



COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY 23 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 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 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 5 only)

The meeting commenced at 12.31pm in open session

1. Apologies

None.

2. Draft Minutes

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 September 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 September 2020.

Matthew O'Toole joined the meeting at 12.35pm

3. Matters Arising

The Committee noted from RaISE the statistics for Manufacturing PPE in Northern Ireland

The Committee noted from the Department the Terms of Reference for the Executive Sub-Committee on Reform

The Committee noted the Department's response to the establishment of a Fiscal Council and Terms of Reference

4. Oral Evidence: Public Sector Reform – Public Sector Reform Division, Department of Finance

Official joined the meeting at 12.35pm

- Bill Pauley, Director
- Emer Morelli, Head of Public Sector Reform Division (PSRD)

Joining the meeting through teleconferencing:

- Helen Toner, Head of Business Consultancy Services

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Paul Frew joined the meeting at 13.06pm

Issues discussed included: OECD implementation and the need to achieve the final delivery; support for major and minor transformative programmes including pay policy, fiscal reform and the change to European directives; the growth of iLabs and the numerous recommendation implemented; COVID-19 and the impact of working from home/hubs through gathering relevant data and including wellbeing, the review of Arms-Length-Bodies for efficiency and managing a cultural shift.

- Agreed:* To ask the Department if NISRA is collating data in relation to homeworking and, if so, to update the Committee on how this is progressing.
- Agreed:* The Committee to receive the overarching mission statement for PSRD.
- Agreed:* The Committee to receive an updated organisation structure diagram for the Department of Finance.
- Agreed:* To maintain a watching brief on the implementation of OECD recommendations by PSRD.
- Agreed:* The Committee to receive more detail on the purpose, intended outcomes and time frame of the review of Arms-Length Bodies.
- Agreed:* To schedule further work on the Voluntary Exit Scheme following the publication of the report by the NIAO.
- Agreed:* To commission research from RaISe to review the OECD recommendations from 2016 following the publication of the NIAO and other relevant reports.

The official left the meeting at 13.59pm

5. Post-evidence deliberations on the Functioning for Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill

The deliberations were reported by Hansard.

The Committee deliberated on Clause 1 including the notice of amendments to the Bill for Consideration Stage.

- Agreed:* To continue with the deliberations of the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill at the next meeting.

6. SL1 – The Business Tenancies (Coronavirus) (Restriction on Forfeiture: Relevant Period) (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2020

The Committee considered the SL1 – The Business Tenancies (Coronavirus) (Restriction on Forfeiture: Relevant Period) (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) (No. 2) 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 30th September 2020. This Draft rule would extend the “relevant period”, for the purposes of section 83 of the Coronavirus Act 2020, to 31st December 2020.

Agreed: To ask the Department to extended the relevant period for the purposes of section 83 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 to 31 March 2021 rather than to 31 December 2020 as proposed in the SL1.

7. Chairperson’s Business

The Chairperson raised a matter in relation to misappropriation of funds within LPS as outlined in the Department of Finance Annual Report and Accounts 2019-2020.

Agreed: To consider the matter in detail at next week’s meeting.

8. Correspondence

Seán Lynch left the meeting at 13.54pm

- i. The Committee considered from Committee for Procedures regarding Standing Orders 110 – 116 - Temporary Provisions

Agreed: The Committee is content with the proposal.

The committee agreed to note the following correspondence:

- ii. The Committee noted Departmental response regarding QUB medical places

Agreed: To note the information request to the Department and routine papers circulated on 18 September 2020.

Seán Lynch joined the meeting at 13.55pm

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the Department of Finance 2020-21 Main Estimate position

Agreed: To ask the Department to respond to a number of issues raised on its position regarding Main Estimates

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme

10. Any Other Business

The Committee noted the intention of the Deputy Chairperson to consider an amendment to the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which would place a duty on the Finance Minister to commence the Budget process and a duty to produce, publish and bring to the floor of the House a draft Budget for a 12-week consultation period.

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 30 September 2020 at 12.30pm in the Senate Chamber.

The meeting moved into closed session at 15.01pm

12. Renewable Heat Incentive Disciplinary Process – Department Response

The Committee considered the response by the Department on the renewable heat incentive disciplinary process

Agreed: Ask the Department to clarify a number of issues in relation to the information provided.

Agreed: To consider the matter again at next week's meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 15.10pm

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