



# Northern Ireland Assembly

## COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITIES

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday 20 October 2016**  
**Room 29 Parliament Buildings**

Present: Michelle Gildernew MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Steven Agnew MLA  
Naomi Long MLA  
Nichola Mallon MLA  
Fra McCann MLA  
Carál Ni Chuilín MLA  
Christopher Stalford MLA

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

Claire McCanny (Bill Office)

Apologies: Colum Eastwood MLA (Chairperson)  
Andy Allen MLA  
Jonathan Bell MLA  
Adrian McQuillan MLA

*The meeting commenced in open session at 10:10 with the Clerk in the Chair*

The Clerk advised the Committee that the Chairperson had sent his apologies for the meeting and that the Deputy Chairperson would join the meeting in due course.

The Clerk sought nominations that another member do take the chair.

Naomi Long nominated Nichola Mallon do take the Chair. This was seconded by Fra McCann.

As there were no other nominations Nichola Mallon took the chair.

*The meeting moved into closed session at 10:11 am*

## **1. Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill – Briefing from the Bill Office**

Claire McCanny from the Assembly's Bill Office joined the meeting at 10:12 am and provided a procedural briefing to the Committee.

The Committee discussed timescales in relation to the Committee Stage of the Bill.

The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report. The Committee noted that the Examiner has completed her technical scrutiny of the Delegated Powers Memorandum in relation to the Bill and has not identified any issues.

*The meeting moved into open session at 10:20 am*

## **2. Apologies**

Apologies are recorded above

## **3. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The draft minutes of the meeting of 13 October 2016 were agreed.

## **4. Chairperson's Business**

The Committee noted the *Vital Signs NI* Report. The launch of the report, which is supported by the Committee in terms of the use of the Long Gallery in Parliament Buildings, will be held on Thursday 27 October from 12.30pm – 2pm.

## **5. Matters Arising**

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Finance in relation to HMRC's decision not to renew the Concentrix Tax Credits contract in 2017.

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At its meeting on 6 October, the Committee expressed significant concerns around the engagement of Committees in the budget and Monitoring Round processes. The Committee agreed that the Clerk request a copy of the papers submitted by the Department to the Department of Finance in relation to

the October Monitoring Round and Budget. A paper was provided on the Monitoring Round on the morning of 13 October and the Committee agreed to return to it this week.

The Committee noted that the Department is undertaking to supply a paper to the Committee on the budget.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek clarity on the papers being provided.

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The Chairperson reminded members that the NI Hotels Federation, when providing evidence on the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill on 13 October 2016, made reference to Good Friday Opening for a rugby match in Limerick in 2010.

By way of clarification, the Committee understands that pubs in Limerick were granted permission by the Court to open on Good Friday 2010 under Section 10 of the Republic of Ireland Intoxicating Liquor Act 1962.

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The Committee's call for written evidence in relation to the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill closed on 19 October 2016.

*Agreed:* the committee office will review the submissions and come back to the Committee with proposals for further oral evidence.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Clerk consider reasonable requests for an extension to the deadline to 5 November 2016.

## **6. Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill – Departmental Briefing**

The following departmental official joined the meeting at 10:25 am

- Mr Liam Quinn, Social Policy Unit, Department for Communities

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

*Michelle Gildernew joined the meeting at 10:30 am and took the Chair*

The official left the meeting at 10:31

*The session was recorded by Hansard*

The Committee noted that it was clear from evidence and discussions to date that the Committee will likely wish to consider making a number of amendments to the Bill. The Committee has been advised that these are likely to be complex in nature from both a policy and drafting perspective. The Committee acknowledged that although the Bill has been long awaited it was important to take the

necessary time to undertake adequate and robust scrutiny. At the same time members noted that the importance of completing the Bill as quickly as possible.

It was in this context therefore that the Committee agreed the following motion:

*That, in accordance with Standing Order 33 (4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33 (2) be extended to 23 February 2017, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 02/16-21).*

## **7. Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill – Evidence Session with the PSNI**

The committee noted a written submission and a paper from the Clerk.

