



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 13 November 2024

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Timothy Gaston MLA

Mr Brian Kingston MLA

Ms Emma Sheerin MLA

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Apologies:

Mr Harry Harvey MLA

In Attendance:

Mr Michael Potter (Assembly Clerk)

Mr Jim McManus (Assembly Clerk)

Mr Tom Armstrong (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Mr Neil Porter (Clerical Supervisor)

Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.02pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson discussed correspondence regarding her meeting with the First Minister on 23rd October 2024.

The Chairperson advised Members of the passing of the Committee motion on the recent racist incidents and thanked Members for their contributions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister to express their disappointment with the lack of commitment for a rapid review and ask for an update on actions so far.

The Chairperson informed members of her meeting with HIA victim and survivor groups on the subject of memorials.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share correspondence with the HIA victim and survivor groups from the Department and from the Arts Council.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 6 November 2024.

5. Matters Arising

The Committee considered the timeline of correspondence and briefing papers received from the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward these summaries to the Department, seek updates on all outstanding correspondence and ask what steps the Department intends to take to ensure it is in compliance with agreed protocols in the future.

Claire Sugden MLA joined the meeting at 2.10pm.

6. Independent Monitoring Authority for Citizens' Rights Agreements – Oral Evidence

The witnesses joined the meeting at 2.10pm.

Members received evidence from:

- Leo O'Reilly, Interim Chair, IMA
- Ms Miranda Biddle, Chief Executive, IMA
- Mr Rhys Davies, General Counsel, IMA
- Ms Helena Geach, Acting Head of Inquiry, IMA

The witnesses provided the Committee with information regarding the work and roles of the Independent Monitoring Authority for Citizens' Rights Agreements.

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

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

The witnesses left the meeting at 2.17pm.

7. EU Affairs Manager – UK Intergovernmental Relations Briefing

The official joined the meeting at 2.18pm.

Members received a briefing from:

- Ms Shauna Mageean, EU Affairs Manager

The official provided the Committee with an update on UK Intergovernmental Relations; UK-EU governance structures and the common framework process.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the official for her attendance.

The official left the meeting at 3.50pm.

8. October Monitoring – Departmental Oral Briefing

The witnesses joined the meeting at 3.51pm.

Members received a briefing from:

- Mr Ronan Murtagh, Director of Finance, TEO
- Ms Paula Shearer, Head of Budgeting, TEO

The witnesses provided the Committee with an update on the October Monitoring.

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

The Department undertook to write to the Committee on the following points:

- In relation to the Victims Payment Scheme, what the delay is in an application being approved and the first payment being made.
- A list of groups in receipt of Communities In Transition funding for the 2024-25 financial year.
- Breakdown of maintenance costs for the Maze Prison and hospital wings.
- Details on the NSMC Lease, including the name of the landlord and the size of the property.
- Details on the Windsor Framework funding website, it's function and when it will be available.

- Numbers of staff and costs involved in the Department who work in relation to the Northern Ireland Protocol and the Windsor Framework
- Breakdown on where the Financial Transactions Capital has been invested by the Strategic Investment Board.
- Whether any Financial Transaction Capital has been delivered to Derry/Londonderry and the North West.
- Update on funding for Westland Community Centre through Urban Villages.
- Written briefing on how the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework will be spent in this financial year.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

The witness left the meeting at 4.20pm.

9. Inquiry into Gaps in Equality Legislation – Update

The Committee discussed the inquiry stakeholder event scheduled for Wednesday 4th December 2024.

10. Draft Forward Work Programme

Members considered the draft forward work programme.

Agreed: Members agreed to invite Foras na Gaelige and the Ulster-Scots Agency to attend the Committee meeting on 4th December to discuss identity and language arrangements.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to start scheduling briefings for the New Year.

Agreed: Members agreed for next week's oral session on Historical Institutional Abuse to be covered by Hansard.

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite departmental officials regarding EU affairs at a later date.

11. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee noted the Twenty-Sixth Report from of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office regarding the Period Products (Executive Office Specified Public Service Bodies) Regulations (NI) 2024.
- iv. The Committee noted an Oral Statement from the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the North South Ministerial Council Institutional and Plenary meeting on 13 September 2024.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Council of Europe on intercultural integration.
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Royal Society of Ulster Architects on the draft Programme for Government.
- vii. The Committee noted an invitation from The Speaker to the Chair to attend a Conferral event on 13th November 2024.
- viii. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office regarding the EVAWG Strategic Framework.
- ix. The Committee noted the NI Executive Brussels Office report.
- x. The Committee noted the AERA Committee's considerations regarding the NI Climate Change Commissioners Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024.
- xi. The Committee noted The Executive Office Press Release to launch the competition for a new Commissioner for Victims and Survivors.
- xii. The Committee noted the correspondence between Rosetta Trust and The Executive Office.
- xiii. The Committee noted an Oral Statement on Public Expenditure 2024-25 from the Finance Minister.

- xiv. The Committee noted the correspondence from The Executive Office regarding non-attendance at Inter-Parliamentary Forum.
- xv. The Committee noted The Executive Office Press Release regarding HIA Redress.
- xvi. The Committee noted a response to the draft Programme for Government from the Youth Assembly.
- xvii. The Committee noted a Press Release and Report on the Economics of Abuse 2024 from Hourglass.

12. Any Other Business

The Committee returned to its consideration of the Chairperson's meeting with the First Minister on Wednesday 23rd October 2024. The Chairperson confirmed the minutes produced by the First Minister's Private Office in relation to the meeting were a fair representation of the meeting.

The Committee considered a proposal from Timothy Gaston MLA that the Committee request the hand-written notes taken at the meeting between the Chairperson and First Minister.

The Committee divided: Ayes 2; Noes 6; Abstain 0

Ayes

Mr Timothy Gaston MLA

Mr Brian Kingston MLA

Noes

Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Ms Emma Sheerin MLA

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

The proposal was not carried.

13. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 20 November 2024 at 2:00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.37pm.

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office