



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

## **Minutes of Proceedings**

**11 September 2025**

**Meeting Location:** Room 30

**Present:**

Ciara Ferguson MLA (Chairperson)

Steve Aiken MLA

Jonathan Buckley MLA

Declan Kearney MLA

Peter Martin MLA

Eóin Tennyson MLA

**Present by Video:**

David Brooks MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Emma Sheerin MLA

**Apologies:**

Kate Nicholl MLA

**In Attendance:**

Christopher Dickison (Senior Assistant Clerk)

Jessica Jacques (Senior Assistant Clerk)

Victoria Bourquin (Assistant Clerk)

Suzanne Walsh (Clerical Supervisor)

Damien Brown (Clerical Officer)

**In Attendance by Video:**

Oliver Bellew (Assistant Clerk)

Shelley Garner (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 10.05am in closed session.

**1. Apologies**

As above.

**2. Declaration of Members' Interest**

None.

**3. COM/2025/504 Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulations (EU) No 765/2008, (EU) 2016/424, (EU) 2016/425, (EU) 2016/426, (EU) 2023/1230, (EU) 2023/1542 and (EU) 2024/1781 as regards digitalisation and common specifications - Legal Advice**

Julie 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 proposed replacement EU act:

COM/2025/504 Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulations (EU) No 765/2008, (EU) 2016/424, (EU) 2016/425, (EU) 2016/426, (EU) 2023/1230, (EU) 2023/1542 and (EU) 2024/1781 as regards digitalisation and common specifications.

The Legal Adviser provided advice on whether it appears likely that the proposed 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 proposed replacement EU act in public session.

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

**4. COM/2025/503 Proposal for a Directive amending Directives 2000/14/EC, 2011/65/EU, 2013/53/EU, 2014/29/EU, 2014/30/EU, 2014/31/EU, 2014/32/EU, 2014/33/EU, 2014/34/EU, 2014/35/EU, 2014/53/EU, 2014/68/EU and 2014/90/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards digitalisation and common specifications - Legal Advice**

Declan Kearney joined the meeting at 10.07am.

Eóin Tennyson joined the meeting at 10.10am.

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

COM/2025/503 Proposal for a Directive amending Directives 2000/14/EC, 2011/65/EU, 2013/53/EU, 2014/29/EU, 2014/30/EU, 2014/31/EU, 2014/32/EU, 2014/33/EU, 2014/34/EU, 2014/35/EU, 2014/53/EU, 2014/68/EU and 2014/90/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards digitalisation and common specifications.

The Legal Adviser provided advice on whether it appears likely that the proposed replacement 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.

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

The Legal Adviser left the meeting at 10.19am.

The Committee moved into public session at 10.20am.

## **5. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 7 August 2025.

## **6. Matters Arising**

None.

## **7. COM/2025/503 Proposal for a Directive amending Directives 2000/14/EC, 2011/65/EU, 2013/53/EU, 2014/29/EU, 2014/30/EU, 2014/31/EU, 2014/32/EU, 2014/33/EU, 2014/34/EU, 2014/35/EU, 2014/53/EU, 2014/68/EU and 2014/90/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards digitalisation and common specifications - Departmental Oral Evidence**

**8. COM/2025/504 Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulations (EU) No 765/2008, (EU) 2016/424, (EU) 2016/425, (EU) 2016/426, (EU) 2023/1230, (EU) 2023/1542 and (EU) 2024/1781 as regards digitalisation and common specifications - Departmental Oral Evidence**

The Committee agreed to consider agenda items 7 and 8 together.

The Committee continued its consideration of the following proposed EU acts:

COM/2025/503 Proposal for a Directive amending Directives 2000/14/EC, 2011/65/EU, 2013/53/EU, 2014/29/EU, 2014/30/EU, 2014/31/EU, 2014/32/EU, 2014/33/EU, 2014/34/EU, 2014/35/EU, 2014/53/EU, 2014/68/EU and 2014/90/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards digitalisation and common specifications; and

COM/2025/504 Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulations (EU) No 765/2008, (EU) 2016/424, (EU) 2016/425, (EU) 2016/426, (EU) 2023/1230, (EU) 2023/1542 and (EU) 2024/1781 as regards digitalisation and common specifications.

