



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY
FIRST MINISTER
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2014
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Mr Leslie Cree
Miss Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr George Robinson
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Stephen Moutray

In Attendance: Mrs Shauna Mageean (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Keith McBride (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)
Ms Roisin Kelly (Bill Clerk – Item 11 only)

The meeting began at 2.01 pm in public session

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairperson's Business

Historical Institutional Abuse

The Committee considered a response from the Department to the Committee's request to be briefed at today's meeting on the outcome of the Department's scoping report in relation to the Magdalene Laundries and Institutional abuse. The response advised that officials were unable to brief the Committee as Ministers were still considering the options.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a timeline for consideration of this issue.

Open University

The Committee considered an invitation to the Chairperson from the National Director of the Open University to attend its degree ceremony on 17 May 2014. The Chairperson advised Members he was unavailable to attend the ceremony. Members agreed to contact the Committee office if they wished to attend in place of the Chairperson.

Motion on Delivering Social Change Signature Programmes Event

The Chairperson advised Members that the motion on the Committee's Report on its Delivering Social Change Signature Programmes Event is on Monday 17 February 2014.

Current Invitations

The Committee noted the list of current invitations.

3. Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2014

Agreed: The draft minutes of the proceedings of the 29 January 2014 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

Timescales for Interaction between Assembly Committees and Departments

The Committee noted the further information provided in relation to the progress of the review of the Interaction between Assembly Committee and Departments guidelines.

House of Lords

The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lords EU Sub-Committee of Agriculture, Fisheries, Environment and Energy in relation to the EU proposal for establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management.

Mr Lyttle joined the meeting at 2.08 p.m.

List of Outstanding Issues

The Committee noted the list of outstanding issues.

Head of the Civil Service

The Committee considered a response from the Head of the Civil Service to the Committee's request to attend a Committee meeting to discuss the Committee's relationship with the Department. The response requests that the meeting take place initially with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Head of the Civil Service to state that it is content for the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to initially meet with the Head of the Civil Service, with a view that the Head of the Civil Service would still come to Committee to discuss issues.

Mrs Hale left the meeting at 2.11 p.m.

European or European Court of Justice Driven Regulations

The Committee considered a response from the Department providing further information on the European Commission's decision in relation to compliance of Article 70(3) of the Fair Employment and Treatment Order with Article 4 of EU Directive 2000/78/EC.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that it be kept informed of any developments.

Common Funding Scheme Review

The Committee considered a response from the Department providing further information in relation to the Review of the Common Funding Scheme for Schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the Committee for Education.

5. Correspondence

Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment to the Department seeking an urgent response to its letter of 21 November 2013 in relation to US funding.

Committee for Finance and Personnel

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel in relation to its Inquiry into Flexible Working in the Public Sector in Northern Ireland.

Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe)

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department providing an overview of the Joint Ministerial Council (Europe) meeting in October 2013.

Investing Activity Report

The Committee noted January's Investment Strategy Investing Activity Report.

Mr Maskey joined the meeting at 2.16 p.m.

6. Together: Building a United Community

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 2.17 p.m.

Miss Fearon joined the meeting at 2.42 p.m.

Departmental officials, Mr Fergus Devitt, Miss Donna Blaney and Mrs Linsey Farrell briefed the Committee on progress of implementation of Together: Building a United Community. Questions and discussion followed. Officials agreed to provide further information in relation to the timeline of outstanding policies mentioned in the document and information on the budget.

Departmental officials left the meeting at 3.22 p.m.

Miss Fearon left the meeting at 3.14 p.m.

7. Committee's European Priorities for 2014

Agreed: The Committee agreed to its response for the Report on Assembly Committee's EU Priorities for 2014.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to include a copy of the Committee's EU Activity for 2013 in the report.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the forward work programme.

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Active Ageing Strategy

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 3.25 p.m.

The Committee considered the Department's correspondence advising that officials would only be able to brief the Committee on the process of developing the consultation document in public session and that it would not be able to brief the Committee on the content of the document in public session as the document was embargoed.

Mr Maskey proposed that the Committee proceed with the briefing in public session with no discussion of the content of the document.

The Committee divided

Ayes: Miss Fearon, Mr Lyttle, Mr Maskey, Ms McGahan

Noes: Mr Cree, Mr Nesbitt

Abstentions: None

Did not vote: Mr Attwood, Mr Robinson, Mr Spratt

Agreed: The Committee agreed to proceed with the briefing in public session with no discussion of the content of the document.

Mr Nesbitt left the meeting at 3.43 p.m.

The Deputy Chairperson took the Chair at 3.43 p.m.

Mr Spratt left the meeting at 3.44 p.m.

Mr Robinson left the meeting at 3.44 p.m.

Mr Cree left the meeting at 3.54 p.m.

Departmental officials, Dr Denis McMahon, Ms Margaret-Rose McNaughton and Mrs Susannah Allen briefed the Committee on the development of the draft Active Ageing consultation document. Questions and discussion followed.

Departmental officials left the meeting at 4.03 p.m.

The meeting moved into closed session at 4.04 p.m.

11. Ombudsman Proposals

The Committee considered the options for taking forward the power of own motion investigations in the Committee's proposals for a Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

Mr Maskey proposed that the Committee proceed with Option C.

Mr Attwood proposed that the Committee proceed with Option A.

Mr Lyttle proposed that the decision be deferred until next week's meeting.

The Committee divided on Mr Maskey's proposal:

Ayes: Miss Fearon, Mr Maskey, Ms McGahan

Noes: Mr Attwood

Abstentions: Mr Lyttle

Agreed: The Committee agreed to proceed with Option C.

As the first proposal was approved, the question was not put on the other proposals.

12. Date, Time and Location of next meeting

The next meeting will be held at 2 p.m. on Wednesday 12 February 2014, in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 4.25 p.m.

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister