



**COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

WEDNESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 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 Maolíosa McHugh MLA  
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA  
Mr Jim Wells MLA

Present by teleconferencing:

Ms Seán Lynch MLA  
Mr Colin Pigeon (RaISe Researcher) (for Agenda Item 8 only)

Apologies:

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)  
Ms Claire McCanny (Senior Assistant Bill Clerk) (for Agenda Item 1 only)

*The meeting commenced at 12.33pm in closed session*

**1. Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill - Briefing from the Senior Assistant Bill Clerk**

The Committee considered the next steps of the passage of the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

*Agreed:* The Committee to consider the post-evidence deliberations on the Bill at the meeting of 23 September 2020

*The meeting moved into public session at 12.52pm*

## **2. Apologies**

None.

## **3. Draft Minutes**

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9 September 2020.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9 September 2020.

## **4. Matters Arising**

### Renewable Heating Initiative Disciplinary Process

*Agreed:* To defer this matter until the meeting of 23 September 2020.

## **5. Oral Evidence: Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Budget Process – Departmental Evidence Session**

*The official joined the meeting at 12.55pm*

- Mr Jeff McGuinness, Head of Central Expenditure Division, Department of Finance

*Jim Allister left the meeting at 13.02pm*

Issues discussed included: draft Information Sharing Protocol; The relationship between the RHI recommendations, the Fiscal Council and the MoU; involving Departments to improve the budget process; the need for meaningful engagement in the financial process; the need for flexibility in any MoU.

*Agreed:* To ask the Department for the Terms of Reference of the Fiscal Council.

*Agreed:* To commission research on the role and responsibilities of bodies in other UK legislatures which have the similar function of a Fiscal Council.

*The official left the meeting at 13.53pm*

*Matthew O'Toole and Maoliosa McHugh declared an interest as Members of the PAC*

## **6. Written Evidence: Public Accounts Committee Report on Excess Votes (Northern Ireland) 2016-17**

The Committee considered the Public Accounts Committee report on Excess Votes (Northern Ireland) 2016-17.

*Agreed:* to seek further detail on the scope and indicative time scales for the NI Audit Office examination of the budgetary process in Northern Ireland, given this Committee's interest and co-ordination role during the budget process.

## **7. Written Evidence: Review of Financial Process, Department of Finance**

The Committee considered the written evidence provided by the Department of Finance on the Review of Financial Process.

*Agreed:* To note at this stage pending the oral evidence session in October.

## **8. RaISe Oral Briefing: Personal Protective Equipment: 'make and buy' in Scotland**

*The research joined the meeting at 13.58pm*

The Committee considered a presentation by RaISe on a commissioned briefing note on making and buying PPE in Scotland.

*Agreed:* Researcher to provide the PPE manufacturing figures for Northern Ireland

*Agreed:* To forward the research paper to the Department for the Economy and the Committee for the Economy for information.

*Agreed:* To forward the research paper to the NI Audit Office to inform its review of PPE procurement.

*Agreed:* To write to the Ministers for Health and Economy seeking their views on lessons learnt to date which would apply to future pandemics and improved resilience in dealing with such situations.

*Agreed:* To write to the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce informing of the Committee's actions in relation to this matter

*The research left the meeting at 14.22pm*

## **9. The Civil Service Injury Benefits Scheme (Amendment) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2020**

The Committee noted the Civil Service Injury Benefits Scheme (Amendment) Scheme (Northern Ireland)

## **10. Chairpersons Business**

There was no Chairperson's Business.

## **11. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee considered the Commissioner for Public Appointments request regarding the Functioning of Government Bill

*Agreed:* to invite the Commissioner for Public Appointments to provide the Committee with a copy of her paper for the Committee's consideration so that the Committee may decide if it considers oral evidence necessary at this stage.

- ii. The Committee considered from the Department regarding the cost of the RHI Inquiry

*Agreed:* To ask the Department for the Terms of Reference for the sub-committee on RHI chaired by the Minister of Finance.

- iii. The Committee noted from the Executive Office regarding The Role of Statutory Committees in Monitoring Departmental Expenditure
- iv. The Committee considered EPIC's submission regarding the proposed changes to the Building Regulations in Northern Ireland

*Agreed:* to consider the matter again following the consultation.

- v. The Committee noted from medical students regarding university places
- vi. The Committee noted from the Committee for Health to DoF regarding QUB Medical Places

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Ministers for Health and the Minister of Finance to thank them and their Departments for the exemplary way this matter was handled.

- vii. The Committee noted from Committee for Health to Department of Finance regarding financial support for carers and
- viii. the response from the Department

*The committee agreed to note the following correspondence:*

- ix. from the Committee for the Economy to Chancellor regarding Extension of the Job Retention Scheme and SEISS
- x. from the Committee for the Economy to the Economy Minister regarding COVID-19 Support Administration and Data Gathering

*Agreed:* to note the routine papers circulated on 10 September 2020.

## **12. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme

*Agreed:* To commission research from RaISe on the likely impact of the EU Exit on the work of Committee for Finance

*Agreed:* To ask the Department to provide information on what are the likely legislative and administration burdens in the lead-up to the final EU exit plans which may have an impact on the Committee

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme

**13. Any Other Business**

**14. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 23 September 2020 at 12.30pm in the Senate Chamber.

*The meeting adjourned at 14.41pm*

**Dr Steve Aiken, OBE MLA**  
**Chairperson**  
**Committee for Finance**  
**23 September 2020**