



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

29 January 2026

Meeting Location: Room 30

Present:

Ciara Ferguson MLA (Chairperson)

David Brooks MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Steve Aiken MLA

Declan Kearney MLA

Peter Martin MLA

Kate Nicholl MLA

Eóin Tennyson MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Cathal Boylan MLA

Apologies:

None.

In Attendance:

Jessica Jacques, Senior Assistant Clerk

Chris Dickison, Senior Assistant Clerk

Sean McCann, Assistant Clerk

Carla Campbell, Clerical Supervisor

Lisa Chestnutt, Clerical Supervisor

Damien Brown, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 10.03am in closed session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Declaration of Interests

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 Vice-Chairperson of the Assembly All-Party Group on Aerospace and Space.

3. 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 - Legal Advice

Julie Byers, Legal Adviser, Assembly Legal Services, joined the meeting at 10.05am.

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

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 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 Committee noted that further consideration of the proposed replacement EU act would take place in public session.

The Legal Adviser remained in the meeting for Agenda Item 4.

4. 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 – Legal Advice

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

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.

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 acts it is amending/replacing.

A question and answer session followed.

The Committee noted that further consideration of the proposed replacement EU act would take place in public session.

The Legal Adviser remained in the meeting for Agenda Item 5.

5. 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 – Legal Advice

Eoin Tennyson joined the meeting at 10.33am.

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

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.

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 acts it is amending/replacing.

A question and answer session followed.

The Committee noted that further consideration of the proposed replacement EU act would take place in public session.

The Legal Adviser left the meeting at 10.40am.

The meeting moved into public session at 10.40am.

6. Agreed Minutes

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2026, which it previously agreed would be approved by the Chairperson.

7. Matters Arising

The Committee considered a draft letter to the Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office, and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, reiterating its

disappointment that officials from the Office for Product Safety and Standards did not provide oral evidence during the Committee's Inquiry on Regulation (EU) 2025/2509 on the safety of toys, and asking again that officials from all relevant UK Government departments and agencies engage directly with the Committee as and when necessary.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue the letter as drafted.

8. 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 - Departmental Oral Evidence

The Committee continued its consideration of 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 considered an assessment of impact and written answers from the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs, and an Explanatory Memorandum from the UK Government on the proposed EU act.

The following officials joined the meeting at 10.43am:

Samantha Swann	Head of Poultrymeat, Eggs, Dairy, Wines and Spirits, Hops and Hemp Policy, Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs
Samantha Stewart	Head of Food Security, Beef, Pigs and Sheep Policy, Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs.

The officials gave oral evidence on the proposed EU act.

A question and answer session followed.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The officials left the meeting at 11.07am.

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.

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

9. 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 – Departmental Oral Evidence

The Committee continued its consideration of 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.

The Committee considered assessments of impact from the Department for the Economy, the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs, and the Department of Justice, and an Explanatory Memorandum from the UK Government on the proposed EU act.

The following officials joined the meeting at 11.09am:

Dr Jennifer Stewart

Head of Firearms and Explosives Branch,
Department of Justice

Sarah-Jane Murphy Senior Scientific Officer, Chemical and Industrial
Pollution Policy, Department of Agriculture,
Environment, and Rural Affairs

Mark McGregor Head of Trade & Windsor Framework Branch,
Department for the Economy.

The officials gave oral evidence on the proposed EU act.

A question and answer session followed.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The officials left the meeting at 11.15am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed not to monitor the progress of the proposed replacement EU act, pursuant to paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 6B to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

10. 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

The Committee continued its consideration of 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.

The Committee considered an Explanatory Memorandum from the UK Government on the proposed EU act.

Agreed: The Committee agreed not to monitor the progress of the proposed replacement EU act, pursuant to paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 6B to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

11. COM/2023/769 Proposal for a Regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability – Departmental Written Evidence

The Committee considered an assessment of impact from the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs (DAERA) on the provisionally agreed text of

COM/2023/769 Proposal for a Regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability.

The Senior Assistant Clerk briefed the Committee on its consideration of the proposed EU act.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the UK Government to ask whether an SPS agreement with the EU would cover this policy area. The Committee also agreed to ask for an update on the UK Government's engagement with the European Commission on the proposed EU act, including further information about its operation, the evidence underpinning the EU's view that it is within the scope of the Windsor Framework, the potential impacts in Northern Ireland, the equivalency process and its application, and the potential for the UK to apply a specific agreement with the EU in this area.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek the views of stakeholders (as identified by RaISe) on the provisionally agreed text via Citizen Space with a four-week deadline for response.

