



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Communities Legacy Report 2017 - 2022

Report: NIA 172/17-22

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List of abbreviations and acronyms used in the report

MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly of Northern Ireland
The Department	The Department for Communities
The Committee	The Committee for Communities
The Assembly	The Northern Ireland Assembly
AIMS	Assembly Information Management System
LCM	Legislative Consent Motion
RaISe	NI Assembly's Research and Information Service
DfC	Department for Communities
CCNI	Charity Commission for Northern Ireland
CDC	Collective Combined Contribution
EFM	Explanatory and Financial Memorandum
EPC	Energy Performance Certificate
GMP	Guaranteed Minimum Pension
FCF	Fraud Compensation Fund
PRS	Private Rented Sector
SMI	Support for Mortgage Interest

Remit, Powers and Membership of the Committee

Powers

The Committee for Communities is a Statutory Departmental Committee established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of Strand One of the Belfast Agreement and under Assembly Standing Order No 48. The Committee has a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department for Communities and has a role in the initiation of legislation.

The Committee has power to:

- consider and advise on Departmental budgets and Annual Plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- approve relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee Stage of relevant primary legislation;
- call for persons and papers;
- initiate enquiries and make reports; and
- consider and advise on matters brought to the Committee by the Minister for Communities.

Membership

The Committee has nine members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, and a quorum of five members. The membership of the Committee is as follows:

- Paula Bradley MLA (Chairperson)
- Kellie Armstrong MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Andy Allen MBE MLA
- Stephen Dunne MLA
- Mark Durkan MLA
- Paul Frew MLA
- Ciara Ferguson MLA
- Áine Murphy MLA
- Aisling Reilly MLA

Review of 2017 – 2022 Mandate

Scrutiny

1. The key points of the Committee’s scrutiny during the 2017 - 2022 mandate are summarised below.

Inquiries

2. The Committee did not undertake any formal inquiries.

Reviews

3. The Committee did not undertake any reviews.

Legislation

4. The Committee scrutinised six Bills during the mandate, the details of which are outlined below.

The Pension Schemes Bill

5. [Read the full Committee report on the Pension Schemes Bill](#)
6. The Pension Schemes Bill aimed to build on recent pension reforms, such as automatic enrolment in workplace pensions, and sought to increase the regulation of Master Trusts by the Pensions Regulator to ensure that savers are appropriately protected, regardless of the sort of pension scheme they are saving into.
7. After considering the evidence it received and seeking clarification on a number of matters, overall, the Committee was content with the policy proposals of the Bill and agreed the Bill as drafted.

Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill

8. [Read the full Committee report on the Licensing and Registration of Clubs \(Amendment\) Bill.](#)

9. The Bill amended, and in some places replaced, the existing provisions of the Licensing (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (the Licensing Order) and the Registration of Clubs (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (the Clubs Order).
10. The Bill (as introduced) contained provisions that aim to modernise licensing laws and to balance support for Northern Ireland’s licensed trade and registered clubs with protecting the health of the local population from alcohol-related harms.
11. Throughout its consideration of the Bill, the Committee aimed to steer a balanced course and were keen to ensure that the Bill supported consumption of alcohol in a controlled environment.



Evidence session with local producer - Armagh Cider Company

12. The Committee sought amendments to a range of clauses (4,8,11,12,27,28) and, after correspondence and discussions with the Department, the Committee was pleased that most of these were taken forward as Ministerial amendments - either as amendments to existing clauses or as new clauses.
13. The Committee felt it had an extremely difficult job in this Bill in balancing the wishes of the hospitality sector, the local alcohol producers and public health

matters. It had to make difficult but pragmatic decisions in terms of the amendments it sought.

