



**COMMITTEE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY
FIRST MINISTER
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2015
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present:	Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson) Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson) Mr Andy Allen Mr Alex Attwood Mr Paul Frew Mr Gordon Lyons Mr Alex Maskey
Apologies:	Ms Megan Fearon Mr David McIlveen Mr Stephen Moutray
In Attendance:	Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk) Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor) Mr Innis Mennie (Clerical Officer) Mr Alyn Hicks (Bill Team - Item 11 only)

The meeting began in public session at 2.13pm.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as recorded above.

2. Chair's Business

EC-UK

The Chairperson advised Members that the Chairs of the European Committees of the UK legislatures were scheduled to meet in Parliament Buildings on Friday 27 November as part of their regular information sharing and discussion on matters relating to Europe.

Departments Bill

The Committee noted correspondence from the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the draft Departments Bill and Explanatory and Financial Memorandum. The Chairperson advised Members of his understanding that a request will be made for the Bill to progress via the accelerated passage procedure.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to meet with junior Ministers at 11am on Monday 30 November for a briefing on the Departments Bill and an explanation for the proposed use of the accelerated passage procedure.

Ministerial Briefing

The Committee noted a response from the First Minister and deputy First Minister accepting an invitation to brief the Committee, and advising that they are content to do so in the New Year.

Mr Attwood joined the meeting at 2.16pm.

Open Government Network in NI

The Committee noted a request from the Open Government Network to brief the Committee on the open government initiative and open government commitments specific to Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing.

Mrs Diane Dodds MEP

The Committee noted an invitation to a 'Meet your MEP' event with Mrs Diane Dodds MEP, which is to be held in the MAC, Belfast at 12 noon on Friday 11 December 2015.

Legacy Gender Integration Group

The Committee noted an invitation to the Committee Chairperson to participate in a stakeholder roundtable on Gender Principles for Dealing with the Past on Friday 27 November. The Chairperson advised that he was unable to attend and other Members indicated that they would not be available to attend in his place.

Northern Ireland Business and Human Rights Forum

The Committee noted an invitation to the Committee Chairperson from the Northern Ireland Business and Human Rights Forum to attend a reception at the Belfast Harbour Commissioners on 11 December 2015.

The Committee noted the list of current invitations.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the proceedings of 18 November 2015 were agreed by the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust

The Committee noted correspondence from the Chair of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT) in response to comments made by a Member at the meeting on 4 November. The correspondence advised that visits to Brussels were popular and enjoyed an encouraging response from both the business community and MLAs; however a visit was not planned for 2015 as it had been agreed to visit Washington DC and Cardiff. The Chairperson requested that the correspondence be brought to the attention of the relevant Member.

List of Outstanding Correspondence

The Committee noted the list of outstanding correspondence.

Historical Institutional Abuse

The Chairperson advised Members that a response had not yet been received from the First Minister and deputy First Minister following two recent requests for information (dated 23 October and 12 November) on the scoping exercises in respect of those victims of historical institutional abuse who fall outside the remit of the current Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, and briefing from officials at the earliest opportunity.

The Chairperson reminded Members that the letters issued following advice to adopt a staged approach to the request for information, and during discussion with Members confirmed that both letters had indicated the Committee's intention to use its powers under section 44 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 should the requested information and briefing from officials not be forthcoming.

Following discussion Mr Attwood proposed that the Committee exercise its power under section 44 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 with regard to the information requested by the Committee on the scoping exercises in respect of those victims of historical institutional abuse who fall outside the remit of the current Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry.

The Chairperson put the question:

"That the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister is content to request that the Speaker issue a notice under section 44 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998."

The Committee divided on the motion proposed by the Chairperson:

Ayes 4

Noes 2

AYES

Mr Allen

Mr Attwood

Mr Lyttle

Mr Nesbitt

NOES

Mr Lyons

Mr Maskey

Agreed: That the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister is content to request that the Speaker issue a notice under section 44 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to the First Minister and deputy First Minister in respect of information on the scoping exercises regarding those victims of historical institutional abuse who fall outside the remit of the current Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry.

The Chairperson proposed the following motion:

“That the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister is content to specify that the relevant witnesses should attend a meeting of the Committee on Wednesday 13 January 2016 at 2pm in Room 30, and that the relevant papers are provided by Thursday 7 January 2016.”

The Committee divided on the motion proposed by the Chairperson:

Ayes 4

Noes 0

Abstained 1

AYES

Mr Allen

Mr Attwood

Mr Lyttle

Mr Nesbitt

NOES

None

ABSTAINED

Mr Maskey

Mr Lyons did not vote.

Agreed: That the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister is content to specify that the relevant witnesses should attend a meeting of the Committee on Wednesday 13 January at 2pm in Room 30, and that the relevant papers are provided by Thursday 7 January.

The Committee agreed to move to the evidence session with Lord Boswell on the House of Lords Inquiry on Visions of EU Reform next.