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 10:35 am

- Mr Stephen Cargin, Chief Superintendent, Police Service of Northern Ireland
- Paul Larkin, District Licensing Officer, Police Service of Northern Ireland
- Ms Alison Douglas, Legal Adviser, Police Service of Northern Ireland
- Mr John Conner, Deputy Principal, Police Service of Northern Ireland

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

*Carál Ni Chuilín MLA left the meeting at 10:52 am*

The witnesses left the meeting at 11:53 am

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request information on a number of issues

*The session was recorded by Hansard*

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The committee noted a written submission from NILGA and papers from the Clerk in relation to agenda items 8 & 9.

## **8. Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill – Evidence Session NILGA (Community Safety)**

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 11:55 am

- Debbie Coyle, Councillor, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
- Michael McCrory, Mid Ulster District Council, Mid Ulster Council
- Ms Karen Smyth, Head of Policy, Northern Ireland Local Government Association

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

The witnesses left the meeting at 12:18 pm

*The session was recorded by Hansard*

#### **9. Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill – Evidence Session NILGA (Licensing and Night-time Economy)**

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 12:19 pm

- Alderman Arnold Hatch, Office Bearer, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
- Patrick Cunningham, Assistant Building Control Manager, Belfast City Council
- Ms Karen Smyth, Head of Policy, Northern Ireland Local Government Association

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

*During questions, Fra McCann declared an interest as a former councillor*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek further information on a number of issues from the witnesses.

The witnesses left the meeting at 1:01 pm

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request research into powers in relation to breaches of liquor and entertainment licenses and prosecutions here and in other jurisdictions.

*The session was recorded by Hansard*

*The meeting suspended at 1:02pm*

*The meeting reconvened in open session at 1:29pm with the following members present: Michelle Gildernew, Steven Agnew, Fra McCann, Naomi Long, Nichola Mallon*

#### **10. Consultation for Provision of Strategic Support to the Voluntary and Community Sector - Departmental Briefing**

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Department.

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 1:30 pm

- Mr Arthur Scott, Director - Voluntary & Community Division
- Sharon Polson, Head of Policy and Innovation
- Mr Jack O'Connor, Voluntary and Community Unit,

*Christopher Stalford joined the meeting at 1:31pm*

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

*Steven Agnew left the meeting at 1:58pm*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request a briefing from the Department on the outcome of the consultation.

The officials left the meeting at 2:02pm

### **11. The Housing Benefit and State Pension Credit (Temporary Absence) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016**

The Committee noted a summary paper from the committee office in relation to the background to these regulations, in particular that they had been considered at policy stage by the former Committee for Social Development but had been subsequently delayed.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request a briefing from the Department on the regulations and to seek an update from Housing Rights and the Law Centre on their position in relation to the regulations.

### **12. Correspondence**

The Committee noted a correspondence memo and tabled correspondence.

*Steven Agnew joined the meeting at 2:04 pm*

The Committee noted a letter from the Minister in relation to his intention to bring a Legislative Consent Motion to the Assembly on the Savings (Government Contributions) Bill.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek written information on the rationale for creating a further excepted matter within Schedule 2 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 rather than introducing an Assembly Bill.

The Committee noted correspondence from NIPSA requesting the opportunity to brief the Committee on the closure of Social Security offices and broader concerns regarding Welfare Reform.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing with NIPSA.

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

### **13. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted its draft Forward Work programme.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Clerk put a paper to the Committee next week in relation to the outcome of the Committee's strategic planning day.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department in relation to the PfG Action Plan briefings. The Department is not currently in a position to provide these briefings.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

#### **14. AOB**

No items were raised

#### **15. Date, time and location of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Communities will take place on Thursday 27 October 2016 at 10.00 am in room 29, Parliament Buildings.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 2:09pm*

**Chairperson, Committee for Communities**

**27 October 2016**