Charities Bill

14. [Read the full Committee report on the Charities Bill.](#)
15. The Bill amends the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, with retrospective effect, to render lawful previous decisions taken by the staff of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI) in reliance on unlawful delegation in cases where doing so is consistent with rights under the European Convention on Human Rights and the decision is not unlawful on other grounds.
16. Throughout its consideration of the Bill, the Committee focused on any potential unintended consequences, as Members understood that retrospective legislation is an unusual course of action and the Committee wished to be assured that the Department had taken sufficient legal advice on the matter.
17. After hearing all its evidence, deliberating on the many issues raised, taking advice from the Assembly Bill Office and querying many issues with departmental officials, the Committee agreed to request that the Department make a number of amendments to the Bill in Clauses 1 and 2, but agreed Clauses 3 and 4 as drafted. The Committee was pleased that these were taken forward as Ministerial amendments to existing clauses with one matter dealt with through a Ministerial assurance.

Private Tenancies Bill

18. [Read the full Committee report on the Private Tenancies Bill.](#)
19. The Bill makes a series of amendments to The Private Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. The key objectives of the clauses in the Bill are to make the private rented sector (PRS) a safer and more secure housing option for a wider range of households, to ensure better regulation of the sector and offer greater protection to private renters.
20. As it considered the Bill, the Committee bore in mind that the PRS sector provides a flexible tenure choice for many tenants, particularly young

professionals, but that the sector also houses a considerable number of vulnerable households.



RaISe presentation on the Private Tenancies Bill

21. Throughout its scrutiny of the evidence, the Committee aimed to consider any potential unintended consequences of the Bill in terms of finding a balance between protecting tenants and the potential for over-regulation which could drive landlords from the sector thus compounding housing problems.
22. The Committee requested that the Department make a number of amendments to the Bill in Clauses 3 and 7 and was pleased that these were taken forward as Ministerial amendments, so that the Bill provided for receipts for all cash payments in relation to the tenancy (not just for rent payments) and that the time period in Clause 7 5D(4) was increased from two to three months.

Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Bill

23. [Read the full Committee report on the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements \(Amendment\) Bill.](#)
24. The Bill amends certain provisions within the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, with the overarching objective to address anomalies within the Order regarding the regulation of land-based betting, gaming, lottery and amusement activities.

25. Given the limited scope of the Bill, the Committee was keen to consider, as far as possible, the wider and longer-term issues that were highlighted to it in evidence regarding the second phase of reforms. It made a substantial number and range of comments and recommendations in that regard, including touching on areas of reserved matters such as media advertising, as well as recommendations pertinent to the clauses of the Bill.
26. The Committee requested significant amendments to the Explanatory and Financial Memorandum (EFM), which were accepted and drafted by the Department, regarding Clauses 8, 11 and the Schedule. The Committee felt that the EFM then better explained the new legislation as to what does or does not constitute payment to participate in a prize draw/competition and also forms of payment.
27. After considering all the evidence, deliberating on the many issues raised, taking advice from the Assembly Bill Office, querying many issues and seeking clarifications with Departmental Officials, the entire Committee agreed to Clauses 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, the Schedule and the Long Title as drafted by the Department. There was a Committee division on Clauses 2 and 6 due to public health concerns.

Support for Mortgage Interest etc. (Security for Loans) Bill

28. [Read the full Committee report on the Support for Mortgage Interest etc. \(Security for Loans\) Bill.](#)
29. The Bill allowed regulations to impose a charge on the property in respect of which a Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) loan is made, and provides for charges securing SMI loans to be registrable in the Statutory Charge Register.
30. The Committee took briefings from the Minister, departmental bill officials and the Law Society and considered additional letters and papers throughout the process as necessary.
31. After much discussion with officials concerning the objectives of the Bill; the detail of an SMI loan; the processes of registering and removing the statutory

charge; and how and when an SMI loan is repaid, the Committee was content with the Bill as drafted.

