



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 11 March 2026

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mrs Pam Cameron MLA

Mr Timothy Gaston MLA

Ms Áine Murphy MLA

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Mr Phillip Brett MLA

Online:

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Apologies:

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

In Attendance: Mr Nick Mitford (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Sarah-Anne McKinley (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Neil Porter (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.02pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Áine Murphy joined the meeting at 2.03pm.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Irish Language Commissioner – Correspondence

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Irish Language Commissioner wrote to her regarding remarks made by some Members at the Committee meeting last week and requested an urgent meeting in relation to this.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Clerk emailed all Members seeking their views on the matter. Members were in majority agreement that the scheduled briefing on the 18 March 2026 should go ahead, and that the Commissioner could respond to questions at that time without the need for an extra meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed note this item.

3.2 Speaker's Office – Irish Language Week

The Chairperson reminded Members that at last week's meeting the Committee agreed for the Clerk to contact the Speaker's Office to determine whether a transcript or recording of the Speaker's event held to mark Irish Language week was available.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Speaker's Office responded advising the Committee that the Irish Language Commissioner was a guest speaker at the event and did not contribute during the programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item.

3.3 British Embassy in Washington – Invitation

The Chairperson advised Members that she received an invitation as Chair of the Committee from the British Embassy in Washington to their St Patrick's Day breakfast on 17 March 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 4 March 2026.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 & 5.2 Commissioner for Public Appointments – Clarification relating to evidence session

The Chairperson reminded Members that at its meeting on Wednesday 25 February 2026, the Committee held an oral evidence session with the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Commissioner has provided two corrections to her evidence given to the Committee during the session.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee also received a response from the Commissioner for Public Appointment to correspondence regarding information on the most recent upheld complaint received by the Commissioner which was in March 2021, and relates to the Department for Infrastructure.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item.

5.3 Victims & Survivors Services (VSS) – Follow up information

The Chairperson reminded Members that at the meeting on 18 February 2026 stakeholders appeared in front of the Committee and while discussing the Victims Support Programme, the need for some clarity and context around the approach to 'Did Not Attend' therapy sessions (DNAs) was discussed.

The Chairperson advised Members that VSS have provided a short briefing note to give further detail to Members around the current and proposed future approach relating to DNAs.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed for the Committee team to liaise with VSS to include the approach to DNAs as part of its oral evidence session with the Committee on 13 May 2026. The Committee also agreed to request that the responses received from VSS community partners be shared with the Committee in advance of the oral briefing.

5.4 Police Ombudsman – Abuse of Position for Sexual Purposes Report

The Chairperson reminded Members that at its meeting on 10 December 2025 the Committee agreed to write to the Police Ombudsman's Office to request further information on its role as part of the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Police Ombudsman sent and published its report 'Abuse of Position for Sexual Purposes (APSP) by PSNI Officers: Analysis and Emerging Findings' last week.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed for the Clerk to liaise with the Clerk of the Justice Committee to explore the possibility of holding a joint meeting on the report.

Timothy Gaston raised a question in relation to an action from last week's meeting where the Committee agreed for the Clerk to liaise with the Equality Commission to seek permission to share the correspondence received by the Committee with the Assembly Commission. The Clerk confirmed that this letter had now been sent.

Timothy raised a question regarding another action from last week's meeting where the Committee agreed to invite Migrants' Rights Network and the PSNI to provide an oral briefing on immigration raids in Northern Ireland. The Clerk updated Members that the PSNI advised that they are not responsible for immigration enforcement and that this falls to the UK Home Office.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite representatives from Mears, the UK Home Office and HMRC to provide oral evidence to the Committee on immigration enforcement.

6. Representatives from the Cross Denominational Network of Survivors and Amnesty International – Historical Clerical Childhood Abuse: Oral Briefing

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

The witnesses joined the meeting at 2.23pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Patrick Corrigan, Head of Nations & Regions / Northern Ireland Programme Director, Amnesty International UK
- Anthony Gribben, Representative, The Dromore Group
- Nikella Holmes, Representative, Interfaith Clerical Abuse Survivors

The witnesses provided a briefing on Historical Clerical Childhood Abuse (HCCA).

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

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

Sinéad McLaughlin joined the meeting at 2.45pm.

Carál Ní Chuilín left the meeting at 3.18pm and returned at 3.23pm.

