

# COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

## MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 21 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 David McIlveen 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)  
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)  
Ms Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)  
Mr Gavin Moore (Bursary Student)

*The meeting opened at 10.02am in public session.*

*Agreed:* that Agenda items 4, 5 & 6 are recorded by Hansard and the Official Report published on the Assembly website.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies are detailed above.

## **2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 14 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 Expert Academic Witnesses on Human Rights Issues**

The Committee received oral evidence from Professor Brice Dickson, School of Law, Queen's University Belfast, Dr Rory O'Connell, School of Law, Queen's University Belfast and Dr Anne Smyth, Transitional Justice Institute, University of Ulster. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

*Mr Weir joined the meeting at 10.07am*

*Mr McIlveen joined the meeting at 10.08am*

*Mrs Cochrane joined the meeting at 10.20am*

*Mrs Cochrane left the meeting at 10.41am*

*Mr McCallister joined the meeting at 10.43am*

*Agreed:* to write to the Secretary of State and the Civil Service Commissioners for their views on issues relating to the Bill, particularly given that some of the provisions may deal with reserved matters. The Committee will also obtain legal advice on issues arising from the evidence on the Bill from Assembly Legal Services as necessary.

## **5. Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill – Evidence Session with Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission**

The Committee noted a submission from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission provided in advance of today's session.

The Committee received oral evidence from the following representatives of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission: Professor Michael O'Flaherty, Chief Commissioner, Dr David Russell, Deputy Director and Colin Caughey, Policy Worker. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

*Mrs Cochrane joined the meeting at 11.11am*

*Ms Fearon left the meeting at 11.29am*

*Mr Weir left the meeting at 11.33am*

*Ms Fearon joined the meeting at 11.34am*

*Mr Weir joined the meeting at 11.40am*

*Mr Girvan left the meeting at 11.45am*

*Agreed:* that the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission will provide follow up advice, including on whether it provided comment on the Bill previously.

## **6. Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill – Evidence Session with Ann Travers**

The Committee noted a written submission from Ann Travers provided in advance of today's session.

The Committee received oral evidence from Ann Travers and Catherine McCartney. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

*Mr Girvan joined the meeting at 11.50am*

*Ms Fearon left the meeting at 12.02pm*

*Ms Fearon joined the meeting at 12.17pm*

The Committee noted correspondence received from the Office of Legislative Council, through DFP, which would be added to the evidence base and reflected in the Committee's report on the Bill.

## **7. Correspondence**

Members noted the following items of correspondence:

- Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP): Gender Neutral Insurance Benefits and Premiums;
- Letter from member of the public regarding Equal Pay Settlement;  
*Agreed:* to forward the letter to DFP for response.
- Committee for Regional Development: Public Expenditure Adjustments;  
*Agreed:* to forward the correspondence to the Department of Finance and Personnel for response.
- DFP: Land Law Bill;
- DFP: Regulation of Solicitors (Handling of Wills);
- DFP: Key outcomes of the Consultation on the Proposed Regulations to Implement the Recast Energy Performance of Buildings Directive;  
*Agreed:* to receive a short oral briefing from Departmental officials at next week's meeting.
- Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Motion for debate in Plenary on the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) and related research paper;  
*Agreed:* to forward to DFP for an assessment of the potential of the SBRI in terms of the DFP remit.
- DFP: NI Net Fiscal Balance Report 2009-10 and 2010-11;  
*Agreed:* to ask DFP for clarification on the accuracy of the estimates of revenue streams contained within the Report in the context of potential future calculations of corporation tax receipts.

- Minister of Finance and Personnel: Financial Forecasting;
- Investment Strategy for NI: DFP Investing Activity Report;
- Commission on Devolution in Wales: Empowerment and Responsibility: Financial Powers to Strengthen Wales (the “Silk Report”);

*Agreed:* to commission a research briefing on fiscal devolution within the UK and potential developments in respect of the devolved funding arrangements.

- DFP: Press Release on Improving Access to Government Services.

*Agreed:* to obtain a briefing note from DFP providing further information on the contract awarded to BT for the delivery of NI Direct Services.

## **8. Committee Work Programme**

Members considered a draft of the Committee work programme.

The Committee noted a DFP press release regarding the Northern Ireland Construction Industry.

*Agreed:* to request a Departmental briefing on the proposed measures in respect of construction contracts and prompt payment.

The Committee noted the Northern Ireland Law Commission’s consultation paper on its Review of the Law Relating to Apartments.

*Agreed:* to request a Departmental briefing on this subject following completion of the consultation process.

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

## **9. Any Other Business**

Mr McCallister and Mrs Cochrane passed on their apologies for next week’s Committee meeting.

## **10. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday 28 November 2012 at 10.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.57pm.*

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