



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for the Economy

## Minutes of Proceedings

**Wednesday 29 May 2024**

**Meeting Location:** Assembly Plenary Chamber, Parliament Buildings Belfast

**Present:**

Mr Phillip Brett MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Gary Middleton MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Pádraig Delargy MLA

Ms SORCHA Eastwood MLA

Mr David Honeyford MLA

Mr Philip McGuigan MLA

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

**Apologies:**

Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA

**In Attendance:**

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)

Anthea Matthews (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Craig Mealey (Clerical Supervisor)

Michael Doran (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced in public session at 10:02am.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were as indicated above.

### **2. Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson welcomed the return of Minister Conor Murphy MLA following his ill-health.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for the Economy welcoming his return.

The Chairperson noted that Mike Nesbitt MLA had left the Committee to become the Minister for Health.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Health wishing him well in his new post.

### **4. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting of 22 May 2024.

Philip McGuigan joined the meeting at 10:04am

### **5. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **6. Department for the Economy – written evidence - Dual Market Access**

**Noted:** The Committee noted Departmental briefing papers on research in respect of enhancing dual market access for businesses in Northern Ireland.

## **7. Delegated Legislation – Debt Relief Order**

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department indicating that it intended to lay a statutory rule – the Insolvency (Monetary Limits) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024. The proposed rule will be subject to the draft affirmative resolution procedure and will change the related prescribed monetary limits that an individual must meet if they are to be eligible for the debt relief scheme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content for the Department to make the rule.

## **8. Correspondence**

### **8.1 Index**

**Noted:** The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

### **8.2 Defective Premises Bill.**

**Noted:** The Committee noted a Departmental response on the economic implications of the Defective Premises Bill.

### **8.3 Energy Efficiency Capital Grants scheme**

**Noted:** The Committee noted information on the Energy Efficiency Capital Grants scheme. The scheme costs were given as £38m over 5 years.

#### **8.4 Trade (Comprehensive And Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership) Bill**

**Noted:** The Committee noted a response on the Legislative Consent Motion for the Trade (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership) Bill. The Department advised that a Legislative Consent Motion will not be laid as the Bill had undertaken much of its passage at Westminster prior to the restoration of normal business at the Assembly.

#### **8.5 Non-Domestic RHI**

The Committee considered a response on the Non-Domestic RHI Scheme which did not include estimates of the costs of associated legal actions.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write again to the Department regarding the Non-Domestic RHI legal costs.

#### **8.6 PPE for Skill-Up**

**Noted:** The Committee noted a response to Committee queries indicating that the Post Project Evaluation for Skill-Up will be available on 30 June 2024 and that the Skills Council report will be available shortly.

#### **8.7 Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism**

The Committee considered Departmental correspondence in respect of the economic implications of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). The Department had advised that it was not responsible for CBAM.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write again to the Department seeking clarity on the anticipated economic implications of CBAM.

#### **8.8 Partnership Agreement**

**Noted:** The Committee noted a copy of the partnership agreement between the Department and the Health and Safety Executive NI.

## **8.9 Main Estimates**

**Noted:** The Committee noted a DfE paper on the Main Estimates.

## **8.10 Financial Provisions Bill**

The Committee considered correspondence relating to the Financial Provisions Bill and a DfE consultation.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek a briefing on the feedback to the consultation.

## **8.11 New Model for FE delivery**

**Noted:** The Committee noted Departmental correspondence in respect of the development of the new model for FE delivery. The Committee noted that the Minister has yet to approve relevant workstreams; the overall timeline for implementation is 2 years; and the development of the 14-19 Framework will address school/FE boundary issues.

## **8.12 Interconnectors**

**Noted:** The Committee noted correspondence from SONI in respect of the operation of interconnectors and the need for additional related capacity.

## **8.13 Interconnection**

**Noted:** The Committee noted correspondence from the Utility Regulator on interconnection. DfE is to make a related policy decision while the granting of the license will fall to the Utility Regulator.

#### **8.14 Smart Metering / Energy Ombudsman**

**Noted:** The Committee noted a response from the Utility Regulator in respect of research relating to smart metering and the role of the energy ombudsman in GB.

#### **8.15 Utility Regulator Invitation**

**Noted:** The Committee noted an invitation to a joint workshop hosted by the Utility Regulator and BSI on Monday 17 June 2024 on consumer protection.

#### **8.16 CMA**

**Noted:** The Committee noted a response from the Competition and Markets Authority to Committee queries in respect of NI trade figures and including CMA's response to the DfE consultation on the energy strategy.

#### **8.17 Fermanagh and Omagh District Council**

The Committee considered correspondence from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (FODC) asking the Committee to convene a meeting of insurers in order to address high premiums and provide consumer choice.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to FODC indicating that insurance is a reserved matter and that the Committee has already written to FCA/CMA on this subject.

## **9. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to cancel the scheduled meeting on 3 July 2024 and to alter the scheduling of some other briefings.

## **10. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next Economy Committee meeting is scheduled to begin on Wednesday 5 June 2024 at 10:00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:08am.

**Phillip Brett MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for the Economy**

**5 June 2024**