12. COM/2025/137 Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013, (EU) 2021/2115 and (EU) No 251/2014 as regards certain market rules and sectoral support measures in the wine sector and for aromatised wine products

The Committee considered a status update from RaISe on COM/2025/137 Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013, (EU) 2021/2115 and (EU) No 251/2014 as regards certain market rules and sectoral support measures in the wine sector and for aromatised wine products.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the relevant department(s) provide a revised assessment of impact on the provisionally agreed text, or confirmation that their initial assessment of impact is unchanged and remains valid in relation to the provisionally agreed text.

13. COM/2024/561 Proposal for a Directive amending Directive 2014/32/EU as regards electric vehicle supply equipment, compressed gas dispensers, and electricity, gas and thermal energy meters

The Committee considered a status update from RaiSe on COM/2024/561 Proposal for a Directive amending Directive 2014/32/EU as regards electric vehicle supply equipment, compressed gas dispensers, and electricity, gas and thermal energy meters.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the relevant department(s) provide a revised assessment of impact on the provisionally agreed text, or confirmation that their initial assessment of impact is unchanged and remains valid in relation to the provisionally agreed text.

14. COM/2023/411 Proposal for a Regulation on plants obtained by certain new genomic techniques and their food and feed, and amending Regulation (EU) 2017/625

The Committee considered a status update from RaiSe on COM/2023/411 Proposal for a Regulation on plants obtained by certain new genomic techniques and their food and feed, and amending Regulation (EU) 2017/625.

The Senior Assistant Clerk briefed the Committee on its consideration of the proposed EU act.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a revised assessment of impact from the relevant department(s) on the provisionally agreed text, including information on whether the proposed act includes provisions for genetically modified organisms, the differences between the UK's legislation and the proposed EU legislation, any implications for the movement of seeds to Northern Ireland, DAERA's engagement with stakeholders and the UK Government on the proposed act, and DAERA's engagement with the UK Government regarding a potential UK-EU SPS agreement.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the UK Government to ask for an update on progress in the UK-EU negotiations on an SPS agreement and how this might impact divergence in this policy area across the UK. The Committee also agreed to ask, based on the provisionally agreed text, which parts of the proposed EU act would apply in Northern

Ireland under Article 13(3) of the Windsor Framework, and which parts could only apply following the process in Article 13(4).

15. Committee Travel

The Senior Assistant Clerk briefed the Committee in relation to its proposed visits to Brussels and Westminster, which it had previously agreed should take place in March 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to postpone the visit to Brussels, and that Members' availability for a visit in April 2026 should be determined.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to postpone the visit to Westminster, and to consider the scheduling of the visit after the Committee Secretariat had engaged with Cabinet Office officials.

16. Correspondence

16.1 The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, including a UK Government Explanatory Memorandum on Regulation (EU) 2025/14 on the approval and market surveillance of non-road mobile machinery circulating on public roads.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence and to publish the Explanatory Memorandum on its webpage.

16.2 The Committee noted a UK Government Explanatory Memorandum on Regulation (EU) 2025/2645 on compulsory licensing for crisis management.

16.3 The Committee noted a UK Government Explanatory Memorandum on Regulation (EU) 2025/2650 as regards certain obligations of operators and traders.

16.4 The Committee noted a response from the Committee on Procedures regarding its Review of Standing Order 59A.

16.5 The Committee considered correspondence from the Executive Office on current proposed EU legislation relevant to Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the next update does not include published EU acts which have already been notified to and considered by the Committee.

16.6 The Committee noted a report from the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels covering the period October to December 2025.

16.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism.

16.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding the UK Government Customs Duty Waiver Scheme.

16.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding the registration of new cars under the Windsor Framework.

16.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding evidence from the Road Haulage Association.

16.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy regarding the HMRC Windsor Framework NI Stakeholder Engagement Team.

16.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs regarding the supply of veterinary medicines to Northern Ireland.

16.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs regarding the supply of veterinary medicines to Northern Ireland

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

16.15 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the UK Government regarding COM/2025/580 and COM/2025/581, proposed Council Directives on excise duty on tobacco and tobacco related products.

16.16 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the UK Government regarding a Commission Delegated Regulation on persistent organic pollutants.

17. Chairperson's Business

The Committee considered a request from the Head of the European Parliament Liaison Office in the UK to meet with the Committee on 26 March 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to meet with the Head of the European Parliament Liaison Office in the UK.

18. Any Other Business

Steve Aiken MLA declared an interest as a member of the Committee for Finance, and raised correspondence, copied to that Committee, from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the UK Government regarding the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to copy the Committee into future correspondence on this matter.

19. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting is provisionally scheduled for Thursday 12 February 2026 at 10am in Room 30 in Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.41am.

Ciara Ferguson MLA

Chairperson, Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee