



COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER 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 Philip McGuigan MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA
Mr Jim Wells MLA

Apologies: Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA

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)
Mr Colin Pigeon (Researcher, RaISE - for agenda item 6 only)
Mr Chris Rothwell (Researcher, RaISE - for agenda item 6 only)

The meeting commenced at 14:03 in public session

1. Apologies

Matthew O'Toole MLA

Paul Frew joined the meeting at 14:04

There was no delegation of authority to vote.

2. Declaration of Interests

Maolíosa McHugh MLA declared an interest as a member of a Credit Union

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25 November 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25 November 2020.

4. Matters Arising

SRs in Breach of the 21-day Rule

The Committee noted that, since January 2020, 6 SRs were in breach of the 21-day rule but that the ESR was content with the explanation from the Department in each case.

5. Oral Evidence: The Amendments to the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012

Witnesses joined the meeting by teleconferencing at 14:05

- Fergal Murphy, General Manager, Kingspan Insulation
- Alan Macklin - Technical Director - Kingspan Insulation
- Chris Pateman - General Secretary, Engineered Panels in Construction Limited (t/a EPIC)

The Committee noted an apology from Jonathan Arnold - Product Development Manager, Building Systems, TATA Steel.

The oral evidence was recorded by Hansard.

Issues discussed included: compliance with BS8414 standards; the view that there should be large scale production testing across components and all building types rather than relying only on small scale testing; the economic impact of a ban, as proposed, on manufacturers of non-combustible construction materials in Northern Ireland; the impact of a ban on carbon emissions; and differences in approaches taken in England & Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

Witnesses left the meeting at 15:21

Agreed: Kingspan to provide a copy of its opening statement.

Agreed: To invite the UK Accreditation Service and Ulster University FireSERT Research & Technology Centre to give oral evidence regarding consultation The Amendments to the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012.

6. Oral Presentation from RaISe: Analysis of Forecast Outturn - Quarterly Report

Researchers joined the meeting by teleconferencing at 15:21

- Colin Pigeon, Researcher, RaISe
- Chris Rothwell, RaISe

Issues discussed included: monitoring on a monthly basis via the dashboards; and accessibility of information to all Committees.

Researchers left the meeting at 15:57

Agreed: To write to the Chairpersons' Liaison Group, the Statutory Committees, and the Departments informing them of the attributes and benefits of the facility

Agreed: To circulate the two RaISe papers to committees for information.

Pat Catney declared an interest as a member of a Credit Union.

7. SR 2020 No. 280 The Administration of Estates (Small Payments) (Increase of Limit) Order 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020 No. 280 The Administration of Estates (Small Payments) (Increase of Limit) Order 2020. The purpose of this Statutory Rule is to increase the small payments limit, from £10,000 to £20,000, on the amount of money that may be released to the beneficiaries of a deceased person from that person's estate by certain organisations without the need for a grant of probate.

Agreed: That the Committee for Finance has considered SR 2020 No. 280 The Administration of Estates (Small Payments) (Increase of Limit) Order 2020 and has no objection to the rule.

8. Written Evidence: Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Report - Managing Attendance in Central and Local Government.

The Committee considered the Northern Ireland Audit Office Report - Managing Attendance in Central and Local Government.

Agreed: To consider the report in the future as part of the Committee's work on public sector reform.

9. Chairperson's Business

There was no chairperson's business.

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill call for evidence.

Agreed: To defer this matter until next week's meeting.

- ii. The Committee considered a Department update regarding the Dormant Accounts Fund.
- iii. The Committee noted Minister's response to the Committee for Communities regarding the Dormant Accounts Fund.
- iv. The Committee noted from Committee for Communities to Minister for Finance regarding the Dormant Accounts Fund.

Agreed: To ask the Department to provide a quarterly update on the Dormant Accounts Fund.

- v. The Committee noted Departmental response regarding Expenditure under sole authority of the Budget Act extension.

Agreed: To provide the information requested regarding Expenditure under sole authority of the Budget Act by 29 January 2020.

- vi. The Committee considered the Ekosgen Report for SOLACE NI & NILGA regarding the EU Successor funding in NI.

Agreed: To ask SOLACE NI & NILGA to provide oral evidence to the Committee in January once more detail is available on EU successor funding.

- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the Chancellor's spending review update.

Agreed: To ask the Department to provide the date when the Draft Budget will be laid and the timeline for the budget process including consultation.

Agreed: To ask the Department to clarify what the £150m set aside for consideration of longer term rates support refers to in the Minister's statement regarding 2020/21 November COVID-19 Funding.

viii. The Committee noted the Departmental response regarding Role and Remit of Independent Fiscal Institutions.

Agreed: To forward to RaISe for information.

Agreed: To note the remaining correspondence:

- ix. From the Minister of Finance to the Committee for Communities regarding Wrightbus & Ryse Hydrogen – Funding for Hydrogen Hubs.
- x. From the Minister of Finance to the Committee for Communities regarding Tax Relief for the Ulster Orchestra.
- xi. From the Minister of Finance to the Committee for the Economy regarding TUI Dispute around the extension of the 'Furlough'
- xii. From the Minister of Finance to the Committee for the Executive Office regarding North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes.

The Committee considered the Information Request to the Department.

The Department has requested an extension to the correspondence on the queries in relation to VAT on goods and PPE equipment.

Agreed: To extend the deadline for a response to next week.

The Department requested a two-week extension on responding to the annual progress report to the Equality Commission.

Agreed: To extend the deadline for a response for a further 2-weeks.

The Committee noted the routine papers circulated on 27 November 2020.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: To ask the Department to provide information on a number of issues in relation to the two common frameworks that fall within the remit of the Committee.

- Agreed:* To schedule written evidence from the Department into the Forward Work Programme once the summary common frameworks are available.
- Agreed:* To receive oral evidence from a Director Business Leader UK Fire and Glasgow Office, ARUP on 13 January 2021 regarding the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012.
- Agreed:* To ask RaISe to conduct an analysis of the Departmental bids for capital and resource funding during the pandemic.
- Agreed:* To receive the Terms of Reference for the Procurement Board and to consider the Minister's statement on the Procurement Board again once the Terms of Reference have been received.
- Agreed:* The Committee is content with the draft Forward Work Programme for September – December 2020.

12. Any Other Business

The Committee noted the Reports of the Examiner of Statutory Rules - Thirty First Report of Session 2019-2020, 25 November 2020 – SR 2020/209: The Business Tenancies (Coronavirus) (Restriction on Forfeiture: Relevant Period) (Northern Ireland) (No 2) Regulations 2020.

The Committee noted the Thirty Second Report of Session 2019-2020, 27 November 2020 - S.R. 2020/280: The Administration of Estates (Small Payments) (Increase of Limit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020; S.R. 2020/221: The Financial Assistance (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020; S.R. 2020/230: The Financial Assistance (Coronavirus) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020; S.R. 2020/262: The Financial Assistance (Coronavirus) (No. 2) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

13. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting is on **Wednesday 9 December 2020** at **2:00pm** in the **Senate Chamber**.

14. Joint Order for Personal Protective Equipment between Department of Finance and Government of Republic of Ireland

The Committee did not consider it necessary to pursue this matter further.

The meeting adjourned at 16:26

Dr Steve Aiken, OBE MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance
9 December 2020