



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITIES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 10 November 2016
Room 29 Parliament Buildings

Present: Colum Eastwood MLA (Chairperson)
Michelle Gildernew MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Nichola Mallon MLA
Fra McCann MLA
Adrian McQuillan MLA
Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
Christopher Stalford MLA

In Attendance: Kevin Pelan (Assembly Clerk)
Ashleigh Mitford (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Stewart Kennedy (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Steven Agnew MLA
Andy Allen MLA

The meeting commenced in open session at 10:20 am

The meeting began without a decision-making quorum and therefore a scheduled briefing not requiring a decision was taken first.

1. Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill – Evidence Session with the Wine and Spirit Trade Association

The Committee noted a written submission and a memo from the Clerk.

The following witness joined the meeting at 10:20 am

- Mr Miles Beale, Chief Executive, Wine and Spirit Trade Association

The witness briefed the committee and this was followed by questions from members.

Adrian McQuillan joined the meeting at 10:32am and decision-making quorum was established

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek more information on a number of issues including Community Alcohol Partnerships, noting that there is only one in Northern Ireland.

The witness left the meeting at 10:44 am.

The session was recorded by Hansard.

2. Apologies

Apologies are recorded above

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting of 27 October 2016 were agreed.

4. Chairperson's Business

The Committee noted that the Chief Officers 3rd Sector (CO3) have invited the Chair to attend their Gala Awards Dinner on Thursday 23 February 2016.

The Committee noted that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson will meet with Pobal immediately after the Committee meeting.

5. Matters Arising

The Committee noted a memo from the Committee for Finance regarding an Assembly Research Paper on the Budget.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a response from the Department for Communities to the relevant questions in the research paper and request that the Department copy the response directly to the Committee for Finance.

—

The Committee noted a memo from the Committee for the Executive Office in relation to the Draft Departments (Transfer of Functions) (No.2) Order (NI) 2016.

The Committee for the Executive Office has considered the Executive Office's proposal to bring forward another draft Transfer of Functions Order to transfer a further small number of functions including the transfer of statutory responsibility of section 19 of the Employment Act (NI) 2016 from the Executive Office to the Department for Communities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it is content with the proposed transfer of functions to the Department for Communities. Members agreed to forward any comments to the Clerk who will respond on the Committee's behalf.

Members considered feedback into the possibility of the Committee hosting a reception for Olympians and Paralympians to celebrate their successes in the 2016 games.

Members noted difficulties experienced by the Department for Communities in arranging its own event.

Agreed: That the Committee write to the relevant sporting bodies to offer its congratulations and to seek views on how best the Committee might engage with participants in the Olympics and Paralympics.

—

The Chairperson advised Members that The Department has now laid the Savings (Government Contributions) Legislative Consent Memorandum in the Business Office and therefore this item was added to the agenda after meeting packs were issued though it had been scheduled to be discussed today. Members were content to deal with the item before moving into the scheduled briefings and evidence sessions.

6. Savings (Government Contributions) Bill - Legislative Consent Memorandum

The Committee noted the Legislative Consent Memorandum and the Draft Committee Report which has its basis in the papers provided to the Committee at its meeting of 27 October.

The Committee noted that while, in line with Assembly procedure, the Committee is required to report within 15 working days of the Legislative Consent Memorandum being laid, there is time pressure for Westminster to obtain consent from the Assembly. Therefore, members had been asked to consider papers in advance of the Memorandum being laid.

Members discussed and agreed the basis of amendments to the Committee Consideration section of the Report

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reflect in its Report that the schemes are positive measures to facilitate those who are in a position to save to do so. However, the Committee also wished to acknowledge that many low income families simply would not have the disposable income that would allow them to access these schemes and will call on the Minister to also acknowledge this.

The Committee agreed its Report as follows:

Agreed: The Committee was content with the front cover, page of contents and Powers and Membership

Agreed: The Committee was content with the sections on the Background and Purpose of the Bill

Agreed: The Committee was content with the section on Committee Consideration subject to the agreed amendment.

Agreed: The Committee was content with the links to appendices

Agreed: The amended Report be the Second Report of the Committee for Communities

Agreed: To order the Report to print

7. The Housing Benefit and State Pension Credit (Temporary Absence) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 – Departmental Briefing

The Committee noted a covering memo, the SL1 and a letter from Housing Rights & the Law Centre. Members were also provided with a copy of Section 87 of the NI Act 1998.

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 10:58:

- Ms Bronagh Ramsden
- Ms Rosemary Hughes

The officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by questions from members.

Colum Eastwood joined the meeting at 11:13 am and took the Chair

The officials left the meeting at 11:25

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was not content for the Rule to be made and agreed to follow up on a number of issues discussed during the briefing before returning to the item at a future meeting.

8. Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill – Evidence Session with Northern Ireland Retail Consortium

The Committee noted written submissions and a memo from the Clerk.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 11:25 am

- Aodhán Connolly - Director of the Northern Ireland Retail Consortium
- Joe McDonald, Senior Manager, Corporate Affairs NI, Asda

The witnesses briefed the committee and this was followed by questions from members.

The Committee noted that Northern Ireland Retail Consortium committed to exploring how it could work better with initiatives such as Community Alcohol Partnerships in terms of the role that Industry can play in tackling alcohol related harm.

The witnesses left the meeting at 12:00pm

The session was recorded by Hansard

9. Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill – Evidence Session with Churches: Methodist, Presbyterian and Church of Ireland

Christopher Stalford joined the meeting at 12:00pm

The Chairperson declared an interest in agenda items related to the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill given family interests in licensed premises.

The Committee noted written submissions from each organisation.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 12:01 pm

- Lindsay Conway OBE, Secretary to the Council for social witness, Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Mr Gavin Norris, Public Affairs Officer, Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Reverend Dr David Clements, Representative of the Methodist Church
- Rev Adrian Dorrian, Church of Ireland

The witnesses briefed the committee on behalf of their own organisations and this was followed by questions from members

The witnesses left the meeting at 12:29 pm

The session was recorded by Hansard

10. Ecclesiastical Exemption Consultation - Departmental Briefing

The Committee noted correspondence, a Written Statement from the Minister and a synopsis of responses in relation to the Consultation.

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 12:30pm

- Mr Iain Greenway, Director of Historic Environment Division
- Mr Manus Deery, Assistant Director, Heritage Advice and Regulation Branch

The officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by questions from members.

The officials left the meeting at 12:42pm

11. SL1 Public Use of the Records (Management and Fees) Rules (NI) 2016

Carál Ní Chuilín declared an interest having brought forward the SL1 as a former Minister.

The Committee noted the SL1 which is not subject to any direct Assembly procedure.

12. SR 389 The Welfare Supplementary Payment (Benefit Cap) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

This SR was previously approved by the Assembly in draft form and has now had its SR number added. No further action is required by the Committee.

13. SR 390 Child Support (Deduction from Earnings Orders, Amendment and Modification and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Committee noted the Statutory Rule.

The Department has advised that there has been no change to policy content since the former Committee considered the SL1. The Examiner of Statutory Rules has not as yet reported on the SR however the Committee was content to agree the SR subject to the Examiner's report which is due to be published on Friday 11 November.

There were no objections to the Rule.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for Communities has considered the Statutory Rule SR390/2016 The Child Support (Deduction from Earnings Orders, Amendment and Modification and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ report, has no objection to the Rule.”

14. Correspondence

The Committee noted a correspondence memo and tabled correspondence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to accept the Linenhall Library's invitation to host a Committee meeting in the future.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to action correspondence as outlined in the correspondence memo.

Agreed: Members wishing to attend the Cedar Foundation event in the Long Gallery on 17 November 2016 should contact the Committee Office by noon on Monday 14 November.

15. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted a tabled draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk write to the Department to seek clarification on the revised process for Monitoring Rounds and how this might impact on the Committee's ability to scrutinise this process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme as amended, noting that the schedule of oral evidence in relation to the Bill for the meeting of 17 November may be subject to minor change.

16. AOB

The Committee further discussed the way forward in relation the Housing Benefit and State Pension Credit (Temporary Absence) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a number of issues upon which it wished the Department to provide clarification and that the Clerk should follow these up in writing.

17. Date, time and location of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Communities will take place on Thursday 17 November 2016 at 10.00 am in room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:50 pm

Chairperson, Committee for Communities

17 November 2016