



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 27 May 2026

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Phillip Brett MLA

Ms Deborah Erskine MLA

Ms Áine Murphy MLA

Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Online:

Mr Timothy Gaston MLA

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

Apologies:

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

In Attendance: Mr Trevor Allen (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Feargal McGuinness (Assembly Clerk)
Aoife Keating-Fitzpatrick (Snr Assistant 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 indicated above.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson welcomed Deborah Erskine to the Committee noting that she has replaced Pam Cameron.

Phillip Brett joined the meeting at 2.01pm.

3.1 Katie's Trust – Safeguarding and Governance Concerns

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into closed session.

The meeting moved into closed session at 2.00pm.

Proceedings continued in public session at 2.05pm with the following Members present: Paula Bradshaw, Stewart Dickson, Phillip Brett, Deborah Erskine, Áine Murphy and Carál Ní Chuilín. Claire Sugden and Timothy Gaston online.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond to the individual, advising that the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland is the independent regulator of charities and that any complaints should be directed to them. Also, that any future meeting requests will be considered by the Committee as and when they are received. The previously scheduled meeting on 17 June 2026 to discuss Ending Violence against Women and Girls will no longer go ahead.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 20 May 2026.

5. Matters Arising

There were no Matters Arising.

6. Oral Briefing – Bill Procedures

The official joined the meeting at 2.06pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into closed session.

The meeting moved into closed session at 2.06pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Dr Frank Geddis, Clerk Assistant, Bill Office and Committees

Dr Geddis declared an interest in relation to the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill and that a family member is involved in work on the Bill within TEO.

The official briefed the Committee on the procedures in place for the Bill Office advising the Office of the Speaker.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the official for his attendance.

The official left the meeting at 2.32pm.

7. Oral Briefing: Departmental officials – Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill

The officials joined the meeting at 2.33pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Martin Carey, Truth Recovery Programme Director, TEO
- Francesca Murray, Head of Inquiry Team, TEO
- Stephanie Higbee, Truth Recovery Programme, TEO

The officials briefed the Committee on the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill.

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

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 2.56pm and returned at 2.59pm.

The officials left the meeting at 3.01pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Bill Clerk to join the session.

The Bill Clerk briefed the Committee on the Further Consideration Stage of the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill.

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

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

The meeting was suspended at 3:05pm.

Proceedings continued in public session at 3.16pm with the following Members present: Paula Bradshaw, Stewart Dickson, Phillip Brett, Deborah Erskine, Áine Murphy and Carál Ní Chuilín. Claire Sugden and Timothy Gaston online.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek legal advice on alternative posthumous eligibility dates, in particular 1952/1953, having regard to the potential breach of the Ministry of Home Affairs Voluntary Homes Regulations (1952) and to consider implications in relation to Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Article 1 of Protocol No. 12.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to confirm that it is working with Gerry Carroll MLA on the final wording of his amendments ahead of Further Consideration Stage of the Bill.

8. Oral Briefing: Stakeholder Panel Session - Draft Framework Race Relations and Delivery Plan 2026-2028

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

The witnesses joined the meeting at 3.32pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Lili Wu, Managing Director, Chinese Welfare Association (online)
- Jamie Miller, Head of Policy & Development, Housing Rights NI
- Liz Griffith, Head of Migration Justice, Law Centre NI
- Fidelma Fearon, Fundraising, Evaluation and Policy Lead, Minority Ethnic Support, Armagh

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the TEO Draft Framework for Race Relations and Delivery Plan 2026-2028.

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

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

Carál Ní Chuilín left the meeting at 3.48pm and returned at 3.53pm.

The witnesses left the meeting at 4.37pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Housing Rights NI to ask for further information from its casework on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), including the need for such accommodation, particularly in relation to minority ethnic communities, and to request its views on what should replace Intimidation Points within the Northern Ireland Housing Executive system.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Law Centre NI to request that any comments they submit to the Draft Framework for Race Relations and associated Delivery Plan 2026–2028 consultation, particularly in relation to legal protections on race relations, are also shared with the Committee.

