

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 16 JANUARY 2013
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 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 Gavin Moore (Bursary Student)

Apologies: Mr Adrian McQuillan MLA

The meeting opened at 10.04am in public session.

Agreed: that Agenda items 4, 5, 6 & 7 are recorded by Hansard and the Official Report published on the Assembly website.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies received.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 9 January 2013

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.

DFP: Clarification on Rating Liability

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Finance and Personnel provided as a follow-up from the Land and Property Services briefing session.

4. Outcome of consultation on Strategic Direction for the use of future EU funding – Briefing from DFP & SEUPB

The Committee took oral evidence from Pat Colgan, Chief Executive, Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) and Shaun Henry, SEUPB. The session was recorded by Hansard.

The Committee noted briefing papers provided by DFP and SEUPB in advance of today's session.

Mr Girvan joined the meeting at 10.07am

Mr McLaughlin joined the meeting at 10.08am

Mrs Cochrane joined the meeting at 10.14am

Mrs Cochrane left the meeting at 10.16am

Mr McCallister joined the meeting at 10.17am

Mr Weir left the meeting at 10.27am

Mrs Cochrane joined the meeting at 10.29am

Mr Weir joined the meeting at 10.36am

Mrs Cochrane left the meeting at 10.39am

Mrs Cochrane joined the meeting at 10.42am

The Committee noted that a plenary debate was scheduled for Monday 21 January on the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister's report on Statutory Committee Activity on European Issues.

Agreed: to forward a response from the Department in relation to evaluations of PEACE programmes to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

Agreed: that follow up information will be requested from DFP on a range of issues discussed following the briefing by SEUPB officials.

Agreed: to copy the DFP and SEUPB briefing papers and Hansard transcript from today's session to relevant statutory committees for information.

5. Prompt Payment and Construction Contracts – Briefing from DFP

The Committee took oral evidence from the following DFP officials: Fiona Hamill, Treasury Officer of Accounts, Central Finance Group and David Carson, Policy and Performance, Central Procurement Directorate (CPD). The session was recorded by Hansard.

The Committee noted briefing papers provided by DFP in advance of today's session.

The Committee noted correspondence received from the Quarry Products Association provided in advance of today's session.

Ms Fearon left the meeting at 11.19am

Mr McCallister left the meeting at 11.24am

Mr Weir left the meeting at 11.28am

Ms Fearon joined the meeting at 11.29am

Mr Weir joined the meeting at 11.33am

Agreed: that the DFP officials will provide follow-up information in relation to thresholds for Project Bank Accounts, as requested during the evidence session.

Agreed: that research will be commissioned to examine international good practice in regard to prompt payment practice and sub-economic tendering.

Agreed: that the DFP briefing papers and Hansard transcript from today's session would be shared with the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Mr McKay left the meeting at 11.41am and Mr Bradley took the Chair.

6. Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill – Evidence Session

The Committee took oral evidence from Dr Máire Braniff, University of Ulster, and Dr Cillian McGrattan, Swansea University, on issues relating to the Bill. The session was recorded by Hansard.

The Committee noted a written submission provided by Dr Braniff and Dr McGrattan in advance of today's session.

Mr McKay joined the meeting at 12.05pm and took the Chair

Mr Girvan left the meeting at 12.13pm

Mr McCallister joined the meeting at 12.16pm

Mr McIlveen left the meeting at 12.17pm

Mr Girvan joined the meeting at 12.18pm

7. Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill – Evidence Session

The Committee took oral evidence from Professor Peter Shirlow, Queen's University of Belfast, on issues relating to the Bill. The session was recorded by Hansard.

The Committee noted various reports provided by Professor Shirlow in advance of today's session.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 12.30pm

Mr Girvan left the meeting at 12.36pm

Mr Bradley left the meeting at 12.49pm

Mr Weir joined the meeting at 12.49pm

Mrs Cochrane left the meeting at 12.50pm

Mr McCallister left the meeting at 12.53pm

8. Subordinate Legislation

SR 455/2012 Superannuation (Victims and Survivors Service Limited) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012

The Committee noted the Eighth 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 (Victims and Survivors Service Limited) Order (NI) 2012 and has no objection to the rule.

9. Correspondence

- Committee for Regional Development: Response to member of the public regarding equal pay settlement;
- Consumer Council: Report into Ulster Bank Payment Crisis;

Agreed: to write to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment to request a copy of a response from the Ulster Bank regarding reviews into the recent payment crisis.

- DFP: press release: "Access to finance challenging but improving";
- DFP: Forecast Outturns (November Position);

Agreed: to copy this information to the other statutory committees for scrutiny at a departmental level.

- DFP: Peace Programmes – SEUPB information for Committee for the Office of the First and deputy First Minister.

10. Committee Work Programme

Members considered a draft of the Committee work programme.

The Committee noted an invitation from the NI Assembly Legislative Strengthening Trust to an Effective Questioning and Scrutiny Workshop.

Agreed: to hold the Workshop following a short weekly Committee meeting on 20 February 2013.

The Committee noted correspondence from DFP on Welfare Reform: Preliminary consultation on Interim Rates Support Scheme.

Agreed: to schedule an oral briefing from DFP on this issue.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Finance and Personnel regarding the Budget Bill 2013.

Agreed: to invite the Minister to a future Committee meeting to brief members on the Bill and associated supplementary estimates.

The Committee noted that the launch of the Place Names of NI Database will be held in the Long Gallery at 2pm on Monday 21 January 2013.

Agreed: that the Committee will hold its meeting on 13 February in Clare House, Holywood Exchange, Belfast for the purpose of informing the Flexible Working Inquiry. This will also enable members to consider advances in the technological and location aspects of flexible working since the previous Committee's visit to Clare House.

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

None.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday 23 January 2013 at 10.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.59pm.

Mr Daithí McKay MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance and Personnel
23 January 2013