. Apologies

There were no apologies.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed members that, at the end of today's meeting, there would be a discussion on the Committee report on the Arts Sector event and he encouraged members to stay for this session. The Chairperson proposed that this take place in closed session.

Agreed: That consideration of the arts sector report takes place in closed session.

The Chairperson informed members that the Committee was proposing to host an informal evidence session on the Sign Language Bill next week but that the Committee team has been unable to secure interpreters at the same times as there are free rooms. Consequently, the event is being rescheduled for September.



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The Chairperson congratulated Daryl Gurney and Josh Rock on their outstanding victory at the World Cup of Darts in Frankfurt on Sunday past. Not only did they win by beating two times champions Wales, Josh broke the record for most number of 180s in a World Cup final.

4. Draft Minutes

The Chairperson informed members that they had been provided with a copy of draft minutes from the meeting on 12 June 2025.

Agreed: That the minutes are agreed as drafted.

5. Matters Arising

Arts Council Northern Ireland - Echo Echo Dance Company Funding Cut

Agreed: That a letter is sent to Echo Echo Dance Company to ask for its approval to disclose all application-related information to the Committee.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Arts Council to ask for details of its review process for funding applications and the criteria used to assess 'artistic quality'.

Department for Communities - June Monitoring Round Briefing

Agreed: That a Departmental briefing on June Monitoring Round is requested for before summer recess.

Minister for Communities - Irish Language Strategy

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Executive Office seeking details relating to delays with the publication of the Irish Language Strategy.

Department for Communities - Engagement with Social Inclusion Co-Design Groups

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to ask for clarification on the methodology used to decide the prioritisation of the social inclusion strategies and to ask for an urgent timetable for publication of the strategies.



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The Committee noted the following items:

Source	Subject Matter
Mid Ulster District Council	Anti-Poverty Strategy
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	Anti-Poverty Strategy
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council	Anti-Poverty Strategy
Department for Communities	Echo Echo Dance Company Funding Cut
Department for Communities	Gambling Bill - scoping paper

6. Correspondence

Maurice Bradley joined the meeting at 10.11a.m.

Steven Millar - Save Riverside Theatre Campaign

Agreed: That a copy of the correspondence is forwarded to the Department to ask what mechanisms (if any) for assistance are available following the university's decision to close the theatre.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Vice Chancellor of the University of Ulster Coleraine seeking information regarding the speed and nature of the closure of the Riverside Theatre.

Andy Allen left the meeting at 10.17a.m.

Daniel McCrossan joined the meeting at 10.17a.m.

Department for Communities - Departmental reply to Assembly And Executive Review Committee (AERC) - Community, Voluntary And Charity Stakeholder List

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to ask if it represents the whole voluntary and community sector or if it only represents those organisation that it funds directly.



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The Chairperson informed members that they had been provided in tabled papers with a joint letter from this Committee and the Scottish and Welsh equivalent committees in relation to the upcoming major changes to the benefits system.

The Chairperson asked for agreement on the text of the letter, and for him as Chair to be empowered to agree any minor changes suggested from Scotland and Wales on behalf of the Committee. Due to the differing recess dates, it was proposed to send the letter on Wednesday 25 June.

Agreed: That the text of the letter is agreed as drafted and that the Chairperson is empowered to agree any minor changes suggested by Scotland and Wales.

Advice NI - Development of a system for reciprocal application of disregards for victims

Agreed: That a letter is sent to counterpart committees in the Republic of Ireland and Westminster to ask if they are considering establishment of cross-Government protocols for triggering reciprocal disregards in respect of any and all compensation schemes developed across the UK and Ireland; The Committee would also like to know if the counterpart committees are considering the establishment of a social security working group made up of officials from Westminster, the Dail and all the devolved administrations to implement these protocols so that victims receive full compensation,

Andy Allen rejoined the meeting at 10.23a.m.

The Committee noted the following items:

Source	Summary of content
All-Party Group on Reducing Harm Related to Gambling	Statement welcoming Department of Health endorsement of NICE Guideline on Gambling-Related Harms
Assembly Business Office	CJI NI inspection of offence investigation and criminal case processing by Northern Ireland departments and organisations report



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Source	Summary of content
Individual	Universal Credit and Housing Failures
Department for Communities	Departmental reply to Committee for the Executive Office correspondence on Historical Institutional Abuse Complex Needs Points.

