



**COMMITTEE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY
FIRST MINISTER
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE 2015
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

- Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Ms Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt
- Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Mr Alex Maskey
- In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Alyn Hicks (Bill Team - for item 1 only)
Ms Jonathan McMillen (Bill Team - for item 1 only)

The meeting began in closed session at 2.08 pm.

1. NIPSO Bill

The Chairperson updated Members on the informal meeting that he had with representatives from the Medical Protection Society, to discuss some of their concerns relating to the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill.

Mr Alyn Hicks and Mr Jonathan McMillen joined the meeting at 2.09 pm.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Ad Hoc Committee on the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill; and considered a response in relation to matters regarding Clause 41.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the Ad Hoc Committee, whilst noting Sinn Féin's consistent objection to

Clause 41 in principle and all policy proposals flowing from it, and that the SDLP has consistently shared concerns regarding the operation of the Clause.

Mr McMillen left the meeting at 2.19pm.

The Committee noted the advice received by the Ad Hoc Committee from the Examiner of Statutory Rules on the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill.

Ms Fearon joined the meeting at 2.21pm.

Mr McIlveen joined the meeting at 2.27pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to relay its views on the Examiner of Statutory Rules consideration of the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill to the Ad Hoc Committee.

Members noted copy correspondence from OFMDFM to the Ad Hoc Committee on the Bill advising that the Office of Legislative Counsel (OLC) has completed a technical scrutiny of the Bill and identified areas which need to be addressed. The Committee received a copy of the OLC advice in confidence and considered the issues raised.

Mr Moutray joined the meeting at 2.38pm.

Mrs Hale joined the meeting at 2.49pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request draft amendments on a number of issues raised by OLC and to see the Drafter's advice on the remaining issues; and update the Ad Hoc Committee accordingly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to update the Ad Hoc Committee on matters relating to Universities; and to ask Assembly Research for a paper clarifying the situation regarding constituent colleges of Queen's University Belfast, including the extent to which these colleges are in receipt of public funds.

The Committee noted a number of draft amendments provided by the drafter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward these to the Ad Hoc Committee.

Members noted correspondence from the Ad Hoc Committee which included a number of recommendations provided in evidence from an individual to that Committee. The Committee considered a draft response to the issues raised.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to the matter at its next meeting.

Members noted a paper from Assembly Research on the etymology of the term ‘Ombudsman’. The Committee also noted a paper from the Ombudsman following a request for the definition of ‘maladministration’ that he currently uses when dealing with complaints about public services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to these matters at its next meeting.

Ms Fearon left the meeting at 3.47pm.

Members discussed issues around the mechanism available for bringing other bodies under the remit of the proposed NIPSO.

Mr Hicks left the meeting at 3.53 pm.

Ms Fearon returned to the meeting at 3.54pm.

2. Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted an initial draft of the Report on the Inquiry into Building a United Community.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward any comments on the draft to staff before Friday lunchtime.

The meeting moved into open session at 3.56 pm.

3. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

4. Chairperson’s Business

Gender Equality Strategy

The Chairperson advised that an attendee at the meeting of the All Party Group on UNSCR 1325: Women, Peace and Security, held on Monday 15 June, advised that they had been provided with a draft Gender Equality Strategy by OFMDFM; whilst the Committee had not yet been furnished with this information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to clarify which organisations or persons have had sight of the draft; and to request that the Committee be provided with a copy as soon as possible.

Committee Invitations

The Committee noted the list of current invitations.

5. Draft Minutes of the meetings held on 10 June 2015

Agreed: The draft minutes of the proceedings of 10 June 2015 were agreed by the Committee.

6. Matters Arising

List of Outstanding Correspondence

The Committee noted the list of outstanding correspondence.

7. Correspondence

Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland

The Committee noted the Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland Annual Report and Accounts for the period ending 30 September 2013.

Committee for Finance and Personnel

The Committee noted a report from the Committee for Finance and Personnel on the visit of the EU Vice President to Belfast in May 2015.

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

The Committee noted a copy letter from the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure to the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding a Community Resuscitation Strategy.

Victims and Survivors

The Committee noted a response from OFMDFM regarding proposed models for a pension for the seriously injured.

Together: Building a United Community

The Committee noted correspondence from OFMDFM following a briefing from Departmental officials on the progress of Together: Building a United Community, which included the final, agreed Good Relations Indicators.

Agreed: Members agreed to include the response in its Inquiry into Building a United Community papers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to invite officials to brief the Committee on the final Good Relations Indicators, including how they will be monitored; and to ask why the Buddy Scheme was not deemed eligible for funding through the £50m shared education programme funded jointly by Atlantic Philanthropies and the Department of Education.

Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

The Committee noted a copy letter from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment to OFMDFM regarding the consequences for the Northern Ireland Economy of a UK exit from the European Union.

Evaluation of the Springboard Headstart Programme

The Committee noted a report from OFMDFM on the Evaluation of the Springboard Headstart Programme, which had been funded through the Central Good Relations Fund in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Committee for Education

The Committee noted a copy letter from the Committee for Education to OFMDFM regarding Delivering Social Change Literacy and Numeracy Signature Projects.

8. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme for the remainder of the session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to postpone the briefing from departmental officials on the Executive's EU Priorities for 2015/16 and Performance against the 2014/15 Executive's EU Priorities until Wednesday 1 July; and to postpone the briefing scheduled with the First Minister and deputy First Minister until the autumn.

9. Children's Services Co-operation Bill.

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 4.03 pm

Members noted a revised draft Bill from the Department and in initial response from the Bill Sponsor, Mr Steven Agnew MLA, to the proposed OFMDFM amendments..

Ms Margaret Rose McNaughton, Ms June Wilkinson and Mr Peter Hutchinson joined the Committee for discussion and questions on the Department's proposed amendments to the Children's Services Co-operation Bill. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

Mr Spratt left the meeting at 4.29pm.

Members noted that the Department may wish to make further amendments following ongoing consultation with other government departments. While acknowledging this the Committee agreed that it was content in principle with a number of the amendments proposed by the Department, with Mr Attwood advising he would reserve judgement until he has considered them further.

The officials left the meeting at 4.47 pm.

The Chairperson advised Members that clause by clause scrutiny of the Bill was scheduled for the meeting on 24 June, and that the Committee would be required to make decisions on the basis of the information that would be available at that time.

Mr McIlveen left the meeting at 4.49pm.

10. Programme for Government

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 4.49 pm

Mr Henry Johnston, Ms Margaret Rose McNaughton, Ms Siobhan Broderick and Mr Tony Canavan and appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the performance of OFMDFM against its 2014/15 Programme for Government targets. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

The Chairperson left the meeting at 5.24pm and the Deputy Chairperson, Mr Chris Lyttle, took the Chair.

Mrs Hale left the meeting at 5.29pm.

Mr Moutray left the meeting at 5.30pm. The Committee lost its decision-making quorum. In the absence of a decision-making quorum proceedings continued in line with Standing Order 49(5).

Officials agreed to provide further information on a number of issues including whether the new reporting mechanism for progress against PfG targets had been ratified by Ministers, and if it is used by other Departments; when the online reporting PfG reporting tool was most recently updated; and figures detailing the total spend to date and funds committed to date under PfG commitment 33.

The officials left the meeting at 5.38 pm.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time and Location of next meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Committee is at 2.00 pm in Room 30 on Wednesday 24 June 2015.

The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 5.39 pm.

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