9. Oral Briefing: Stakeholder Panel Session - Draft Framework Race Relations and Delivery Plan 2026-2028

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

The witnesses joined the meeting at 4.38pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Dr Nisha Tandon OBE, CEO, ArtsEkta
- Ann Marie White, Refugee Support Operations Manager, British Red Cross
- Dr Lilian Seenoi-Barr, CEO, NW Migrants Forum
- Daniel Holder, Director, The Committee on the Administration of Justice

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the TEO Draft Framework for Race Relations and Delivery Plan 2026-2028.

Áine Murphy left the meeting at 4.44pm and returned at 4.47pm.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 4.46pm and returned at 4.49pm.

Claire Sugden left the meeting at 5.10pm.

Timothy Gaston left the meeting at 5.59pm.

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

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

Phillip Brett and Deborah Erskine put on record their concerns that elements of the panel session became overly political in nature due to the contributions of some witnesses.

The witnesses left the meeting at 6.04pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to The Committee on the Administration of Justice to request a copy of the two published reports referred to during the session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an update regarding the publication of the first report on the Refugee Integration Strategy.

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.
- ii. The Committee considered a response from the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression (OICE) to the Committee's correspondence of 18 May 2026 regarding the establishment of the Castlereagh Foundation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to write to the Department to request an update on discussions between NIO and TEO in relation to the Castlereagh Foundation and to highlight the need to continue to press NIO to progress the commencement of the necessary legislation to enable OICE to carry out its functions in full. The Committee also agreed to highlight its concerns around adequate staffing for the Office.

- iii. The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Health to the Committee's correspondence on 24 April 2026 requesting information on the Programme for Government funding and specifically how much of this has been spent on the private sector in efforts to tackle waiting lists.

The Committee noted this item.

- iv. The Committee noted that a written statement has issued on the publication of the first Annual Report on the Programme for Government (PfG).

Phillip Brett put on record that he felt the statement should have been an oral statement to the House, and not a written statement.

- v. The Committee considered a response from the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) to the Committee's correspondence of 15 May 2026 requesting further information regarding its community and voluntary partners and demographic research.

The Committee noted this item.

- vi. The Committee considered a response from the First Minister and deputy First Minister to the Committee's correspondence on 24 April 2026 in relation to Historical Clerical Child Abuse (HCCA).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and to write to the Department to ask whether 'spiritual abuse' is being considered as part of the TEO Research and Recommendations, and to request information on the pathways available for reporting such abuse.

- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding guidance to Departments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to invite Departmental officials to come before the Committee to provide an overview of the TEO Contingency Planning Envelopes in the absence of an agreed budget.

- viii. The Committee noted a Hansard Report of 13 May 2026 - Victims' Payments Scheme: Victims' Payments Board.
- ix. The Committee noted a Hansard Report of 13 May 2026 - Victims' Payments Scheme and Victims' Support Programme: Commission for Victims and Survivors and Victims & Survivors Service.

- x. The Committee noted the 65th Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules. There are no rules for the attention of this Committee.
- xi. The Committee noted a Written Ministerial Statement dated 20 May 2026 from First Minister and deputy First Minister on the publication of the Covid-19 Inquiry Reports for Modules 3 and 4.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to write to the Department to request an update on when the Executive response to Modules 3 and 4 of the COVID-19 Inquiry will be published.

- xii. The Committee noted a response from the Minister for Communities to the Committee's correspondence of 27 March 2026 regarding Ending Violence Against Women and Girls and its update on departmental work.
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding Equality Impact Assessments and cross departmental co-operation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this item and agreed to write to the Head of the Civil Service request an oral briefing on Equality Impact Assessments and cross departmental co-operation.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the draft forward work programme.

The Committee considered the scheduled briefings for 27 May 2026 from Departmental officials on the Delegated Legislation and Shadow Redress Service for the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill. Other scheduled briefings include the Migrants' Rights Network on Immigration Raids and Assembly Legal Services on Freedom of Information (Fol) requests and alternative posthumous dates in relation to the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reschedule the 17 June oral briefing from Queen's University Belfast on the 'Prevalence and Impact of Adverse Childhood

Experiences in Northern Ireland' to Wednesday 9 September 2026, in order to accommodate an oral briefing from the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR).

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 Wednesday 3 June 2026 at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 6.07pm.

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Executive Office

Wednesday 3 June 2026