



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 25 February 2026

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:	Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)
	Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
	Mr Phillip Brett MLA
	Mrs Pam Cameron MLA
	Mr Timothy Gaston MLA
	Ms Áine Murphy MLA
	Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
	Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA
Online:	None
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 2.00pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Sinéad McLaughlin joined the meeting at 2.01pm.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 HIA Memorial Event

The Chairperson updated Members that she attended the unveiling of the HIA Memorial Plaque ceremony on Friday 20 February in Parliament Buildings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for final figures in relation to the HIA Redress Board and to seek an update on contributions from those religious organisations that are yet to contribute to the scheme.

3.2 Individual – New Victims' Initiative

The Chairperson advised Members that Raymond McCord wrote to her regarding a new initiative regarding victims and the impact of the Troubles through story telling.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and include this as a topic of discussion for the Strategic Planning session in April.

3.3 Correspondence from representatives of Historical Clerical Childhood Abuse

The Chairperson advised Members that she have been forwarded a reply from representatives of Historical Clerical Child Abuse from junior Ministers in relation to the three research reports and cross-departmental recommendations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to follow up with the Department on this issue that was previously raised with the Department.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 18 February 2026.

Áine Murphy joined the meeting at 2.06pm.

5. Matters Arising

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee agreed a press release regarding the HIA Memorial Event via correspondence on Thursday 19 February 2026. The final press release removed the referral to the Arts Council as they were not involved in the final process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item.

Carál Ní Chuilín raised an issue regarding last week's meeting and the agreed action to write to the Irish Government to request further information on how the module on education relating to the Northern Ireland Troubles curriculum, as part of the Leaving Certificate is being developed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the UK Government to ask whether there have been any discussions with the Department for Education in England regarding the teaching of the Troubles in Great Britain.

Carál Ní Chuilín raised an issue regarding the proceedings of last week's oral evidence session on the Strategy for Victims and Survivors of the Troubles / Conflict 2024-2034 and the treatment of witnesses appearing before the Committee.

6. Introductory Briefing from the new Commissioner for Public Appointments: Oral Briefing

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

The witness joined the meeting at 2.17pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Claire Keatinge, Commissioner for Public Appointments, Commission for Public Appointments

The witness provided an introductory briefing following their recent appointment as the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Carál Ní Chuilín declared an interest having served as Communities Minister in 2020.

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

The Chairperson thanked the witness for her attendance.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 3.04pm and returned at 3.13pm.

The witness left the meeting at 3.11pm.

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

- An update on the review of the 1995 Order, including whether the Department has undertaken any discussions regarding its potential inclusion as an amendment to the Financial Provisions Bill.
- To request that the appointment process for Independent Assessors be expedited, given that there are currently only seven Assessors in post within the office.
- To request that serious consideration be given to increasing the Commissioner's allocation of working hours from 75 to 100 days per year, particularly in light of the absence of a Commissioner in post between May 2021 and August 2025.
- To request further information on the rationale for TEO's unregulated appointments, and on the additional bodies that have been established since 2020.
- To request clarity on who will regulate and provide oversight of the Commissioner for Public Appointments going forward.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk would write to the Clerk of the Finance Committee to ask whether any discussions have taken place regarding the 1995 Order and its inclusion in the Financial Provisions Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Commissioner for Public Appointments to request further information on the most recent example of an upheld complaint relating to a public appointment.

7. Clerk of EU and Interparliamentary Affairs – EU Matters: Oral Briefing

The official joined the meeting at 3.14pm.

Carál Ní Chuilín left the meeting at 3.15pm and returned at 3.19pm.

Sinéad McLaughlin left the meeting at 3.22pm and returned at 3.28pm.

Áine Murphy declared an interest as a member of the AERA Committee.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Feargal McGuinness, Clerk of EU and Interparliamentary Affairs, Northern Ireland Assembly

The official provided an update on EU Matters.

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

The Chairperson thanked the official for his attendance.

