

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 5 DECEMBER 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
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 Kathy O'Hanlon (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)
Mr Colin Pidgeon (Research Officer) (Agenda items 5 & 6 only)
- Apologies: None

In the absence of the Chairperson the deputy Chairperson opened the meeting at 10.10am in public session.

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 28 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 from the Equality Commission

The Committee took oral evidence from Eileen Lavery, Head of Advice and Compliance and Jacqui McKee, Director of Advice and Compliance, Equality Commission. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

Members noted a written submission from the Equality Commission which was provided prior to the evidence session.

Mr McLaughlin joined the meeting at 10.15am.

Mr McCallister joined the meeting at 10.24am.

Mr McKay joined the meeting at 10.24am and took the Chair.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 10.24am.

Mr McQuillan joined the meeting at 10.26am.

Mrs Cochrane and Mr Weir joined the meeting at 10.42am.

Mr Girvan left the meeting at 10.44am.

Agreed: to confirm the request for DFP officials to provide a final oral briefing on the Bill at next week's meeting.

Members noted that, at its meeting next week, the Committee will consider the issues arising from the evidence, including any issues requiring legal advice from Assembly Legal Services. The Committee will also consider whether any draft amendments to the Bill should be prepared for consideration following Christmas recess.

5. Rating Debt and Insolvency – Assembly Research Briefing

The Committee received a briefing from Assembly Research on Rating Debt and Insolvency.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 10.52am.

Mr Girvan joined the meeting at 10.53am.

Mr Weir joined the meeting at 10.59am.

Mr McQuillan left the meeting at 11.06am.

Mr McQuillan joined the meeting at 11.09am.

Mr Bradley left the meeting at 11.16am.

Agreed: that Assembly Research would provide further information as requested during the briefing.

Agreed: that a briefing would be sought from DFP on the issues raised in the research paper.

6. Financial Forecasting – Assembly Research Briefing

The Committee received a briefing from Assembly Research on Financial Forecasting.

The Committee noted correspondence from DFP on Outturn and Forecast Outturn Tables.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 11.19am.

Mr Bradley joined the meeting at 11.21am.

Mr McQuillan left the meeting at 11.26am.

Mr Weir joined the meeting at 11.37am.

Mr McQuillan joined the meeting at 11.38am.

Mr McCallister left the meeting at 11.41am.

Mr McQuillan left the meeting at 11.41am.

Mr Girvan left the meeting at 11.45am.

Mr McQuillan joined the meeting at 11.45am.

Mr Girvan joined the meeting at 12.05pm.

Agreed: that the research paper is copied to the other statutory committees and that they are advised of the availability of an oral briefing by Assembly Research on the matter should the need arise.

7. Flexible Working Inquiry – Consideration of Draft Terms of Reference

The Committee noted evidence and research papers on Flexible Working, which had been received earlier in the year, and considered a draft Terms of Reference for the Inquiry.

Mr McCallister joined the meeting at 12.17pm.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 12.23pm.

Mr McQuillan left the meeting at 12.26pm.

Mr Weir joined the meeting at 12.30pm.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 12.31pm.

Agreed: that the draft Terms of Reference for the Inquiry, as amended, will be kept under review as the Inquiry progresses.

Agreed: that the draft signposting notice for newspapers would be published with a twelve week deadline for submissions.

Agreed: to begin scheduling oral evidence from witnesses included in the initial list of stakeholders, which had been developed from the preliminary evidence and research received to date.

8. Subordinate Legislation

SR 2012/393 Superannuation (Commission for Victims and Survivors for NI) Order (NI) 2012.

The Committee noted the Sixth Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, which had no issues to raise by way of technical scrutiny of the Order.

Agreed: that the Committee has considered The Superannuation (Commission for Victims and Survivors for NI) Order (NI) 2012 and has no objection to the rule.

9. Correspondence

Members noted the following items of correspondence:

- Email from member of the public regarding value for money issues relating to the transfer of Belfast Metropolitan College to Titanic Quarter;
Agreed: to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Employment and Learning for consideration.
- COFMDFM: Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Review of the Balance of Competencies paper;
Agreed: to seek advice from DFP on areas relevant to its remit and whether the Department would be making a response to the paper.
- DFP: Response regarding PfG Delivery Plans, Business Plan and Savings Delivery Plan;
- NI Affairs Committee: Call for Air Passenger Duty on short haul flights to end;
Agreed: that a letter would be issued to the Department to ask when the draft terms of reference would be available for the planned research on Air Passenger Duty.
- DFP: Sickness absence in the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2011/12;
- NI Law Commission: Consultee letter regarding the Review of the Law relating to Apartments;
- NI Children's University Event in Long Gallery;
Agreed: that members would respond individually to the invitation.
- Correspondence from OFMDFM to Chris Lyttle MLA, regarding PfG delivery and monitoring.
Agreed: to request that the Committee is copied into the DFP quarterly progress reports and that the Committee will decide if oral briefings are required on a case-by-case basis.

10. Committee Work Programme

Members noted that the Chancellor would be making his Autumn statement today.

Agreed: to request a written update on the implications for Northern Ireland of the Autumn Statement.

Agreed: to request an oral briefing from DFP as soon as a decision on devolution of corporation tax is announced.

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

11. Any Other Business

The Committee noted that the Christmas E-Card would be issued to all stakeholders who have provided evidence to the Committee this year, in line with previous approaches.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday 12 December 2012 at 10.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.39pm.

**Mr Daithí McKay MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance and Personnel
12 December 2012**