



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings Wednesday

4 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

Online:

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Apologies:

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

In Attendance: Mr Nick Mitford (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Aoife Keating-Fitzpatrick (Snr Assist 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.

Apologies

As above.

1. Declarations of Interest

Pam Cameron joined the meeting at 2.02pm.

Timothy Gaston raised an issue in relation to a PSNI inquiry about the Chairperson and the First Minister.

The Clerk updated Members that the Commission has an established protocol in dealing with enquiries by the PSNI, and following legal advice, acted in accordance with that protocol. Members are not routinely advised of PSNI requests. The Clerk also highlighted that the information sought by the PSNI was from the Assembly Commission, not the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for Jonathan McMillan, Head of Legal Services, Northern Ireland Assembly to join the meeting.

The official joined the meeting at 2.07pm.

The official provided clarification regarding the Assembly Commission's involvement in requests for information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request the protocol from Assembly Legal Services in relation to requests for information and to circulate this to Members.

The official left the meeting at 2.14pm.

3. Chairperson's Business

There were no items of Chairpersons Business.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 28 January 2026.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 Invitation to attend HIA memorial event.

The Chairperson advised Members that an invite has been received from the Speaker's Office in relation to the unveiling of the HIA memorial plaque in Parliament Buildings on Friday 20 February 2026 at 12.00pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item.

6. First Minister and deputy First Minister: Oral Briefing

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

The witnesses joined the meeting at 2.15pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Michelle O'Neill, First Minister, The Executive Office
- Emma Little-Pengelly, deputy First Minister, The Executive Office

The witnesses provided an update on the Programme for Government and Ending Violence against Women and Girls.

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

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

The witnesses left the meeting at 3.19pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First and deputy First Minister in relation to the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding future oral briefings, stating that additional time must be allocated for these sessions with the Committee in future.

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

The meeting was suspended at 3.20pm.

The meeting resumed in open session at 3.27pm.

7. Draft Budget and December Monitoring – Departmental Officials : Oral Briefing

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

The witnesses joined the meeting at 3.27pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Ronan Murtagh, Finance Director, The Executive Office

- Paula Shearer, Head of Budgeting Branch, The Executive Office

The witnesses provided an update on the Draft Budget and December Monitoring.

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

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

Áine Murphy left the meeting at 3.38pm and returned at 3.38pm.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 3.40pm and returned at 3.42pm.

Áine Murphy left the meeting at 3.44pm.

Phillip Brett declared an interest in relation to the Victim's Payment Scheme having a parent in receipt of the scheme.

Phillip Brett also declared an interest in relation to the Language Commissioners, as the Ulster Scots and British Tradition Commissioner previously worked as his election manager.

The witnesses left the meeting at 4.17pm.

8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee noted an invitation from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to attend their Annual Human Rights Lecture 2026 on 26 February 2026 at the Bar Library, in the Royal Courts of Justice, Belfast.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly - Outcome of the First Youth Assembly Plenary of the Third Mandate.
- iv. The Committee noted a news release from TEO – Executive statement on Local Growth Fund.

- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Examiner of Statutory Rules - Fifty-fourth Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules. There are no rules for the attention of this Committee.
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance - Hansard report on the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill from the TEO evidence session on 21 January 2026.
- vii. The Committee noted a TEO News Release from TEO - O&S Doors to turn dust into power in a £9 million 'first of its kind' investment.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance - 2025 – 26 Public Expenditure Outturn and Forecast Outturn: November and December positions.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from Pivotal - Two years of the restored Northern Ireland Executive report.

9. 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 Introductory briefings from the new Commissioner for Victims and Survivors and the Chief Scientific and Technology Adviser.

The Committee will also receive oral briefings from Assembly Research and Information Services (RaISE) on Reconciliation and an updated paper on Legacy in the Republic of Ireland.

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

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 11 February at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.21pm.

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office

Wednesday 4 February 2026