



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 27 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 Harry Harvey MLA

Mr Brian Kingston MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Ms Emma Sheerin MLA

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

Apologies:

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin 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 2.00pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA joined the meeting at 2.01pm.

Emma Sheerin MLA joined the meeting at 2.01pm.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Deputy Chairperson informed the Committee he represents the Northern Ireland Assembly at the Council of Europe in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and has met the Commissioners in the Council of Europe referred to in the CAJ/Amnesty evidence.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson commented on the exhumation of remains by the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims Remains.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims Remains to the Committee.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the amended minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 20 November 2024.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Strategy for Victims and Survivors 2024 – 2034 – Committee on the Administration of Justice and Amnesty International UK – Oral Evidence

The witnesses joined the meeting at 2.03pm.

Claire Sugden MLA joined the meeting at 2.05pm

Members received evidence from:

- Mr Daniel Holder, Committee on the Administration of Justice
- Ms Gráinne Teggert, Director, Amnesty International UK

The witnesses provided evidence on the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 and the Independent Commission for Reconciliation Information Recovery (ICRIR).

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 3.07pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to ICRIR to request the following information:

- The current number of cases that ICRIR is investigating.
- Whether ICRIR has any proposals for reform to make the Commission Article 2 compliant.
- How many times national security has been used by the UK Government as a reason to withhold information from ICRIR.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite ICRIR to the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to request the following information:

- Whether he intends to retain the ICRIR in its current form.
- The nature of the consultation that has taken place in relation to repealing and replacing the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act.
- Clarification on the role of 'reconciliation' in the functions of ICRIR.
- To highlight the discussion in the Committee and the unanimous view of the need for reform of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act.

7. Strategy for Victims and Survivors 2024 – 2034 – Stakeholder Groups - Oral Briefing

The witnesses joined the meeting at 3.12pm.

Members received a briefing from:

- Mr Alan Brecknell, Pat Finucane Centre
- Ms Sandra Peake, WAVE Trauma Centre
- Mr Kenny Donaldson, South East Fermanagh Foundation (by video or teleconference)

The witnesses provided the Committee with their views on the Strategy for Victims and Survivors 2024-2034 and ICRIR.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA left the meeting at 3.48pm.

Mr Brian Kingston MLA left the meeting at 3.53pm

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

The witnesses left the meeting at 4.34pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission the Research and Information Service to undertake research into legacy and reconciliation processes in the Republic of Ireland.

8. Inquiry into Gaps in Equality Legislation – Update

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

The Chairperson discussed draft questions for the event with the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee confirmed they were content with the draft questions.

The Clerk commented on the timetable for the inquiry stakeholder event on 4th December 2024.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the timetable for the inquiry stakeholder event.

The Chairperson asked Members to keep the Committee team updated regarding their availability for the event on 4th December 2024.

9. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson informed the Committee that at next week's Committee meeting Foras na Gaelige had requested that their evidence to the Committee be delivered in Irish and that the committee meeting would therefore be held in Room 29 in order to avail of simultaneous interpretation.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that simultaneous interpretation would be available in the room, but would not be available to Members joining remotely. She noted that the interpretation would be available in the published recording.

The Committee considered the draft forward work programme.

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

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office to the Committee's request for further information on the investment strategy and Ebrington.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence between the Committee for Communities and the Department of Work and Pensions on the Republic of Ireland Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance on the Budget 2025-26 & Future Years Information Gathering.
- v. The Committee noted an invitation from the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland.
- vi. The Committee considered and noted a response to an Assembly written question from the Minister for Communities.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance on the Northern Ireland Banking and Financial Services landscape inquiry.
- viii. The Committee noted the Twenty-Seventh Report from the Examiner of Statutory Rules to the Assembly and appropriate Committees.
- ix. The Committee considered a request from Advice NI to appear in front of the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add Advice NI to the forward work programme.

11. Any Other Business

Claire Sugden MLA commented that during a previous evidence session with departmental officials regarding mother and baby institutions the Committee was informed that there was a budget of £250,000 earmarked to help raise public

awareness of the mother and baby institution financial redress scheme. This has now been reduced to £80,000.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for an explanation.

12. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 4 December 2024 at 2.00pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.43pm.

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office