



**COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

WEDNESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 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  
Mr Philip McGuigan MLA  
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA  
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA  
Mr Jim Wells MLA

By Teleconference: Ms Jemma Dolan 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)

*The meeting commenced at 14:01 in public session*

**1. Apologies**

None.

The Committee noted that notice has been received from Jim Allister MLA.

to delegate authority to Jim Wells MLA of the Committee to vote under Temporary Standing Order 115(6) on any issue, if necessary, until he joins the meeting.

## **2. Declaration of Interests**

Dr Steve Aiken declared an interest regarding correspondence from a member of public who is from his constituency.

*Philip McGuigan joined the meeting at 14:02*

## **3. Draft Minutes**

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 18 November 2020.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 18 November 2020.

## **4. Matters Arising**

### Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill

The Committee noted a Notice of Withdrawal of Amendments tabled on 17 November 2020 for Consideration Stage and Notice of Amendments tabled on 17 November 2020 for Consideration Stage.

## **5. Oral Evidence: The NI Fire and Rescue Service - the Amendments to the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012.**

*Witnesses joined the meeting at 14:03*

- Michael Graham, Chief Fire & Rescue Officer, NIFRS
- Paddy Gallagher, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer, NIFRS
- Geoff Somerville, Group Commander (Protection), NIFRS

The oral evidence was recorded by Hansard.

Issues discussed included: the NIFRS view that hotels, hostel and boarding houses should be included in the list of relevant buildings; the NIFRS view that buildings with stories of more than 11m should be included as opposed to the proposed 18m; the establishment of the Building Safety Programme Group to independently look at building safety and building risk in NI; and issues relating to ensuring use of

appropriate materials, safety checks on buildings and further work on proposed changes to the Building Regulations.

*Agreed:* To ask the Department if there are currently any hotels, hostels or boarding houses, which are excluded from the legislation, but where the materials relevant to the legislation have been used.

*Agreed:* NIFRS to approach Northern Ireland Building Regulations Advisory Committee (NIBRAC) with a view to providing the Committee with details of further proposals for amending the Building Regulations.

*Witnesses left the meeting at 14:45*

*Jim Allister joined the meeting at 14:51*

#### **6. SR 2020 No. 262 - The Financial Assistance (Coronavirus) (No. 2) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020**

The Committee noted a press article relating to wind turbines which references the Committee for Finance.

The Committee noted that the SL1 had not previously been considered by the Committee.

The Committee discussed a proposal to consider the SR without having firstly considered the policy proposals of the legislation at SL1 stage.

*Agreed:* Given the urgent nature of the Statutory Rule, to consider SR (2020 No. 262) The Financial Assistance (Coronavirus) (No. 2) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 without having firstly considered the policy proposals at SL1 stage.

The Committee considered SR 2020/262 The Financial Assistance (Coronavirus) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020. The proposed Rule is made in order to ensure continuity of financial assistance to certain businesses affected by public health restrictions in light of the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 15) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 laid at the Assembly on 16 November 2020.

*Agreed:* That the Committee for Finance has considered 2020/262 The Financial Assistance (Coronavirus) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules report, has no objection to the rule.

*Agreed:* The Clerk to inform the Committee of the total number of SRs which have been in breach the 21-day rule since the Committee was formed.

## **7. Chairperson's Business**

The Committee considered correspondence from a member of the public regarding an ongoing dispute with the Department of Finance.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that, in order to avoid a perceived conflict of interest he would hand over to the Deputy Chairperson for this item of business and not participate in any decision-making relating to the matter.

*Paul Frew assumed the Chair at 15:08*

*Agreed:* To seek more information from the member of the public.

*Dr Steve Aiken resumed the Chair at 15:15*

The Committee considered correspondence from the Director of the Royal Society of Ulster Architects (RSUA) to the Minister of Finance seeking clarification on building regulations relating to energy performance of buildings.

*Agreed:* To ask the Department to provide a written briefing to the Committee outlining the provisions in the Nearly Zero-Energy Buildings requirements and to respond to the questions raised by RSUA for consideration by the Committee on 9th December.

*Agreed:* To inform RSUA of the Committee's approach.

## **8. Correspondence**

i. The Committee considered the response from the Department regarding Localised Restrictions Support Scheme.

*Agreed:* To ask the Department to provide and update on the amount of support payments outstanding and the timescale to complete.

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

*Agreed:* Matthew O'Toole to provide a formal proposal for next week's meeting.

- iii. The Committee considered a response from the Department regarding Dormant Accounts Fund.

*Agreed:* To defer consideration of the correspondence to next week's meeting.

- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding the NIC-ICTU response to Public Service Pension Schemes' Consultation.

*Agreed:* To schedule oral evidence with NIC-ICTU once the Committee receives outcomes from the consultation.

- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office regarding North/South Ministerial Council: Special EU Programmes.

*Agreed:* To write to the Minister of Finance in support of the proposal from the Committee for the Executive Office that he meets with the eleven local councils, and to ask the Minister to meet with the three cross-border partnership bodies with a view to easing concerns that they may have around future EU funding.

*Agreed:* To copy the letter to the Committee for the Executive Office and the three cross-border partnership bodies.

*Agreed:* To note the remaining items of correspondence:

- vi. Department response to the Committee for the Economy regarding impact of the COVID-19 Restrictions and Extended CJRSS  
vii. Correspondence from Committee for Communities to Minister for Finance regarding Dormant Accounts Fund

*Agreed:* To note the information request to the Department and the Routine Papers circulated on Friday 20 November 2020.

## **9. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme.

*Agreed:* To invite the Director Business Leader UK Fire and Glasgow Office Leader ARUP to provide oral evidence to the Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> December on the amendment to the building regulations.

*Agreed:* To receive oral evidence from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) on either 9 or 16 December on Outstanding Dilapidation payments, depending on scheduling of oral evidence on the Budget 2021-2022.

*Agreed:* To receive oral evidence from OECD 27 January 2021, NIPSA 3 February 2021 and Pivotal 10 February 2021.

*Agreed:* The Committee is content with draft Forward Work Programme for September-December 2020.

*Agreed:* To consider agenda item 11 and to move to closed session for agenda item 10.

### **11. Date, time and place of next meeting**

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

*The Committee moved into closed sessions at 15:42*

### **10. Any Other Business**

The Committee considered an issue relating to the joint order for Personal Protective Equipment between the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.

*The meeting adjourned at 15:46*

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