



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Justice

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 18 June 2026

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Emma Sheerin MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Doug Beattie MLA
Maurice Bradley MLA
Connie Egan MLA
Brian Kingston MLA
Patsy McGlone MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Ciara Ferguson MLA
Aoife Finnegan MLA

Apologies: Paul Frew MLA (Chairperson)

In Attendance: Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Thomas McKillop (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Gareth Black (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Paula Morrow (Clerical Supervisor)

Aaron Pakenham (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.01pm in public session with the Deputy Chairperson in the Chair.

Agreed: That the oral evidence sessions with the Public Prosecution Service and the PSNI on the Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill will be recorded by Hansard.

Patsy McGlone joined the meeting at 2.02pm.

Connie Egan declared an interest in relation to items 4 and 5 of the agenda due to her fiancé being a victim of crime and having an open case with the Public Prosecution Service.

The Deputy Chairperson noted that several Committee Members are members of the All Party Group on Access to Justice.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 11 June 2026.

3. Matters Arising

Members noted that Jonny's Law had inadvertently been left of the list of issues raised in evidence which are not in the Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill which had been considered at last week's meeting. However, it was included in the correspondence sent to the Department requesting information on any consideration that is being given or policy work undertaken in respect of those matters.

4. Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill – Public Prosecution Service oral evidence

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2.05pm:

Michael Agnew, Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions;
Richard Scullion, Head of Policy and Information; and
Cathy McGalie, Principal Public Prosecutor, Policy and Information Unit

The witnesses provided oral evidence on the Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill.

The oral evidence was followed by a question-and-answer session.

Aoife Finnegan joined the meeting at 2.32pm.

Maurice Bradley joined the meeting at 2.32pm.

The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the witnesses and they left the meeting at 3.16pm.

Agreed: That the Addendum to the Public Prosecution Service's Response to the Call for Evidence on the Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill, which raises a number of queries

regarding the provisions at Part 3 of the Bill relating to life sentences for murder cases, be forwarded to the Department of Justice for a response to the points raised.

5. Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill – Police Service of Northern Ireland oral evidence

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 3.17pm:

Gary McDonald, Chief Superintendent, PSNI;
Louise Cummings, Chief Inspector, PSNI; and
Paddy Mullan, Chief Inspector, PSNI.

The witnesses provided oral evidence on the Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill.

The oral evidence was followed by a question-and-answer session.

During the evidence session, the witnesses agreed to provide the Committee with follow-up information on:

- Data on crimes against public workers, categorised by sector and type of public worker;
- Numbers of PSNI Officers injured during the recent incidents of violence and anti-social behaviour; and
- Any specific offences that the PSNI consider have received unduly lenient sentences in recent years.

The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the witnesses and they left the meeting at 3.59pm.

6. AccessNI – Annual Performance Report 2025-2026 – Department of Justice written paper

The Committee noted a paper from the Department of Justice providing a copy of AccessNI's Performance and Activity Report for 2025/26.

Members agreed to consider agenda item 12 next.

7. New Strategy to Reduce Offending and Reoffending – Call for views

The Committee noted a paper from the Department of Justice advising that a Call for Views to support the development of a new long-term strategy to reduce offending and reoffending will be issued today, 18 June 2026.

8. Correspondence

The Committee considered the following items of correspondence:

- Responses from the Department of Justice and the PSNI to the Committee's request for information on gold mining in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: To ask the Information Commissioner's Office for a copy of the information requested by the Information Commissioner from the PSNI on 22 May 2020 regarding gold mining in Northern Ireland.

- Correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs requesting views on the Areas with Natural Constraints (Payments) Bill.

Agreed: To provide a nil response to the AERA Committee.

- A response from the Commissioner Designate for Victims of Crime in relation to recent correspondence to the Committee from an individual on post-separation economic abuse and whether the matters raised by the individual will be considered by the cross-departmental Task and Finish Group established by the Commissioner.

Agreed: To forward the response from the Commissioner Designate and the original correspondence to the Department of Justice for a response to the issues raised.

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- Minister of Justice – Agency arrangements – notification of the intention for the Department to authorise the requisition of land at the Invest NI site, Forthriver Business Park, Springfield Road, Belfast.
- Department of Justice – Response to CJINI Report on the Year Three Review of the Effectiveness of Part 1 of the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021.
- Public Prosecution Service - Response to CJINI Report on the Year Three Review of the Effectiveness of Part 1 of the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021.
- PSNI - Response to CJINI Report on the Year Three Review of the Effectiveness of Part 1 of the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021
- Department of Education - Response to request for information on the number of parents currently being prosecuted in relation to non-attendance.
- Independent Monitoring Board - 2025 Independent Monitoring Board National Annual Report.
- Pivotal - Improving the institutions: suggested reforms to the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive – Report.

- An individual - Further correspondence regarding an ongoing personal matter.
- An individual - Further correspondence regarding personal case.

9. Forward Work Programme

9.1 Committee's Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the latest draft of the Committee's forward work programme.

Agreed: To schedule additional meetings on 22 September, 29 September and 6 October, to receive oral evidence on the Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill.

Agreed: To schedule an oral evidence session with Ms Pauline Duddy on the Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill in relation to Jasmine's Law.

Agreed: To schedule an oral evidence session with the Equality Coalition on the Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill.

Members noted that, due to the Final Stage of the Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill scheduled to take place 30 June 2026, the Committee for the Executive Office had recently agreed to defer the concurrent meeting with the Committee for Justice on the Abuse of Position for Sexual Purposes by PSNI Officers, which had been scheduled for that morning.

Agreed: That the concurrent meeting with the Committee for the Executive Office on the Abuse of Position

for Sexual Purposes by PSNI Officers, scheduled for 30 June 2026, be postponed.

10. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's business.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

Members were advised that the next meeting will take place on Thursday 25 June at 2.00pm in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.08pm.

Paul Frew MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Justice
25 June 2026