



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for The Executive Office

## Minutes of Proceedings

**Wednesday 29 January 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 Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Ms Emma Sheerin MLA

**Apologies:** Ms. Claire Sugden MLA

**In Attendance:** Mr Michael Potter (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 closed session.*

### **1. Apologies**

As above.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Truth Recovery – Gender Perspective Stakeholder Oral Evidence**

*The witnesses joined the meeting at 2.01pm.*

Members received evidence from a collaborative group of female advocates.

The witnesses provided evidence on gender perspective of Truth Recovery.

*Sinéad McLaughlin MLA joined the meeting at 2.04pm.*

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 3.15pm*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask the following:

- Can the Department ensure a thorough understanding of a gender perspective is considered when developing the redress scheme for mother and baby institutions?
- Why does the Chair of the Victims and Survivors Consultation Forum go through the Executive Office to contact Forum members?

- What are the current processes and procedures to ensure that the Consultation Forum is a safe space for victims and survivors and what is the process regarding how complaints are addressed?
- How has the Executive Office monitored the environment of the Consultation Forum and what has been done to address any issues?
- In what ways has the Truth Recovery process been co-designed with victims and survivors?
- What are the criteria and was it the process for selection to the Consultation Forum and the Truth Recovery Independent Panel?

*The meeting moved into public session at 3.23pm.*

#### **4. Truth Recovery – Public Consultation Departmental Oral Briefing.**

*The witnesses joined the meeting at 3.24pm.*

Members received a briefing from:

- Mr. Martin Carey, Programme Director, The Executive Office
- Ms. Pauline Corscadden, Engagement Team, The Executive Office
- Ms. Elaine Allen, Redress Team, The Executive Office
- Ms. Francesca Murray, Inquiry Team, The Executive Office

The witnesses provided a briefing on the Truth Recovery public consultation.

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

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

*The witnesses left the meeting at 4.37pm.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department for the following information:

- How has the Public Appointments Code been applied to recruitment for the for the Truth Recovery Independent Panel?
- What is the process for complaints regarding the Truth Recovery Panel and when was this process was introduced?

- What is the budget for the campaign to raise awareness of the recording of oral testimonies in relation to mother and baby institutions?

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the outgoing Independent Chairperson of the Consultation Forum, to ask her if there are any issues that she feels should be raised by the Committee.

## **5. Chairperson's Business**

The Chair advised the Committee of her attendance at a Committee on the Administration of Justice / Amnesty International event on Legacy on Tuesday 28 January 2025.

The Chair advised the Committee that the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery is scheduled to attend the Committee on 26 February 2025.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite NIO officials to give an update on repeal/amendment to the legacy legislation.

The Committee considered a draft press statement on the start of hearings for the Omagh Bombing Inquiry.

The Committee considered a proposal from Mr. Timothy Gaston to add the following to the draft press release:

“The Committee, noting its own experience of difficulties dealing with institutions which are based in the Irish Republic when it comes to institutional abuse and the short comings in engagement with the Kingsmill inquest, urges full cooperation from authorities on both sides of the border so that the whole truth can be obtained.”

The Committee divided: Ayes 1; Noes 6; Did not vote 1

## **Ayes**

Mr. Timothy Gaston MLA

**Noes**

Ms. Paula Bradshaw MLA

Mr. Stewart Dickson MLA

Mr. Harry Harvey MLA

Mr. Brian Kingston MLA

Ms. Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Ms. Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

**Did not vote**

Ms. Emma Sheerin MLA

The proposal was not carried.

The Committee considered a proposal from the Chairperson to add the following to the press release:

“and we urge cooperation from authorities on both sides of the border so that the whole truth can be obtained.”

The Committee divided: Ayes 7; Noes 0; Did not vote 1

**Ayes**

Ms. Paula Bradshaw MLA

Mr. Stewart Dickson MLA

Mr. Timothy Gaston MLA

Mr. Harry Harvey MLA

Mr. Brian Kingston MLA

Ms. Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Ms. Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

**Did not vote**

Ms. Emma Sheerin MLA

The proposal was carried.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the amended press release.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask RalSe to provide a list of funds Northern Ireland receives from the United States of America.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for a list of the peace and reconciliation funding Northern Ireland receives from the United States of America.

**6. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 22 January 2025.

**7. Matters Arising**

The Committee noted information from the Council of Europe on child abuse in Europe.

**8. Inquiry into Gaps in Legislation – Update**

The Committee noted the Inquiry options paper.

The Chair advised the Committee that the Christian Institute and Women's Rights Network have agreed to appear before the Committee on 12 February.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Christian Institute and Women's Rights Network should appear in front of the Committee on 12 February at separate shorter sessions.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to organise a closed session on 5 March so the Committee can discuss the options paper and Committee recommendations.

Mr Timothy Gaston asked for the Committee to go into closed session, and the Committee agreed, to discuss a sensitive scheduling matter.

*The meeting went into closed session at 4.54pm.*

*The meeting went into public session at 4.56pm.*

## **9. Draft Forward Work Programme**

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 correspondence from the Examiner of Statutory Rules to the Assembly and appropriate Committees.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee of Finance on the Draft Executive Budget 2025-26.
- iv. The Committee noted a response from the First Minister and deputy First Minister to the Committee's correspondence requesting information on the Democratic Consent Motion.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from Ofcom.
- vi. The Committee noted a press release from the Department of Justice on a funding boost to help tackle domestic and sexual abuse.

- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Attorney General for Northern Ireland.
- viii. The Committee noted a press release from The First Minister and deputy First Minister to announce £1.2m Regional Change Fund for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.
- ix. The Committee considered a response from The Law Society to the Committee's correspondence requesting information on the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the response to COSICA and the Historical Institutional Abuse stakeholders' group.

- x. The Committee noted correspondence from The Executive Office on a Partnership Agreement between The Office of the Attorney General for Northern Ireland and The Executive Office.
- xi. The Committee noted an invitation to attend an Advice NI Annual General Meeting on 30th January 2025.
- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance.
- xiii. The Committee considered correspondence from The Executive Office on the 2024-25 January Monitoring briefing paper.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Department for a briefing on the 2024-25 Budget.

## **11. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

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

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 5 February 2025 at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting was adjourned at 4.57pm.*



**Paula Bradshaw MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office**