



COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2016
Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

- Present:** Mr Paul Frew MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood MLA
Ms Clare Bailey MLA
Mr Roy Beggs MLA
Ms Michaela Boyle MLA
Mr Declan Kearney MLA
Mr Trevor Lunn MLA
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA
- In Attendance:** Mrs Christine Darrah (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Marie Austin (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Pamela Carson (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Leanne Johnston (Clerical Supervisor)
- Apologies:** Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Doug Beattie MLA
Mr Sammy Douglas MLA

The meeting commenced at 2.04 p.m. in open session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 22 September 2016.

3. Matters Arising

Item 1 – Committee Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted an up-dated Forward Work Programme for October 2016 which includes a number of work items scheduled by the Department of Justice.

Item 2 – Draft Programme for Government 2016-21

The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office regarding its intention to produce a co-ordinated response from all Statutory Committees to the draft Programme for Government (PFG) and setting out the timescale.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral evidence session on the draft PfG and Department of Justice draft action plans for the meeting on 13 October 2016 to assist consideration of a response to the Committee for the Executive Office.

Item 3 – Further Information from Judge Desmond Marrinan in relation to Judicial Appointments

The Committee noted further information provided by Judge Marrinan in relation to Judicial Appointments which was relevant when considering the issue further at the Strategic Planning meeting.

4. Business Crime Action Plan - Update

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.10 p.m.

Sinead Simpson, Community Safety Division, Department of Justice
Chief Superintendent Chris Noble, PSNI
Aodhán Connolly, Director, Northern Ireland Retail Consortium

The officials outlined the Business Crime Action Plan and the progress made to date in taking forward the recommendations of the previous Justice Committee.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials agreed to provide further information on several issues.

The briefing was recorded by Hansard.

Ms Bailey left the meeting at 2.59 p.m.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Mr Attwood left the meeting at 3.26 p.m.

Agreed: The Committee noted the Business Crime Action Plan and agreed to request six-monthly progress reports.

Agreed: The Committee noted the invitation to attend the next meeting of the Business Crime Partnership Forum and agreed that Members should advise the Clerk if they wished to attend.

5. Legislative Consent Motion – Policing and Crime Bill – Maritime Enforcement Powers

The Committee considered further information provided by the Minister of Justice and the PSNI in relation to the proposed Legislative Consent Motion on Maritime Enforcement Powers and expressed concern regarding the handling of this issue by the Department of Justice.

Ms Bailey rejoined the meeting at 3.29 p.m.

Mr Attwood rejoined the meeting at 3.33 p.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Justice regarding its concerns about the handling of this LCM and the provision of inaccurate information and to seek assurances that, when developing legislation, formal discussions through formal channels, at the highest level with the PSNI and other relevant organisations, take place and the information provided to the Committee accurately reflects their positions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Justice requesting further clarification regarding the proposed Legislative Consent Motion on Maritime Enforcement Powers.

6. Attorney General for Northern Ireland's Draft Human Rights Guidance for the Police Service of NI, the Public Prosecution Service and Forensic Science NI on Human Rights Standards Relevant to Co-operation and Operational Independence

The Committee considered further information provided by the Attorney General for Northern Ireland on his draft Human Rights Guidance for the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) and Forensic Science NI (FSNI) on Human Rights Standards Relevant to Co-Operation and Operational Independence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Attorney General's draft guidance for the PSNI, PPS and FSNI on Human Rights Standards Relevant to Co-operation and Operational Independence.

7. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Justice advising that she had given permission to the Scottish Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs to include several issues extending to Northern Ireland in the Inquiries into Fatal Accidents and Sudden Deaths etc. (Scotland) Act 2016 (Consequential Provisions and Modifications) Order 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request clarification regarding the mechanism for this and the impact/implications of including issues extending to Northern Ireland in the Order.

- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Justice advising of the publication of Official Statistics Bulletin 18/2016 '*First Time Entrants to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland 2014/15.*'

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Justice advising that the Minister of Justice will make an oral statement to the Assembly, on Monday 17 October 2016, on the Inter-Governmental Agreement on Co-Operation on Criminal Justice Matters.
- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Justice regarding the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency Report providing sick absence data for staff in the NICS for the 2015/16 financial year and the high level of sick absence within the Department of Justice and outlining initiatives aimed at ensuring sickness absence is robustly managed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request the sick absence figures, including any increase/decrease from the previous year, separated into departmental staff, including other agency staff and prison grade staff.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office providing a copy of a briefing paper entitled '*After the EU Referendum: Establishing the Best Outcome for NI.*'
- vi. The Committee noted the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland – Department of Justice Procurement Activity Report for September 2016.
- vii. The Committee considered a request for a meeting from the Northern Ireland Branch of Men's Aid to present a proposal in relation to Family Law.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that an informal meeting with the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Men's Aid, to which all Committee Members would be invited to attend, should be arranged.
- viii. The Committee noted an invitation from the Children's Law Centre and Save the Children to '*A Children's Rights*' briefing event on 16 November 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members should advise the Clerk if they wished to attend this event.
- ix. The Committee noted the Assembly EU Matters Newsletter 04/2016.
- x. The Committee noted an invitation from Include Youth to an event in Queen's University entitled '*Youth Justice and Conflict Transformation: What is the Future Following Devolution*' on 5 October 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members should advise the Clerk if they wished to attend this event.
- xi. The Committee considered the Prisoner Ombudsman's Report into the circumstances surrounding the death of Patrick Kelly and Members expressed concerns regarding the issues raised in relation to prisoner health care.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send a copy of the report to the Committee for Health given the findings and recommendations relating to the provision of healthcare in Maghaberry Prison and the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

- xii. The Committee considered the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland Report on *'Road Traffic Enforcement'*.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Justice regarding why the CJINI recommendation on mutual recognition of driving disqualification and penalty points, made 8 years ago, had not been progressed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the report further at the meeting on 6 October 2016.

8. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised Members that he had held introductory meetings with the Director of Public Prosecutions and officials in the Attorney General's office.

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 6 October 2016 at 2.00 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.03 p.m.

Mr Paul Frew MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Justice