



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 22 April 2026

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Phillip Brett MLA

Mrs Pam Cameron MLA

Mr Timothy Gaston MLA

Ms Áine Murphy MLA

Online:

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Apologies:

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

In Attendance: Mr Keith McBride (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Aoife Keating-Fitzpatrick (Senior Assistant Clerk)
Ms Sarah-Anne McKinley (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Neil Porter (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.01pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Individual - Historical Clerical Child Abuse (HCCA)

The Chairperson advised Members that an individual wrote to her regarding engagement between TEO officials and victims & survivors in relation to HCCA.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department highlighting the need to engage with victim & survivors across the various religious orders to ensure engagement is inclusive as possible.

3.2 Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) – Launch of Model Complaint Handling Procedures

The Chairperson advised Members that she will be speaking at a NIPSO event on Wednesday 24 June 2026 at 10am in the Stormont Hotel.

The event is to launch NIPSO's new Model Complaints Handling Procedures which will provide guidance to staff on how they should investigate complaints across health and social care, local government, central government and housing & education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item.

3.3 Commissioner for Victims and Survivors (CVS) – Victims' Support Funding Programme

The Chairperson advised Members that the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors wrote to her outlining their concerns following the announcement of the Victims Support Programme on Friday 27 March 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First and deputy First Minister highlighting the shortfall in funding and the potential implications this could have regarding support availability to victims & survivors across Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors to provide oral evidence at the meeting on Wednesday 13 May 2026 with the Victims and Survivors Service.

3.4 Men's Advisory Project – Invitation

The Chairperson advised Members that she received an invitation from the Men's Advisory Project to their Project Conference, which took place on 30 March 2026 at the Europa Hotel in Belfast.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item.

3.5 Individual – HIA and Care Experience

The Chairperson advised Members that Connie Egan MLA forwarded correspondence to her from an individual in relation to research conducted by the Administrative Data Research Centre Northern Ireland on Children's Social Care and Homelessness.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item.

3.6 Truth Recovery Independent Panel (TRIP) – Update on Final Report & 3.7 Further TRIP correspondence

The Chairperson advised Members that the Truth Recovery Independent Panel (the Panel) wrote to her and the Deputy Chair in relation to the publication of its Final Report.

The Chairperson also advised Members that following the visit to PRONI the Committee team contacted the Panel who have advised that in early 2025, they conducted a survey of victim & survivors to inform the development of proposals for a permanent archive. As part of this process, the Panel published their suggestions for the proposed Permanent Archive in a Consultation Document.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note these items and agreed for the Committee team to review the actions previously agreed by the Committee in relation to access to records and to update Members at next week's meeting.

3.8 Timothy Gaston MLA – Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalane Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill

The Chairperson advised Members that Timothy Gaston MLA wrote to her following a meeting he held with a number of groups ahead of Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalane Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill.

The Chairperson also advised Members that officials have indicated the Consideration Stage debate has been delayed and will not take place before Tuesday 12 May 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking a confirmed date for Consideration Stage, a written update on Public Interest Immunity (as previously indicated by the Department) to provide reassurance on safeguards and address concerns shared by the Committee, and an update on the Department's response to the correspondence sent on 26 March 2026, in order to reach a position on all amendments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to give further consideration to any potential amendments during a future meeting where the Bill will be discussed, following confirmation of the Consideration Stage.

3.9 Vetting Procedures

The Chairperson advised Members concerns were raised this week by the First and deputy First Minister in relation to claims that the former Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland was appointed despite security service concerns.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to write to the Department to seeking clarity on the processes in place for security vetting for all public and ministerial appointments. The Committee also agreed to ask what provisions are in place in the event of any future suspension, including the ability to review any appointments following during this time.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the letter to be circulated to Members in advance for agreement before being sent to the Department.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25 March 2026.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 PRONI – Visit Presentation

The Chairperson advised Members that PRONI have provided a copy of the presentation they delivered to Members during the Committee's visit on Wednesday 15 April 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to review the Committee actions completed to date regarding access to records and consider resource capabilities across Health & Social Care Trusts and the Inquiry, regarding

the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill, at next week's meeting.

5.2 PRONI Committee Visit – Press Release

The Chairperson advised Members that a press release was issued on Thursday last week, following the Committee's visit to PRONI highlighting its role in relation to the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item.

5.3 & 5.4 Irish Language Commissioner – Grand Central Station and Public Authorities List

The Chairperson advised Members that the Irish Language Commissioner had responded to the Committee's correspondence of 20 March 2026 regarding follow-up queries arising from the oral evidence session on 18 March 2026

The Chairperson advised Members that the Commissioner had also responded to the Committee's correspondence on 26 March 2026 in relation to the list of public authorities they may advise.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note these items and agreed to write to the Commissioner to request copies of all correspondence between the Office and the Belfast Telegraph on the matter. The Committee further agreed to clarify that this request is made on the basis of the Office's status as an arm's-length body of TEO and the Committee wishes to fully understand the contextual issues surrounding the matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send the Commissioner a copy of the correspondence from the Speaker's Office, considered at its meeting on 11 March 2026, which advised that the Commissioner was not a guest speaker at the event

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request details of the amount spent to date on legal fees by the Commissioner for the Irish Language and to seek clarity on the Office's budgetary concerns, including a breakdown of all associated costs.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression, the Irish Language Commissioner the Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British Tradition to request details on the amount of money spent on legal fees to date.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Communities to request information on the amount of money spent on legal fees in relation to Grand Central Station. Correspondence on this matter was sent to the Minister on 20 March 2026 and the Committee awaits a reply.

5.5 Clerk of EU and Interparliamentary Affairs – Follow up information

The Chairperson advised Members that the Clerk of EU and Interparliamentary Affairs has provided the follow up information requested by the Committee, following their oral evidence session on 25 February 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item

5.6 The Council of Europe – Register of Damages

The Chairperson reminded Members that at the last meeting before Easter recess, the Deputy Chair raised an issue relating to a meeting they had with the Red Cross where the issue of registers of claims for damages in Ukraine was discussed and Members agreed for this information to be sent to all Members.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item.

6. Oral Briefing – Draft Framework for Race Relations and Delivery Plan 2026-28: Departmental officials

Agreed: The Committee agreed for Hansard to record the session.

The officials joined the meeting at 2.46pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Orla McStravick - Director, Race Relations and Integration, TEO

- Paul Naylor - Head of Race Relations Development & Delivery, TEO
- Julie Cuming - Head of Migration & Integration Policy Branch, TEO

The officials provided an update on the Draft Framework for Race Relations and Delivery Plan 2026-28.

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

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Áine Murphy left the meeting at 3.20pm and joined online at 3.37pm.

Sinéad McLaughlin left the meeting at 3.26pm.

Phillip Brett left at 3.29pm and returned at 3.35pm.

Timothy Gaston left the meeting at 3.42pm.

The witnesses left the meeting at 3.42pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold a stakeholder panel session to inform its consideration of the Draft Framework for Race Relations and Delivery Plan 2026–28. The Committee team will prepare a draft list of stakeholders for Members to consider during the Committee’s Strategic Planning session at next week’s meeting.

7. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee considered a response from the Department for Communities to the Committee’s correspondence on 6 March 2026 regarding the New Foundations Pilot Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to write to the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Health to ask if they could explore the legal and operational requirements for a cross agency data sharing framework or to identify if there are any existing statutory powers that could be used to support improved service co-ordination for victims and survivors.

- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual expressing concern regarding messaging on promotional pens distributed at a recent TUV party conference.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to write to the individual outlining that any issues in relation to a party conference should be raised with the relevant political party.

- iv. The Committee considered a response from the Committee for Communities to the Committee's correspondence to all Statutory Committees regarding the Windsor Framework and wider EU issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and to consider any further action when responses have been received from all statutory Committees.

- v. The Committee considered a response from the Committee for Communities to the Committee's correspondence on 20 March 2026, requesting an update on any information they have received from the Department for Communities regarding the draft Irish Language Strategy and the draft Ulster Scots Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to forward to the Committee for Communities the briefing notes provided to the Committee, along with the Hansard reports of the oral evidence session with Office of Identity and Cultural Expression and the two Language Commissioners which took place at the meeting on 18 March 2026.

- vi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Justice regarding the Criminal Justice (Sentencing) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to write to the Department to ask whether they have any views or comments on the Bill, and whether there are any implications, or any role, for TEO arising from this Bill.

- vii. The Committee considered a response from TEO to the Committee's correspondence on 6 March 2026 requesting further information following the EVAWG Strategy and first Delivery Plan briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to write to the Department to ask that the findings from the first study on attitudes among young

men and boys is forwarded to the Committee upon completion. The Committee also agreed to include a copy of the Phase 2 Delivery Plan 2026–2028 in the meeting pack for next week’s meeting.

viii. The Committee noted a response from the Minister for Education and Youth in the Republic of Ireland to the Committee’s correspondence on 19 February 2026 requesting information on the development of the module on the Northern Ireland Troubles as part of the Leaving Certificate curriculum.

ix. The Committee noted a response from TEO to the Committee’s correspondence on 12 March 2026 in relation to Historical Clerical Childhood Abuse queries.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to write to the First and deputy First Minister to ask that the Committee is kept updated on the outcomes of the meeting, including any agreed actions by TEO and that a new independent Chair should be recruited to support victims and survivors as this area of work progresses.

x. The Committee considered a response from TEO to the Committee’s correspondence on 13 March 2026 requesting information relating to Programme for Government (PfG) and the PfG Delivery Unit.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to write to the Department of Health to request further information regarding the amount of money spent from the PfG budget within the private sector as part of the Delivery Unit’s role in addressing Health waiting lists and to encourage the Minister to draw down any available funds.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a breakdown of any funds returned to the Treasury by TEO relating to unspent Public Sector Transformation funding.

xi. The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Health to the Committee’s correspondence on 6 March 2026 in relation to the work of the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to write to the Minister of Health to ask that they keep the Committee updated regarding the possibility of a central depository system following their discussions with COSICA.

