



## **COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

WEDNESDAY 30 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 12.32pm in open session*

#### **1. Apologies**

*Paul Frew joined the meeting at 12.33pm*

There were no apologies.

The Committee noted that Jim Wells indicated that he would be late.

The Committee noted that, under Temporary Standing Order 115(6) – Jim Wells MLA delegated his authority to vote to Jim Allister MLA.

## **2. Draft Minutes**

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 23 September 2020.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 23 September 2020.

## **3. Matters Arising**

No matters rising.

## **4. Post-evidence deliberations on the Functioning for Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill**

*Jim Allister joined the meeting at 12.36pm*

*Jim Wells joined the meeting at 13.06pm*

The deliberations were reported by Hansard.

The Committee deliberated on Clause 2,3,4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 8(a), 9, 10, 11, 11(a), 12, 13, 14,15 and the Schedule and amendments to the Bill proposed by the Bill sponsor for Consideration Stage.

*Jim Wells left the meeting at 13.46pm*

*Agreed:* Matthew O'Toole to consider academic technical evidence in relation to Clause 11(A).

## **5. Oral Evidence: October Monitoring Round – Departmental Position**

*Officials joined the meeting at 14.11pm*

This agenda item was reported by Hansard.

- *Stewart Barnes, Finance Director*
- *Janis Marynowski, DoF Finance and Corporate Services Division*

Issues discussed included: particular pressure on the Department early in the year has being met by the Department of Communities; eventual Sale of Northlands; the delay of planned maintenance due to lockdown; the delay of some projects such as LPS Valuation & Rates, HR and the Stormont Estate; the stage of the Nova project.

*Officials left the meeting at 14.20pm*

**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:* “That the Committee has considered Department of Finance’s proposal for subordinate legislation The Business Tenancies (Coronavirus) (Restriction on Forfeiture: Relevant Period) (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2020, and has no objection to the policy implications of the of the proposed legislation at this stage.”

**7. SR – 2020/201 The Rates (Coronavirus) (Electronic Communications) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020**

The Committee considered SR – 2020/201 The Rates (Coronavirus) (Electronic Communications) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020. This Order Amends Article 62 of the Rates (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 in order to allow District Valuers’ certificates to issue electronically rather than by post. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak in Northern Ireland, this electronic rule has been developed to provide LPS valuation staff with an alternative legal means of issuing certificates as a result of operational limitations created by the COVID-19 arrangements.

*Agreed:* 'That the Committee for Finance has considered SR 2020/201: The Rates (Coronavirus) (Electronic Communications) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020 and has no objection to the rule'

## **8. Department of Finance - Annual Report and Accounts 2019-2020**

The Committee considered the Department of Finance Annual Report and Accounts 2019-2020 and in particular the matter of misappropriation of funds within LPS as outlined in the Department of Finance Annual Report and Accounts 2019-2020.

*Agreed:* To ask Land and Property Service (LPS) to give oral evidence including issues relating to the matter of misappropriation of funds.

## **9. Chairperson's Business**

The Committee considered the decision in Westminster not to bring forward a UK Budget.

*Agreed:* To ask the Minister for Finance, in the absence of a UK budget, to provide details to the Committee of the impact of this decision on the timing, content and opportunity for Committee for Finance scrutiny and consultation on the Assembly Budget for 2021-22.

*Agreed:* To write to all Executive ministers to ask for the list of bids submitted by Department since the Assembly has been restored and to identify which were successful, partially successful or unsuccessful.

## **12. Any Other Business**

The Committee considered the letter from the Chairperson to the Speaker and agreed to return to this matter on 7 October 2020

## **10. Correspondence**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to defer consideration of this agenda item until 7 October 2020.

## **11. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme

*Agreed:* To consider opportunities for oral evidence in relation to Public Sector Reform at the meeting on 7 October 2020.

*Agreed:* To defer further consideration of the Forward Work Programme until 7 October 2020.

### **13. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 7 October 2020 at 2:00pm in the Senate Chamber.

### **14. Renewable Heat Incentive Disciplinary Process – Department Response**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to defer this agenda item until 7 October 2020.

*The meeting adjourned at 14.48pm*

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