5. House of Lords Inquiry – Visions of EU Reform

Representatives from the House of Lords European Committee joined the meeting at 2.32 pm.

Lord Boswell of Aynho, Chairman of the House of Lords European Committee discussed his Committee's Inquiry '*Visions of EU Reform*'. Lord Boswell was accompanied by Mr Stuart Stoner, Clerk to the House of Lords European Committee.

Questions and discussion followed and the evidence session was recorded by Hansard. Members noted that while this was not a formal part of the evidence gathering for the House of Lords Committee Inquiry, the discussion may be drawn on in the report, and an informal note may be included in the appendices.

Mr Frew joined the meeting at 3.09pm.

Mr Lyons left the meeting at 3.29pm.

Mr Frew left the meeting at 3.29pm.

Lord Boswell and Mr Stoner left the meeting at 3.36 pm.

Agreed: the Committee agreed to issue a press release on the discussion with Lord Boswell.

6. European Commission Work Programme 2016

The Committee considered an Assembly Research and Information Service analysis paper on the European Commission Work programme for 2016. Members also noted the UK Government Explanatory Memorandum on the European Commission Work

Programme for 2016; and that the House of Lords will be writing to the European Commission with views on the Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the RaISe paper to the House of Lords Committee, and also to the relevant committees in the House of Commons, the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales for information.

The Committee noted a draft commissioning letter to statutory committees and a template for response as part of its information gathering exercise for the annual report on Assembly Committee European Priorities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue the letter and template to statutory committees, along with the RaISe analysis of the European Commission Work Programme for 2016 and the UK Government Explanatory Memorandum.

The Committee noted a draft letter to stakeholders requesting input to the information gathering exercise for the annual report on Assembly Committee European Priorities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue the correspondence to the relevant stakeholders, including the Department, MEPs, the Committee of the Regions and the European and Economic Social Committee.

7. Correspondence

Solace NI

The Committee noted a short summary paper from NILGA and SOLACE NI regarding a local government response to the Syrian refugee crisis.

Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted a response from OFMDFM regarding the Committee's Inquiry into Building a United Community which included clarification on the recommendations being progressed; information on the shared education campus and Ministerial panel; a response to the recommendation which proposed laying an annual report on the progress of T:BUC; information on progress of the appointment of a Chair for the T:BUC community engagement forum; and a breakdown of the £800m allocated to T:BUC over the lifetime of the strategy, along with spend to date on the headline actions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from Departmental officials on the plan to implement the recommendations of the Committee's Inquiry into Building a United Community.

Parenting NI

The Committee noted a response from the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding funding for the Parenting NI Odyssey Parenting your Teen Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the correspondence to Parenting NI.

Sexual Orientation Strategy

The Committee noted an update from the Department on the Sexual Orientation Strategy.

Committee for Finance and Personnel

The Committee noted a copy letter to the Rt Hon. Peter Robinson MLA from the Chairperson of the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding its NAMA Inquiry.

Northern Ireland Executive Brussels Office

The Committee noted the Northern Ireland Executive Brussels Office Brussels Report for July – October 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the report to relevant Statutory Committees.

Consultation on Draft Amendments to the Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976

The Committee noted correspondence from OFMDFM advising of a consultation on draft Regulations to amend the Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976.

8. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson advised Members that the Department had not yet confirmed if any briefings relating to outstanding business could be scheduled for the meeting of Wednesday 2 December.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk would liaise with the relevant departmental officials in respect of potential departmental briefing; and that if no substantive agenda items were possible the Committee may not meet on 2 December.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the first meeting following Christmas recess would be Wednesday 6 January.

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme to December 2015.

9. Any Other Business

Mr Attwood sought clarification on the legislative programme expected from the Department to the end of the current mandate.

10. Date, Time and Location of next meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Committee is at 11 am in Room 30 on Monday 30 November 2015.

Mr Lyons returned to the meeting at 3.43pm.

The meeting moved into closed session at 3.44 pm.

Mr Lyttle left the meeting at 3.44pm

11. NIPSO Bill

Mr Alyn Hicks joined the meeting at 3.44pm.

The Chairperson reminded Members that it had been agreed that the Assembly Legal Services should informally explore an issue raised by the Attorney General.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Bill Team to liaise more formally with the Attorney General on this matter.

The Committee considered four amendments which had been tabled to Further Consideration Stage of the Public Services Ombudsperson Bill, scheduled for debate on 30 November, which it had not previously considered.

Clause 30, page 11, line 29

Agreed: The Committee agreed not to support the amendment.

Mr Lyttle returned to the meeting at 3.46pm.

Clause 46, page 17, line 34

Agreed: The Committee agreed not to support the amendment.

Clause 13, page 6, line 2

Agreed: The Committee agreed not to support the amendment.

Schedule 3, page 36, line 27

Agreed: The Committee agreed not to support the amendment.

The Bill Team agreed to provide a table of amendments, including the Committee position, to Members for Further Consideration Stage.

Mr Hicks left the meeting at 4.02pm.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 4.03 pm.

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