



COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2020

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Mr Paul Frew MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Pat Catney MLA
Ms Jemma Dolan MLA
Mr Philip McGuigan MLA
Mr Maoliosa McHugh MLA
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA
Mr Jim Wells MLA

Apologies: Dr Steve Aiken (Chairperson)

In Attendance: Mr Keith McBride (Assembly Clerk)
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)

The meeting commenced at 14:06 in public session

The Committee considered a revised agenda due to an urgent SL1 on the Business Tenancies (Coronavirus) (Restriction on Forfeiture: Relevant Period) (Northern Ireland) (No 3) Regulations 2020.

Agreed: To proceed with the revised agenda.

1. Apologies

Dr. Steve Aiken MLA

The Committee noted that notice has been received from Jim Allister MLA to delegate authority to Jim Wells MLA to vote under Temporary Standing Order 115(6) on any issue, if necessary, until he joins the meeting

The Committee noted that notice has been received from Jemma Dolan MLA to delegate authority to Maoliosa McHugh MLA to vote under Temporary Standing Order 115(6) on any issue, if necessary, when she leaves the meeting.

2. Declaration of Interests

No declarations of Interests.

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 2 December 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a minor amendment and the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 2 December 2020 were agreed subject to the amendment.

4. Matters Arising

There are no matters arising.

5. Oral Evidence: Consultation: Amending the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 – Oral Evidence: Department of Finance - Consultation Summary

Officials joined the meeting by teleconferencing at 14:09

- Billy Black, Head of Building Standards Branch, Principal Professional Technical Officer;
- Damian Fairley, Building Standards Branch, Senior Professional Technical Officer.

The oral evidence was recorded by Hansard.

Jim Wells joined the meeting at 14:19

Jim Allister joined the meeting at 14:46

Issues discussed included: BS8414 testing and differences relating to on-site application and repeatability of testing in real-life situations; evidence of test manipulation; difficulties in enforcement; recommendations made by the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service; and differences in approach in other administrations.

Officials left the meeting at 14:45

Pat Catney left the meeting at 14:46

6. Written Briefing: RaISe - Review of Financial Process Select Reading List for the Committee for Finance

The Committee noted the briefing note from RaISe which provides a select reading list of past reports, discussion papers, briefings, minutes and correspondence, which are relevant to the DoF Review of Financial Process in Northern Ireland.

7. Written Evidence: Department of Finance - Public Procurement Common Framework

The Committee considered written evidence from the Department of Finance on the Public Procurement Common Framework.

Agreed: To ask the Department to urgently provide a full explanation outlining why Cabinet Office guidance was not followed and why, regardless of Cabinet Office guidance, the Committee was not furnished with important information that had been issued to stakeholders more than six weeks previously.

Agreed: To ask the Department to immediately provide full details of all organisations that it issued the Summary Framework to and copies of all responses received.

Agreed: To schedule oral evidence from the Department on the Common Framework at the earliest opportunity.

Agreed: To forward the correspondence from CEFNI to the Committee for the Economy for its views.

Agreed: That the Committee for Finance will keep the Committee for the Economy updated on progress.

8. Chairperson's Business

There was no chairperson's business.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 14.

14. SL1: The Business Tenancies (Coronavirus) (Restriction on Forfeiture: Relevant Period) Northern Ireland) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2020

The Committee considered the SL1 – The Business Tenancies (Coronavirus) (Restriction on Forfeiture: Relevant Period) (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2020. The purpose of the draft Rule is Section 83 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 provides that a right of re-entry or forfeiture, under a relevant business tenancy, for non-payment of rent may not be enforced, by action or otherwise, during the relevant period. "Relevant period" is currently defined in subsection (7) as the period starting with Royal Assent and ending with 31st December 2020. That end date was inserted by The Business Tenancies (Coronavirus) (Restriction on Forfeiture: Relevant Period) (Northern Ireland) (No 2) Regulations 2020 which were cleared through the Committee earlier this year. This new Draft rule would extend the "relevant period", for the purposes of section 83 of the Coronavirus Act 2020, to 31st March 2021.

Agreed: That the Committee for Finance has considered Department of Finance's proposal for subordinate legislation The Business Tenancies (Coronavirus) (Restriction on Forfeiture: Relevant Period) (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2020 and has no objection to the policy implications of the of the proposed legislation at this stage.

9. Correspondence

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

Pat Catney returned to the meeting at 15:08

- ii. The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding General Register Office letter to churches.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Justice regarding the Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Bill.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding a number of queries requested from Land and Property Services.

- v. The Committee noted the Departmental response regarding NISRA annual report and accounts 2019-20 and the (Red, Amber, Green) RAG status guidance.
- vi. The Committee considered the Departmental response regarding VAT on goods from GB to Northern Ireland.

Agreed: To forward the response from the Department to the Committee for the Economy to inform its ongoing work on this matter.

- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lords EU Committee to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury in respect of a European Union proposal for a regulation to establish the EU Single Window Environment for Customs.

Agreed: To note the remaining correspondence:

- viii. The Committee for Communities regarding Briefing by Co3 on impact of Covid-19 on Charity Sector.
- ix. Written Ministerial Statement regarding Budget 2021-22: Funding Available.
- x. Financial Reporting Advisory Board Annual Report 2019-20.

The Committee noted the Information Request to the Department.

The Committee considered the routine papers circulated on 27 November 2020 which included the Monthly Outturn and Forecast Outturn in routine papers.

Agreed: To include the Monthly Outturn and Forecast Outturn in routine papers and the full analysis will be provided by RaISe on a quarterly basis.

The Committee noted the routine papers circulated on 4 December 2020.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee is content with the draft Forward Work Programmes for September – December 2020 and January-April 2021.

11. Any Other Business

Agreed: To ask the Department why the turnaround time has lengthened since people have been told to go through a named official in relation to localised restrictions support scheme funding.

12. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting is on **Wednesday 16 December 2020 at 2:00pm** in the **Senate Chamber**.

Paul Frew offered his apologies for next week's meeting.

The Committee moved into closed session at 15:21

13. Written Evidence: Department of Finance - RHI Disciplinary Process

The Committee considered correspondence received from the Department in relation to the RHI Disciplinary Process.

Agreed: That the Committee for Finance is content with the Department's request on the sharing of the relevant information.

The meeting adjourned at 15:24

**Mr Paul Frew MLA
Deputy Chairperson
Committee for Finance
16 December 2020**