The following officials joined the meeting at 10.21am:

Damien Doherty	Chief Inspector of Trading Standards, Department for the Economy
Kevin Neeson	Deputy Chief Executive, Market Compliance and Operations Division, Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland

The officials gave oral evidence on the proposed EU acts.

A question and answer session followed.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The officials left the meeting at 10.44am.

The Committee considered COM/2025/503 Proposal for a Directive amending Directives 2000/14/EC, 2011/65/EU, 2013/53/EU, 2014/29/EU, 2014/30/EU, 2014/31/EU, 2014/32/EU, 2014/33/EU, 2014/34/EU, 2014/35/EU, 2014/53/EU,

2014/68/EU and 2014/90/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards digitalisation and common specifications.

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

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request a revised departmental assessment of impact if any changes to the text are proposed by the Council of the European Union or the European Parliament, which 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 to request that the Department for the Economy engages with other departments as appropriate in order to obtain any relevant information.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request that RalSe monitors the progress of the proposed EU act, including negotiations in the European Parliament and Council of the European Union, and submits quarterly updates, or more often as appropriate, to the Committee.

The Committee considered COM/2025/504 Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulations (EU) No 765/2008, (EU) 2016/424, (EU) 2016/425, (EU) 2016/426, (EU) 2023/1230, (EU) 2023/1542 and (EU) 2024/1781 as regards digitalisation and common specifications.

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

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request a revised departmental assessment of impact if any changes to the text are proposed by the Council of the European Union or the European Parliament, which 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 to request that the Department for the Economy engages with other departments as appropriate in order to obtain any relevant information.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request that RaISe monitors the progress of the proposed EU act, including negotiations in the European Parliament and Council of the European Union, and submits quarterly updates, or more often as appropriate, to the Committee.

#### **9. COM/2023/462 Proposal for a Regulation on the safety of toys and repealing Directive 2009/48/EC – Consideration of survey responses**

The Committee noted that no responses were received to its public consultation on the proposed EU act COM/2023/462 Proposal for a Regulation on the safety of toys and repealing Directive 2009/48/EC.

The Committee noted separate responses from the British Toy and Hobby Association (BTHA) and the Health and Safety Executive.

The Committee noted updated Legal Advice on the proposed EU act.

The Committee noted a response from SOLACE NI on the proposed EU act.

The Committee noted that responses are awaited from the First and deputy First Minister, and the UK Government in relation to the proposed EU act.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the responses from the BTHA and the Health and Safety Executive to the UK Government.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the responses on its website, having been reformatted and redacted in order to remove personal information and improve readability on the website.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider the proposed EU act again when responses are received from the UK Government and the First and deputy First Minister.

Declan Kearney left the meeting at 10.55am.

David Brooks left the meeting at 10.57am.

**10.COM/2023/258 Proposal for a Regulation establishing the Union Customs Code and the European Union Customs Authority, and repealing Regulation (EU) No 952/2013 – Consideration of survey responses**

Declan Kearney joined the meeting at 11.04am.

The Committee considered responses to its public consultation on the proposed EU act COM/2023/258 Proposal for a Regulation establishing the Union Customs Code and the European Union Customs Authority, and repealing Regulation (EU) No 952/2013.

The Committee noted responses from the Department for the Economy and HMRC on the proposed EU act.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request that the Department for the Economy provide an updated assessment of impact (including input from HMRC as appropriate) if any changes are proposed by the Council of the European Union or the European Parliament which 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 to request that, in any revised assessment of impact or in its assessment of the published act, the Department for the Economy includes:

- Comments on the consultation responses received by the Committee;
- Updates (where appropriate) on the Department for the Economy and HMRC's previous answers to questions posed by the Committee; and
- A summary of any input received from trade bodies through the Department for the Economy and HMRC's engagement.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the responses on its website, having been reformatted and redacted in order to remove personal information and improve readability on the website.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Committee for the Economy to share the transcript of their upcoming oral evidence session with the Road Haulage Association, once it is available.



**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite Aodhán Connolly, Head of Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels, to provide oral evidence on the proposed EU act.

## 11. Committee Work Planning

The Committee considered a progress update on the actions agreed on 20 February 2025, and the most recent update provided by the Executive Office on proposed EU legislation relevant to Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request assessments of impact on the following proposed EU acts:

- COM/2023/414 Proposal for a Regulation on the production and marketing of plant reproductive material in the Union;
- COM/2025/415 Proposal for a Regulation on the production and marketing of forest reproductive material.

