

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY 22 JANUARY 2020

Room 29, 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 Seán Lynch MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA
Mr Jim Wells MLA

Apologies:

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

The meeting commenced at 2.04pm in closed session.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Arrangements for Committee Meetings

The Committee considered a paper outlining the proposed arrangements for meetings of the Committee for Finance.

Agreed: Meetings will be held at venues outside Parliament Buildings only once the Committee has considered and agreed a business case.

Agreed: Meetings, will, as a rule, be held in public session, unless the Committee agrees that there is an overriding reason for proceedings to be held in closed session.

3. Staff Contact Details

The Committee noted the contact details for Committee Office Staff and the pro-forma for contact details.

4. Committee Induction Plan and arrangements for strategic planning meeting

The Committee considered the Committee Induction Plan.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the induction plan and arrangements for strategic planning meetings.

5. Outcomes of an Effective Committee

The Committee noted a paper on the outcomes of an effective Committee.

6. Committee approach to dealing with correspondence and requests for meetings which are not linked to strategic priorities of statutory duties

The Committee considered the approach to dealing with correspondence and requests for meetings which are not linked to strategic priorities of statutory duties.

Agreed: The broad approach to be adopted by the Committee was agreed.

7. Committee approach to meeting preparation and witness questioning

The Committee considered options for meeting preparations and witness questioning.

Agreed: The broad approach to be adopted by the Committee was agreed.

8. Protocol on conduct and courtesy at Committee Meetings

The Committee considered the protocol on conduct and courtesy at Committee meetings.

Agreed: The protocol on conduct and courtesy was agreed.

9. Committee approach to the use of social media

The Committee considered its approach to the use of social media.

Agreed: The Committee Clerk will be responsible for promoting the Committee's work via Twitter.

RaISe Senior Researcher joined the meeting at 2.29pm

10. RaISe Briefing on public expenditure and budget process

The Committee received a briefing on public expenditure and budget process.

Agreed: To receive a series of informal briefings with RaISe on the Budget.

Agreed: To include the Draft Memorandum of Understanding on the Budget Process, developed by the Committee for Finance & Personnel in the 2011 mandate, in papers for the next Committee meeting and to raise the matter with Minister.

Agreed: It is a priority for the Committee to receive clear, timely and accurate information from the Department and this is to be publicised on Twitter.

Agreed: To receive oral evidence from NICVA on its report: *A Review of the Fiscal Powers of the NI Assembly*.

Agreed: To write to the Director General of the NI Assembly regarding vacancies, particularly in the Public Finance Scrutiny Unit.

RaISe Senior Researcher left the meeting at 3.10pm

The meeting moved into public session at 3.15pm

11. Committee Membership

The Committee noted the Committee Membership.

12. Declaration of Interests

The Committee considered the Declaration of Interests. There were no declarations of interests from Members.

13. Committee Procedures

The Committee noted the Guide to the Powers and Operations of Statutory Committees for Chairperson and Members, the Guide to the Role of Committee Chairpersons and the Guide for Members on the Role and Functions of the Committee Office.

14. Guidance on timescales for interaction between Committees and Departments

The Committee noted the guidance paper, which sets out the timescales for the provision of information and evidence between departments and committees agreed by the Executive and the Assembly Chairpersons' Liaison Group.

Agreed: That these time scales are adhered to as a minimum.

15. Subordinate Legislation: Delegation of technical scrutiny to the Examiner of Statutory Rules

The Committee considered the briefing regarding committee consideration of subordinate legislation.

Agreed: The motion: "That the Committee for Finance under Standing Order 43, resolves to delegate to the Examiner of Statutory Rules the technical scrutiny of statutory rules referred to the Committee under the above mentioned Standing Order" was agreed.

Agreed: The Committee further resolves that in carrying out this function the Examiner shall be authorised to report her technical findings on each statutory rule to the Assembly, and to the relevant Department, as well as to the Committee itself and to publish her report.

16. Committee for Finance Legacy Report 2011-2016 & Clerk's Briefing

The Committee considered the legacy Report and the Clerk's briefing paper.

Agreed: to ask for an update from the NCA on Project Eagle.

Agreed: To receive an update from the Department on the outworking, successes or otherwise, of the Voluntary Exit Scheme.

Agreed: To receive an update from the Minister on the future direction and policy of corporation tax.

Agreed: Given the agreement on pay for health care workers the Committee agreed to raise the matter of pay for civil servants with the Minister at next week's meeting.

Agreed: To question the Minister on details of proposals on the establishment of a Brexit Committee.

17. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme for 22 January-1 April 2020.

- Agreed:* The Forward Work Programme was agreed.
- Agreed:* To inform the Department of the key areas to be covered at next week's meeting.
- Agreed:* To schedule written evidence sessions from the CBI, FSB, Retail NI, the NI Retail Consortium, Hospitality Ulster, Manufacturing NI and NICVA in relation to rating.
- Agreed:* To schedule informal meetings between the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson with NICSHR and CPD with other Committee members invited to attend.
- Agreed:* To consider a research request regarding matters of conscious for Registrars in relation to same sex marriage as a substantive item at the next Committee meeting.
- Agreed:* To commission RaISe to determine the appropriate person to provide oral evidence to the Committee from the HM Treasury Devolved Spending Teams.

4:00pm Jim Wells left the meeting

18. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following:

- Congratulatory letters from the Attorney General to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.

19. Chairperson's Business

The Committee considered a request from the Minister of Finance to meet with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.

Agreed: The Committee is content for the Clerk to arrange the meeting.

The Committee considered the written statement and papers regarding Special Adviser appointments.

Agreed: To write to the Minister expressing disappointment regarding the handling of this matter and to raise the issue with the Minister at the Committee meeting next week.

The Committee noted information provided by Retail NI regarding Reval 2020.

The Committee noted the organisational chart for the Department of Finance.

20. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

21. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 29 January 2020 at 2pm in Room 29.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.18pm

**Dr Steve Aiken, OBE MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance
29 January 2020**