

Appendix 1

Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee Relating to the Report

- Meeting of 4 November 2020
 - Meeting of 10 March 2021
 - Meeting of 21 April 2021
 - Meeting of 15 September 2021
 - Meeting of 22 September 2021
 - Meeting of 29 September 2021
 - Meeting of 6 October 2021
-

Minutes of Proceedings

WEDNESDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2020

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Paul Frew MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Pat Catney MLA
Ms Jemma Dolan MLA
Mr Philip McGuigan MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA
Mr Jim Wells MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Mr Jim McManus (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Phil Pateman (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Neil Sedgewick (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 14.03pm in public session

Matthew O'Toole declared an interest as a Civil Service Pension holder

6. Oral Evidence: The Consultation & Changes to the Transitional Arrangements 2015 Scheme – Pensions Division, Department of Finance

Officials joined the meeting at 15.09pm

- Mr Stephen Ball, Policy and Legislation, Pensions Division, Department of Finance
- Ms Blathnaid Smyth, Head of Public Service Pension & Legislation Branch, Department of Finance

This oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Issues discussed included: the cost cap will depend on the outcome of the consultation; costs for employers is set until 2023; employees' choice of the schemes which may be more attractive but may have additional cost; consultation is based on the choice of the schemes and the timing; ICTU consultation and the need for an Equality Impact Assessment; final salary scheme versus career average scheme.

Agreed: The Department to provide the ICTU written response to the consultation.

The officials left the meeting at 15.45pm

The meeting adjourned at 17.30pm

Dr Steve Aiken, OBE MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance
11 November 2020

[Extract]

WEDNESDAY, 10 MARCH 2021

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Paul Frew MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Pat Catney MLA
Mr Jim Wells MLA

Present by Video-conference:
Ms Jemma Dolan MLA
Mr Philip McGuigan MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA

Apologies: Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA (Chairperson)

In Attendance: Mr Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Phil Pateman (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Neil Sedgewick (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced in open session at 2:01pm with the Deputy Chairperson assuming the role of acting Chairperson.

3. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

The Committee noted that no notice had been received from any Member to delegate authority to vote under Temporary Standing Order 115(6) on any issue in the event of them not being present for all or part of the proceedings.

8. Oral Evidence – Department of Finance – Feedback from Public Sector Pension Consultation

The Departmental officials joined the meeting at 3:44pm.

Grace Nesbitt, Director of Pensions Division;

Blathnaid Smyth, Assistant Director of Public Service Pensions; and

Stephen Ball, Public Service Pensions Policy and Legislation Branch

The Committee noted: the Department of Finance's briefing paper; published responses to the consultation; and a leaflet on the changes to public sector pensions.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted that it had sought related evidence from the Northern Ireland Public Sector Alliance (NIPSA), the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), British Medical Association (BMA), Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC), the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and the Police Federation for Northern Ireland.

Mr Wells declared an interest stating that he is the Chairperson of the Trustees of the Northern Ireland Assembly Members' Pension Scheme.

Mr Catney declared an interest stating that he is a trustee of the Northern Ireland Assembly Members' Pension Scheme.

The acting Chairperson declared an interest on behalf of the remaining members of the Committee stating that they are members of the Northern Ireland Assembly Members' Pension Scheme.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:41pm.

Mr Paul Frew MLA

Deputy Chairperson, Committee for Finance

24 March, 2021

[Extract]

WEDNESDAY, 21 APRIL 2021

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Paul Frew MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Pat Catney MLA
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA
Mr Jim Wells MLA

Present by Video-conference:
Ms Jemma Dolan MLA
Mr Philip McGuigan MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Mr Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Angela McParland (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Neil Sedgewick (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)
Mr Aidan Stennett (Assembly Research – item 8 only)

The meeting commenced in open session at 2:02pm.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

The Committee noted that no notice had been received from any Member to delegate authority to vote under Temporary Standing Order 115(6) on any issue in the event of them not being present for all or part of the proceedings.

2. Declaration of Interests

The Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Jim Allister, Pat Catney, Jemma Dolan, Philip McGuigan and Matthew O'Toole recorded declarations of interest in respect of Item 6, oral evidence from the Northern Ireland Committee - Irish Congress of Trade Unions on public sector pensions, as all Members will be in receipt of a pension associated with their role as an MLA.

6. Oral Evidence: Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC-ICTU) - Public Sector Pensions

The witnesses joined the meeting at 2:07pm

Alison Millar, General Secretary of the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA), Chair of NIC-ICTU, and Temporary Chair of the Pension Collective Consultation Working Group (CCWG);

Jim Quinn, Union Representative, Fire Brigades Union; and

Nuala O'Donnell, Union Representative, Irish National Teachers' Organisation,
representing the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council.

Mr Frew joined the meeting at 2.08pm.

The following witness joined the meeting at 2:16pm

Dessie Lowry, Union Representative, Royal College of Nursing;

The Committee noted: a NIC-ICTU briefing paper and previous NIC-ICTU consultation submission; and related correspondence from the Police Federation and the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council.

Mr Wells declared an interest as the Chairperson of the Trustees of the Northern Ireland Assembly Members' Pension Scheme.

Mr O'Toole declared an interest as a member of the GB civil service pension scheme.

The Chairperson declared an interest stating he is entitled to a Ministry of Defence pension.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their evidence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department in order to seek further information on the public sector pension revaluation process and related timescales as well as the expected timescales for the forthcoming Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to NIC-ICTU to ascertain the specific features of Northern Ireland public sector pensions which form the basis of its concerns for the LCM and for which it is seeking reassurance from the Department.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.18pm.

