



# Northern Ireland Assembly

## COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday 12 February 2015**  
**Room 29, Parliament Buildings**

- Present: Mr Alex Maskey MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Mickey Brady MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Jim Allister MLA  
Mr Roy Beggs MLA  
Ms Paula Bradley MLA  
Mr Maurice Devenney MLA  
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA  
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA  
Mr Fra McCann MLA  
Mr Sammy Wilson MLA
- In Attendance: Dr Kevin Pelan (Assembly Clerk)  
Mrs Ashleigh Mitford (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Stewart Kennedy (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Richard Reid (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies: Mr Gregory Campbell MLA

The Chairperson declared the meeting open at 10.02am.

**The meeting moved into closed session at 10.02am.**

*Paula Bradley MLA joined the meeting at 10.03am*

*Roy Beggs MLA joined the meeting at 10.04am*

*Maurice Devenney MLA joined the meeting at 10.08am*

#### **1. Committee Inquiry – Procedural Issues**

The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister for Social Development in relation to its Section 44 notice requiring the release of the fact-finding report into the DSD Special Adviser.

The Committee discussed whether to extend the deadline for the production of the fact-finding report. The motion was proposed:

*That the deadline for the production of the fact-finding report is extended to 5pm on Wednesday 18 February 2015 and should the report not be provided by that time the Clerk should liaise with Legal Services on referring the matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.*

Ayes; 7

Noes; 3

Abstentions; 0

Non-voting; 0

AYES:

Mr Alex Maskey MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Mickey Brady MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Jim Allister MLA

Mr Roy Beggs MLA

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Ms Delores Kelly MLA

Mr Fra McCann MLA

NOES:

Ms Paula Bradley MLA

Mr Maurice Devenney MLA

Mr Sammy Wilson MLA

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Speaker and the Minister and advise them of its decision.

**2. Inquiry into allegations, arising from a BBC NI Spotlight programme, aired on 3 July 2013, of impropriety or irregularity relating to NIHE managed contracts and consideration of any resulting actions – Phase 2 Report**

The Committee considered the draft report on Phase 2 of its Inquiry.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Table of Contents of the Report

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the following appendices stand as part of the Report:

Appendix 1 - Minutes of Proceedings

Appendix 2 - Minutes of Evidence

Appendix 3 - Written Evidence

Appendix 4 - Correspondence from the Department of Social Development

Appendix 5 - List of Witnesses

## Appendix 6 - Supplementary Evidence

## Appendix 7 - Procedural Fairness

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Recommendations of its Report

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Introduction of its Report

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Consideration of Evidence of its Report as amended

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Conclusions of its Report as amended

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Executive Summary of its Report

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Report be the 10th Report of the Committee for Social Development

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to send an extract of the Report to an individual for comment in advance of ordering it to print.

The Chairperson declared the meeting open to the public at 11.01am.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Roy Beggs MLA as a new member of the Committee.

### **3. Apologies**

Apologies were as noted above.

### **4. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The draft minutes of the meetings held on 5 February 2015 were agreed.

### **5. Matters Arising**

- 5.1** The Chairperson informed the Committee that on 10 February 2015 the Assembly agreed to extend the Committee Stage of the Regeneration Bill to 28 May 2015.
- 5.2** The Chairperson informed the Committee that the Welfare Reform Bill completed Consideration Stage on 11 February 2015.

### **6. Social Housing Reform Programme – Regulatory Framework Consultation – Departmental Briefing**

The following officials joined the meeting at 11.04am:

- Paul Price, Social Housing Reform Programme, Programme Manager, DSD; and
- Shane Clements, Social Housing Reform Programme, Policy Project Manager, DSD

The officials briefed the Committee on the Social Housing Reform Programme – Regulatory Framework consultation.

The officials took questions from the Committee and discussed issues that they considered should be addressed in the consultation document. In particular, the Committee was concerned that some of the questions were phrased in a technical way that tenants might not understand and this might deter them from taking part in the survey. The Committee felt this could result in a key audience not being captured in the consultation.

The Committee was advised that an ‘easy-read’ version would be produced to address this.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek an update from the Department on its work in relation to regulating the private rented sector.

The officials left the meeting at 12.07pm.

*Alex Maskey MLA left the meeting at 12.07pm*

*Mickey Brady MLA took the Chair at 10.07pm*

## **7. Housing Repossession Taskforce – Departmental Briefing**

The following officials joined the meeting at 12.09pm:

- Stephen Martin, Chairperson, Housing Repossessions Taskforce, DSD; and
- Paul Grocott, Policy Advisor, DSD

The officials briefed the Committee on the Department’s final report on the Housing Repossession Taskforce.

*Jim Allister MLA left the meeting at 12.14pm*

*Jim Allister MLA re-joined the meeting at 12.25pm*

The officials took questions from the Committee and discussed the content of the report. The Committee acknowledged the importance of the report and its recommendations. However, the Committee was of the view that the report should have included positive examples of the benefits of engaging with the advice sector at an early stage.

*Dolores Kelly MLA left the meeting at 12.33pm*

*Jim Allister left the meeting at 13.09pm*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek information from the Department on the outcomes for homeowners as a result of engaging with the advice sector.

The officials left the meeting at 13.17pm.

*Stewart Dickson MLA left the meeting at 13.17pm*

## **8. SR 34 The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015**

The Committee had no objections to the Rule.

The Chairperson read the following motion into the record:

*That the Committee for Social Development has considered the Statutory Rule SR 34 The Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report has no objections to the Rule.*

## **9. Correspondence**

The Committee noted correspondence from the OFMdFM Committee regarding European Priorities.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the OFMdFM on its European Priorities.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from the Department on its European activity including the action it is taking to source EU funding for projects under its remit.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to action the rest of the correspondence as outlined in the correspondence memo.

*Stewart Dickson re-joined the meeting at 13.21pm*

## **10. Forward Work Programme**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme as drafted.

## **11. Date, time and place of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Social Development will take place on 19 February 2015 at 10.00am in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 13.21pm.

**Alex Maskey**

**Chairperson, Committee for Social Development**

**19 February 2015**