- xii. The Committee noted a response from TEO to the Committee's correspondence on 6 March 2026 requesting further information on the responsibilities of the post and reporting structures for the Director of the OICE, the Irish Language Commissioner and the Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British Tradition.
- xiii. The Committee noted an Official Report (Hansard) - OICE and Language Commissioners: Director of Office of Identity and Cultural Expression, Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British Tradition and the Irish Language Commissioner: 18 March 2026.
- xiv. The Committee noted a response from the Home Office to the Committee's correspondence on 19 March 2026 in relation to immigration enforcement.
- xv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the 2025-26 Public Expenditure Outturn and Forecast Outturn – February 2026.
- xvi. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from an individual to the Speaker in relation to the Irish Language Commissioner's evidence session to the Committee on 18 March 2026.
- xvii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from an individual to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and to the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the rising cost of home heating oil.
- xviii. The Committee noted a response from the Committee for Communities in relation to the Windsor Framework and wider EU issues.
- xix. The Committee noted correspondence from TEO – Investment Strategy Northern Ireland: Investing Activity Report.
- xx. The Committee noted a response from the Charities Commission to the Committee's correspondence on 13 March 2026 regarding safeguarding within religious and state institutions.

- xxi. The Committee noted the March 2026 update from the Youth Assembly for Northern Ireland.
- xxii. The Committee noted an invitation from the Independent Autism Reviewer for Northern Ireland to the launch of the first annual report on Monday 27 April 2026.
- xxiii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Communities to TEO regarding welfare mitigations and the 2028 cliff edge.
- xxiv. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Communities to TEO in relation to assistance with fuel costs.
- xxv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Assembly's Research and Information Service (RaISe) regarding the recently published RaISe-PFSU Briefing Paper Series.
- xxvi. The Committee noted a news release from TEO – Executive calls for urgent action on Local Growth Fund.
- xxvii. The Committee noted a response from the Head of the Civil Service to the Committee's correspondence on 20 March 2026 in relation to the Strategy for Victims and Survivors of the Troubles/Conflict 2024-2034 and Memorialisation.
- xxviii. The Committee noted a response from TEO to the Committee's correspondence on 11 March 2026 requesting information in relation to Historical Clerical Childhood Abuse.
- xxix. The Committee noted a response from TEO to the Committee's correspondence on 27 February 2026 regarding a sectarian attack in Derry/Londonderry.
- xxx. The Committee noted a response from TEO to the Committee's correspondence on 26 March 2026 in relation to the Common Frameworks Programme.
- xxxi. The Committee noted a document laid in the Business Office on 8 April 2026 – Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat Annual Report for 2024/25.

- xxxii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission regarding the recruitment of four commissioners.
- xxxiii. The Committee noted a news release from TEO - Urgent action needed by the Prime Minister on fuel and energy costs.
- xxxiv. The Committee noted an invitation from OICE to celebrate the launch of their photographic exhibition on Wednesday 15 April 2026.
- xxxv. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding possible amendments to Inquiry (Mother & Baby institutions, Magdalene Laundries & Workhouses) & Redress Scheme Bill.
- xxxvi. The Committee noted a response from Minister of Health to the Committee's correspondence of 27 March 2026 - Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Update on Departmental work undertaken.
- xxxvii. The Committee noted a response from the Minister for Infrastructure to the Committee's correspondence on 27 March 2026 - Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Update on Departmental work undertaken.
- xxxviii. The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs to the Committee's correspondence on 27 March 2026 - Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Update on Departmental work undertaken.
- xxxix. The Committee noted a response from the Department for Infrastructure to the Committee's correspondence on 27 March 2026 regarding the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant.
- xl. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Justice to the Committee's correspondence on 27 March 2026 in relation to the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant.
- xli. The Committee noted a response from Helen McEntee TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs & Trade to the Committee's correspondence on 19 January 2026 regarding the Northern Ireland Troubles Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to discuss any potential action at next week's Strategic Planning session.

- xlii. The Committee noted a news release from TEO - Appointment of Moira Doherty as Permanent Secretary of TEO.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the draft forward work programme.

The Committee noted an update from the Assistant Clerk in relation to next week's meeting where the Committee will receive an oral briefing from the Veteran's Commissioner on the Armed Forces Covenant.

The Committee will also consider a written briefing from the Safeguarding Board, the updated Draft Final Report on the Inquiry and hold its Strategic Planning session postponed from today's meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to proceed with the remaining briefings as set out in the forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold a concurrent meeting with the Committee for Justice with the PSNI and the Police Ombudsman's Office in relation their work as part of Ending Violence against Woman and Girls.

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 29 April 2026 at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.06pm.

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office

Wednesday 22 April 2026