



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 17 June 2026

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Phillip Brett MLA
Ms Deborah Erskine MLA
Mr Timothy Gaston MLA
Ms Áine Murphy MLA

Online: None

Apologies: Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA
Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
Ms Claire Sugden MLA

In Attendance: Mr Trevor Allen (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Feargal McGuinness (Assembly 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

Apologies as indicated above.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Chairperson's Business

There were no items of Chairperson's Business.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 10 June 2026.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 Head of the Civil Service – Equality Impact Assessments

The Chairperson advised Members that a response has been received from the Head of Civil Service to the Committee's correspondence of 28 May 2026, in relation to Equality Impact Assessments and cross-departmental co-operation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing with the Head of the Civil Service.

5.2 Ending Violence Against Women & Girls (EVAWG) – Summary of Responses

The Chairperson reminded Members that, at last week's meeting, the Committee agreed to update the summary document on the written updates received from all Departments in relation to EVAWG. The revised update reflects the need to highlight the rural dimension of the issue, particularly the engagement work undertaken by DAERA and the absence of specific funding.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the updated response to the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Finance to request details of any bids submitted by Departments since the launch of the EVAWG Strategic Framework.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure to query why no bids have been made in this area and to seek clarification on whether its ALBs have submitted bids relating to EVAWG.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the aspects of funding across TEO, including the Local and Regional Change Fund, and whether such funding might be more effectively allocated to the Departments of Education and Justice, as part of the potential Inquiry's Terms of Reference into EVAWG.

5.3 Soroptimists International Portadown

The Committee considered a report from Soroptimist International Portadown, examining public awareness of domestic abuse within the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council area.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the authors of Soroptimist report to give evidence when it undertakes its Inquiry into EVAWG.

5.4 Access to Records - Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee agreed at last week's meeting to review previous actions it has taken in relation to access to records, to ensure these reflect the Panel's recommendations in this area.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the following actions:

- To send follow-up correspondence to the relevant Ministers and departments in relation to the Committee's outstanding letters of 29 April 2026, seeking updates on the issues previously raised.
- To write to the First Minister, deputy First Minister, and the Minister of Health to request that they undertake a formal, cross-departmental scoping exercise on the design of a permanent archive. This should take full account of the recommendations of the Independent Panel and initiate preparatory work towards bespoke legislation to establish and govern the archive with the specific aim of removing existing barriers to victims and survivors and their families in accessing records.
- To revisit and give consideration to relevant recommendations from the Independent Panel when scrutinising the associated delegated legislation.
- To write to the Minister of Finance to request details of any bids submitted by Departments in relation to this area.

5.5 Truth Recovery Independent Panel – Correspondence

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee considered correspondence from the Independent Panel at yesterday's meeting regarding the recommendations contained in their reports which have been issued periodically by the Panel.

The Committee noted this item.

5.16 & 5.17 TEO - Draft List of Technical Amendments and Notice of Amendments tabled 16 June 2026 for Further Consideration Stage

The Chairperson reminded Members that yesterday the Committee held an additional meeting to discuss the Committee's final amendments to the Inquiry

(Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill in advance of Further Consideration Stage. The draft amendments shared by the Department have now been formally tabled with the Assembly Bill Office.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note these items and agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister to seek their views on Mr Gerry Carroll MLA's amendments to clause 32, and how these would operate in practice if selected for debate by the Speaker and made by the Assembly. In particular, the Committee requests further detail on how the Truth Recovery Redress Service would potentially differentiate between individuals placed in workhouses for reasons other than pregnancy, and those who were placed there due to being pregnant.

5.12, 5.14 & 5.15: Draft Framework for Race Relations and Delivery Plan 2026-2028 and Members' Responses

The Chairperson advised Members that Deborah Erskine and Phillip Brett had submitted feedback on the Committee's consideration of its updated draft response to the Draft Framework for Race Relations and Delivery Plan 2026–2028. As Mr Gaston submitted additional feedback today, consideration of the draft response was deferred until next week's meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note these items and agreed to consider the updated draft response at next week's meeting.

6. Oral Briefing – Independent Commission for Reconciliation & Information Recovery (ICRIR) – May Report Findings

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

The witnesses joined the meeting at 2.20pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Sir Declan Morgan, Chief Commissioner, ICRIR
- Peter Sheridan, Commissioner for Investigations, ICRIR
- Josephine Kelly, Director of Finance and Corporate Services, ICRIR

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the May Report Findings of the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 2.58pm and returned at 2.59pm.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

The officials left the meeting at 3.35pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to ICRIR to request information on a number of areas, including the number of investigations requiring input from An Garda Síochána and the number of requests currently outstanding.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to highlight its concern that a number of requests for information remain outstanding in response to ICRIR's requests, and to invite the Minister to come before the Committee to discuss the matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to come before the Committee to discuss its views on ICRIR.

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

The meeting was suspended at 3:38pm.

