



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 29 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

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Online:

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

Apologies:

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

In Attendance: Mr Peter McCallion (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.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Attack on Dunmurry Police Station

The Chairperson condemned the recent attack on Dunmurry police station and appealed to anyone with information to contact the PSNI.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister to ask for an update on how the Communities in Transition Programme and the wider Central Good Relations Fund are progressing to help deliver the Safer Communities commitment in the Programme for Government.

3.2 Junior Ministers meeting with Interfaith Clerical Abuse Survivors

The Chairperson reminded Members that at last week's meeting junior Ministers confirmed that they would be meeting with Interfaith Clerical Abuse Survivors on 30 April 2026.

The Chairperson advised Members that Tony Gribben had also shared with her correspondence between himself and TEO officials regarding the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to follow up with the Interfaith Representatives of Survivors on any responses received in relation to the outcomes of the meeting.

3.3 Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) Invitation

The Chairperson reminded Members that, at last week's meeting, she advised that she will be speaking at a NIPSO event on Wednesday 24 June 2026 to launch NIPSO's new Model Complaints Handling Procedures.

The Chairperson advised Members that any Member who wishes to attend should respond to the link in the invitation provided, by Friday 1 May 2026.

The Committee noted this item.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 22 April 2026.

5. Matters Arising

5.1-5.4 Access to Records – Committee Actions to Date

The Chairperson reminded Members that at last week's meeting the Committee agreed for the Committee team to review the actions previously agreed in relation to access to records and the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Health as follows:

- To highlight that timely disclosure of records held by Trusts could affect the Redress Scheme and seeking clarity as to how the Department plans to mitigate this risk and to determine the contingency arrangements that are in place in the event that insufficient resources are available

- To request an update on progress to amend the 1989 Adoption Regulations to enable the transfer of records for preservation and including future reporting arrangements.
- To ask for further information on the rationale behind those records not eligible for transfer to PRONI and suggest that the Trusts seek to locate all records in one place within each Trust.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister to ask whether funding under the Truth Recovery Programme could be transferred to the Department of Health to specifically support access to and redaction of historic records, and whether additional capacity (including temporary) could be put in place ahead of the Inquiry and Redress Scheme going live. Also to recommend that future budgets explicitly recognise access to records as part of redress and not purely as an administrative function.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to PRONI to ask that it keeps the Committee updated on its work around the preservation of records, particularly in relation to institutions and their co-operation, and to confirm whether the case files for St Joseph's Children's residential institution have been transferred. The Committee also agreed to seek an oral evidence session once Phase 3 of its work has been completed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask officials to provide an update on discussions to date with the Department for Health and PRONI regarding engagement with Trusts to understand the scale of support they may require.

5.5 Committee for Justice – Abuse of Position for Sexual Purposes by PSNI Officers

Claire Sugden joined the meeting online at 2.15pm

Pam Cameron joined the meeting at 2.16pm

The Chairperson reminded Members that at last week's meeting the Committee agreed to hold a concurrent meeting with the Committee for Justice to hold an oral

evidence session with the PSNI and the Police Ombudsman's Office in relation to their work as part of Ending Violence against Woman and Girls.

The Chairperson advised Members that a date has now been confirmed for the meeting and this will take place on Tuesday 2 June 2026, subject to agreement at the Committee for Justice.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue formal invitations for the joint concurrent meeting following agreement from the Committee for Justice.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to postpone the informal meeting with NIJAC originally scheduled for Tuesday 2 June 2026 to a later date.

5.6 The Executive Office – Phase 2 of Ending Violence against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Delivery Plan 2026 - 2028

The Chairperson reminded Members that at last week's meeting the Committee agreed to include a copy of the EVAWG Phase 2 Delivery Plan in the meeting pack for today's meeting.

The Chairperson also advised Members that during the event launch for Phase 2 of the Delivery Plan there were a number of speakers as part of a panel event including Dr Susan Lagdan, who is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Ulster University.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite Dr Susan Lagdan to discuss EVAWG as part of a stakeholder panel session at a future meeting when this item is being considered.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include in next week's meeting pack a copy of the resources from the Parliamentary Excellence session on the Ending Violence Against Women & Girls: Delivery Plan Update.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek access to the Regional Change Fund and Local Change Fund videos relating to EVAWG and to copy relevant links to Members.

The Committee noted that a response is awaited to the request from the Committee to the Irish Language Commissioner for copies of all correspondence between his Office and the Belfast Telegraph.

6. Oral Briefing – Veterans’ Commissioner – Armed Forces Covenant

Agreed: The Committee agreed to postpone the oral evidence session at the request of the Veterans’ Commissioner. This session will be rescheduled for a date in June.

Phillip Brett welcomed the recent decision by Belfast City Council to adopt the Armed Forces Covenant.

