Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for The Executive Office

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 21 October 2026

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:	Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA (Chairperson)
	Mr Stewart Dickson MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
	Mr Phillip Brett MLA
	Ms Sinéad Ennis MLA
	Ms Deborah Erskine MLA
	Mr Timothy Gaston MLA
	Ms Sinéad McLauglin MLA
	Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
Online:	Ms Claire Sugden MLA
Apologies:	None

In Attendance: Mr Nick Mitford (Assembly Clerk)

Ms Aoife Keating Fitzpatrick (Senior Assistant Clerk)

Ms Sarah-Anne McKinley (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Mr Jonathan Lawless (Clerical Supervisor)

Ms Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm in public session.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Declarations of Interest

Claire Sugden declared a standing interest, as Bill Sponsor in relation to agenda item 8.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Informal Meeting note - Strong Safe Aware NI

The Chairperson advised Members that together with the Committee Clerk she met with Strong Safe Aware NI on Wednesday 14 November 2026 to discuss the work of the organisation in relation to Ending Violence against Women & Girls (EVAWG).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for details of any relevant departmental contacts best placed to assist Strong Safe Aware NI in developing its work in conjunction with EVAWG.

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the Clerk to provide details of any relevant organisations that Strong Safe Aware NI may wish to engage with regarding future opportunities and collaboration.

3.2 Meeting, Mapping and Moving – Ballymena Recovering Report

The Chairperson advised Members that a report convened by Radius Housing and written by Involve was published on Thursday 15 October 2026 following the disorder that took place in Ballymena in June 2025.

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

- What actions has TEO taken, or does it plan to take, in response to the report's findings and recommendations.
- How the Department intends to incorporate the report's recommendations into its Good Relations and T:BUC programmes in the area going forward.
- To highlight the need for Race Relations legislation in light of the report's findings and to outline the specific reasons for its delay.

3.3 Individual - International Commission on Missing Persons: Milltown Cemetery

The Chairperson advised Members that they had received correspondence from an individual requesting that the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) visit Northern Ireland to assist families in relation to a number of sites, including burial grounds at Milltown Cemetery.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask whether it has received any correspondence regarding the alleged destruction of mother and baby graves at Milltown. Also to ask whether the Department has engaged with the ICMP on any assistance it may be able to provide and, if not, to consider engaging with ICMP to outline how the organisation could assist where necessary.

3.4 PEACEPLUS - Change Maker Funding Programme

The Chairperson advised Members that PEACEPLUS Change Maker Funding Programme has opened for applications. There will be further calls later this year, seeking projects that will address the following areas: Ending Violence against Women & Girls; reducing racial tensions; early interventions to avoid young people

becoming homeless; community activity to help clean up Lough Neagh; and using art as a medium for community cohesion.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask how projects are selected across TEO's policy areas for the PEACEPLUS Change Maker Funding.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 14 October 2026.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 Informal Meeting – Truth Recovery Independent Panel

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee held an informal meeting with the Truth Recovery Independent Panel on 13 October 2026 to hear about the findings of its Final Report, which was published on 7 July 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Department of Health to ask whether any adoption agencies have closed, or are expected to close, in advance of the opening of the Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to let the Truth Recovery Independent Panel know when the Committee launches it Call for Views regarding the Delegated Legislation for the Inquiry Rules and Regulations.

6. Oral Briefing: First and deputy First Minister

The witnesses joined the meeting at 2.03pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

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

The witnesses provided an oral briefing on the work of The Executive Office.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance.

The First Minister left the meeting at 3.02pm.

The deputy First Minister left the meeting at 3.08pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister to request that they attend a Committee meeting before the Christmas recess and to attend the meeting for a minimum of 90 minutes to allow sufficient time to facilitate detailed scrutiny regarding TEO policies and priorities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Committee Clerk would seek advice on the level of privilege afforded to Committee proceedings and also to clarify the relevant rules and procedures regarding circumstances where the First Minister leaves a Committee meeting, leaving the deputy First Minister in attendance.

Members congratulated Phillipp Brett on the birth of his daughter.

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

The meeting was suspended at 3:13pm.

Phillip Brett left the meeting at 3.14pm.

Timothy Gaston left the meeting at 3.14pm and joined online at 3.20pm.

Proceedings resumed in open session at 3.20pm with the following Members present: Paula Bradshaw, Stewart Dickson, Phillip Brett, Sinéad Ennis, Deborah Erskine, Sinéad McLaughlin, Carál Ní Chuilín and Claire Sugden and Timothy Gaston online.

7. Oral Briefing: Permanent Secretary - TEO 5 Year Business Plan

The officials joined the meeting at 3.20pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Moira Doherty, Permanent Secretary, TEO
- Paul Donnelly, Director, Finance, People & Planning Directorate, TEO
- Brenda Henderson, Director, Executive Services & International Relations Directorate, TEO

The officials provided an oral briefing on the TEO 5 Year Departmental Business Plan.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Sinéad Ennis left the meeting at 3.42pm and returned at 3.45pm.

