



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 1 May 2024

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)

Ms Connie Egan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Brian Kingston MLA

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Ms Emma Sheerin MLA

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Pádraig Delargy MLA

Apologies:

Mr Harry Harvey MLA

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

In Attendance:

Mr Michael Potter (Assembly Clerk)

Mr Tom Armstrong (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Supervisor)

Mr Adam Byrne (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.03pm in open session

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson discussed the Legacy and Reconciliation Act which came into force today.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery to the Committee at a future date.

- ii. The Chairperson discussed the Covid Inquiry collecting evidence in Belfast this week.
- iii. The Chairperson discussed the elections of Lilian Seenoi-Barr as Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council and Micky Murray as Lord Mayor of Belfast City Council.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Ms Seenoi-Barr and Mr Murray congratulating them on their elections and to send support due to the abuse they have both received.

- iv. The Chairperson discussed the disagreement between the UK and Irish governments on asylum seekers.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 24 April 2024.

5. Matters Arising

- i. The Committee discussed a Summary of Committee Priorities following the Committee's Strategic Planning Session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the priorities for the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule sessions on International Relations, Strategic Investment, Identity and Language and Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition.

- ii. The Committee discussed a draft response to the Lords Constitution Committee inquiry on the Governance of the Union.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to the response.

Claire Sugden MLA joined the meeting at 2.09pm

6. Oral Evidence Session – Refugee and Asylum Support Briefing

The witnesses joined the meeting at 2.09pm

Members received a briefing from:

- Orla McStravick, Director, Refugee and Asylum Support and Integration Division, The Executive Office

- Jonathan McNaught, Refugee and Asylum Support and Integration Division, The Executive Office
- Julie Cuming, Refugee and Asylum Support and Integration Division, The Executive Office

The witnesses provided the Committee an overview of the Department's work on Refugees and Asylum Support.

Pádraig Delargy MLA joined the meeting at 2.24pm

The oral evidence was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

The witnesses left the meeting at 3.17pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking details on contact points for refugees who have been given a right to remain.

7. Oral Evidence Session – Law Centre (NI)

The witnesses joined the meeting at 3.17pm

Members received a briefing from:

- Liz Griffith, Senior Research and Policy Officer, Law Centre (NI)
- Niamh Rowan, Community Engagement Officer, Law Centre (NI)

The witnesses provided the Committee an overview of Law Centre NI's work on refugees and asylum support.

The oral evidence was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

Claire Sugden MLA left the meeting at 4.01pm

The witnesses left the meeting at 4.04pm

The meeting was suspended at 4.05pm

The meeting resumed at 4.09pm

8. Oral Evidence Session – Refugee Stakeholder Groups

The witnesses joined the meeting at 4.09pm

Members received a briefing from:

- Ann Marie White, British Red Cross
- Areeg Fareh, Anaka Women's Collective
- Ei-Mon Thant, North West Migrants' Forum
- Alexis Ekwueme, Belfast City Sanctuary

The witnesses provided the Committee an update of the ongoing work of their respective groups on refugees and asylum support.

The oral evidence was followed by a question and answer session.

Brian Kingston MLA left the meeting at 4.49pm

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

The witnesses left the meeting at 5.15pm

9. Draft Forward Work Programme

Members considered the draft forward work programme.

Agreed: Members agreed that they were content to proceed with the briefings as set out in the work programme.

Agreed: Members agreed to postpone the session with HIA institutions

Agreed: Members agreed to call the Redress Board to that meeting

10. Correspondence

Agreed: Members agreed to share correspondence received at last week's meeting from Queen's University Belfast in relation to the use of bodies for medical investigation with an individual who has been engaging with the Committee on this issue.

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee Correspondence.

- ii. The Committee noted a Ministerial Statement from the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the North-South Ministerial Council Plenary Meeting.
- iii. The Committee noted a letter from the First Minister and deputy First Minister to the Finance Committee regarding the Victoria Square residential apartments.
- iv. The Committee noted a letter from the Minister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business to the Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee regarding a new EU regulation on the Safety of Toys.
- v. The Committee noted a response from the Committee for the Economy requesting details on scrutiny of Common Frameworks.
- vi. The Committee noted an Investment Strategy (NI) report on Investing Activity.
- vii. The Committee noted a memo from the Clerk to the Committee of Communities and a letter from the Chair to the Committee for Communities to the Executive Office on an Anti-Poverty Strategy.
- viii. The Committee noted a response from the Arts Council NI in relation to a memorial for victims and survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse.
- ix. The Committee noted a letter from the Equality Commission NI requesting that they be kept involved in the development of updated race equality legislation.
- x. The Committee discussed a response from the Department of Justice on the number of HIA prosecutions.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Public Prosecution Service seeking information on the number of HIA prosecutions.

11. Any Other Business

The Committee was informed that there will be an informal meeting with the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement on Thursday 9th May at 1pm in the Private Dining Room.

12. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 8 May 2024 at 2:00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.17pm

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office