



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for The Executive Office

## Minutes of Proceedings

**Wednesday 9 October 2024**

**Meeting Location:** Room 30, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)

Ms Connie Egan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Timothy Gaston MLA

Mr Harry Harvey MLA

Mr Brian Kingston MLA

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Ms Emma Sheerin MLA

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

**In Attendance:**

Mr Michael Potter (Assembly Clerk)

Mr Tom Armstrong (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Mr Michael McClelland (Clerical Supervisor)

Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)

*The meeting commenced at 2.02pm in open session*

### **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The Chairperson referenced the recent murder of Mary Ward.

The Chairperson advised that officials are working on the practical arrangements for the Interparliamentary Forum meeting on Friday 15 November 2024.

### **4. Matters Arising**

The Chairperson advised Members that she met with the Commissioner Designate for Victims of Crime.

The Chairperson reminded Members that they considered correspondence from the Commissioner on 11 September calling for a rapid review of the racist incidents in the summer.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed a motion for the review by The Executive Office of the events of the summer.

The Committee discussed Mr Brian Kingston MLA's letter with Members requesting that the First Minister and junior Minister be recalled to the Committee.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to seek legal advice on recalling the First Minister and junior Minister to the Committee.

*The Chair called for the meeting to enter into closed session at 2:25pm*

*The meeting resumed in open session at 2:28pm*

## **5. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 2 October 2024.

## **6. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework – Departmental Oral Briefing**

*The witnesses joined the meeting at 2.29pm*

Members received a briefing from:

- Claire Archbold (Director, EVAWG Directorate)
- Geraldine Fee (Deputy Director, EVAWG Directorate)
- Ryan Somerville (Head of Policy & Research, EVAWG Directorate)

The witnesses provided the Committee with an overview of the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework.

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

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to The Executive Office to clarify the following:

- How much money was spent on the Strategic Investment Board since the initiation of the project?
- Where was the money spent?
- What rationale was given for the spending?
- How much money was spent on the Centre for Procurement Excellence?

- Has the Executive Office engaged with the Women's Rights Network on the Framework?

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to The Executive Office to express their dissatisfaction at the late arrival of the briefing papers.

*The witnesses left the meeting at 3:20pm.*

## **7. Mother and Baby Institutions – Donation of Bodies for Anatomical Research – QUB Oral Briefing**

*The witnesses joined the meeting at 3.21pm*

Members were advised that the Diocese of Down and Connor asked to come to a meeting of the Committee. However they were unable to attend on this date, providing a written paper instead.

Members received a briefing from:

- Professor Alan Smyth, Dean and Head of School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences, QUB
- Alistair Finlay, Associate Vice-President (Operations and Special Projects), QUB.

The witnesses provided the Committee with an overview of the donation of bodies for anatomical research.

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 4:16pm.*

*The meeting was suspended at 4:16pm*

*The meeting resumed at 4:23pm*

## **8. Mother and Baby Institutions – Records and Access to Data – PRONI and Human Rights Commission Oral Briefing**

*The witnesses joined the meeting at 4:23pm*

Members received a briefing from:

- David Huddleston, Acting Director, PRONI
- Wesley Geddis, Acting Head of Records Management, PRONI
- Joy Carey, Project Manager (Mother and Baby Institutions), PRONI
- Alyson Kilpatrick, Chief Commissioner, NI Human Rights Consortium
- Dr Hannah Russell, Senior Policy and Research Officer, NI Human Rights Consortium
- Emma Osbourne, Policy and Research Officer, NI Human Rights Consortium

The witnesses provided the Committee an overview of the Records and Access to Data in the context of Mother and Baby Institutions.

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

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

*Brian Kingston MLA left the meeting at 4:43pm.*

*Sinéad McLaughlin MLA left the meeting at 4:44pm.*

*The witnesses left the meeting at 5:05pm.*

## **9. SR 2024-xxx The Period Products (Executive Office Specified Public Service Bodies) Regulations (NI) 2024**

The Committee considered SR 2024-xxx The Period Products (Executive Office Specified Public Service Bodies) Regulations (NI) 2024 which would specify those public service bodies to which the duty to make free period products available for users while on their premises applies.

**Agreed:** Members agreed that the Committee for The Executive Office has considered SR 2024/xxx The Period Products (Executive Office Specified Public Service Bodies) Regulations (NI) 2024 and recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

## **10. Inquiry into Gaps in Equality Legislation – Update**

Members were advised that the Long Gallery has been provisionally booked for Wednesday 4th December 2024 from 9am to 11am for an event with stakeholder groups.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to confirm their availability for the 4 December event.

## **11. Draft Forward Work Programme**

Members were reminded of the Committee's visit to Ebrington on 16 October.

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.

## **12. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee noted Written statement by the First Minister and deputy First Minister Victims and Survivors Strategy 2024-2034.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from ROSA NI on petition to overturn the ban on puberty blockers.
- iv. The Committee noted summary of progress on 100 Days Checklist from The Executive Office.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence on the work of the Youth Assembly Rights & Equality Committee from Northern Ireland Youth Assembly.

- vi. The Committee noted update on UK Shared Prosperity Fund from the Committee for Finance
- vii. The Committee noted update on the level of unfilled vacancies across the Northern Ireland Civil Service from the Committee for Finance.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from update on the Budget Sustainability Plan from the Minister of Finance.
- ix. The Committee noted a complaint from an individual regarding the Committee Chair.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence and Briefing Paper on Milltown Cemetery from the Diocese of Down and Connor.
- xi. The Committee noted the Independent Monitoring Authority's third Annual Report to the Specialised Committee on Citizens' Rights.

### **13. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

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

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 16 October 2024 at 2:00pm at the Ebrington Hotel.

*The meeting was adjourned at 5:12pm.*

**Paula Bradshaw MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office**