



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Communities

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 26 September 2024

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson) MLA
Mr Andy Allen MBE MLA
Ms Kellie Armstrong MLA
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA
Ms Ciara Ferguson (Deputy Chairperson) MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
Mr Brian Kingston MLA

Apologies: Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA
Ms Sian Mulholland MLA

In Attendance: Ms Emer Boyle (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Sean McCann (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Chris McAfee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Katie Egan (Clerical Officer)



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The meeting commenced in open session at 10.00a.m.

1. Apologies

Apologies are listed above.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed Members that only routine items would be dealt with at the meeting as a training session would take place in closed session once the meeting ended.

The Chairperson raised the issue of the treatment of Committee colleague Andy Allen recently when there was no lift available to assist him onto a plane at Birmingham Airport. The Chairperson wished to put on record the Committee's abhorrence at his treatment and hoped that his experience leads to an immediate and long overdue improvement in accessibility rights for disabled people.

3. Draft Minutes

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with a copy of the draft minutes from the meeting on 19 September 2024.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes as drafted.

4. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Caleb's Cause NI	Invite to Hear Our Voices event on 18 November 2024, Long Gallery
Dept for Communities	Oral Statement - NSMC Languages Body Meeting



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Dept for Communities	British Irish Council Housing Ministerial Meeting 20 September from Minister Lyons
Dept for Communities	Press Release Closure of the NI Resettlement Team
Dept for Communities	Press Release Minister announces funding for Public Realm Scheme in Glengormley
Dept for Communities	Press Release Minister Lyons Supports Will to Give Week
Dept for Communities	Press Release Paris Celebration Event for Olympic and Paralympic athletes
Dept for Communities	Press Release Support for carers is available through the Civil Service Guide: Supporting Carers
Conradh na Gaeilge	ECRML report on the UK
Committee for Finance - NIA	DoF June and July Monthly Outturn
Committee for Finance - NIA	DoF Financial Provisions Bill



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Re the Correspondence from Committee for Finance – Department of Finance September 24 update on transformation proposals from Interim Public Sector Transformation Board (PSTB).

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department for Communities to ask for a written briefing on its transformation proposals.

Re the Correspondence from an individual in relation to non-regulation of property management companies.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department of Finance, copied to the Department for Communities asking for the following:

- clarification in relation to regulation property management to include a list of property management companies operating in Northern Ireland along with a geographical breakdown of where they operate
- whether the regulation of property management companies has been considered in the development of the housing strategy
- what, if any, regulations are placed on property management companies and whether there any codes of practice or associated regulations for property management companies

Agreed: That a research paper is requested from RalSe on models of best practice in terms of property management and if there is any support for setting up appropriate arrangements where there is a planning requirement for the operation of a management company.

The Chairperson informed Members that they had been provided with an anonymous letter in relation to the Irish Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme and the possible impact of compensation on eligibility for UK benefits. The correspondence made clear that potential applicants are required to decide whether to accept compensation within 60 days.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to ask for an urgent response in relation to eligibility and whether existing benefits will be disregarded.



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Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Committee for The Executive Office with an update on the Committee's actions in relation to this correspondence.

5. Matters Arising

The Committee noted a reply from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council to Committee queries on complaints to environmental health in the past 5 years about the private rental sector.

The Committee noted a reply from the Department for the Economy on the Commissioner for Older People NI Report - At the centre of Government Planning: The Programme for Government and Preparing for an Ageing Population.

6. Pensions (Extension of Automatic Enrolment) Bill

Members noted a Departmental reply to Committee queries on employer costs.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Citizen Space call for evidence closed on 20 September and that they had been provided with a copy of the 3 submissions received.

Agreed: That each of the organisations that responded are invited to provide oral evidence at future meetings.

Agreed: That a copy of the submissions are included in the final Committee report.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department to ask for information in terms of the data monitoring that will be put in place as Members are keen to understand how many people are opting out in the different age categories and how regularly this will be reported on.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Minister to ask what is being done to encourage self-employed people to enrol in a pensions scheme.

Agreed: That a letter is sent to the Department for the Economy, copied to the Department for Communities, to ask for statistics on the number of self-



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employed people who would not be covered by the Bill, and to ask that is disaggregated by Section 75 category, if available.

7. Forward work programme

The Chairperson informed Members that an online meeting with the Youth Assembly on the Pensions (Extension of Automatic Enrolment) would take place on 8 October.

Brian Kingston raised the issue of a possible future briefing by the IFA on the legacy of Euro 2028. After discussion, it was agreed that this would be discussed further at the Committee meeting on 24 October when the Committee would hold a session on strategic planning.

Members noted the forward work programme.

8. Any other business

There was no other business.

9. Date, time and location of the next meeting

The next meeting is at 10.00a.m. on Thursday 3 October, in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 10.21a.m.

Colm Gildernew MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Communities