The witnesses left the meeting at 3.41pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Committee team to liaise with the Safeguarding Board to arrange an oral evidence session on safeguarding within religious and state institutions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Charity Commission to ask what role, if any, it has in relation to safeguarding within religious and state institutions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First and deputy First Minister to ask for the following information:

- That a meeting is arranged at the earliest opportunity between Ministers (not only junior Ministers) and representatives of Interfaith Clerical Abuse Survivors.
- An update on the timeline for Ministers progressing the HCCA work.
- The current status of the IDWG and the Interim Chair, and how this role will be filled going forward.
- Further information on the meeting between Ministers and the PSNI Chief Constable regarding HCCA.

7. Historical Clerical Childhood Abuse – TEO Research and Recommendations Departmental Officials: Oral Briefing

Agreed: The Committee agreed to take a short comfort break and suspend the meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 3.46pm.

The meeting resumed in closed session at 3.52pm.

The officials joined the meeting at 3.53pm.

Phillip Brett joined the meeting at 4.11pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Patrick Gallagher, Assistant Secretary, TEO
- Karen Wilson, Head of HIA Implementation Branch, TEO
- David Hall, Deputy Head of HIA Implementation Branch, TEO

The officials provided an update on the TEO Research and Recommendations relating to HCCA.

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

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Carál Ní Chuilín left the meeting at 4.27pm and returned at 4.35pm.

The officials left the meeting at 4.38pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move back into open session for the next item of business.

The meeting resumed in open session at 4.38pm.

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

- That the TEO Research and Recommendations are shared with the Committee at the earliest opportunity.
- That an awareness programme is established to improve communication with victims and survivors regarding this area of work going forward.
- That a response is issued to the five queries raised by representatives of Interfaith Abuse Survivors in their letter to the junior Ministers dated 2 March 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the PSNI to request further information on the open and ongoing investigations managed by the Non-Recent Child Abuse Team relating to non-recent and recent clerical and institutional abuse.

8. Programme for Government (PfG) and PfG Delivery Unit – Departmental Officials: Oral Briefing

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

The officials joined the meeting at 4.43pm.

Sinéad McLaughlin left the meeting at 4.58pm.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 5.10pm and returned at 5.12pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Jaclyn Richardson, Interim Director of Programme for Government, TEO
- Patrick Gallagher, Head of Delivery Unit, TEO

The officials provided a briefing on the PfG and the PfG Delivery Unit.

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

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Carál Ní Chuilín left the meeting at 5.27pm.

The witnesses left the meeting at 5.36pm.

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

- A breakdown of the £61 million funding from the Public Sector Transformation Fund provided to the Department of Health to support the expansion of multidisciplinary teams in GP practices.
- The amount of money spent from the PfG budget to the private sector as part of the Delivery Unit's role in addressing Health waiting lists.

- Breakdown of the £20.5 million allocated to Speeding Up Justice, which is aimed at reducing court delays and case backlogs and modernising the justice process.
- That the Committee is sent a copy of the updated document aligning the Budget to the PfG once the Draft Budget is agreed.

9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee considered a response from the Chief Scientific and Technology Adviser to the Committee's correspondence on 12 February 2026 requesting further information in relation to Department of Health research projects, trials and associated timelines and if Copilot operates as a cross-departmental function throughout the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to write to the Chief Scientific and Technology Adviser (CSTA) to request information on how AQWs are commissioned for using AI to answer, and to arrange an oral briefing with the CSTA before March 2027.

- iii. The Committee noted the fifty-eighth report from the Examiner for Statutory Rules. There are no rules for the attention of this Committee.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission – Newsletter February 2026.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from TEO – Appointment of Lay Members to the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission (NIJAC).
- vi. The Committee noted a news release from TEO – Appointment of Lay Members to NIJAC.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Youth Assembly for Northern Ireland – Monthly update February 2026.

- viii. The Committee noted an oral statement from the Minister for Finance – Chancellor’s Spring Forecast 3 March 2026.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the North Ireland Assembly Business Office – Maze Long Kesh Development Cooperation Partnership Agreement (Revised). A date was updated in the footer and signature added.
- x. The Committee noted news release from TEO – The First Minister, deputy First Minister and Minister for Economy announce £12.9m investment by Cirdan to drive innovation, skills and create jobs.
- xi. The Committee noted a news release from TEO – The First Minister and deputy First Minister celebrate the contribution of women across society on International Women’s Day.

10. 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 introductory briefing from the Director of the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression, Irish Language Commissioner and Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British tradition. The Committee will also receive an oral briefing from the Open University on its report ‘Learnings from ‘Why Riot? The whys’ beneath youth violence.’

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

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 18 March 2026 at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.41pm.

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office

Wednesday 11 March 2026