## 12. Correspondence

**12.1** The Committee considered correspondence from the Speaker regarding the Independent Review of the Windsor Framework.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Committee Secretariat to prepare briefings on the procedural matters arising from the Independent Review's recommendations for the Committee.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule an informal meeting to discuss the procedural matters arising from the Review.

Jonathan Buckley left the meeting at 11.19am.

**12.2** The Committee noted written answers from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on COM/2025/137 Proposal for a Regulation regarding certain market rules and sectorial support measures in the wine sector and for aromatised wine products.

**12.3** The Committee noted a response from the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs regarding COM/2023/769 Proposal for a Regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability.

**12.4** The Committee noted a response from the Cabinet Office regarding COM/2023/411 Proposal for a Regulation on plants obtained by certain new genomic techniques and their food and feed.

**12.5** The Committee considered a response from the Cabinet Office regarding COM/2023/224 Proposal for a Regulation on compulsory licensing for crisis management.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request an assessment of impact on COM/2023/224 Proposal for a Regulation on compulsory licensing for crisis management.

**12.6** The Committee noted a response from the Cabinet Office regarding the potential UK-EU SPS Agreement.

**12.7** The Committee considered correspondence from the EU Affairs Manager regarding the European Committee of the Regions-UK Contact Group.

**12.8** The Committee considered correspondence from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) regarding engagement with the European Committee of the Regions-UK Contact Group.

The Committee noted that the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) is currently reviewing the arrangements for Assembly Members' participation in inter-parliamentary and international bodies, and may therefore wish to consider the Assembly's participation in the Contact Group as part of that.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the AERC and the Speaker.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that - if necessary in advance of the AERC completing its work and without prejudice to the outcome of that review - Assembly officials should engage further with the Contact Group's secretariat in order to explore how the Committee might participate in it, and what would be involved in jointly hosting a meeting of the group in 2026.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to respond to NILGA to inform it of the Committee's agreed approach.

**12.9** The Committee considered correspondence from Allied Customs Services regarding concerns from small businesses on the Duty Waiver Reimbursement Scheme under the Windsor Framework.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the correspondence to the Committee for the Economy and advise the correspondent accordingly.

**12.10** The Committee noted a quarterly update from RaISe on COM/2023/217 Proposal for a Regulation on detergents and surfactants.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the update on its webpage.

**12.11** The Committee noted a quarterly update from RaISe on COM/2023/411 Proposal for a Regulation on plants obtained by certain new genomic techniques and their food and feed.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the update on its webpage.

**12.12** The Committee noted a quarterly update from RaISe on COM/2023/192 Proposal for a Directive on the Union code relating to medicinal products for human use.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the update on its webpage.

**12.13** The Committee noted a quarterly update from RaISe on COM/2023/193 Proposal for a Regulation laying down Union procedures for the authorisation and supervision of medicinal products for human use and establishing rules governing the European Medicines Agency.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the update on its webpage.

**11.14** The Committee noted a quarterly update from RalSe on COM/2023/451 Proposal for a Regulation on circulatory requirements for vehicle design and on management of end-of-life vehicles.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the update on its webpage.

**12.15** The Committee noted a quarterly update from RalSe on COM/2024/577 Proposal for a Regulation as regards the strengthening of the position of farmers in the food supply chain.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the update on its webpage.

**12.16** The Committee noted a quarterly update from RalSe on COM/2023/770 Proposal for a on the protection of animals during transport and related operations.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the update on its webpage.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to inquire whether the Assembly's Research and Information Service (RalSe) has sufficient resources to support the ongoing work of the Committee, and to correspond with the Chairpersons' Liaison Group on the matter as relevant.

**12.17** The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the UK Government to the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee regarding the UK-EU Summit and the Joint Committee.

**12.18** The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the UK Government to the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee regarding the EU Critical Raw Materials Act.

### **13. Chairperson's Business**

None.

#### **14. Any other business**

A Member commented on the interaction between the Assembly's IT modernisation project and the work of the Committee, and noted that this could potentially be considered in the informal discussion referred to under item 12.1.

#### **15. Date, time, and place of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 18 September 2025 at 10:00am in Room 30.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to send possible questions or topics for questioning to the Ulster Farmers' Union ahead of their oral evidence session with the Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.35am.

**Ciara Ferguson, MLA**

**Chairperson, Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee**