



COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY 27 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
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)
Mr Neil Sedgewick (Clerical Supervisor)

The meeting commenced at 2.35pm in public session.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

A Member declared the following interest:

Dr Steve Aiken – Agenda Item 6 - Oral Evidence from Mr Sam McBride on the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill

2. Draft Minutes

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 20 May 2020

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 20 May 2020

3. Matters Arising

The Committee considered a request from RaISe to contact the Department for additional information relating to research commissioned by the Committee on outstanding dilapidation payments.

Agreed: RaISe to contact the Department to request the additional information.

The Committee considered the points raised by the Minister during the Vote on Account and Budget (No.2) Bill.

Agreed: To consider the Clerk's paper at next week's meeting outlining the issues in more detail and providing some analysis.

4. Oral Evidence: The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 2.41pm

- Mr Les Allamby, Chief Commissioner, NIHRC
- Dr David Russell, Chief Executive, NIHRC

This oral evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

The main issues discussed included: the NICS disciplinary process as it relates to special advisers; the responsibility and accountability of ministers for the conduct of their special advisers; the need for and importance of proportionality in creating criminal offences; and possible exceptions to criminal offences under Clause 11 of the Bill.

Agreed: To forward any further questions to the NIHRC for a written response.

Witnesses left the meeting at 3.47pm

5. Oral Evidence: Mr Sam McBride on the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill

The following witness joined the meeting at 3.50pm

- Mr Sam McBride, Author

This oral session was recorded by Hansard.

The main issue discussed included the misuse of personal email accounts and the need for tougher sanctions for breaches of security.

Agreed: To forward any further questions to Mr McBride for a written response.

The witness left the meeting at 5.00pm

6. Written Evidence: Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill

Committee noted the written evidence regarding the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

7. Financial Support for Businesses adversely affected by COVID-19

The Committee considered the papers regarding this issue.

Agreed: To write to the Minister of Finance highlighting the areas where gaps have been identified and informing the Minister that the Committee will support any reasonable costed proposals from relevant departments to address those gaps.

Agreed: To write to the Minister for the Economy, the Minister for Infrastructure, the Minister of Education and the Minister for Communities outlining identified gaps in support relevant to their departments; informing them that the Committee for Finance will support any reasonable proposals to address gaps in support; and asking that their Departments bring forward costed proposals to provide support to those who require it.

Agreed: The Department to provide a detailed breakdown of those sectors which will and will not benefit from some sort of rates relief after 31st July 2020 and to copy its response to the Committee for the Economy

Jemma Dolan and Seán Lynch left the meeting at 5.12pm

8. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's Business.

9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered the Minister's response regarding to Joint Order for Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

Agreed: To inform the Department that the information requested for consideration by the Committee in the letter to the Minister on 29 April 2020 is now overdue and should be provided to the Committee immediately.

- ii. The Committee noted the Departmental response regarding the provision of relief to contracting bodies on existing contracts and included the cost of PPE and social distancing measures
- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs regarding £25 million for farmers and horticulture

Agreed: To ask the Department of Finance to respond directly to the Clerk to the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and copy the response to the Committee for Finance.

- vi. The Committee noted from the Committee for Education regarding the Substitute Teacher Hardship Scheme
- vii. The Committee noted the Departmental response to the Committee for Education regarding the Substitute Teacher Hardship Scheme
- viii. The Committee noted from the Committee for Communities to the Minister of Finance regarding Dormant Accounts Fund

The Committee noted the information request to the Department and routine papers issued on 26 May 2020.

10. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme for April to July 2020

Agreed: To invite the NI think tank Pivotal to make a written submission with regards to the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

11. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 3 June at 2.30pm in Room Senate Chamber.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.24pm

**Dr Steve Aiken, OBE MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance
03 June 2020**