COMMITTEE FOR Finance and Personnel

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 27 August 2015
Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Daithí McKay MLA (Chairperson) MLA

 Mrs Judith Cochrane MLA

 Mr Leslie Cree MBE, MLA

 Mr Paul Girvan MLA

 Mr John McCallister MLA

 Mr Ian McCrea MLA

 Mr Máirtín Ó Muilleoir MLA

 Mr Jim Wells MLA

In Attendance: Mr Paul Carlisle (Assembly Clerk)

 Mr Phil Pateman (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

 Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)

 Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

 Mr Jonathan McMillen (Legal Adviser – *Agenda Item 2 only*)

Apologies: Mr Dominic Bradley MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

 Ms Michaela Boyle MLA

 Mr Adrian McQuillan MLA

*The meeting commenced at 10:03am in closed session.*

*Agreed that agenda item 4 is covered by Hansard and published on the Assembly’s website*

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

1. Review of the sale of National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) assets in Northern Ireland – Procedural and Legal Advice

Members received further independent legal advice from Assembly Legal Services in respect of its powers to compel oral evidence from witnesses under Section 44 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

*Agreed:* to seek further legal advice on scope for compelling witnesses under Section 44.

Members considered procedural advice in respect of information previously sought from the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP).

*Agreed*: that the Chairperson will write to the Minister of Finance and Personnel to ascertain which of the Committee’s requests for information the Department is willing to address and the specific timeframe for the Department to conclude its discussions with the National Crime Agency (NCA) in relation to the Committee’s requests.

Members noted correspondence from the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service to a request from the Committee seeking a copy of a letter he issued to all Permanent Secretaries regarding the NCA’s investigation into the sale of NAMA assets in Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* to write to the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service seeking the rationale for the decision that departments collate all papers relevant to NAMA.

Members considered correspondence from the NCA which indicated it would be willing to meet privately with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.

*Agreed:* that the meeting with the NCA should include the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson and a representative of each party on the Committee.

*Judith Cochrane joined the meeting at 10:12am*

*Jim Wells joined the meeting at 10:20am.*

1. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 20 August 2015

*Agreed*: that the minutes, as amended, are published on the Assembly website.

 *The Committee suspended at 10:42am*

*The Committee returned to open session at 10:45am for the remainder of the meeting*

**4. Review of the sale of NAMA assets in Northern Ireland – Evidence session with the Law Society of Northern Ireland**

Members received a briefing from the following representatives from the Law Society of Northern Ireland:

* Miss Arlene Elliott, President;
* Ms Katherine McKay; Deputy Chief Executive;
* Mr James Cooper, Council Member; and
* Mrs Moira Neeson, Director of Client (Solicitors) Complaints.

*Agreed*: to publish the briefing paper from the Law Society on the Assembly’s website.

1. Review of the sale of NAMA assets in Northern Ireland – Correspondence and Next Steps

Members considered two pieces of correspondence from members of the public relating to the Committee’s Review.

*Agreed*: to write to Mr McKeating in the same terms as the previously agreed approach, to establish what factual information he can provide which is relevant to the Committee’s Review Terms of Reference.

*Agreed:* to note the correspondence from the other individual and to write HM Revenue and Customs seeking a response to the issues highlighted as applicable.

1. Any Other Business

Electronic/Hard Copy Committee Packs

Members were reminded that, arising from a central agreement reached at the Chairpersons’ Liaison Group, from September onwards, Committee staff will no longer be providing hard copy meeting packs to any member.

1. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be relayed to members when a decision has been taken in that regard.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 11:50am.*

**Mr Daithí McKay MLA**

**Chairperson**

**Committee for Finance and Personnel**

**09 September 2015**