



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 6 May 2026

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Phillip Brett MLA

Mr Timothy Gaston MLA

Ms Áine Murphy MLA

Online:

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Apologies:

Mrs Pam Cameron MLA

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

In Attendance: Mr Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Feargal McGuinness (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 1.59pm in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above

2. Declarations of Interest

Áine Murphy declared a standing interest in relation to Item 7 and the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill having a family member who was born in a Mother and Baby institution.

Pam Cameron declared a standing interest in relation to Item 7 and the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill having worked previously in TEO as a junior Minister from February 2024 until September 2025.

Pam Cameron declared a standing interest in relation to Item 7 and the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill as it stands, she has a family member who may be entitled to a redress payment as part of the second part of this legislation.

Carál Ní Chuilín declared a standing interest in relation to Item 7 and the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill having served as Communities Minister in 2020.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Chairperson's Liaison Group – Updated Guidance

The Chairperson advised Members of updated Guidance for Witnesses appearing before the Assembly a revised Guide to the Role of Committee Chairpersons which were approved by CLG.

The Committee noted both of these items.

3.2 Community Foundation NI

The Chairperson advised Members of an invitation from the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland to its event on Wednesday 20 May at 4.00pm, entitled: A time to Act: Capitalising on the Potential of Philanthropic Giving for Northern Ireland.

Member were advised that is they wished to attend, they could do individually by registering via the link provided in the invitation.

The Committee noted this item.

3.3 Individual Correspondence – Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalane Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill

The Chairperson advised Members that she had received correspondence from an individual setting out their views on a number of proposed amendments to the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill.

The Committee noted this item.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 29 April 2026.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 & 5.2 Ending Violence Against Women & Girls (EVAWG)

The Chairperson referred Members to a copy of the resources from the Parliamentary Excellence session on the Ending Violence Against Women & Girls: Delivery Plan Update.

Other materials including Regional Change Fund and Local Change Fund videos relating to EVAWG were emailed to Members on Thursday 30 April 2026 and are also available on the Members' Portal.

The Committee noted those items.

5.3 Strategic Planning – Draft Actions

The Chairperson reminded Members of the recent Committee Strategic Planning session.

Ministerial Briefings

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek to hold ministerial briefings once per session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, given the remaining eleven months of the mandate, topics covered in these sessions should focus on the wider TEO portfolio.

Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalane Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill

The Committee noted that it expect to have eight items of delegated legislation to consider from September 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that post legislative scrutiny of the Bill would be included in the Committee's legacy report for the successor Committee.

Historical Institutional Abuse

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an oral briefing with the HIA Independent Facilitator.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to continue to pursue publication of the Historical Clerical Childhood Abuse TEO Report and Recommendations with the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing on the final figures of the HIA Redress Board following its closure, when available.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to remain in regular contact with the PSNI Historical Institutional Abuse SRO regarding ongoing work into HIA and Mother and Baby Institutions.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to seek clarity from PSNI as to how frequently progress reports are produced and seeking sight of these reports in relation to its ongoing work into HIA and Mother and Baby Institutions.

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG)

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request oral briefings from the Department during both sessions remaining in the mandate to receive updates on the EVAWG Strategy and Phase 2 of the Delivery Plan.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold a joint meeting with the Committee for Justice with the PSNI and the Police Ombudsman's Office to discuss Abuse of Position for Sexual Purposes by PSNI Officers in relation to EVAWG.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold two stakeholder panel sessions with Regional Change Fund recipients: Barnardo's, Nexus, NSPCC, Relate NI, White Ribbon, Women's Aid NI, Women's Resource & Development Agency and Youth Actions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold a roundtable event with Local Change Fund recipients within the 11 councils across Northern. These events will take place before the end of the mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to recipients of the Small Business Research initiative: Googleminds, Inclutech, ThinkPig and Politus to request a written briefing in the first instance on the innovative ways in which they are using this funding to keep women and girls safe.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarity on whether the IFA and Women's Aid funded through the Local Change Fund within the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council area is solely specific to that council area or if it forms part of wider regional programmes.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request additional information on these funds, including: how the Local and Regional Change Fund is intended to enhance existing provision and whether there is any duplication with services already funded, what outcomes or service improvements the two Funds are designed to deliver and how any academic framework or research has informed these funding streams.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a potential Inquiry into EVAWG in the absence of the Race Relations legislation. Suggested areas for consideration include; attitudinal change, the underlying causes of abuse, adverse experiences, trauma resilience, and young people.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask RaSe to conduct an initial scoping exercise on potential key lines of Inquiry for the Committee to consider before summer recess.

