



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Joint Concurrent Committee meeting
of the
Committee for the Economy
and the
Committee for Education
Minutes of Proceedings
Wednesday 17 June 2026

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

Present: Mr Nick Mathison MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Phillip Brett MLA
Ms Diane Forsythe MLA
Ms Diana Armstrong MLA
Mr David Brooks MLA
Mr Pádraig Delargy MLA
Ms Michelle Guy MLA

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Mr David Honeyford MLA

Mr Declan Kearney MLA

Ms Cathy Mason MLA

Ms Kate Nicholl MLA

Present by video-conferencing:

Ms Cara Hunter MLA

Mrs Julie Middleton MLA

Apologies:

Mr Pat Sheehan MLA

Mr Jon Burrows MLA

Mr Danny Baker MLA

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)

Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)

Michael Greig (Senior Assistant Clerk)

Katie McMaster (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Karen O'Hare (Clerical Supervisor)

Sarah Dowd (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced in public session at 11:07am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

2. Declarations of Interest

Diane Forsythe declared an interest in respect of being the Assembly Private Secretary to the Minister for Education.

Padraig Delargy declared an interest in respect of being a former teacher and being a member of a school board of governors.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson welcomed Members to the joint concurrent meeting.

4. Skills Strategy and TransformED NI

The following officials joined the meeting at 11:11am:

- Graeme Wilkinson, Director of Skills in Industry, DfE;
- Annette Palmer, Acting Director Strategic Policy & Services, DfE;
- Louise Watson, Director of Further Education Fit for the Future, DfE;
- Suzanne Kingon, Deputy Secretary for Policy, Delivery and Infrastructure, DE;
- and
- Karen McCullough, Director of Qualifications, 14-19 Strategy and Youthwork Policy, DE.
- Claire McClelland, Director of Raising Aspiration and Supporting Learning, DE

Phillip Brett and Cara Hunter joined the meeting at 11:11am.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

Key issues discussed included: mandatory education etc. to age 18; alignment of educational pathways; vocational and technical training and international comparisons; Further Education reform and the Entitlement Framework; NEETs – the Milburn review and linkages with DfC and DoH in order to address associated barriers to education; young peoples' well-being; 14-19 structures supporting joint working; funding issues for skills; post-19 SEN transformation; curriculum reform to meet the needs of business including STEAM; linkages between schools and business; the delivery of the careers portal; scoping out duplication; Initial Teacher Education and support for subject specialists; all-island post school mobility; TransformED NI linkage to the independent review of education; skills targets including upskilling for new areas e.g. AI, green skills etc. and reskilling; addressing low levels of adult participation; and the new literacy and numeracy schools framework.

Cara Hunter left the meeting at 12:08pm.

Declan Kearney left the meeting at 12:15pm.

Cathy Mason left the meeting at 12:28pm.

The Committee for Education lost its decision-making quorum.

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Diana Armstrong left the meeting at 12:29pm.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 12:38pm.

The Committee for the Economy lost its decision-making quorum.

Phillip Brett rejoined the meeting at 12:42pm.

The Committee for the Economy regained its decision-making quorum.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 12:47pm.

The Committee for the Economy lost its decision-making quorum.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their evidence.

Officials left the meeting at 12:54pm.

Phillip Brett rejoined the meeting at 12:54pm.

The Committee for the Economy regained its decision-making quorum.

5. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

6. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The scheduling of the next joint concurrent Committee meeting is to be determined.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:54pm.

Nick Mathison MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Education

24 June 2026

Phillip Brett MLA

**Chairperson, Committee for
the Economy**

24 June 2026