



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

11 December 2025

Meeting Location: Room 30

Present:

Ciara Ferguson MLA (Chairperson)

Steve Aiken MLA

Cathal Boylan MLA

Declan Kearney MLA

Peter Martin MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

David Brooks MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Jonathan Buckley MLA

Kate Nicholl MLA

Eóin Tennyson MLA

Apologies:

None.

In Attendance:

Chris Dickison, Senior Assistant Clerk

Jessica Jacques, Senior Assistant Clerk

Oliver Bellew, Assistant Clerk

Sean McCann, Assistant Clerk

Carla Campbell, Clerical Supervisor

Shelley Garner, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 10.05am in closed session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Regulation (EU) 2025/2439 amending Regulation (EU) 2024/2865 as regards dates of application and transitional provisions – Legal Advice

Caroline Byers, Legal Adviser, Assembly Legal Services, joined the meeting at 10.06am.

The Committee considered a notification from the Cabinet Office in relation to the following published replacement EU act:

Regulation (EU) 2025/2439 amending Regulation (EU) 2024/2865 as regards dates of application and transitional provisions.

The Legal Adviser provided advice on whether it appears likely that the published replacement act differs significantly (in whole or in part) from the content or scope of the EU act it is amending/replacing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to continue its consideration of the published replacement EU act in public session.

The Legal Adviser remained in the meeting for agenda item 4.

4. COM/2025/652 Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 as regards certain obligations of operators and traders – Legal Advice

The Committee considered a notification from the Cabinet Office in relation to the following proposed replacement EU act:

COM/2025/652 Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 as regards certain obligations of operators and traders.

The Legal Adviser provided advice on whether it appears likely that the proposed replacement EU act differs significantly (in whole or in part) from the content or scope of the EU act it is amending/replacing.

A question and answer session followed.

The Legal Adviser left the meeting at 10.20am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to continue its consideration of the proposed replacement EU act in public session.

The Committee moved into public session at 10.21am.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2025.

6. Matters Arising

None.

Eóin Tennyson MLA joined the meeting at 10.22am.

7. Regulation (EU) 2025/2439 amending Regulation (EU) 2024/2865 as regards dates of application and transitional provisions – Departmental Oral Evidence

The Committee continued its consideration of Regulation (EU) 2025/2439 amending Regulation (EU) 2024/2865 as regards dates of application and transitional provisions.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Cabinet Office regarding its assessment of the published replacement EU act.

The following officials joined the meeting at 10.22am.

Mark McGregor - Head of Trade and Windsor Framework Branch, Department for the Economy

Dr Jennifer Stewart - Head of Firearms and Explosives Branch, Department of Justice

The officials gave oral evidence on Regulation (EU) 2025/2439.

A question and answer session followed.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The officials left the meeting at 10.29am.

The Committee noted that, in order to meet its statutory requirements, it must decide whether or not to hold an inquiry into the published replacement EU act.

The Committee had regard to:

- I. the legal advice on whether it appears likely that the replacement act significantly differs (in whole or in part) from the content or scope of the EU instrument which it amends or replaces, and
- II. the departmental assessments on whether it appears likely that the replacement act would have a significant impact specific to everyday life of communities in Northern Ireland in a way that is liable to persist.

Agreed: The Committee agreed not to hold an inquiry into the replacement EU act, pursuant to paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 6B to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The Committee noted that its decision will be published on the Committee webpage.

8. COM/2025/652 Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 as regards certain obligations of operators and traders – Departmental Oral Evidence

The Committee continued its consideration of the following proposed replacement EU act:

COM/2025/652 Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 as regards certain obligations of operators and traders.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Cabinet Office regarding the provision of an Explanatory Memorandum.

The following officials joined the meeting at 10.33am:

Catherine Fisher - Grade 5, Windsor Framework Implementation Directorate, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Matthew Carson - Grade 7, Windsor Framework Implementation Directorate, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

The officials gave oral evidence on the proposed replacement EU act.

A question and answer session followed.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The officials left the meeting at 10.46am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Chief Veterinary Officer to give evidence on the EU act, when it is published and notified to the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to monitor the progress of the proposed replacement EU act, pursuant to paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 6B to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The Committee noted that normally it would make requests to the Department and RaISe. However, given that the EU act is expected to be published by the end of the year, the Committee is unlikely to receive any updates.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask RaISe to inform the Secretariat in the usual way about developments regarding the proposed replacement EU act.

Kate Nicholl MLA left the meeting at 10.49am.

9. COM/2023/224 Proposal for a Regulation on compulsory licensing for crisis management and amending Regulation (EC) 816/2006

The Committee considered the proposed EU act: COM/2023/224 Proposal for a Regulation on compulsory licensing for crisis management and amending Regulation (EC) 816/2006.

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health to its request for an updated assessment of impact on the provisionally agreed text, and its query regarding access to medicines and vaccines produced in the UK.

The Committee noted legal advice on the provisionally agreed text of the proposed EU act.

- 10. COM/2025/822 Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulations (EC) No 1907/2006, (EC) No 1272/2008, (EU) No 528/2012, (EU) 2019/1021 and (EU) 2021/697 as regards defence readiness and facilitating defence investments and conditions for defence industry**
- 11. COM/2025/823 Proposal for a Directive amending Directives 2009/43/EC and 2009/81/EC, as regards the simplification of intra-EU transfers of defence-related products and the simplification of security and defence procurement**
- 12. COM/2025/553 Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 as regards the school fruit, vegetables and milk scheme ('EU school scheme'), sectoral interventions, the creation of a protein sector, requirements for hemp, the possibility for marketing standards for cheese, protein crops and meat, application of additional import duties, rules on the availability of supplies in time of emergencies and severe crisis and securities**

The Committee agreed to consider agenda items 10, 11 and 12 together.

The Committee considered the following proposed replacement EU acts:

COM/2025/822 Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulations (EC) No 1907/2006, (EC) No 1272/2008, (EU) No 528/2012, (EU) 2019/1021 and (EU) 2021/697 as regards defence readiness and facilitating defence investments and conditions for defence industry;

COM/2025/823 Proposal for a Directive amending Directives 2009/43/EC and 2009/81/EC, as regards the simplification of intra-EU transfers of defence-related products and the simplification of security and defence procurement; and,

COM/2025/553 Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 as regards the school fruit, vegetables and milk scheme ('EU school scheme'), sectoral interventions, the creation of a protein sector, requirements for hemp, the possibility for marketing standards for cheese, protein crops and meat, application of additional import

duties, rules on the availability of supplies in time of emergencies and severe crisis and securities.

Steve Aiken MLA declared an interest as Chairperson of the Assembly All-Party Group on Aerospace and Space.

The Deputy Chairperson declared an interest as Deputy Chairperson of the Assembly All-Party Group on Aerospace and Space.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request legal advice and initial departmental assessments of impact to help inform its decisions on whether to monitor the three proposed replacement EU acts.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that RalSe provide a short, focussed list of key representatives of businesses and civil society identified as being affected COM/2025/822 and COM/2025/823 (or who would be so affected if the acts enter into force). The Committee agreed to request the list include the following entities, along with other key representatives of businesses and civil society identified by RalSe:

- ADS Northern Ireland;
- Navantia UK;
- Airbus Belfast;
- Short Brothers, a Boeing Company; and
- Thales Air Defence Limited

13. Correspondence

13.1 The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs regarding veterinary medicines supply to Northern Ireland.

13.2 The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the UK Government regarding veterinary medicines supply to Northern Ireland.

The Committee noted that this matter falls outside its remit, as set out in Schedule 6B to the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and is within the remit of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs, which has recently undertaken scrutiny on the issue.

Agreed: The Committee noted both items and agreed to bring the response from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs to the attention of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs. The Committee further agreed to seek assurance that it is continuing to consider the matter, and ask to be kept informed about its scrutiny work on veterinary medicines supply.

13.3 The Committee considered a status update from RaISe on COM/2023/769 Proposal for a Regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability.

13.4 The Committee considered correspondence from Dogs Trust regarding COM/2023/769 Proposal for a Regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an updated assessment of impact from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs once the provisionally agreed text of the proposal is available.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to inform Dogs Trust that it will consider the proposed EU act again once the provisionally agreed text is available, and decide its next steps in due course.

Jonathan Buckley MLA and the Deputy Chairperson left the meeting at 11.10am.

13.5 The Committee noted correspondence from JTI UK regarding the UK Government's Tobacco and Vapes Bill and its interaction with the EU Tobacco Products Directive.

Steve Aiken MLA declared an interest that his UUP party colleague Robin Swann MP, in his previous role as Minister of Health, previously advocated for Northern Ireland to be included in the scope of this UK legislation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Health and advise the correspondent accordingly.

13.6 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the UK Government regarding COM/2025/531 Proposal for a Regulation on simplification of certain requirements and procedures for chemical products.

13.7 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the UK Government regarding Regulation (EU) 2024/1860 as regards a gradual roll-out of Eudamed.

13.8 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the UK Government regarding C/2025/4797, a Commission Delegated Regulation on persistent organic pollutants.

13.9 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the UK Government regarding C/2025/3986, a Commission Delegated Regulation on household tumble dryers.

13.10 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the UK Government regarding C/2025/0518, a Commission Delegated Regulation on certain dairy products, food additives, collagen casings, and meat products.

13.11 The Committee noted an invitation from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to its event on Windsor Framework Article 2: Enforcement and Remedies.

14. Chairperson's Business

None.

15. Any Other Business

None.

16. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 8 January 2026 at 10.00am in Room 30.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.14am.

Ciara Ferguson MLA

Chairperson, Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee