



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS WEDNESDAY 11 JANUARY 2017 ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

- Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Danny Kennedy (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs Pam Cameron
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Christopher Stalford
- Apologies: Mr Cathal Boylan
Mr William Irwin
Mr Phillip Logan
Mr Seán Lynch
Mr Philip McGuigan
Mr Richie McPhillips
- In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Committee Clerk)
Mr Neal Flanagan (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Andrienne Magee (Clerical Officer)

The meeting began in public session at 2.08 pm. In the absence of a decision-making quorum, the proceedings began in line with Standing Order 49(5).

1. Commissioner for Public Appointments

Representatives from the office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (CPA NI) joined the meeting at 2.08 pm.

Mr Kennedy joined the meeting at 2.08pm.

Ms Judena Leslie, Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland, and Ms Pat Neeson, Business and Policy Manager, CPA NI, briefed the Committee on the representation of women and minorities on the boards of public bodies.

A question and answer session followed.

Mr Stalford left the meeting at 2.25pm and the decision-making quorum was lost. In the absence of a decision-making quorum proceedings continued in line with Standing Order 49(5).

Mr Stalford returned to the meeting at 2.37pm.

Mr Kennedy declared an interest as a former Executive Minister with a role in making public appointments.

The representatives from the office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments left the meeting at 2.49 pm.

Agreed: to accept suggestions from the Commissioner for Public Appointments to the effect that the Committee expects:

- the achievement of the public appointment targets set by the Executive;
- that the Executive Office (TEO) maintains a focus on good governance and the pursuit of excellence in its public administration;
- that TEO implements the agreed reform of the CPA NI legislation;
- that TEO implements its commitment to review the practice of appointing local councillors to public bodies; and
- that Departments collaborate and work in partnership across public appointments.

Agreed: to ask TEO for the rationale for not accepting the recommendation that CPA be given legislative authority to intervene in an ongoing public appointment process.

Agreed: to highlight the issue of appointments to public bodies to other statutory committees; and suggest they seek information on the steps being taken by their respective departments and arm's-length bodies to encourage diversity on boards.

2. Appointments to Public Bodies – Departmental Officials

The Committee noted that a session had been scheduled to provide the Committee with an opportunity to hear from Executive Office officials on the Department's responsibilities in respect of public appointments; however, correspondence had been received from TEO advising that, as the First Minister and deputy First Minister had ceased to hold office, it had been considered appropriate to defer the briefing until a later date.

3. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

4. Chairperson's Business

Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry

The Committee noted that, on Friday 6 January 2017, Sir Anthony Hart submitted his Report on the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry to the First Minister and deputy First Minister as required by the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Act (Northern Ireland) 2013; and that the Report will be formally published on Friday 20th January 2017 following a statement by Sir Anthony Hart at a public meeting in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Shaw's Bridge, Belfast.

Agreed: to invite Sir Anthony Hart to brief the Committee on the Report after its publication.

The Committee noted that the victims and survivors of abuse have waited for some considerable years and worked hard to get to this point; and acknowledged the impact that the current political situation will have on them.

Agreed: to ask the Head of the Civil Service to pass the Report to the Minister of Justice and the Minister for Communities to ascertain their ability to progress it.

Agreed: while managing expectations, to advise the Expert Panel on Redress on the action taken by the Committee to try to move this matter forward.

The Committee noted a response from the Health Minister regarding the scoping exercises on clerical abuse outwith the HIA Inquiry and mother and baby homes/laundries, which advises that a single interdepartmental group will be established to be co-sponsored and resourced by TEO and the Department of Health and chaired independently. The Committee further noted that the Health Minister had advised that the group would be established and research commissioned in early 2017 "subject to the required approvals".

Agreed: to request further information from the Department of Health on the required approvals for the establishment of the group.

Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee, Scottish Parliament

The Committee noted an invitation extended by the Convener of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee of the Scottish Parliament to a meeting of representatives from EU Committees in Scotland, Wales and the London Assembly Brexit group, which is proposed to be held at the Scottish Parliament on Friday 3 March.

Agreed: to accept the invitation in principle, with the Committee to be represented by one member from each political party; and that the invitation may be opened to include a representative from other committees, depending on the agenda.

Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

Members noted correspondence to the Clerk from the Clerk to the Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Union Affairs (JCEAU) suggesting a meeting with the Committee regarding the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Agreed: to accept the invitation in principle.

Together: Building a United Community Engagement Forum

The Committee noted that the date of the Together: Building a United Community Engagement Forum meeting at Girdwood Community Hub had been changed to Thursday 2 March 2017.

NI Chinese New Year Showcase 2017

Members noted an invitation to the Chairperson to attend the NI Chinese New Year Showcase event, which is to be held in the Ulster Hall on Wednesday 25 January.

Agreed: members were content for the Chairperson to represent the Committee at the event.

NI Bureau, Beijing

The Committee noted a report of a meeting between Mr Tim Losty, Director of the NI Bureau in Beijing, and the Deputy Chairperson, which took place in Beijing on 27 October 2016.

