



COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2020

Room 29, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

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

Apologies: Mr Pat Catney MLA

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

The meeting commenced at 2.10pm pm in public session.

1. Apologies

Mr. Pat Catney MLA

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send a letter of condolence to Mr. Catney on the death of his mother.

A Member declared the following interest:

Mr Paul Frew MLA at Agenda Item 6 – Oral Evidence: Overview and priorities for Construction and Procurement Delivery (CPD)

2. Draft Minutes

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 12 February 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 12 February 2020.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Oral Evidence: Overview and priorities for Public Expenditure Directorate

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.11pm

- Joanne McBurney – Budget Director
- Stuart Stevenson – Head of Accountability and Financial Management Division

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Mr Jeff McGuinness, Head of Central Expenditure, was unable to provide attend. The Committee noted his apology.

The officials provided the Committee with an update on the Public Expenditure Directorate.

The oral evidence session was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: Officials to provide further information on a range of issues.

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

Jim Wells joined the meeting at 3.15pm

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

5. Oral Evidence: Budget Bill (NI) and Spring Supplementary Estimates

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.08pm

- Joanne McBurney – Budget Director
- Barry Armstrong – Supply Officer

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Mr Jeff McGuinness, Head of Central Expenditure, was unable to provide evidence.

The oral evidence session was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: Officials to provide further information on a range of issues.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The Committee considered the question that:

The Committee for Finance is satisfied that there has been appropriate consultation with it on the public expenditure proposals contained in the Budget Bill (NI) 2020 and is content to grant accelerated passage to the Bill in accordance with Standing Order 42(2).

Agreed: The Committee for Finance to write to the Speaker highlighting the limited time and limited opportunity there has been for consultation with it on the public expenditure proposals contained in the Bill; recognising the prevailing extenuating circumstances; and agreeing, reluctantly, to grant accelerated passage to the Bill in accordance with Standing Order 42(2).

The Chairperson suspended the meeting at 4.00pm

The Chairperson resumed the meeting in public session at 4.10pm

6. Oral Evidence: Overview and priorities for Construction and Procurement Delivery

The following officials joined the meeting at 4.10pm

- Des Armstrong – Chief Executive, CPD
- Michael Watson – Head of Policy and Performance Division, CPD

The oral evidence session was followed by a question and answer session.

Jim Allister left the meeting at 4.15pm

Matthew O'Toole left the meeting at 4.45pm

Agreed: Officials to provide further information on a range of issues.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: To consider at the Strategic Planning Session on 11 March 2020 conducting an inquiry into procurement.

Agreed: To write to the Committee for Justice in relation to legal fees associated with contractors taking a legal challenge to a contract.

7. RaISE Research Paper - Special Advisers: Appointment and Conduct

The Committee considered the RaISE research paper – Special Advisers: Appointment and Conduct.

The Committee noted the Departmental press release regarding Special Advisers.

8. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's Business

9. Correspondence

The Committee considered a paper from the NI Human Rights Commission.

Agreed: To request a written briefing from the NI Human Rights Commission on the issues highlighted in its paper.

The Committee considered the response from the National Crime Agency (NCA) in relation to a request to update the Committee on the National Asset Management Agency Loans Portfolio NI.

Agreed: To write to the NCA asking for a formal response as to when the Committee expects to receive the relevant information.

The Committee noted the following:

Memo from Committee of Infrastructure acknowledging to send information on Departmental Resource requirements to the Committee for Finance.

Open Government Network Northern Ireland briefing on the work of the Network and the national action plan.

10. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme for January to April 2020 and the oral evidence session still to be scheduled.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time and Place of next meeting.

The next meeting will be on **Wednesday 26 February 2020 at 2.00pm in Room 29.**

The meeting was adjourned at 4.51pm

**Dr Steve Aiken, OBE MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance
26 February 2020**