Legislative Consent Motions (LCMs)

LCM on Westminster Compensation (London Capital Finance plc and Fraud Compensation Fund) Bill

32. [Read the full Committee report on the LCM on Westminster Compensation \(London Capital Finance plc and Fraud Compensation Fund\) Bill.](#)
33. The Committee was briefed by departmental officials on the purpose of the LCM. Members asked what the impact would be on Northern Ireland if the LCM was not agreed as quickly as possible. The officials advised that if the LCM was not agreed, the provisions of the Compensation (London Capital & Finance plc and Fraud Compensation Fund (FCF)) Bill relating to the pensions Fraud Compensation Fund would not be extended here.
34. The officials advised that the LCM provides legal certainty for schemes, allows Fraud Compensation payments falling from "pension liberation" fraud to be made and ensures the going concern status of the FCF. It would also ensure scheme members in Northern Ireland are not put at a disadvantage compared to people in Britain, and are able to enjoy the benefits of the loan.
35. The Committee sought the views of The Pensions Regulator on the LCM who advised that it had no objection to the LCM being approved by the Committee.
36. In order to ensure that Northern Ireland members are not disadvantaged and that this is handled in a timely manner without the need for a separate Assembly Bill, Members were content to recommend that the provisions in the Westminster Bill, as outlined in the LCM, are extended here.

LCM on Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination Bill

37. [Read the full Committee report on the LCM on Immigration and Social Security Co-Ordination Bill.](#)
38. The Committee was briefed on the Bill and LCM and was advised that the UK Ministers for Future Borders and Immigration and Disabled People Health and

Work, requested that Minister Hargey agree that the Northern Ireland social security provisions remain in the Bill and to bring forward the necessary legislative consent motion.

39. The Committee was advised that the Bill makes provision for retained EU regulations, which relate to the current social security co-ordination scheme, to be amended by the Westminster Government and/or a devolved authority.
40. Members recognised that the LCM did not deal with the specifics of social security benefits but rather gave the Assembly the powers to make regulations in respect of social security co-ordination and were content to support the LCM. However, some members noted their general uneasiness with the use of LCMs rather than bespoke Assembly legislation.

LCM on the Westminster Pension Schemes Bill

41. [Read the full Committee report on the LCM on the Westminster Pension Schemes Bill.](#)
42. The Committee was briefed by departmental officials and queried why the Department had brought the LCM forward at that time given the Bill was subject to possible amendment at Westminster. The Committee queried whether the Department could have waited until the Bill was in its final form but was advised that the Bill, given for all practical purposes that there is a single systems of pensions, will safeguard the interests that for pension members in NI by ensuring that pensions law does not fall behind the protections available in Britain.
43. Omission of the NI provisions in the Bill would mean that the NI Assembly would be required to bring a comparable Bill forward, in a similar timeframe, to ensure that members here are not disadvantaged compared to people in Britain and that the pensions system continues to function.
44. The Committee recognised that the Bill had been broadly welcomed by unions, the pensions industry, and political parties and further recognised that central to the Bill is the principle of consumer protection and enabling people to plan better for their pensions.

45. The Committee welcomed that the power to make subordinate legislation on the Bill will rest with the Department for Communities and the powers of control over the subordinate legislation will rest within the Assembly.
46. The Committee acknowledged that the Bill will strengthen the pensions system by introducing certain safeguards and enhanced sanctions. Members were supportive of the draft Legislative Consent Motion which endorses the principle of extension of the principles of the Pensions Schemes Bill, as introduced in the House of Lords, to Northern Ireland.

Further LCM on the Westminster Pension Schemes Bill

47. [Read the full Committee report on the LCM on the Westminster Pension Schemes Bill.](#)
48. The Department advised the Committee that, since the original Bill was introduced, other amendments had been made to add further detail on policies already in the Bill, which were covered by the original Legislative Consent Memorandum, such as a charge cap for Collective Defined Contribution (CDC) schemes.
49. The Committee was informed by the departmental officials that the amendments are generally seen as positive measures which are aimed at optimising the opportunity to legislate for pension schemes to better help people plan for the future and to protect people's pensions. Officials also informed the Committee that further detail on these provisions will be set out in subordinate legislation, made by the Department for Communities and subject to Assembly control. The fact that the Assembly will have control over the subordinate legislation was particularly welcomed by the Committee.
50. The Committee also welcomed an amendment in relation to the pensions dashboard which ensures that there will be a public service pensions dashboard as well as commercial dashboards.
51. The Committee accepted that it was advantageous that any changes to the regulation of pensions as a result of legislation is made across all jurisdictions at the same time to ensure compliance and enforcement.

LCM on The Pension Schemes (Conversion of Guaranteed Minimum Pensions) Bill

52. [Read the full Committee report on the LCM on The Pension Schemes \(Conversion of Guaranteed Minimum Pensions\) Bill.](#)
53. The Committee was briefed by departmental officials who highlighted that the LCM was to extend to Northern Ireland the provisions in the Pension Schemes (Conversion of Guaranteed Minimum Pensions) Bill relating to the conversion of Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) benefits into other scheme benefits.
54. The Committee welcomed that the Bill will amend existing GMP conversion legislation and reassure pension schemes that they can use the conversion legislation to equalise overall pensions for the effect of differences between men and women resulting from GMPs. The Committee therefore welcomed the balancing out of the inequalities between men and women in the overall pensions they receive.
55. The Committee sought confirmation on whether any future changes would be made through subordinate legislation, which would be the responsibility of the Department for Communities and the Assembly. The Officials informed Members that, as pensions is a devolved issue, all pension regulations will be brought before the Committee.
56. The Committee expressed concerns over any unforeseen implications if Northern Ireland chose to diverge from Westminster, particularly in relation to the centralised pension scheme. The officials confirmed that, in line with section 87 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, there was, in effect, a single system of pensions across the UK in order to allow for the smooth running of pension schemes.
57. After the discussion with officials, the Committee was content that the extension of provisions in the Bill to Northern Ireland would enable the required provisions to be enacted by pension schemes across jurisdictions at the same time, thus providing legal clarity and certainty for scheme providers seeking to remove inequalities from their schemes.

Approach

58. Due to the ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic, Committee meetings were mostly conducted in a hybrid format with some Members attending in person in person and some remotely via the Starleaf system. Two meetings were held in a fully virtual format. No external visits or committee meetings were possible.



Committee at work in hybrid meeting

59. The Committee has seen enormous benefit in engaging with stakeholders formally and informally to assist it in its scrutiny role.
60. In addition to formal meetings – for which key statistics are appended – the Committee also undertook a number of other actions which are set out below.

Stakeholder events / informal meetings

61. The Committee agreed at its meeting on 16 September 2020 to hold a series of informal themed stakeholder events, in order to hear from the substantial number of groups who had requested to brief the Committee.
62. The Committee held three such events on the themes of Housing/Housing Policy, Social Security and Welfare Mitigations and Covid - the Way Forward. These events enabled groups to have the opportunity to brief Members outside of formal meetings.
63. The Committee also held two Informal 'Zoom' Youth Stakeholder events as part of its evidence gathering in relation to two Bills.

Informal Stakeholder event on Housing and Housing Policy

64. The first such event was on the theme of Housing and Housing Policy which enabled the Committee to hear from key groups on a range of issues including, rethinking social housing, the provision of affordable homes, constraints facing the construction industry and the future proofing of homes to support the needs of people with dementia.
65. The key outcome of the event was the Committee's request to all groups present to make an assurance to liaise in the future with the Alzheimer's Society. The Committee also recommended that, to assist the construction industry, the Alzheimer's Society carry out a mapping exercise to draw up a list of essential requirements for the future development and/or refit of homes.

Informal Stakeholder Event on Social Security and Welfare Mitigations

66. The Committee held a second stakeholder event on Social Security and Welfare Mitigations. Members heard from key groups on a range of issues including the protection and extension of the current package of Welfare

Mitigations, the changes required in the Special Rules for Terminal Illness in Social Security law and the impact of Universal Credit on women.

67. The Committee and participants both hailed the event a great success, enabling open and frank discussions to take place. Following on from the event, the Committee agreed to write to the Department on a range of issues including an update on its ongoing work in relation to amending the Special Rules for Terminal Illness for welfare claimants.



Stakeholder Event on Social Security and Welfare Mitigations

Informal Stakeholder event on Covid and The Way Forward

68. The third and final stakeholder event was on the theme; Covid and The Way Forward. The Committee heard from two key groups on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, including the future role of Community Development Trusts in creating a resilient economy and the devastating impact of the pandemic on the charity sector.

69. The Committee welcomed hearing first hand from both groups. Members discussed the future of Community Development Trusts and their vital role in bringing forward local strategies.
70. The Committee thanked local charities including St Vincent de Paul for their outstanding work during the pandemic when the need for their services increased rapidly while faced with the devastating loss of income as a direct result of the pandemic.

Informal ‘Zoom’ Youth Stakeholder event for the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill

71. The Committee held an informal ‘Zoom’ youth stakeholder event, organised by Engagement, involving a group of pupils in their final year of secondary education. The pupils participated in break-out sessions to aspects of the Bill of particular relevance to them, such as school formals in licensed premises and access to the licensed area of a sports club. A report on this event is included in the appendices of the Bill report.

Informal ‘Zoom’ Youth Stakeholder event for the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Bill

72. The Committee held an informal ‘Zoom’ youth stakeholder event involving a group of pupils in their final year of secondary education. The pupils completed an interactive online ‘Mentimeter’ questionnaire on the aspects of the Bill most pertinent to young people, such as how to make gambling less appealing to under-18s and education on gambling addiction. A report on this event is included in the appendices of the Bill report.

Visits

73. Due to a combination of the Covid-19 pandemic and its extensive primary legislation work programme it was decided by the Committee not to undertake external visits in order to complete all Committee Stages of Bills to deadlines.

External meetings

74. The Committee held two fully virtual meetings which were counted as external meetings in the Assembly Information Management System (AIMS) report. External meetings physically located on sites other than Parliament Buildings were not possible due to the Covid-19 regulations.

Suggested Issues for the Successor Committee

75. The Committee considered a number of legislative and policy issues, which have yet to be formally concluded. These are outlined briefly below for the consideration on the new Committee.

Primary Legislation

Betting Bill

76. During its consideration of the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Bill, Departmental Officials informed the Committee that the Bill was only the first phase of reform and that a new, more comprehensive Bill, would be brought forward in the new mandate. A new Committee may wish to be aware that this Bill will likely consist of over 350 clauses and will deal with a range of issues that this Committee was particularly concerned about, including online gambling, an independent regulator and further protections of children and young people from the harms of gambling.

Charities Bill

77. Although, the Charities Bill was short, the background leading to the need for the Bill was complex and impacted on over 7000 decisions taken by Charity Commission staff over a number of years. At the end of a series of legal proceedings, these decisions were finally deemed not lawful, in February 2020 by the Court of Appeal, leading to the retrospective actions needed in the Bill.
78. The Minister also commissioned an Independent Review of Charity Regulation in Northern Ireland (NI) in January 2021. The review considered the Charities Act (NI) 2008 (the Act) and the roles of the Charity Commission and the Department. Its work overlapped in places with several actions permitted by the Charities Bill – including any creation of a Scheme of Delegation and a charity registration threshold.

79. As the Report from the Independent Review of Charity Regulation was only published on 22 January 2022 and therefore not during the Committee's consideration of the Bill, the Committee was only able to hear from the Review Panel in a closed session. Although the points raised by the Panel were of relevance to the Committee's work and Members did consider them in closed sessions of deliberations, it was a source of frustration and annoyance to the Committee that the report was not published in time for the Members to discuss these in public session or include any of the discussion within the Committee Bill Report. A new Committee may wish to be briefed by departmental officials on the progress of implementing the recommendations from this report.

Private Tenancies Bill

80. The key objectives of this the Bill are to make the private rented sector a safer and more secure housing option for a wider range of households, to ensure better regulation of the sector and offer greater protection to private renters. The Committee noted that the Minister highlighted that the Bill represents only the first stage of a longer-term programme of reform for the Private Rented Sector. The Committee would have liked to have seen a more ambitious Bill but noted the time constraints of the mandate. Members were left in no doubt from witnesses that reform could not wait and that this Bill was an important first step to address some of the issues in the sector. The new Committee will wish to be kept informed about the further legislative steps required in order to address outstanding issues such as letting fees, fitness standards, affordability and landlord licensing.

Fuel Poverty

81. The Committee took a keen interest in rising energy prices and Members were extremely concerned about the level of support to those vulnerable people and families in need. Whilst Members welcomed the launch of the Energy Support Payment Scheme, they called for it to be broadened to individuals that are not in receipt of the qualifying benefits. With energy costs rising at a rapid rate, this is having a huge impact on a large section of society and Members felt that an extension of the scheme could assist the working poor and those that are not in receipt of the qualifying benefits but are in receipt of tax credits.

82. In addition, the Committee wrote to the Department to ask if it had considered an increase in support payments such as the Cold Weather Payment Scheme, the Affordable Warmth Scheme and the Boiler Replacement Scheme. This is an issue that a new Committee may wish to consider as energy costs show no sign of decreasing, which will leave more at risk of being plunged into fuel poverty. A new Committee may wish to continue to monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of existing schemes such as the Affordable Warmth Scheme and the Winter Fuel Payment.

Housing and Homelessness

83. The Committee took several briefings on Housing throughout the Mandate from the Department and providers on the Supporting People Programme. The Committee expressed its support for the programme which provides assistance to people to help them stay in their own homes. The Committee also expressed its support for the Department in calling for the funding for this important programme to be ring-fenced.
84. Members wrote to the Department to ask what It was considering as the budget for the Supporting People Programme as concern was expressed that, due to timescales for completion of the Supporting People Feasibility Study and the planned move to a 3-year budget, this programme might fall outside being considered in the 3-year budget.
85. Members were concerned that Supporting People organisations may be informed of their budget at a late stage which might leave them in a poor position when it comes to forward planning. The Supporting People budget going forward is an issue that a new Committee may want to scrutinise closely along with the outcome of the Supporting People Feasibility Study which was due to deliver its findings to the Minister in spring 2022.
86. In relation to the specific issue of homelessness the Committee was briefed by Homeless Connect and heard that a substantial bid for homelessness services valued at £43.8 million between 2022 and 2025 was not met in the proposed draft budget. Homeless Connect, and the Committee, were deeply concerned about the consequences which will follow for people at risk of or experiencing

homelessness and the sector which seeks to support them if this draft budget is ever implemented. A new Committee may wish to keep a close eye on the budget for homelessness to ensure that adequate funding is provided for housing and homelessness services.

Budgetary Scrutiny

87. The Committee has assisted the Department in scrutinising the Department's plans and the outcome of the budget and monitoring round processes throughout a mandate which saw enormous pressures on departmental budgets. It will be likely be a regular agenda item going forward for the new Committee.

Secondary Legislation

88. A new Committee is likely to be asked to scrutinise a large volume of secondary legislation in respect of required regulations stemming from a number of the Acts passed during the mandate, including the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Act, the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Act and the Private Tenancies Act.

