

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 23 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)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

Apologies: Mr Adrian McQuillan MLA

The meeting opened at 10.24am in public session.

Agreed: that Agenda item 6 is recorded by Hansard and the Official Report published on the Assembly website.

1. Apologies

There was one apology as detailed above.

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.

Budget Bill (NI) 2013

The Committee noted the response from the Minister of Finance and Personnel regarding a briefing on the Budget Bill (NI) 2013.

Agreed: that the Committee will take evidence on the Budget Bill (NI) 2013 from DFP officials at its meeting on 30 January.

4. Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill

Members discussed potential proposals for amendments to the Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill.

Agreed: that any member intending to propose amendments through the Committee will liaise with the Bill Clerk, Patricia Casey, urgently, with a view to tabling draft amendments for consideration at the next Committee meeting and before formal clause-by-clause scrutiny of the Bill.

5. Review of the Efficiency Delivery Programme – Evidence from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)

Officials from the NIAO were unable to attend the Committee to give evidence due to adverse weather conditions. The evidence session will be rescheduled to a suitable date later in the Committee's work programme.

6. Outcome of January Monitoring Round and the Implications of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement – Evidence from DFP

The Committee took oral evidence from the following DFP officials: Peter Jakobson and Jeff McGuinness, Central Expenditure Division, Central Finance Group; and Preeti Miller, Finance Division, Corporate Services Group. The session was recorded by Hansard.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 11.13am.

Mr McCallister joined the meeting at 11.13am.

Mr Weir returned to the meeting at 11.21am.

Agreed: to request clarification from the Central Procurement Directorate and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment on what the issues are regarding the procurement process for the Titanic project and the reasons why they have arisen; and details of any other projects that the £18m EU funding may be used for.

Agreed: to seek advice from DFP on the mechanisms that can be put in place in the event of the devolution of corporation tax to take account of companies trading in NI but declaring the related profits elsewhere.

The Clerk advised the Committee that the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) had requested a copy of the briefing papers for the evidence session.

Agreed: to copy DFP correspondence regarding the implications of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement to NIPSA.

7. Subordinate Legislation

The Committee considered the following proposals for subordinate legislation:

The Rates (Small Business Hereditament Relief) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2013

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under The Rates (Small Business Hereditament Relief) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2013, and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

The draft Rates (Unoccupied Hereditaments) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2013

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under The draft Rates (Unoccupied Hereditaments) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2013 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

8. Correspondence

Mrs Cochrane joined the meeting at 11.35am.

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure: Co-ordinated Statutory Committee visits to Londonderry – UK City of Culture;

Agreed: to consider matters relevant to the Committee's remit that could be incorporated into a coordinated visit to Derry/Londonderry by Assembly statutory committees in 2013.

- Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (CETI): Correspondence from the Secretary of State regarding Enterprise Zones;
- CETI: New Energy Efficiency Directive;

Agreed: to forward to DFP for comment on the implications of the Directive for the Department.

- Correspondence from a member of the public regarding a pay agreement for PSNI civilian staff;
- DFP: Replacement of Housing Benefit for Rates.

9. Committee Work Programme

Members considered a draft of the Committee work programme.

The Committee noted that the visit to Clare House, Holywood Exchange will take place on Wednesday 13 February, not 6 February as previously advised.

The Committee noted correspondence from DFP on the policy consultation on the Public Service Pensions Bill.

Agreed: to schedule a briefing on the outcome of the consultation, following its completion.

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

10. Any Other Business

Agreed: that, as requested by Mr Bradley, the Committee seeks an update from DFP on progress on the proposed Narrow Water Bridge project and confirmation of when a decision will be made by the Department on the related funding.

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

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

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 11.39am.

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