2016-17 KESS Annual Programme – “Hot Topics List”

Working in partnership with its Assembly colleagues, the Research and Information Service compiled the below list of topics that are expected to be relevant to Assembly business. This “Hot Topics List” is stated in no particular order of significance. It aims to help inform the 2016-17 Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS) Programme, which will run from October 2016 - June 2017. The Programme will include 16 seminars; each covering 2/3 themes under a broad heading. It will aim to promote evidence-based policy and law making in Northern Ireland (NI).

1. Public Finance

- Public expenditure management models
  - Outcomes-Based Budgeting
  - Preventative Expenditure

- Impact of departmental budget cuts on delivery of public services (including third sector)
  - Section 75 groups
  - Rural community
  - Environment
  - Well-being
  - Higher and Further Education

- European Union (EU) Funding
  - Impact on the economy
  - Potential impact of the UK’s EU Referendum Vote outcome on available funding

- Alternate Forms of Available Public Finance
  - Financial Transactions Capital
  - European Investment Bank Funding
  - Borrowing
  - Sale of public assets

- Financial Arrangements under Devolution
  - Barnett formula and viable alternatives
Potential financial implications of “English Votes for English Laws” (EVEL) for the regions, e.g. NI block grant implications
- Executive’s use of its fiscal levers, including existing and future taxes (e.g. Air Corporation Tax), duties (e.g. Air Passenger Duty), levies, charges (e.g. water charging) and rates
- Models to inform the development and implementation of an Independent Fiscal Council in NI

- Revenue
  - Tax avoidance and tax evasion

- Public Procurement
  - Savings from collaborative procurement
  - Use of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and or social economy enterprises (SEEs) in public procurement
  - Effectiveness of social/community clauses in public procurement contracts, e.g., in delivering social benefits or advancing the Executive’s social policy priorities
  - Impact of budget constraints on public procurement and the construction industry
  - Potential NI procurement impact of the UK’s EU Referendum Vote outcome

2. Governance

- UK’s EU Referendum Vote
  - Potential political, economic and social implications of the Vote outcome for NI

- Public Sector Reform in NI
  - Implications of the public sector’s use of “Voluntary Exit Scheme” (VES)
  - Models to promote sustainability and collaboration in public service delivery (including the third sector) both within NI and cross-border, e.g., in the areas of health, social care, waste collection, infrastructure, environment, etc.

- Local Government
  - Promotion of well-being by local government
  - Implementation of local government reform in NI
    - Relevant lessons from Great Britain about local government reform implementation
      - Local level planning
      - Service delivery at the local level, e.g. performance improvement

- Representation of women in politics

- Electoral reform

- Machinery of government
  - Models of Opposition
  - Petitions of Concern

3. Agriculture

- Farm safety

- Rural proofing
• Bovine Tuberculosis (TB)
  o Models for reducing and eradicating

• Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform

• Supply chain issues and farm gate prices

• Sustainability of farm income

4. Fisheries

• Fisheries Reform

• Single species fishery

• Potential impact on NI fisheries of the UK’s EU Referendum Vote outcome

5. Environment

• Pollution
  o Air Pollution
  o Noise Pollution, e.g. measures to redress Airplane Noise
  o River Pollution

• Climate Change

• Strategic Planning, e.g. flood risk and integrated coastal zone management

• Marine Planning, e.g. managing competing interests – economic versus conservation

• Marine Conservation Zones

• Rural Sustainable Development Planning

• Plant Disease and Invasive Species

• Waste Management and Disposal, e.g. resource efficiency and enforcement

• Dilapidated/Dangerous Buildings and Neglected Sites

• Potential impact on the NI environment of the UK’s EU Referendum Vote outcome

6. Energy

• Economic impact of developing an energy economy in terms of, e.g., jobs, business growth and supply chains

• Economic, environmental and social impacts of developing renewables beyond NI’s 2020 targets versus unconventional resource and the impact of developing both
• Electricity
  o Electricity Market Reform (EMR)
  o Security of supply
  o Grid connections
  o Research and development

• Renewable Energy
  o Small scale wind generation
  o Renewable heat incentives
  o Smart metering
  o Price controls and consumers