The official left the meeting at 4.01pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Clerk of EU and Interparliamentary Affairs to ask:

- If they will be implementing a coordinated approach across Departments to keep Assembly Committees updated on the ongoing functioning of frameworks following these regular reviews of Common Frameworks.
- To seek more information on outcomes of recent meetings attended by TEO Ministers including what was discussed and any outcomes agreed to be shared with the Committee.
- To seek further information from TEO on its position with respect to other recommendations in the Lord Murphy Review, including recommendations to expand the Northern Ireland Executive Office in Brussels.
- To ask how the Department logs and monitors any issues relating to the Windsor Framework across Departments, given TEO's oversight role in relation to EU Matters.
- To ask what representations if any, have been made by the First Minister and deputy First Minister outside areas relating to SPS.
- To ask whether a tracker of issues relating to the cross-departmental outworkings of the Windsor Framework and EU matters is in place and maintained by TEO, and if not, whether this is planned to be implemented.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the UK Government to request an update on discussions taking place with the European Union and the impact of the Windsor Framework in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to all Statutory Committees to ask for an update on issues identified or discussed in relation to the Windsor Framework and wider EU matters.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Clerk to liaise with his counterpart in the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee (WFDSC) in relation to any tracker or update on the WFDSC's work.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to follow up with the Clerk of EU and Interparliamentary Affairs in relation to a number of items:

- To ask whether a tracker of issues relating to the outworkings of the Windsor Framework and EU matters could be developed for Members.
- To ask for further information on any impacts arising from the 30 Common Frameworks currently being progressed through the programme which may have a stronger impact on Northern Ireland.
- To ask for further information on the makeup of the Specialised Committees that oversee specific areas of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, including details of their membership and how frequently they meet.
- To ask for further information on the makeup of the Joint Consultative Working Group, including details of its membership and how frequently it meets.

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

The meeting was suspended at 4.04pm.

The meeting resumed in closed session at 4.11pm.

The meeting moved into open session at 4.20pm.

8. Inquiry: Gaps into Equality Legislation – Updated Draft Final Report

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the Final Report until after the oral briefing from the Equality Commission on the Supreme Court judgment in *For Women Scotland Ltd v Scottish Ministers*.

9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) regarding the Northern Ireland Troubles Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and keep a watching brief on the issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask permission from the NIO to share the correspondence with the five stakeholders who presented to the Committee at last week's meeting regarding the Strategy for Victims and Survivors of the Troubles/Conflict 2024–2034.

- iii. The Committee noted a response from TEO to the Committee's correspondence on 30 January 2026 in relation to sectarian attacks in Derry / Londonderry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to write again to the Department to ask for further detail on how the Communities in Transition and TBUC programmes are addressing these issues at a grass roots level.

- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the Department of Education 5 Year Budget Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and write to the Department to ask for an update on the status of TEO's 5 Year Business Plan and whether this has been finalised and sent to the Department of Finance.

- v. The Committee noted correspondence from Advice NI in relation to automatic enrolment to free school meals for Universal Credit claimants.
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from Belfast Works Connect regarding place-based economic inactivity support during the Local Growth Fund Transition.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Communities in relation to the Local Growth Fund.

- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding the Draft Budget and social and affordable housing.
- ix. The Committee noted an Official Report (Hansard) – Introductory Briefing: Commissioner for Victims and Survivors 11 February 2026.
- x. The Committee noted an Official Report (Hansard) - Introductory Briefing: Chief Scientific and Technology Adviser 11 February 2026.
- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from NIA Legal Services - Fifty-seventh report from the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

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 oral briefing from the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse and Departmental officials on Ending Violence against Women and Girls. The Committee will also consider a written briefing on Immigration Raids in Northern Ireland from the Migrants' Rights Network.

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

11. Any Other Business

The was no other business.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 4 March 2026 at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.26pm.

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office

Wednesday 25 February 2026