7. Safeguarding Board Northern Ireland – Written Briefing

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Safeguarding Board regarding safeguarding within religious and state institutions and the Interfaith Committee.

Stewart Dickson joined the meeting online at 2.25pm

Members expressed some considerable concerns at the disjointed nature of safeguarding for this sector and the absence of signposting for victims of spiritual abuse.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek the views of a member of the Interfaith Clerical Abuse Survivors in relation to its recommendations around safeguarding.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department regarding the TEO research and recommendations on Historical Clerical Childhood Abuse, and to request again that these be shared with the Committee to enable meaningful scrutiny alongside victims and survivors.

8. Gaps into Equality Legislation – Updated Draft Final Report

Agreed: The Committee agreed for RalSe officials to sit in the public gallery for the session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into closed session for this item of business.

The meeting continued in closed session at 2.30pm.

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into public session.

The meeting continued in public session at 2.44pm with the following Members present: Paula Bradshaw, Phillip Brett, Pam Cameron, Timothy Gaston, Áine Murphy Carál Ní Chuilín and Claire Sugden online.

The Clerk provided an update on the agreed actions from the previous session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration for a further week and to share examples of minority reports from the Assembly and the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee.

9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee considered a response from the TEO to the Committee's correspondence of 20 March 2026 following the introductory briefing with the Commissioner for the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression and the two Language Commissioners.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Northern Ireland Office to ask for an update on the grant making function of the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression as the commencement of any further provisions under the Identity and Language (NI) Act 2022, is a matter for it.

- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly regarding any potential opportunities to engage with Committee scrutiny work during this final year of the mandate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Committee team to respond to the Youth Assembly Manager highlighting that Ending Violence against Women and Girls is a potential opportunity to engage with the Committee before the end of the mandate.

- iv. The Committee considered a response from TEO to the Committee's correspondence of 27 February 2026, requesting further information following the Introductory Briefing from the new Commissioner for Public Appointments and specifically the review of the 1995 Order, the appointment of independent assessors, the Commissioners time commitment and TEO unregulated appointments including oversight of the Commissioner.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to TEO to ask that the Committee is kept informed when the list of bodies regulated by CPANI is updated, and to receive updates on the progress of the Prerogative Order and the list of TEO unregulated appointments going forward.

- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Open College Network Northern Ireland to share a recently commissioned research on cross-cutting Executive priorities, including inclusion, equality of opportunity, and long-term societal and economic well-being.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an informal meeting with the Chair and Deputy Chair in the first instance.

- vi. The Committee noted a response from the Minister for the Constitution and EU Relations to the Committee's correspondence of 27 February 2026 requesting an update on EU relations.
- vii. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to the Committee's correspondence of 4 April 2026 regarding departmental work on the EVAWG Strategy.

- viii. The Committee noted a response from Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to the Committee's correspondence of 4 April 2026 in relation to departmental work on the EVAWG Strategy.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from NIA Legal Services – 62nd Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules. There are no rules for the attention of this Committee.
- x. The Committee noted a response from the Committee for Infrastructure to the Committee's correspondence on 27 February 2026 regarding the Windsor Framework and wider EU issues.
- xi. The Committee noted a TEO news release – First Minister and deputy First Minister launch of a second Ending Violence against Women and Girls Delivery Plan.
- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from the NIA Business Office - Partnership Agreement Between the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission and TEO.
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the 2025-26 Public Expenditure Outturn and Forecast Outturn March position.
- xiv. The Committee noted a TEO news release – First and deputy First Minister condemn attack on Dunmurry police station.

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 oral briefing from the new TEO Permanent Secretary and from Departmental officials on the response to module 2 report of the Covid Inquiry. The Committee will also consider a Retention and Disposal Schedule for TEO.

The Committee also noted an update from the Assistant Clerk regarding the potential update to the agenda for next week's meeting to include an additional session on the

Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill may be scheduled for next week's meeting, subject to confirmation of Consideration Stage.

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

11. Any Other Business

Carál Ní Chuilín referred to a possible conflict of interest regarding the covid inquiry report and indicated that she was to seek the advice of the Clerk of Standards and Privileges.

A number of Members strongly welcomed the Final Stage of the Sign Language Bill and highlighted the significance of this milestone for the deaf community.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Communities and the Communities Committee to thank them for their work in recognising Sign Language and advancing this important legislation.

Timothy Gaston updated Members that he attended an event organised by Politics in Action with Ballycastle High School and Cross and Passion College which focused on tackling Violence against Women and Girls and suggested that they provide evidence to the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Politics in Action to request an update on the issues discussed during the event, including similar events held with schools in other constituencies across Northern Ireland with a view to taking evidence from a number of schools.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 6 May 2026 at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 2.54pm.

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office

Wednesday 6 May 2026