• Potential impact on NI energy of the UK’s EU Referendum Vote outcome

7. Regional Development

• Water and sewerage
  o Funding infrastructure investment to address, e.g. flooding
  o Domestic water charging

• Rail Services
  o Health and safety provision
  o Timetabling

• Integrated Transport
  o Equality in transport service delivery
  o Delivering sustainable transport solutions in times of austerity
    ▪ Models to promote transport infrastructure investment to support growth and competitiveness

8. Enterprise, Business, Trade and Investment

• Economic development
  o Models to increase productivity in NI and promote economic development regionally and sub-regionally
  o Potential NI economic impact of the UK’s EU Referendum Vote outcome

• Business/enterprise
  o Models to promote enterprise, e.g., private funding initiatives such as “Angel Funding”
  o Effectiveness of the Executive’s enterprise policy in promoting innovative collaboration between business and universities
    ▪ Developing university “spin-out” companies and business/university collaboration, to encourage innovation capacity
    ▪ Potential impact on NI enterprise of the UK’s EU Referendum Vote outcome

• Trade and Investment
  o NI Investment Strategy
  o Impact of Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership on NI
9. **Employment**

- Agency Workers EU Directive
- Careers and Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)
  - Targeting groups, such as school age pupils, young people, unemployed, those living in rural areas, those in urban, etc.
- Youth Unemployment
  - Young people “Not in Education, Employment or Training” (NEETS)
- Economic Inactivity
  - Strategically tackling economic inactivity, to reduce welfare benefit costs and social exclusion levels
  - Impact of reduced third sector (community/voluntary sectors) funding
- Implications of the National Living Wage for employers and employees/workers
- Zero Hours Contracts (ZHCs)
  - Impact of ZHCs' use on business and the individual employee
- Gender inequality in the workplace
- Skills deficit
- Apprenticeships
  - Models to improve alignment of apprenticeships with business needs
- Employment agencies
- Potential impact on NI employment of the UK’s EU Referendum Vote outcome

10. **Higher and Further Education**

- Impact of reduced funding in third level education, e.g. implications for the universities, individual students, business, industry and other
- Student loans
- Educational Maintenance Allowance
- Support for people with learning disabilities
‘Fit for purpose’ graduates
  o Teaching entrepreneurship in universities

Potential impact on NI’s Higher and Further Education of the UK’s EU Referendum Vote outcome

11. Education

- Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disability
  o Implementation of changes
- Anti-Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy
- Revised Curriculum
- Social Media Use
- Shared and Integrated Education
- Education Governance
- School Rationalisation/ Small School Sustainability
- Early Years/Intervention
  o Signature Nurture Units
  o Literacy and Numeracy Projects
  o Targeting children’s services
- Promotion of Females in STEM subjects (“Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths”)
- Promotion of STEAM subjects (“Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths”)
  o Use of innovative digital gaming and social networking

12. Culture and Arts

- Inclusion in the arts
  o Working in partnership with local councils and key stakeholders
  o Costs of engaging in different art forms
  o Removal of barriers, e.g. financial, economic, educational and information-related
  o Location of venues in areas of multiple deprivation
  o Ethos of cultural institutions and arts venues
  o Health and well-being benefits
- Multi-purpose Use of Libraries
- Creative Industries
  o Maximising the potential of their economic benefit
  o Effective delivery support mechanisms
  o Closing the skills gap
- Initiatives to enable shift in policy from STEM to STEAM
Minority language strategies
   - Effectiveness of such governmental strategies in NI and elsewhere, e.g. European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, French and indigenous languages in Canada

Broadcasting
   - BBC Charter renewal process and regional representation

13. Sport
   - Physical activity and child development
     - Child participation in physical activity compared with elsewhere in the UK
     - Longer-term social and economic implications of NI children’s low sport participation
     - Models of interventions or programmes aimed at effectively tackling barriers to physical activity, particularly for children at post-primary level
   - Gender imbalance in physical activity levels
   - Cycling
     - Cycling policy
       - Models to encourage cycling instead of driving
     - Track cycling
       - Models for outdoor and indoor velodromes
   - Sport to enhance the lives of people with disabilities
   - Models for emergency exiting plans and their impact on stadium capacity
   - Sports tourism
     - Economic potential of sports tourism on the island of Ireland
     - Effectiveness of NI governmental policy and strategic planning to encourage sports tourism
     - Models of good practice in strategic planning to promote sports tourism

14. Social Development
   - Third sector
     - Implications of funding cuts, e.g. on service provision
   - Homelessness
   - Community Regeneration
   - Liquor Licensing Reform
   - Regulation of the Private Rented Sector
   - Social Housing
   - Planning relating to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)
15. Health

- Advance decisions to refuse treatment
- Sustainability and collaboration
  - Models used in health and or social care to promote sustainability and collaboration in public service delivery (including the third sector) both within NI and cross-border, e.g. in the context of:
    - Accessing appropriate care (such as workforce planning from acute care to community care, access to out of hours, emergency care, pharmacies, etc.)
    - Implementing the “Transforming Your Care Strategy”, e.g., delivering efficiencies when providing care, e-health/Connected Health and workforce planning in the health sector, such as issues relating to gender
    - Reducing waiting lists
- Health inequalities
  - A socio-economic, demographic and spatial analysis, e.g., differences in sickness rates, disability and mortality
- Promoting well-being
  - Analysis of methodological approaches undertaken to measure well-being
- Mental health
  - Mental capacity
  - Self-harm/suicide, e.g. amongst young females
  - Effects of bereavement on mental health
- Obesity
  - Models/measures to reduce obesity and promote health and well-being in children, young people and adults
- Electronic cigarettes
  - A smoking cessation tool or gateway to smoking
  - Regulation of sale
  - Regulation of use, e.g. vaping ban
- Regulation of legal highs’ sale and use
- Tobacco controls
- Models to allow secondary use of data to promote efficiency
- Specialised treatment of rare diseases and related travel
- Medical intervention during pregnancy
16. Land and Property

- Land Law Reform
  - Management of public spaces on private housing estates/in multi-unit dwellings

17. Equality and Human Rights

- Immigration and Asylum
  - Economic Migrants, Refugees and Asylum-Seekers
    - Relocation implications, e.g. social, economic and political
    - Integration Strategy
    - Potential impact on each specified group following the UK’s EU Referendum Vote outcome

- Building a united community
  - Racism and community cohesion
    - Involving communities and other groups, e.g. young people in decision-making

- Historical abuse
  - Redress for Victims and Survivors, e.g. clerical abuse and mother/baby homes

- Women and politics
  - Political parties’ use of candidate selection

- Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) rights

- Age Discrimination in relation to the provision of goods, facilities and services

- Disability
  - Mental capacity
  - Welfare Reform

- Potential impact on equality and human rights of the UK’s EU Referendum Vote outcome

18. Justice

- Prison Reform
  - Drug misuse in prisons
  - Staff and prisoner safety, including adequate staffing levels
  - Reform of women’s prisons
  - Mental health and care
  - Healthcare provision
  - Learning and skill development opportunities

- Rehabilitative work with ex-prisoners
  - Implications of funding reductions for third sector working

- On-line behaviour and offences
  - Improving on-line protection for children and young people
  - Disclosing private sexual photographs and images, e.g. ‘revenge porn’ on social media
• Mental Capacity
  o Advanced decision-making in civil law

• Youth Justice System reform

• Legal Aid reform
  o Budgetary implications
  o Access to justice implications
  o Alternative methods to fund money damage claims
  o Remuneration and appointment of expert witnesses and or legal representatives

• Fines and Enforcement
  o Good practice in other jurisdictions to highlight alternatives to prosecution, e.g. supervised activity orders/community service
  o Television licensing

• Bail, e.g. codifying NI bail law

• Human trafficking offences

• Vehicle immobilisation on private land

• Victims and Witnesses of crimes

• Crimes against older people

• Sexual crime
  o Lack of coordination in compilation of sexual crime data

19. Statistics

Use of Census Longitudinal database and other available data to provide information on:

• Welfare Reform implications

• Social Mobility
  o Labour market transitions relevant to: female career mobility; youth entry; delayed exits; the economically inactive; and, NEETS

• Differential outcomes in:
  o Health
  o Education
  o Higher and Further Education
  o Employment
  o Other