

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2012
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Daithí McKay MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Dominic Bradley MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs Judith Cochrane MLA
Mr Leslie Cree MBE MLA
Ms Megan Fearon MLA
Mr Paul Girvan MLA
Mr John McCallister MLA
Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA
Mr Adrian McQuillan MLA
Mr Peter Weir MLA

In Attendance: Mr Shane McAteer (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)
Mr Gavin Moore (Bursary Student)

The meeting opened at 10.06am in public session.

In the absence of the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson took the Chair.

Agreed: that Agenda item 4 is recorded by Hansard and the Official Report published on the Assembly website.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 7 November 2012

Agreed: that the minutes are published on the Assembly website.

3. Matters Arising

Table of Requests for Information from the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP)

The Committee noted the table of requests for information from DFP which provided an update on any matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

4. Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill – Evidence session with the Commission for Victims and Survivors

The Committee received oral evidence from Kathryn Stone, Commissioner for Victims and Survivors and Adrian McNamee, Head of Policy, Commission for Victims and Survivors on the Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

Mr McQuillan joined the meeting at 10.10am

Mrs Cochrane joined the meeting at 10.18am

Mr McKay joined the meeting at 10.32am and took the Chair.

Mr McCallister joined the meeting at 10.44am

Agreed: that the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors will provide follow up information as discussed during the evidence session.

5. Departmental Programme for Government Delivery Plans and Monitoring Performance – DFP Briefing

The Committee noted the DFP briefing paper provided in advance of today's session.

The following DFP officials briefed the Committee: Stephen Peover, Permanent Secretary, DFP; Brigitte Worth, Finance Director, Corporate Services Group (CSG); and Colm Doran, Head of Business Planning and Corporate Governance, CSG.

Ms Fearon left the meeting at 11.00am

Mr Weir left the meeting at 11.01am

Ms Fearon joined the meeting at 11.10am

Mr Weir joined the meeting at 11.10am

Agreed: that the DFP officials will consult with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and provide the Committee with an analysis of the potential development of new and historical direct long-haul flight routes from Northern Ireland.

Agreed: that the DFP officials will provide details of costs of defending court cases in relation to procurement challenges.

Agreed: that the DFP officials will examine the scope for including further detail on the resource implications of key actions in the Delivery Plan, including the level of additional resources or funding associated with each key action.

Agreed: that the DFP officials will provide the Committee with details of the steps being taken by the Treasury and HMRC to monitor current corporation tax receipts relating to Northern Ireland, with a view to establishing a firm baseline for future calculations in the event of the devolution of corporation tax powers.

6. DFP Performance to date against 2012-13 Business Plan Targets – DFP Briefing

The following DFP officials briefed the Committee: Stephen Peover, Permanent Secretary, DFP; Brigitte Worth, Finance Director, CSG; and Colm Doran, Head of Business Planning and Corporate Governance, CSG.

The Committee noted the DFP briefing paper provided in advance of today's session.

Mr McQuillan left the meeting at 11.50am

Mr Weir left the meeting at 12noon

Mr McCallister left the meeting at 12.02pm

Mr Girvan left the meeting at 12.03pm

Mrs Cochrane left the meeting at 12.05pm

Agreed: that the DFP officials will carry out an examination of staffing in Land and Property Service (LPS) and provide an assurance that sufficient staff are in place to meet targets.

Agreed: that the DFP officials will provide further information on the collection and debt figures relating to empty homes, the current position with the progress of adding new homes to the rating list, the profile of rating debt by sector and in terms of levels of debt write-offs by sector in recent years and figures on the age profile of outstanding debt.

7. Departmental Savings Delivery Plans – DFP Briefing

The following DFP officials briefed the Committee: Stephen Peover, Permanent Secretary, DFP; Brigitte Worth, Finance Director, CSG; and Colm Doran, Head of Business Planning and Corporate Governance, CSG.

The Committee noted the DFP briefing paper provided in advance of today's session.

Agreed: that the DFP officials will provide follow up advice on whether the projection for revenue generation is expected to change for 2014-15.

8. Public Expenditure Adjustments: 2012-13 October Monitoring and 2013-14 and 2014-15 Budget Realignment – DFP Briefing

The following DFP officials briefed the Committee: Michael Brennan, Head of Central Expenditure Division (CED), Central Finance Group (CFG); Peter Jakobson, Central Expenditure Division, CFG; Jeff McGuinness, Central Expenditure Division, CFG; and Brigitte Worth, Finance Director, CSG.

The Committee noted a copy of the Minister's statement of 12 November.

Mr Weir joined the meeting at 12.30pm

Mr Girvan joined the meeting at 12.30pm

Mr McLaughlin left the meeting at 12.31pm

Agreed: that the DFP officials will provide a paper on the Barnett consequentials received in this budget period, the basis upon which they were received and the financial years to which they apply. The Departmental officials also agreed to provide clarification of the reasons for increases in administration expenditure for relevant departments, including details of any related movement of resources away from front-line services; and a statement of monies currently held at the centre, with regular updates to follow.

9. Subordinate Legislation

The Committee considered the following draft statutory rule:

The General Office (Fees) Order (NI) 2012

The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Department providing clarification on how the proposed increase in fees had been calculated in terms of cost recovery.

The Committee noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules has formally confirmed that he has no points to raise by way of technical scrutiny in relation to the Rule.

Agreed: that the Committee has considered The General Office (Fees) Order and recommends that the rule is affirmed by the Assembly.

10. Correspondence

Members noted the following items of correspondence:

- Anonymous letter regarding Civil Servants and Partial Retirement;
Agreed: to forward the correspondence to DFP for a response.
- Committee for Employment and Learning: Quarterly Labour Force Survey Updates;
Agreed: to forward to DFP for action.
- DFP: Response to the Committee for the Environment regarding the Waste Infrastructure Programme;
- DFP: Response regarding building regulations and the installation of wood burning stoves;
Agreed: to copy the DFP response to the original correspondent.
- DFP: Further information on the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme;
- European Parliament Information Office in the UK – Conference on EU Funding in Northern Ireland.

11. Committee Work Programme

Members considered a draft of the Committee work programme.

Agreed: that the Committee work programme is amended to reflect decisions made today, and that the revised programme is published on the Assembly website.

12. Any Other Business

13. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday 21 November 2012 at 10.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.34pm.

Mr Daithí McKay MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance and Personnel
21 November 2012