Dr Steve Aiken MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Finance
28 April 2021

[Extract]

WEDNESDAY 15 September 2021

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Dr Steve Aiken MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Pat Catney MLA
Ms Maolíosá McHugh MLA
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA
Mr Jim Wells MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Jemma Dolan MLA
Mr Philip McGuigan MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Mr Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Angela McParland (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm in open session.

Mr Matthew O'Toole left the meeting at 4:08pm

Mr Jim Allister left the meeting at 4:40pm

11. Forward Work Programme

11.1 The Committee noted that it is to receive three oral briefings on the Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) on the Public Sector Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill on 22 September 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to relevant statutory committees seeking their views, if any, on the LCM.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.57pm.

Dr Steve Aiken MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Finance
22 September 2021

[Extract]

WEDNESDAY 22 September 2021

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Keith Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA
Mr Jim Wells MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Pat Catney MLA
Ms Jemma Dolan MLA

Apologies: Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Philip McGuigan MLA

In Attendance: Mr Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Angela McParland (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)
Mr Michael Scholes (Research Officer) - item 9 only

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm in open session.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

Mr Philip McGuigan delegated authority to vote on his behalf for the duration of the meeting to Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA, under Temporary Standing Order 115(6).

2. Declaration of Interests

Mr Maolíosa McHugh declared an interest as a member of the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme

There were no other declarations of interest.

9. Oral Presentation: RaISe – Public Service Pension Reform

The researcher officer joined the meeting

- Michael Scholes, Research Officer, RaISe

The Committee considered a related research paper.

Mr Jim Wells declared an interest as chairperson of the Assembly Commission Members' Pension Scheme

The Chairperson thanked the research officer for his presentation.

10. Oral Evidence: Public Sector Unions – Pension Reform and the Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) on the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill

The witnesses joined the meeting at 2:29pm.

- Alison Millar, General Secretary Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA);
- Dessie Lowry, Union Representative, Royal College of Nursing (RCNI); and
- Nuala O'Donnell, Union Representative, Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)

Mr Matthew O'Toole declared an interest as a member of the UK civil service pension scheme.

The session was recorded by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their evidence.

11. Oral Evidence: Department of Finance – Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) on the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill

The Committee considered Departmental papers on the LCM.

The officials joined the meeting at 3:21pm.

- Blathnaid Smyth, Assistant Director of Public Service Pensions, DoF; and
- Stephen Ball, Public Service Pensions Policy and Legislation Branch, DoF.

The session was recorded by Hansard.

Mr Jim Wells left the meeting at 3.46pm

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their evidence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking: clarity in respect of the costs of the McCloud remedy; assurances in respect of financial advice for members and administrative support for schemes; assurances in respect of interest payments on additional contributions; and confirmation of the waiving of additional contributions for the relatives of deceased scheme members.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to give further consideration to the LCM in closed session on 29 September 2021.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.25pm

Dr Steve Aiken MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Finance

29 September 2021

[Extract]

WEDNESDAY 29 September 2021

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Philip McGuigan MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA
Mr Jim Wells MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Pat Catney MLA
Ms Jemma Dolan MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Mr Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Proceedings commenced at 2.00pm in closed session.

1.Legislative Consent Motion: Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill – written briefing

The Committee noted related papers from the Committee for Communities; the Committee for Justice, the Department of Finance and the Community Trade Union.

Pat Catney and Jim Wells joined the meeting at 2:04pm

Pat Catney declared an interest as a member of the board of the Northern Ireland Assembly Members Pension Scheme.

Jim Wells declared an interest as the chairperson of the board of the Northern Ireland Assembly Members Pension Scheme.

Members expressed a range of reservations in respect of the proposed payment model underpinning the reforms to public sector pensions as proposed by the UK Government.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, notwithstanding its concerns, it had no option other than to support, or to not oppose, the passage of the Legislative Consent Motion.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should draft a report on the LCM setting out Members' concerns for consideration at the meeting of 6 October 2021.

Agreed: The Committee further agreed that the Clerk should draft letters to both the Minister seeking relevant assurances and to the House of Lords Public Sector Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill Committee suggesting changes to the primary legislation in line with Members' concerns

Jemma Dolan joined the meeting at 2:26pm

The meeting was adjourned at 4.39pm.

Dr Steve Aiken MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Finance

6 October 2021

[Extract]

6 October 2021

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Pat Catney MLA
Mr Philip McGuigan MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Jim Allister MLA
Ms Jemma Dolan MLA

Apologies: Jim Wells MLA

In Attendance: Mr Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)

Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)
Eileen Regan (Senior Research Officer) - item 8 only

Proceedings commenced at 2.00pm in closed session.

1. Legislative Consent Motion: Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill – written briefing

The Committee noted draft correspondence and a copy of the draft report on the proposed LCM.

- Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Finance and to the House of Lords sponsor of the Bill indicating its concerns and seeking in the case of the former, assurances and in the case of the latter, amendments to the primary legislation.
- Agreed: The Committee agreed to include an excerpt from the minutes of the meeting of 6 October 2021 in its report and to order its report on the proposed LCM to be published as the Committee's 3rd report of this mandate.

Matthew O'Toole joined the meeting at 2:07pm

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15pm.

Dr Steve Aiken MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Finance
6 October 2021

[Extract]

