



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITIES

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 2 June 2016
Room 29 Parliament Buildings

Present: Colum Eastwood MLA (Chairperson)
Michelle Gildernew MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Steven Agnew MLA
Andy Allen MLA
Jonathan Bell MLA
Naomi Long MLA
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)
Oliver Bellew (Clerical Officer)

Eleanor Murphy (Research Officer)

Apologies: none

The meeting commenced in closed session at 10.05am.

1. Committee Practices

Members noted a number of documents relating to committee practices.

The Clerk briefed the committee.

10.09 am: Michelle Gildernew joined the meeting

Agreed: The committee agreed to adopt a strategic, outcomes based approach to its work. In particular, the committee agreed that an external focus and effective stakeholder engagement will be essential.

Agreed: The committee agreed its approach to dealing with correspondence and requests for meetings which are not aligned to strategic priorities or statutory duties.

Members provided committee staff with views on how the committee may wish to approach preparation and questioning in meetings.

The committee noted guidance on protocol on conduct and courtesy at committee meetings.

Agreed: The committee agreed to return to consider committee practices as part of a strategic planning session in September.

Mrs Eleanor Murphy (Research Officer) provided the Committee with an overview of the Assembly's Research and Information Services.

The meeting moved into open session at 10.47.am.

2. Apologies

There were no apologies to record.

3. Chairperson's Business

The committee noted the list of Committee Membership and committee staff details.

4. Declaration of Interests

The committee noted a memo from the Clerk.

The Chairperson advised members that all Assembly members are required to register relevant interests in the Register of Members' Interests and that the deadline for this is Thursday 9 June 2016.

The Chairperson drew attention to Standing Order 69(5) and asked members if they had any interests to declare.

The following interests were declared:

Colum Eastwood:	family interest in the licensing trade, former councillor
Jonathan Bell:	Vice President of the Confucius Institute, Governor of Regent House School, Landlord
Naomi Long:	husband is a councillor
Nichola Mallon:	former councillor
Christopher Stalford:	former councillor

The Chairperson reminded members that advice and guidance is available from the Clerk of Standards, Room 243, Parliament Buildings.

5. Committee Guidance and Procedures

The committee noted the following items on guidance and procedures:

- A Guide to the Powers and Operation of Statutory Committees for Chairpersons and Members
- A Guide to the role of the Committee Chairperson
- A Guide for Members on the Role and Functions of the Committee Office
- Providing an effective Research Service to Committee – Good Practice Guidelines
- Guidance for handling subordinate legislation

The Chairperson drew members' attention to issues in respect of Privilege and Sub-judice.

Agreed: The committee agreed that Assembly Research papers would be automatically published on the Assembly web site unless the committee decided otherwise.

6. Departmental guidance on timescales for interaction between Assembly Committees and Departments

The committee noted the document 'Departmental guidance on timescales for interaction between Assembly Committees and Departments'.

7. Subordinate Legislation

The Committee noted a memo from the Clerk in relation to the delegation of technical scrutiny to the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

Question put and agreed:

“The Committee for Communities resolves, under Standing Order 43 to delegate to the Examiner of Statutory Rules the technical scrutiny of statutory rules referred to the Committee under the above mentioned Standing Order. The Committee further resolves that in carrying out this function the Examiner shall be authorised to report her technical findings on each statutory rule to the Assembly and to the relevant Department, as well as to the Committee itself and to publish her report.”

The committee noted a memo from the Clerk providing a summary of current subordinate legislation falling under the Department for Communities which is subject to Assembly procedure.

The committee noted an extract from the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report and a response from the Department for Communities in respect of SR 2016/99 – The Pensions (2015 Act) (Pension Sharing on Divorce etc.) (Transitional Provision) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016.

Agreed: The committee agreed to seek a briefing from the Department on this SR.

The committee noted a number of Statutory Rules that had been laid in the previous Mandate and the statutory period had carried forward into the new Mandate. Those which had been laid after the final meeting of the previous committee will be formally considered at the next meeting of the committee.

8. Correspondence

The committee noted the Department for the Economy's consultation document on a proposed new energy efficiency scheme called "EnergyWise".

Agreed: The Committee agreed that members would provide comments to the Clerk in advance of the next meeting.

The committee noted an invitation (and Report) from the Simon Community regarding an event in Parliament Buildings entitled 'Ending Homelessness: Recommendations to the NI Assembly and Executive'.

Agreed: The committee agreed that members would indicate their availability to attend the event to the committee office.

Agreed: The committee agreed to seek an update presentation on homelessness from the Department and others.

The committee noted a correspondence memo.

Agreed: The committee agreed to action all correspondence as outlined on the correspondence memo.

9. Forward Work Programme

The committee noted the following:

- Clerk's memo;
- Summary of strategies that have transferred to the Department for Communities; and
- Extracts from Legacy Reports from previous Committees of the 2011-16 Session.

The Clerk briefed the committee.

Agreed: The committee agreed its Forward Work Programme for June 2016.

Agreed: The committee agreed that its meetings will take place in room 29 at 10am every Thursday.

Agreed: The committee agreed that committee staff will begin to draft a Forward Work Programme for the Autumn 2016 session for consideration at a committee strategic planning day in September 2016.

Agreed: The committee agreed that the Clerk will write to the Department for Communities to seek its views and/or an update in relation to the recommendations contained in the 2011-16 Committee Legacy Reports.

10. AOB

The Chairperson asked members to complete a contact details form and return it to the committee office as soon as possible.

The Clerk drew members' attention to the fact that the Statutory Period for SR 2016/99 will end on 13 June. The committee will therefore be unable to take any action following next week's briefing.

11. Date, time and location of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Communities will take place on Thursday 9 June 2016 at 10.00am in room 29.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 11.24 a.m.

Colum Eastwood

Chairperson, Committee for Communities

9 June 2016