Communities in Transition (CIT)

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an oral briefing with the Department on Phase 2 contracts and the Phase 3 work plan.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department for a list of CIT case studies to enable consideration of the potential for the Committee holding stakeholder panel sessions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing with Departmental officials following completion of the T:BUC review.

Race Relations

Agreed: The Committee agreed that should the Race Relations Legislation not be introduced to the Assembly, the Committee will proceed to hold an Inquiry as outlined above.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider Claire Sugden's Private Member's Bill which aims to address protections against age discrimination in goods, facilities and services as part of its forward work programme should it be introduced within this mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a stakeholder panel session on the Draft Framework for Race Relations and Delivery Plan 2026-2028 to take place at the meeting on Wednesday 27 May 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members would confirm by correspondence the stakeholders to be invited to participate in two panel sessions. These stakeholders may include: Migrant Centre NI, North West Migrants Forum, British Red Cross, Chinese Welfare Association, Housing Rights NI, Inter-Ethnic Forum, Northern Ireland Local Government Partnership on Traveller Issues, Law Centre, ArtsEkta, and Migrant Help.

Refugees and People Seeking Asylum

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a progress update on the delivery of the Strategy and associated Delivery Framework from Departmental officials before March 2027 and including the awaited first progress report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Secretary of State to outline how and to seek clarity as to why the Home Office declined to provide oral evidence to the Committee on immigration enforcement.

Victims and Survivors

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange oral briefings with Departmental officials in the remaining two sessions, on the delivery of the Strategy for Victims and Survivors of the Troubles/Conflict 2024/2034.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a stakeholder panel session on the Strategy before March 2027.

Troubles and Conflict

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing with Departmental officials following the closure of the Victim's Payment Scheme before March 2027.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue a press release at its last meeting before summer recess highlighting the Victims' Payments Board's closure to new applications in August 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to keep a watching brief on the UK Government's Troubles Bill and how this progresses in the next session of Parliament.

Rights, Language and Identity

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing with the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression and the two Language Commissioners before March 2027.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold an oral evidence session with Rights, Language and Identity groups before March 2027.

Programme for Government

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing with Departmental officials on the Programme for Government and the Delivery Unit in both sessions before March 2027.

International Relations

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to confirm that monthly updates from the three Bureaus will be provided to the Committee on an ongoing basis.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange a final oral briefing from the three Bureaus in January 2027.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to maintain a watching brief in relation to the progress of the draft International Relations Strategy.

Other agreed actions:

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request written briefings from TEO ALBs and to consider these on a monthly basis between now and the end of the mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to update the Strategic Priorities proposed programme of work to 2027 in line with the agreed changes.

5.4 Irish Language Commissioner

The Chairperson advised Members that the Commissioner for Irish Language has responded to the Committee's correspondence of 24 April 2026 in relation to the

Committee's request to have sight of the correspondence between the Office and the Belfast Telegraph.

The Chairperson also advised Members that the Commissioner has further clarified his request to have sight of the correspondence sent to the Speaker and copied to the Committee by an individual, which was considered by the Committee at its meeting on 22 April 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek permission from the individual who forwarded the item of correspondence, before copying it to the Commissioner once permission is granted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Commissioner to again request the original information sought by the Committee, and to outline the options available to the Committee in relation to compelling the provision of information under Section 44A of the Northern Ireland Act.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister to raise concerns regarding the Commissioner's failure to provide the information requested by the Committee and to seek clarity on issues of accountability, including to whom the Commissioner is accountable.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek legal advice in relation to the Assembly Committee's ability to compel the provision of information under Section 44A of the Northern Ireland Act from the Irish Language Commissioner.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for a further breakdown of funding for the three Offices, to include the amount spent on legal fees to date.

6. Oral Briefing – Introductory Briefing: TEO Permanent Secretary

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

The officials joined the meeting at 2.36pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Moira Doherty - Permanent Secretary, TEO
- Gareth Johnston, Deputy Secretary, Good Relations and Inclusion, TEO
- Brenda Henderson, Deputy Secretary, Executive Services and International Relations, TEO

The officials provided an introductory briefing on the role of the TEO Permanent Secretary.

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

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Sinead McLaughlin put on record her concerns regarding Ebrington Square and serious traffic management issues.