Sub Regional Stadia Funding

89. The Committee took a keen interest in this issue with several Departmental briefings and numerous letters to the Department and the Minister calling for the funding to be released to local football clubs as soon as possible. The Committee was concerned that the amount of funding available for this programme was insufficient as there had been a substantial delay in the programme, likely resulting in higher costs to the clubs as building costs had increased substantially in recent times. The Committee was briefed again on this issue at the meeting on 24 February 2022, and asked officials to provide total costs to date of the programme and also requested a briefing from the Minister. This may not be possible in this mandate and it is therefore recommended that a new Committee receives a briefing from the Minister on this issue as soon as possible.

Welfare Reform

90. The Committee took a keen interest in welfare reform mitigations with numerous letters to the Department, Minister and Executive Office asking that all mitigations were extended, loopholes closed and that the package of measures originally agreed in February 2020 were fully implemented as a matter of urgency. Members therefore welcomed the passage of the Welfare Supplementary Payments (Amendment) Bill and the fact that there was no end date for qualifying for particular payments. A new Committee may want to request a Departmental briefing on the outcome of the Welfare Mitigations Review, conducted by an Independent Advisory Panel and expected to report early in 2022.

Social Strategies

91. The Committee expressed concern at the lack of progress on a range of social inclusion strategies – Anti-Poverty; Disability; Gender and Sexual Orientation Strategies. The Department advised the Committee that work on developing the strategies had been ongoing in conjunction with the Strategy Co-design Groups and Cross-departmental Working Groups and that a draft strategic framework had been developed containing the proposed vision and outcomes for each strategy. A new Committee may want to request a further update on progress and/or a Departmental briefing session on these strategies.

Sports Sustainability Fund

92. The Committee considered the Public Accounts Committee Report on the Covid-related Sports Sustainability Fund and was concerned with the findings from the report. The Committee had already raised a number of the issues, such as club reserves, at urgent meeting held with Sport NI in April 2022. Members decided to write to the Department to ask for a written briefing on its response to the report. The response might not have been received in time for this Committee to consider and a new Committee might wish to follow up with the Department to ask for on oral briefing once it has formally responded.

Disabled Facilities Grant and Warranted Builders Scheme

93. At a meeting close to the end of the mandate the Committee considered the Disabled Facilities Grant to enable improvements to the home of a person with a disability. The Committee noted that although applicants are directed to a list of Warranted Builders, these lists are considered to be out of date and are updated and managed by the Warranted Builders Scheme and not by the Housing Executive. The Committee feels that a full review of the Disabled Facilities Grant is likely to be needed and the new Committee may wish to look in more detail at this grant process and related issues such as the Warranted Builders List.

Supporting People Programme

94. The Committee have taken an ongoing interest in the funding for and the delivery of the Supporting People Programme, which helps people to live independently in the community. The NI Housing Executive administers the Programme on behalf of the Department. The Committee remain concerned about the recruitment and retention of staff within the voluntary and community organisations which play a key role in the delivery of the Programme and in particular parity of pay and esteem for these staff in comparison to staff working in similar posts in the statutory sector. The new Committee may wish to keep a focus on this vital Programme.

Appendix 1 – Committee for Communities

The Committee has 9 members. The membership of the Committee throughout the current mandate was as follows:

- Ms Paula Bradley (Chairperson)
- Ms Kellie Armstrong (Deputy Chairperson)
- Mr Andy Allen MBE
- Mr Jonathan Buckley 1, 5
- Mr Mark Durkan
- Ms Carál Ní Chuilín 2, 7
- Mr Robin Newton 3, 6
- Ms Sinéad Ennis 4
- Mr Fra McCann 7

¹ Mr Alex Easton MLA replaced Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA as a member of the Committee from Monday 2 November 2020

² Ms Karen Mullan MLA replaced Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA as a member of the Committee from Monday 1 February 2021

³ Mrs Pam Cameron replaced Mr Robin Newton as a member of the Committee for Communities from Monday 21 June 2021

⁴ Ms Áine Murphy replaced Ms Sinead Ennis as member of the Committee for Communities from Monday 13 September 2021.

⁵ Mr Stephen Dunne replaced Mr Alex Easton as a member of the Committee from Monday 20 September 2021.

