



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Justice

Minutes of Proceedings

THURSDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2024

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present:

Joanne Bunting MLA (Chairperson)

Deirdre Hargey MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Maurice Bradley MLA

Stephen Dunne MLA

Ciara Ferguson MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Doug Beattie MLA

Stewart Dickson MLA

Justin McNulty MLA

Apologies:

Sinéad Ennis MLA

In Attendance: Caroline Perry (Assembly Clerk)
Thomas McKillop (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Jonny Redpath (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mark McConnell (Clerical Supervisor)
Aaron Pakenham (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.10pm in open session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the oral evidence sessions with Department of Justice officials on the Justice Bill and on the Budget and October Monitoring Round would be recorded by Hansard.

Deirdre Hargey declared an interest in relation to an immediate family member who works for the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service.

Joanne Bunting declared an interest in relation to an immediate family member who works in the legal profession.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 19 June 2024.

3. Matters Arising

The Committee was advised that Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland's report on its inspection of the effectiveness of Criminal Court administration in Northern Ireland that was included in the meeting pack had been withdrawn due to

errors and was relaid in the Business Office. The updated version was included in the tabled pack.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Justice to ask for a written update on what steps the Department intends to take based on the recommendations of the report.

4. Justice Bill: Department of Justice

Maura Campbell, senior sponsor of the Bill; Andrew Lavery, Bill manager; Lisa Boal, Reducing Offending Division; Veronica Holland, deputy director of the Rehabilitation and Reducing Reoffending Directorate; Therese Murphy, Policing, HR and Pensions Division; Emma Crozier, Head of the Violence Against the Person Branch; and Steven Allison, Head of the Enabling Access to Justice Division; joined the meeting at 2.12pm.

Doug Beattie joined the meeting at 3.01pm.

The oral evidence was followed by a question-and-answer session, during which Committee Members asked questions about a number of issues, including financial resources to deliver the policy intentions of the Bill; whether robust consultations had taken place; human rights compliance; regulation-making powers; and provisions to be added at Consideration Stage.

The witnesses advised the Committee that a need to table an amendment to a provision in Part 1 of the Bill as introduced has been identified.

The witnesses agreed to provide further information on a number of issues raised, including, within the next two weeks, a delegated powers memorandum.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked officials for their attendance and they left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission the Examiner of Statutory Rules to scrutinise the Bill's delegated powers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that all Bill-related documents will be published on the Committee's web page.

5. Budget update and October Monitoring Round: Department of Justice

Deborah Brown, Director of Justice Delivery; Richard Logan, Head of the Financial Services Division; and Andrea Quail, Head of Financial Planning, Strategy and Support, joined the meeting at 4.39pm.

The witnesses provided an update on the Department of Justice's budget and on the October Monitoring Round.

The Deputy Chairperson took the Chair at 4.40pm.

The Chairperson took the Chair at 4.46pm.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The witnesses agreed to provide further information on a number of issues.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their attendance and they left the meeting.

6. SL1 — The Payment and Electronic Money Institution Insolvency Rules (Northern Ireland) 2024

The Committee considered a proposal for a Statutory Rule under Article 359(1C) of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 to set out the procedural rules for a special administration procedure for payment and electronic money institutions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Department's paper to the Committee for the Economy and the Committee for Finance.

7. Police Pensions (Amendment No.2) Regulations 2024 — consultation — Department of Justice written paper

The Committee noted a written paper from the Department of Justice regarding its intention to consult on a proposal to amend the Police Pensions Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

8. “Charlotte’s Law” — Report on consultation responses and the way forward — Department of Justice written paper

The Committee noted a written paper from the Department of Justice containing an overview of the responses to and proposed way forward on its consultation on Charlotte’s Law.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Justice regarding the human rights implications of the proposed legislation, to request an assessment of the effectiveness of “Helen’s Law”, potential options for implementation and information on any legal advice that was sought.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the updated Forward Work Programme.

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Justice regarding its intention to publish a joint press statement with the Department of Health and the Department of Education on a child criminal exploitation action plan.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Justice to ask for information on whether the action plan will be linked to the ongoing work being conducted by The Executive Office.

- ii. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Justice regarding airsoft gun usage in relation to legislation in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Department's response to Sammy Wilson MP and to forward another expected response from the Department on this matter to him when it is received.

The Committee noted the following:

- iii. correspondence from the Department of Justice regarding the publication of research bulletins on 'Perceptions of Paramilitarism in Northern Ireland';
- iv. correspondence from the Department of Justice regarding a publication notice on 'Northern Ireland Youth Justice Agency Annual Workload Statistics 2023-24'; and
- v. a response from the Youth Justice Agency regarding trauma-informed practice case studies.

11. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson updated the Committee on an informal meeting that they held with the Independent Reporting Commission, including the British and Irish Government's planned next phase for this work.

The Chairperson advised members that she and the Deputy Chairperson have received an invitation to hold an informal meeting with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson should attend on behalf of the Committee.

12. Any Other Business

Justin McNulty informed the Committee that the new personal injury discount rate has been set at 0.5% and congratulated the Committee for its work on this matter.

The Committee was reminded that it can discuss the implications of this during its meeting with the Association of British Insurers.

13. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

Members were informed that the next Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday 3 October 2024 at the earlier time of 1.30pm in Room 30. Members were reminded that the Committee will consider its approach to the Committee Stage of the Justice Bill at this meeting.

The Meeting was adjourned at 5.30pm.

Joanne Bunting MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Justice