The Deputy Chairperson briefed the Committee on the meeting with Mr Losty and highlighted the opportunities for further engagement in China, particularly in Shenyang and Wuhan.

Agreed: to invite Mr Losty to brief the Committee at the first available opportunity.

Committee visit to Brussels

The Committee noted that the acting EU Affairs Manager had developed a draft itinerary for the agreed visit to Brussels from 24-26 January. This included meetings with the Office of the NI Executive in Brussels (ONIEB); NI MEPs; UKRep; the Irish Permanent Representative; and non-EU representatives from Norway, Switzerland and Canada.

The Committee discussed the viability of proceeding with the visit in view of the political situation. The Chairperson expressed thanks to the acting EU Affairs Manager for her work in developing the itinerary; and to Committee staff for ensuring that projected expenditure had been protected in the event that the visit did not proceed.

Agreed: to postpone the visit until a future date in view of current political situation and the anticipated costs.

Members expressed disappointment that valuable opportunities to engage with others on the UK's exit from the EU would be missed.

UK-Kyrgyzstan Friendship Group

The Committee noted that a planned visit by a delegation from the UK-Kyrgyzstan Friendship Group on Tuesday 24 January had been cancelled in view of the current political situation.

Committee Invitations

The Committee noted the current list of Committee invitations.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the proceedings for the meetings of 7 December 2016 were agreed by the Committee.

6. Matters Arising

Draft Programme for Government

The Committee noted the response of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) to the consultation on the draft Programme for Government (PfG).

Agreed: to publish the NICCY paper on the PfG section of the Committee web page.

The Committee noted responses to the draft PfG from the Committee for the Economy and the Committee for Education; and that the submissions have been published in the appendices to the Committee's report on the draft PfG.

Outstanding Committee Correspondence

The Committee noted the current list of outstanding correspondence.

Members noted that the Committee had requested sight of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) audit report on border-related issues on 6 October 2016 and subsequently on 10 November. It was also noted that TEO officials advised on 24 November that the request was under consideration but, to date, the report had not been received. The Committee further noted that the Committee for Finance had advised of its interest in the report and had asked that it be shared when received.

Agreed: to ask that the NSMC audit report on border-related issues be provided as soon as possible.

Agreed: to copy the NSMC audit report to Committee for Finance when it is received.

Agreed: to request updates on the position of other outstanding issues relevant to TEO.

European Commission Work Programme 2017

The Committee noted that, at its meeting on 9 November, members agreed to initiate the process for compilation of the 2017 Report on Assembly Committee European Priorities.

Agreed: to request TEO's EU priorities for the year ahead to help inform the Committee position.

7. Correspondence

Programme for Government – Corporation Tax

The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office regarding corporation tax rates in G20 countries.

Minority Ethnic Development Fund

The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office regarding the Minority Ethnic Development Fund pre-verification procedures and Diversiton Ltd.

Agreed: to forward a copy of the response to Diversiton Ltd.

Investigating Links in Attainment and Deprivation Report

The Committee noted copy correspondence from TEO to the Committee for Education regarding the Investigating Links in Attainment and Deprivation Report.

The Children and Young People's Strategy

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the launch of the public consultation on the Children and Young People's Strategy.

Consumer Council

The Committee noted correspondence from the Consumer Council regarding the launch of a public consultation on its draft forward work programme for 2017-18.

The Committee noted that the Consumer Council's 'Annual Enquiry & Complaints Report for 2015-16' had been published.

EU Matters

The Committee noted the latest edition of the Northern Ireland Assembly's EU Matters newsletter prepared by the acting EU Affairs Manager, which focuses on Brexit.

NISRA

The Committee noted correspondence from NISRA regarding the consultation on proposals for the Updated Multiple Deprivation Measure.

Waringstown Development Association

The Committee noted correspondence from Waringstown Development Association regarding the Listed Grange property.

Agreed: to advise Waringstown Development Association that the Committee does not become involved in individual cases and provide contact details of their constituency MLAs, in line with the agreed Committee protocol; and to forward the correspondence to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) and ask that they respond directly to the Association.

Annual Reports and Accounts

The Committee noted that the Annual Reports and Accounts for the Commission for Victims and Survivors; the Community Relations Council; the Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation; and the Victims and Survivors Service had been received and were available in the Committee office.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme until February 2017.

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held at 2.00 pm in Room 30 on Wednesday 18 January 2017.

The meeting moved into closed session at 3.13 pm

The meeting was suspended at 3.13pm

The meeting resumed at 3.15pm

11. Strategic Planning Mid-year Review

The Committee reviewed actions taken to date in respect of the priorities identified at the planning meeting on 7 September 2016.

Agreed: to focus on victims and survivors and historical institutional abuse at the meeting on 25 January.

Agreed: the Clerk will prepare a paper regarding the work undertaken or planned by the Committee on Brexit.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 3.25 pm.

Mr Mike Nesbitt
Chairperson
Committee for the Executive Office