



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for The Executive Office

## Minutes of Proceedings

**Wednesday 19 March 2025**

**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
- Ms Sínead McLaughlin

**Online:**

- Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
- Ms Claire Sugden MLA

**Apologies:** Ms Áine Murphy MLA

**In Attendance:**

- Ms Róisín Kelly (Assembly Clerk)
- Ms Sarah-Anne McKinley (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
- Ms Shelley Garner (Clerical Supervisor)

*The meeting commenced at 2.00pm in public session.*

## **1. Apologies**

As above.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

Brian Kingston declared an interest as a Member of the Committee for Communities regarding item 8.9 under correspondence.

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

There was no Chairperson's Business.

## **4. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 12 March 2025.

## **5. Matters Arising**

The Chairperson updated Members that, following the written briefing on the budget last week, Departmental officials will attend the Committee at next week's meeting to speak to the Committee's queries on the budget.

The Chairperson also updated Members that the Committee for Finance is content to accept the Committee's response to the budget in the coming weeks.

## **6. SR: Draft Regulations The Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner (Northern Ireland) 2024 – Departmental Oral Evidence**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the briefing should be reported by Hansard.

*The witness joined the meeting at 2.02pm.*

Members received a briefing from:

- Mr Colin Moffett, Director – Civil Contingencies Division

The witness provided evidence on the SR: Draft Regulations Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner (Northern Ireland) 2024.

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department to allow for the Executive Office to establish an independent office to be known as the 'Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner' (NICC) and to allow the NICC to have the following functions to:

- Oversee and report on the exercise of functions of Northern Ireland departments under the Act.
- Provide advice and make recommendations to Northern Ireland departments on the operations of the Act.
- Undertake or commission research concerning the operations of the Act.
- Monitor the implementation of climate action plans and sectoral policies.
- Publish reports, advice, recommendations and other relevant information relating to the operations of the Act.

The proposed Statutory Rule is to be subject to the draft affirmative resolution procedure.

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

The Chairperson thanked the witness for their attendance.

*The witness left the meeting at 2.30pm.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to formally consider whether it is content with the Statutory Rule as drafted following the Examiners of Statutory Rules Report which is due to be published on the 21 March.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to add the Statutory Rule to next week's agenda for formal consideration at its meeting on the 26 March.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a detailed breakdown of £1m per annum estimated costs for the establishment of the

Commissioner's office including accounts for salaries of the Commissioner, their staff and infrastructure costs.

## **7. Historical Institutional Abuse – Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISE) Oral Briefing Session**

*The official joined the meeting at 2.31pm.*

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

The Chairperson thanked the researcher for his attendance.

*The official left the meeting at 3.28pm.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Scottish government to request the following information in relation to victims of Historical Institutional Abuse in Scotland:

- Further information on the methodology in terms of the “fair and meaningful” modelling calculation that they have used for institutions to make payments to victims of Historical Institutional Abuse.
- Further information on full redress payment decision for the Scottish Government to fund £10,000 (or one third of each individually assessed payment whichever is greater) including how the agreed cap was decided.
- Further information on the money provided by religious organisations and what percentage of funds they were asked to contribute in terms of final payments to victims.
- Further information on the national guarantee of specialist therapeutic support for child victims and how long this guarantee is valid for.
- Further information on compensation to victims and if these funds went to victims directly or was any part of the award put towards the cost of the Inquiry or was this funded by the state.
- Further information on Roman Catholic and Church of Scotland denominations and if this includes ministers, priests, other religious, or anyone as part of those orders involved in child outreach work.

- Clarity regarding anonymity for victims and the process in place if they change their mind to remain anonymous.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to request that RalSe provide further information on the breakdown of the approximately twenty organisations listed by the Scottish government as contributors to Historical Institutional Abuse.

## 8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from Relatives for Justice following their briefing session with the Committee on 26 February. They have provided the Committee with an update on the work of their organisation and issues around the Victims Payment Scheme. They have also submitted a request to brief the Committee on the Victims Payment Scheme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note this item of correspondence and agreed to schedule an oral evidence session with Relatives for Justice and other organisations as part of a wider panel session on the Victims Payment Scheme.

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office in relation to outstanding Common Frameworks.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and agreed to share this information with the Inter Parliamentary Forum, the EU Affairs Manager and the Chairperson of the Committee for Finance who, as well as the Chairperson, attends the Inter Parliamentary Forum.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed include this item as a relevant paper for the oral briefing on EU Matters with Departmental officials at its meeting on the 30 April.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to seek clarity on the Frameworks which require agreed Windsor Framework text to be included in order to complete the finalisation process.

- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee to the Head of the NICS regarding the Housing Supply Strategy and the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and that the Committee will be included in any reply.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Communities to request an update on outstanding strategies for which the Minister for Communities is responsible.

- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office to Committee for the Economy providing an update on the North West Development Fund (NWDF).

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an update on the work of the North West Development Fund (NWDF) and to ask why the additional €1m given by the Irish Government to extend the funding period to the end of March 2025, and other funding, was not match funded by the Northern Ireland Executive.

**Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to request a general update on the work of the NWDF and what procedures are to ensure that the structures remain in place going forward, as a written brief in the first instance. The Committee may request an oral briefing, if necessary, having considered the written briefing.

- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance in relation to proposals on the final Budget for 2025-2026.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and to write to the Department to request that the Committee is sent a copy of any further information to inform final Budget 2025-2026 proposals once this has been sent to the Department of Finance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further information of the use of FTC and for a breakdown of any bids submitted by TEO to the £8.4 million of unallocated FTC available for 2025-2026.

- vii. The Committee noted the Hansard Report of the Draft Refugee Strategy and Delivery Framework Departmental Briefing which took place at its meeting of 5 March 2025.
- viii. The Committee noted the Hansard Report of Hansard Report of the Programme for Government Departmental Briefing which took place at its meeting of 5 March 2025.
- ix. The Committee noted the thirty-fourth Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules to the Assembly and appropriate Committees. There are no rules for the attention of this Committee.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council who have published its assessment of the Executive's 2025-2026 Draft Budget for NI Departments.
- xi. The Committee noted a press release from the Executive Office on the Report "Ending Violence against Women and Girls – Experiences and Attitudes of 16 Year Olds in NI 2016".
- xii. The Committee noted a press release from the Executive Office following the deputy First Minister's address at the annual NI Bureau Breakfast event in Washington DC.
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office regarding seasonal agricultural workers and visa recommendations.
- xiv. The Committee noted a press release from the Executive Office in relation to the Competition for Language Commissioners being launched.
- xv. The Committee noted a press release from the Executive Office regarding Individual Wellbeing statistics in Northern Ireland for 2023-2024.
- xvi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance in relation to the capital easements highlighted in the Spring Supplementary Estimates as a result of ongoing legal challenge.

## **9. Forward Work Plan**

The Committee considered the draft forward work programme.

The Committee noted an update from the Assistant Clerk in relation to the consideration of an SR and an oral briefing on the TEO 2025-2026 Budget at its meeting on the 26 March. The Committee also noted an update on the oral briefing with Survivors Together which has been rescheduled to the 2 April meeting and will be in closed session.

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

## **10. Any Other Business**

None.

## **11. Date, Time and Place of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 26 March 2025 at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 3.52pm.*

**Paula Bradshaw MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office**

**Wednesday 19 March 2025**