



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Finance

Minutes of Proceedings

13 October 2021

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Jim Allister MLA
Mr Pat Catney MLA
Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Jemma Dolan MLA
Mr Philip McGuigan MLA
Mr Maolíosa McHugh MLA

Apologies: Jim Wells MLA
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

In Attendance: Mr Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)
Claire McCanny (Bill Clerk) - item 7 only



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Proceedings commenced at 2:00pm in open session.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

No Members delegated authority to vote on their behalf for the duration of the meeting, under Temporary Standing Order 115(6).

2. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 RHI Action Plan

The Chairperson reminded the Committee that the Minister had recently published the Executive's RHI Action Plan and supporting documents which included reference to an overarching programme of NICS reform as well as an NICS-wide whistle-blowing policy and the appointment of policy and speak-up champions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister amending its invitation to him in order to request that he briefs on matters relating to the RHI Action Plan as soon as possible. The Committee also agreed to seek: sight of the Executive Office and Department of Finance MoU relating to NICS reform; an explanation in terms of accountability lines for the RHI Action Plan; and the likely timescales for implementation.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to revise its invitation to HOCS in order to include discussion on related matters and to also seek: sight of the Executive Office and Department of Finance MoU relating to NICS reform; and an explanation in terms of accountability lines for the RHI Action Plan; and the likely timescales for implementation.

3.2 LCM Public Sector Pensions



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The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee had published its report on the Legislative Consent Motion relating to the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to NIC-ICTU thanking the union representatives for their evidence and providing them with a copy of the report.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 6 October 2021.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Financial Reporting (Departments and Pubic Bodies) Bill - Departmental oral evidence

Departmental officials joined the meeting at 2:07pm

Jeff McGuiness, Acting Head of Central Expenditure Division; and

Joanne Warnock, Public Spending Directorate.

The Committee noted Departmental papers relating to the Bill and to the Review of Financial Processes and central funding matters.

The oral evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their evidence.

Proceedings continued in closed session at 2:38pm



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7. Financial Reporting (Departments and Pubic Bodies) Bill – Bill Office briefing

Claire McCanny, Bill Clerk joined the meeting at 2:38pm

The Committee noted related papers.

The Chairperson thanked the Bill Clerk for her briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking its views on possible amendments to the Bill in respect of: the provision of information to the independent Fiscal Council for Northern Ireland; the treatment of the presentation of accruing resources in the Estimates; and improvements to the transparency of the Estimates.

Proceedings continued in open session at 2:59pm

8. October Monitoring Round – written briefing

The Committee noted Departmental papers relating to the October Monitoring Round.

9. Correspondence

9.1 The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

9.2 The Committee noted a Departmental update on the Dormant Accounts Fund. The Clerk will circulate a copy of the Reclaim Fund Report, when available.

9.3 The Committee noted further Departmental correspondence regarding its decision to not increase Land Registration Fees for 2022-23.



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- 9.4 The Committee noted correspondence on a proposed Departmental consultation on increases to Building Control fees pending feedback from the related consultation.
- 9.5 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (CAERA) on Unique Circumstances funding.
- 9.6 The Committee noted Departmental correspondence on Barnett consequentials arising from a proposed increase in National Insurance contributions.
- 9.7 The Committee noted Departmental correspondence on the impact of changes to the Personal Injury Discount Rate.
- 9.8 The Committee noted Departmental correspondence relating to the multi-year budget process.
- 9.9 The Committee noted correspondence from CAERA relating to the multi-year budget process.
- 9.10 The Committee noted correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on its planned review of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report into the budget process.
- 9.11 The Committee noted Ministerial correspondence relating to delays in the legislation establishing an independent Fiscal Council for Northern Ireland.
- 9.12 The Committee noted a Ministerial statement relating to the RHI Action Plan pending the additional Ministerial and HOCS briefings, as indicated above.
- 9.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Chairpersons' Liaison Group (CLG) to the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding the treatment of EU Regulations.
- 9.14 The Committee considered the composite information request.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the composite request was an accurate and complete record of the Committee's outstanding information requests.



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10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed to revise its invitation to HOCS for 17 November 2021 to include consideration of the RHI Action Plan and to defer scrutiny on the new role for HOCS to the Committee for the Executive Office and PAC.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme, as amended.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Finance will be at 2pm on Wednesday 20 October 2021 in Room 30 and on Starleaf.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:12pm.

Dr Steve Aiken MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Finance
20 October 2021