Deborah Erksine, Sinéad Ennis and Carál Ní Chuilín declared an interest as Members of the AERC Committee.

Stewart Dickson left the meeting at 4.06pm and returned at 4.09pm.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The officials left the meeting at 4.10pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Permanent Secretary to request the following information:

- A written update on the review of TEO's Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs), including which ALBs have been reviewed, the findings of those reviews, which ALBs remain outstanding, and the timeline for completion.
- An update on the review of TEO's grant funding streams, including the timescales for completion.
- Information on the data held in relation to the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Strategy, including work being undertaken to establish a centralised database.
- Details of work commissioned by the Department from consultancy firms, including a breakdown of outsourced projects and associated costs.

- Information on how work relating to the Historical Clerical Childhood Abuse (HCCA) will be progressed following the recommendations contained within the three research reports, including next steps to be taken.
- Details of any underspend relating to the Racial Integration Strategy, including a breakdown by council area of the funding allocated, spent and unspent.

8. Oral Briefing: Assembly Bill Office

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into closed session.

The Committee moved into closed session at 4.18pm.

The official joined the meeting at 4.18pm.

Carál Ní Chuilín left the meeting at 4.19pm and returned at 4.22pm.

Members received an oral briefing from:

- Stephen Orme, Bill Clerk, Assembly Bill Office

The official provided an oral briefing on the Age Discrimination (Goods, Facilities and Services) Bill and the Committee Stage of the Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the official for his attendance.

The official left the meeting at 4.34pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into open session.

Proceedings resumed in open session at 4.35pm with the following Members present: Paula Bradshaw, Stewart Dickson, Sinéad Ennis, Deborah Erskine, Sinéad McLaughlin, Carál Ní Chuilín and Claire Sugden online.

9. Correspondence

i. The Committee noted the summary of Committee correspondence.

ii. The Committee considered correspondence from Queen's University Belfast regarding its Body Donation Programme.

The Committee noted this item.

iii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual in relation to the prolonged delay in the Ministry of Defence providing records required for an application under the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) for their consideration.

iv. The Committee considered a response from the First Minister and deputy First Minister to its correspondence of 10 September 2026 regarding the role of the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse.

The Committee noted this item.

v. The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Health to its correspondence of 10 September 2026 in relation to waiting times for children who are victims of childhood sexual abuse.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health to request details of the full evaluation of the CADRE model in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust and to ask whether there are any plans to extend the CADRE pilot to other Health and Social Care Trusts across Northern Ireland.

vi. The Committee considered further correspondence from an individual regarding Ministry of Defence perceived administrative maladministration.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to Committee for Health and the Committee for Communities as issues raised relate to both Departments.

vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance in relation to Departmental Budget briefings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the briefing paper from last week's meeting on the TEO budget position to the Committee for Finance.

viii. The Committee noted a Hansard Report - Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill – Inquiry Rules and Regulations: Executive Office 7 October 2026.

ix. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Department of Finance to the Committee for Finance regarding the procurement of replacement contract for the supply of agency staff.

x. The Committee noted correspondence from NIA Legal Services - The 75th report from the Examiner of Statutory Rules. There are no rules for the attention of this Committee.

xi. The Committee noted correspondence from The Executive Office in relation to the extension of the public consultation on the Draft Northern Ireland Artificial Intelligence Strategy.

xii. The Committee noted a response from the Minister for Communities to its correspondence of 10 September 2026 to request further information on the books relating to consent that are currently available to young people through public libraries and through the Sure Start programme.

xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the NIA Business Office - NI Judicial Appointments Commission (NIJAC) Annual Reports and Accounts 2025-26.

xiv. The Committee noted a response from the NIO its correspondence of 10 September 2026 regarding the Age Discrimination (Goods, Facilities and Services) Bill.

xv. The Committee noted a response from The Executive Office to its correspondence of 25 June 2026 requesting further information on the Programme for Government First Annual Report.

xvi. The Committee noted a response from the PSNI to its correspondence of 11 September 2026 in relation to the Christian Family Centre in Armoy.

xvii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Justice to The Executive Office regarding Protective Mothers NI: Executive priorities regarding family justice & domestic and sexual abuse.

xviii. The Committee noted a research report from the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People - ‘Rights Without Borders.’

xix. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Department of Finance to the Committee for Finance regarding Departmental 5 Year Plans.

xx. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from The Dromore Group to the Minister for Finance in relation to the costs of childhood sexual abuse.

xxi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the Department of Finance’s response to the Prevalence and Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Northern Ireland.

xxii. The Committee noted a response from the Victims’ Payment Board to its correspondence of 8 October 2026 in relation to applications to the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme.

xxiii. The Committee noted correspondence from Voice and Justice Alliance regarding the publication of Meet, Map, Move: Ballymena Recovering Report.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the draft forward work programme.

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

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

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

The meeting was adjourned at 4.41pm.

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Chairperson, Committee for The Executive Office

Wednesday 21 October 2026