Proceedings continued in open session at 3.49pm with the following Members present: Paula Bradshaw, Phillip Brett, Deborah Erskine, Timothy Gaston and Áine Murphy.

7. Oral Briefing: Veteran's Commissioner – Armed Forces Covenant

The witnesses joined the meeting at 3.50pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- David Johnstone, Veteran's Commissioner, Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner's Office
- Rachael Harger, Communications and Policy Support, Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner's Office
- Michael Murdoch MBE, Chief Executive, Reserve Forces and Cadets Association
- Darren Niven, Defence Relationship Manager, Reserve Forces and Cadets Association

The Chairperson declared an interest having a family member who is a veteran.

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the Armed Forces Covenant.

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

Deborah Erskine, Phillip Brett and Timothy Gaston placed on record their thanks to veterans for their service.

Timothy Gaston placed on record his thanks to the Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner's Office.

Deborah Erskine placed on record her thanks to the Chief Executive of the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for their comments regarding the Veterans Champion in Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

The witnesses left the meeting at 4.45pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that any correspondence received by TEO from the UK Government's Ministry of Defence is responded to, in order to ensure that no opportunities for veterans in Northern Ireland are missed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister to request that they meet with the Veterans Commissioner, should such a request be made.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Head of the Civil Service to request that implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant across the NICS is covered during her forthcoming oral briefing to the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for Communities to request a breakdown of the nature of services to which individuals have been signposted, as well as the volume of calls received since the introduction of the new telephone and text service for the Armed Forces community.

8. Oral Briefing: Assembly Legal Services: Freedom of Information

Agreed: The Committee agreed to go into closed session.

The official joined the meeting at 4.49pm.

Áine Murphy left the meeting at 4.49pm and joined remotely at 4.52pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Caroline Byers, Legal Advisor, Northern Ireland Assembly

The official briefed the Committee on legal advice in relation to Freedom of Information requests and witnesses.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the official for her attendance.

The official left the meeting at 17.01pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into public session.

Proceedings continued in open session at 17.01pm with the following Members present: Paula Bradshaw, Phillip Brett, Deborah Erskine, Timothy Gaston and Áine Murphy online.

9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.

- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs regarding the Areas with Natural Constraints (Payment) Bill.

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

- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Development Lead from the 'Own My Life' programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to arrange an informal meeting with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson in the first instance.

- iv. The Committee considered a response from Housing Rights NI to the Committee's correspondence of 28 May 2026, asking for further information on its casework on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Communities for information, as DfC oversee this policy area, and to reflect the points made in the Committee's response to TEO on the Race Relations Framework that was discussed earlier in the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Infrastructure for information as DfI has responsibility for planning, particularly any associated impacts on parking and issues of overprovision within these areas, and to request available data on the impact of HMOs on parking provision.

- v. The Committee considered a response from the Department to the Committee's correspondence of 11 May 2026 requesting clarification on the EVAWG Change Funds.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and to include previous correspondence relating to the breakdown of the Local and Regional Change Fund across council areas in next week's meeting pack, to help inform any potential Inquiry in terms of funding and any identified gaps.

- vi. The Committee considered a response from the Department to the Committee's correspondence of 18 May 2026, regarding the Castlereagh Foundation and the OICE staffing limitations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and to write to the Department to ask that the Committee is kept informed once the OICE business plans have been approved and following the appointment of the new CEO, an update is provided on recruitment within the Office.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Secretary of State to ask when a decision will be made on who will be responsible for the establishment of the Castlereagh Foundation and if no decision has yet been made, to request that the Committee is kept updated.

- vii. The Committee noted a Hansard Report - Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill - Delegated Legislation and Shadow Redress Service: Department of Justice and TEO.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy to TEO in relation to the Neonatal Leave Employment Rights Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that these elements of the Bill are progressed and to seek clarification on what discussions have taken place in relation to this within TEO.

- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from TEO to the Committee for the Communities regarding the Social Housing Development Programme.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Communities to TEO in relation to NICCY Sponsorship.
- xi. The Committee noted a news release from TEO – 'First Minister, deputy First Minister and Economy Minister announce creation of new jobs at Kainos'.
- xii. The Committee noted an oral statement from First Minister and deputy First Minister of 10 June 2026 on the North South Ministerial Council Institutional and Plenary Meetings.
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from NIA Legal Services and the 68th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules. There are no rules in the report for the attention of this Committee.

- xiv. The Committee noted a news release from TEO on 'Appointments to the NI Judicial Appointments Commission'.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the draft forward work programme.

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First and deputy First Minister to request confirmation of the oral briefing with Ministers, which is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 1 July 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer the concurrent meeting with the Committee for Justice scheduled to take place on Tuesday 30 June 2026 due to the Final Stage of the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill now being scheduled for that day.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 24 June 2026 at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.14pm

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Chairperson, Committee for The Executive Office

Wednesday 24 June 2026