



Northern Ireland Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday 18 June 2015
Room 29, Parliament Buildings

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

The meeting commenced at 10.45 a.m.

The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson were absent and the Committee Clerk was in the chair.

Dolores Kelly moved that Fra McCann do take the chair of the Committee.

Paula Bradley seconded the motion.

There were no further nominations and Mr McCann took the chair at 10:46a.m.

1. Improving Benefit Uptake – Year 3 Plans – Social Security Agency Briefing

This session, which had commenced informally as the Committee was inquorate, resumed in formal, open session.

The following Social Security Agency (SSA) officials were answering members' questions:

- Margaret Boyle, Assistant Director of Working Age Services
- Joan O'Hara, Improving Benefit Uptake Team

The Committee noted a submission from the SSA.

The officials left the meeting at 11.50 a.m.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meetings held on 11 June 2015 were agreed.

4. Chairperson's Business

None raised

5. Matters Arising

The Committee noted that the motion that the Pension Schemes Bill to proceed under the accelerated passage procedure is scheduled for 30 June 2015.

The Committee noted comments from the Department regarding the scheduling of its briefing on the Affordable Warmth Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to retain the current scheduling for this item as 2 July 2015.

6. Direct Labour Organisation Strategy and Costs Update – Departmental Briefing

The following officials from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive joined the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

- Gerry Flynn, Director of Landlord Services

- Clark Bailie, Director of Finance

The chair reminded members that at its meeting of 21 May, the Committee considered correspondence from Unite and an answer to an Assembly Question in relation to the increasing costs and scale of the NIHE Direct Labour Organisation. The Committee had agreed to seek an update from the Department as soon as possible. The Clerk and Mr McCann also met informally with Unite on Monday 15 June to discuss their concerns and Unite wrote to the Committee following this informal meeting.

Members noted relevant correspondence on the issue.

The Committee noted a submission from the department and a briefing paper from the Clerk.

The officials briefed the Committee.

11.12 a.m. Sammy Douglas joined the meeting.

11.24 a.m. Paula Bradley left the meeting

The briefing was followed by questions from members.

Agreed: NIHE will keep the Committee updated on the progress of its negotiations with Unite.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further information on a number of issues from the Department.

The representatives left the meeting at 11:35 a.m.

7. Social Housing Reform - Development of a Social Housing Rent Policy - Departmental Briefing

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 11:36 a.m.

- Jim Wilkinson, Director of Housing - DSD
- Paul Price, Deputy Director of Housing - DSD
- Heloise Brown, Head of Policy, Research and Legislation - DSD

The Committee noted a submission from the department.

The officials briefed the Committee.

12.12p.m. Paula Bradley joined the meeting

The briefing was followed by questions from members.

The Committee noted that the Department intends to commence a 16 week consultation on its Social Housing Rent Policy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a departmental briefing on Affordable, Shared Equity Housing.

The officials left the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

8. Correspondence

The Committee noted correspondence from Dr Malcolm McKibbin in relation to his response to the recommendations contained within the Committee's report on Phase 3 of its recent inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Dr McKibbin to ask for a response on those issues identified in the report for which he specifically has responsibility as Head of the NI Civil Service.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) in relation to its response to the recommendations contained within the Committee's report on Phase 3 of its recent Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to AERC to seek clarification on the likely timeframe for its consideration of the Ministerial Code.

The Committee considered a correspondence memo.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to action all correspondence as outlined on the correspondence memo

9. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

10. AOB

Agreed: The Committee noted that the Chair has been absent for health reasons and agreed to write a letter to wish him well in his recovery.

Sammy Douglas queried the progress of the Liquor Licensing Bill and also declared an interest on this matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an update from the Department in relation to the likely scheduling of the Liquor Licensing Bill.

The Committee noted a request from Talk Back for an interview with a Committee Member in relation to the removal of a rainbow flag from a Fold Housing Association property.

Agreed: Any member available for interview would contact Committee staff after the meeting.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Social Development will take place on 25 June 2015 at 10:00am.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:38 p.m.

Alex Maskey

Chairperson, Committee for Social Development

25 June 2015