⁶ Mr Paul Frew replaced Ms Pam Cameron as a member of the Committee from Monday 20 September 2021.

⁷ Ms Karen Mullan left the Committee on 13 September 2021 and was replaced by Ms Ciara Ferguson on 27 September 2021.

⁸ Ms Aisling Reilly replaced Mr Fra McCann as a member of the Committee from 1 November 2021

Appendix 2 – Mandate Facts and Figures

Committee Meetings & Visits

Session	Number of meetings held	Percentage minutes public / closed	Number of meetings held outside Parliament Buildings*	Number of committee visits**
2019/2020	21	Public – 93.06% Closed – 4.25%	0	0
2020/2021	43	Public – 81.08% Closed – 15.70%	0	0
2021/2022	33	Public – 78.65% Closed – 17.09%	2 fully virtual meetings	0

*Fully virtual meetings were counted as being held outside Parliament Buildings by the AIMS report.

**Committee visits were not possible due to Covid-19 regulations.

Committee Bill Reports

Session	Name of Bill	Committee report (Ordered to print)
2019/2020	LCM on the Pension Schemes Bill	29 April 2020
2019/2020	LCM on the Immigration and Social Security Co-Ordination Bill	8 July 2020

Session	Name of Bill	Committee report (Ordered to print)
2020/2021	Further LCM on the Westminster Pension Schemes Bill	22 October 2020
2021/2022	Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill	13 May 2021
2021/2022	LCM on the Westminster Compensation (London Capital & Finance plc and Fraud Compensation Fund) Bill	17 June 2021
2020/2021	Pension Schemes Bill	19 November 2021
2021/2022	Charities Bill	2 December 2021
2021/2022	Private Tenancies Bill	12 January 2022
2021/2022	LCM on the Pension Schemes (Conversion of Guaranteed Minimum Pensions) Bill	14 January 2022
2021/2022	Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Bill	26 January 2022
2021/2022	Support for Mortgage Interest etc. (Security for Loans) Bill	10 February 2022

Committee Inquiries / Reviews / Micro inquiries

Session	Name of report	Committee Report (ordered to print)	Date debated in Plenary (if applicable)
2019/2020	N/A		

Session	Name of report	Committee Report (ordered to print)	Date debated in Plenary (if applicable)
2020/2021	N/A		
2021/2022	N/A		

The Committee did not conduct any Inquiries, Reviews or Micro enquiries during this Mandate.

Committee Motions Debated in Plenary (excluding Inquiries / Reviews / Membership changes)

Session	Motion	Date debated in Plenary
2019/2020		
2020/2021		
2021/2022		

Statutory Rules

Session	Negative Resolution	Affirmative Resolution	Draft Affirmative	Confirmatory	Not laid	Total
2019/2020	111	4	1	44	4	175
2020/2021	43	1	0	6	8	58
2021/2022	24	2	0	10	2	38

Committee Reports (excluding Bill and Inquiry reports)

Session	Name of report	Date (date approved by Committee)	Date debated in Plenary (if appropriate)
2021/2022	Legacy Report		N/A

Witnesses

Session	Number of Organisations who gave evidence to the committee
2019/2020	23
2020/2021	70
2021/2022	71

Appendix 3 - Expenditure for the period 1 September 2017 – 31 March 2022

Budget area	Details	Expenditure
Committee Travel - committee members and staff travel and subsistence in relation to visits and meetings outside Parliament Buildings*		£0
Advertising	Includes the cost of advertising relating to:	£5894.14
External Consultancy	Includes costs associated with committee use of external consultants to assist in consideration of legislation, inquiries, etc.	£0
General expenses	Cost of refreshments for committee meetings, committee events, working lunches, seminars, room hire, witness expenses, and conference fees for members etc.	£3709.64
All budget areas	All details	£9603.78

*No meetings were held outside Parliament Buildings due to Covid-19.

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