



**COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

WEDNESDAY 20 MAY 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  
Mr Seán Lynch MLA  
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA  
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA  
Mr Jim Wells MLA

Present by Teleconferencing:

Ms Jemma Dolan MLA

Apologies:

In Attendance: Mr Jim McManus (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Neil Sedgewick (Clerical Supervisor)

*The meeting commenced at 2.33pm in public session with the Deputy Chairperson in the Chair.*

**1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

**2. Draft Minutes**

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13 May 2020

*Agreed:* The Committee Agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13 May 2020.

### **3. Matters Arising**

The Committee considered an additional question to the Department regarding Job Evaluation of the Private Secretary role. Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

*Agreed:* To include a question to the Department as to how the Job Evaluation and Grading Support (JEGS) was implemented for the upgrading of the Private Secretary role.

The Committee considered the UUEPC paper on policy advice to the Minister on Rates Relief

*Agreed:* To invite UUEPC to give oral evidence on the paper on 1 July, 2020

*Dr Steve Aiken joined the meeting at 2.35pm and assumed the Chair*

### **4. Oral Evidence: Budget (No 2) Bill and Vote on Account - Department of Finance**

*The following officials joined the meeting at 2.36pm*

- Ms Joanne McBurney, Budget Director, DoF who joined the meeting through teleconferencing
- Ms Emer Morelli, Head of Supply, Public Spending Directorate, DoF
- Mr Barry Armstrong, Supply Officer, DoF

This oral session was recorded by Hansard.

Issues discussed included: the reasons why Main Estimates cannot be produced at this stage with a greater level of detail at directorate level; the basis on which the Vote on Account is Calculated; potential financial concerns relating to front loading payments to businesses; the use of accruing resources; Air Passenger Duty costs; and RRI borrowing limit headroom for capital purposes.

*Agreed:* To ask the Department to explain why some departments' total COVID-19 funding in the VoA were different to the Minister's statement.

*Agreed:* To ask the Department to clarify if the reason the Department for Finance cannot ask for the centrally held funding for air passenger duty to be

waivered by the Treasury is due to it being enshrined in primary legislation.

*Officials left the meeting at 3.41pm*

*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:* That the Committee writes to the Speaker to reflect the sentiments expressed and to confirm that it is content that the Bill should pass under the accelerated passage procedure as per Standing Order 42(2).

## **5. Written Evidence: In-Year Monitoring of Public Expenditure 2020-21 Guidelines**

The Committee considered the In-Year Monitoring of Public Expenditure 2020-21 Guidelines provided by the Department of Finance.

*Agreed:* To forward the RaISe paper to the Department requesting a response to the scrutiny points raised in time for the oral evidence session on In-Year Monitoring on 3 June 2020.

## **6. Chairperson’s Business**

There was no Chairperson’s Business.

## **7. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee noted the Departmental response regarding NI Screen founding legislation.
- ii. The Committee considered Departmental response regarding the NI Leisure and Entertainment Forum.

*Agreed:* To forward the response to the Forum for information.

- iii. The Committee considered Departmental response to Dilapidation Payments.

*Agreed:* To ask RaISe to carry out case study analysis on one or two of the outstanding dilapidation payments in order to identify the differences in

variations such as amounts of payments claimed and settled and timescales.

- vi. The Committee considered NILGA requesting to brief the Committee re local government financial concerns arising from COVID-19.

*Agreed:* To request a written briefing from NILGA advising them that the Committee should have a better picture of the position in relation to councils once it has considered the June Monitoring information on 3 June.

*Agreed:* The Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Clerk to identify the core group who are not availing of COVID-19 funding for consideration by the Committee.

- vii. The Committee noted information from a member of the public regarding Non Domestic Rates and UUEPC Report.

- viii. The Committee considered information from the Assembly EU Affairs Manager regarding the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol VAT Provisions.

*Agreed:* To ask the EU Affairs Manager to keep the Committee apprised of any developments.

- ix. The Committee considered the Committee for Communities correspondence regarding the RaISe Paper on Coordinated Budget Scrutiny

*Agreed:* To write to the Committee for Communities.

- x. The Committee noted from the Committee for Justice information regarding the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

- xi. The Committee noted the Departmental response to Committee for Infrastructure regarding financial gaps due to austerity measures.

- xii. The Committee noted from the Chair of the Committee for the Economy to the Finance Minister for information regarding Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

- xiii. The Committee noted from the Committee for Communities information regarding the Solace NI briefing.

The Committee noted the information request to the Department and routine papers issued on 15 May 2020.

## **8. Draft Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme for April-July 2020.

*Agreed:* The Clerk to change the timing of the oral evidence session with the Department on 17 June 2020 regarding the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill to accommodate Mr. Allister who will also be giving evidence to the Committee for The Executive Office on that day.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

## **9. Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

## **10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 27 May at 2.30pm in the Senate Chamber.

*The meeting moved into closed session at 4.02pm*

## **11. Committee's Draft Strategic Plan**

The Committee considered the draft Strategic Plan.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Committee Strategic Plan.

*Agreed:* to develop a draft Operational Plan for the 2020-2021 session for consideration prior to Summer Recess.

*Agreed:* to receive a written briefing from the Department in relation to the Fiscal Council as suggested in the briefing paper.

*The meeting was adjourned at 4.06pm*

**Dr Steve Aiken, OBE MLA**  
**Chairperson**  
**Committee for Finance**  
**27 May 2020**