7. Proposed Member's Bill on UNCRRPD: Oral briefing from Danny Donnelly MLA

The Chairperson welcomed Danny Donnelly MLA to the meeting and invited him to brief on his proposed Bill.

A question and answer session followed the briefing and the main areas of discussion were:

- The 'due regard' principle
- The timelines for the key steps of the proposed Bill
- Departmental feedback on the Convention
- Monitoring arrangements
- Enforcement
- Dialogue with other political parties
- Engagement with the Minister and Department
- Costings
- UNCRRPD status throughout the UK
- Approaches taken elsewhere

Agreed: That Danny Donnelly provides the Committee with feedback received from the Department on the proposed Bill.

The Chairperson informed members that, in order to set up for the next agenda item, he proposed to take a comfort break.

The meeting was suspended at 11.14a.m.

Andy Allen left the meeting at 11.14a.m.



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The meeting restarted at 11.22a.m. with the following members present:

Colm Gildernew, Brian Kingston, Sian Mulholland, Kellie Armstrong, Daniel McCrossan, Nicola Brogan, Maurice Bradley, Maolíosa McHugh

8. Briefing by RalSe on the Comparison of disability legislative frameworks across England, Scotland Wales and Republic of Ireland

The Chairperson welcomed Michael Greig, RalSe official, to the meeting.

A question and answer session followed the briefing and the main areas of discussion were:

- Commitment across each jurisdictions to the implementation of the recommendations of the UNCRPD
- Monitoring mechanisms throughout UK
- The differences in signing, ratifying and incorporating the UNCRPD
- Countries that have fully implemented the UNCRPD

Agreed: That RalSe provides further information on the monitoring mechanisms throughout the UK and countries that have fully implemented the UNCRPD.

Nicola Brogan left the meeting at 12.00p.m.

9. Departmental briefing on Intermediate Rent

The Chairperson welcomed the following officials to the meeting:

David Polley - Department for Communities

Maryann Dempsey - Department for Communities

Jon Anderson - Maple & May Ltd.

A question and answer session followed the briefing and the main areas of discussion were:

- Application process and the monitoring of the process
- The geographical breakdown of the homes in the intermediate rent scheme
- Tenancy deposits
- The use of guarantors and whether this scheme will use guarantors



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- Income levels
- Rent increase levels
- The use of Financial Transactions Capital (FTC)
- Council areas where the intermediate rent scheme will operate
- The process for allocating properties
- The average period for intermediate rent stays

Agreed: That the Department provides the Committee with further information on the council areas in which the intermediate rent scheme will operate once the details are finalised and further information on the application process once that is finalised.

Agreed: That the Department keeps the Committee informed of progress of the intermediate rent scheme.

10. Forward Work Programme

The committee noted a copy of the forward work programme.

11. Any other business

There was no other business.

12. Date, time and location of the next meeting

The next meeting is at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday 26 June 2025, in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson informed members that the meeting would now go into closed session to consider the Committee's report on the Arts Sector.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.40p.m.

The meeting went into closed session at 12.40p.m.

13. Consideration of draft Committee Report on the Arts Sector

The Chairperson advised Members that, to keep the discussion focused, he would go through each section and ask if there were any comments or suggested changes.



Executive Summary

Agreed: That the Committee is agreed with this section as drafted.

Introduction

Agreed: That the Committee is agreed with this section as drafted.

Context and Methodology

Agreed: That the Committee is agreed with this section as drafted.

Analysis of Evidence: Key Themes

Agreed: That the Committee is agreed with this section as drafted.

Committee Recommendations

Agreed: That a text change is made to recommendation 1.

Conclusion

Agreed: That the Committee is agreed with this section as drafted.

Agreed: That a note of thanks to the organisations that contributed to the event and via Citizen Space is added to the report.

Agreed: That the relevant changes are made and forwarded to members for agreement by correspondence by noon on Tuesday 24 June.

The meeting ended at 12.55p.m.

Colm Gildernew MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Communities