The officials left the meeting at 4.02pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request legal advice as to whether witnesses could decline to answer or defer responses pending consideration relating to other Freedom of Information requests.

Proceedings were suspended at 4.03pm.

Proceedings resumed in public session at 4:11pm.

7. Oral Briefing – Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalane Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill: Department Officials

Agreed: The Committee agreed to continue proceedings in closed session.

The officials joined the meeting at 4.12pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Martin Carey, Truth Recovery Programme Director, TEO
- Martina Moore, Family and Children’s Policy Director, Department of Health

- Catherine Rodgers, Tribunals and Corporate Services Director, Department of Justice
- David Huddleston, PRONI Director, Department for the Communities

The officials provided an update on the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalane Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill and Clause 31.

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

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their evidence.

The witnesses left the meeting at 5.03pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an additional meeting to consider Committee amendments to the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalane Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill on Tuesday 12 May 2026 at 10.00am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further information on the costs incurred to date by the Truth Recovery Independent Panel including details of any consultancy fees.

8. Gaps into Equality Legislation – Updated Draft Final Report

The Committee gave further consideration to the content of its updated Draft Final Report in relation to its Inquiry on Gaps into Equality Legislation.

Sinéad McLaughlin left the meeting at 5.07pm.

Áine Murphy left the meeting at 5.13pm.

Proceedings continued in public session at 5.15pm with the following Members present: Paula Bradshaw, Phillip Brett, Timothy Gaston, Stewart Dickson and Carál Ní Chuilín online.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Equality Commission to ask for clarity on the: the consequences of the Dillon ruling; the timing of an anticipated High Court

review hearing; and the revised timeline for the publication of the Commission's guidance following the above.

9. Retention and Disposal Schedule – TEO

The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee had been sent the most recent Retention & Disposal Schedule for TEO.

The Committee discussed the Schedule.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a written briefing from PRONI and the Department on the changes to the Schedule, specifically outlining what has changed since the previous version and the rationale for the proposed timeframes.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to give further consideration to the Schedule at a subsequent meeting.

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill.

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

- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the First Minister and deputy First Minister in relation to Bereavement Payments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask that it keeps the Committee updated on any outcomes at the meeting of the Practitioners' Working Group regarding options for further support for the bereaved.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors to request sight of the advice paper to bereaved victims and survivors, when this is updated.

- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding proposals to disregard compensation payments made by the Republic of Ireland's Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme when calculating entitlement to social security benefits.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Communities Committee to ask that it keeps the Committee updated on the progress of these proposals.

- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Education in relation to the Education (Holiday Meal Payments) Bill and the Irish-Medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask whether it has any views or comments on the Bills, and whether there are any implications, or any role, for TEO arising from the Bills.

- vi. The Committee noted a Hansard Report - Draft Race Relations Framework and Delivery Plan 2026-28: TEO 22 April 2026.
- vii. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to the Committee's correspondence on 26 March 2026 regarding the Armed Forces Covenant.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Independent Autism Reviewer Annual Report September 2024 – March 2026.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Examiner of statutory Rules including the 63rd Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules. There are no rules for the attention of this Committee.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Examiner of statutory Rules including the 64th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules. There are no rules for the attention of this Committee.
- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from TEO – Investment Strategy Northern Ireland – Investing Activity Report.

- xii. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education to the Committee's correspondence on 25 March 2026 in relation to Ending Violence Against Women & Girls.
- xiii. The Committee noted a response from the Department for Economy to the Committee's correspondence on 25 March 2026 regarding Ending Violence Against Women & Girls.
- xiv. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Justice to the Committee's correspondence on 25 March 2026 in relation to Ending Violence Against Women & Girls.
- xv. The Committee noted a news release from TEO - NISRA Publication of New 2024 Based Population Projections for Northern Ireland.
- xvi. The Committee noted a response from the Commissioner for Ulster Scots and Ulster British Tradition regarding legal fees.
- xvii. The Committee noted a response from the Chief Scientific and Technology Adviser to the Committee's correspondence of 13 March 2026 in relation to Written Assembly Questions.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the draft forward work programme.

The Committee considered scheduling briefings on 13 May 2026 from the Victim's Payment Board on the Victims' Payment Scheme and from the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) and the Commissioner for Victims & Survivors in relation to the Victims' Payment Scheme and the Victims' Support Programme.

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

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 12 May 2026 at 10.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.23pm.

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office

Wednesday 13 May 2026