

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 24 APRIL 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 10.05am in public session.

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

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 17 April 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.

4. Air Passenger Duty – Evidence from PricewaterhouseCoopers

Mr Weir joined the meeting at 10.09am.

The Committee took evidence from Dr Esmond Birnie, Chief Economist, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and Dr Jonathan Gillham, Economist, PwC. The session was recorded by Hansard.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 10.20am.

Mr Girvan joined the meeting at 10.20am.

Ms Fearon joined the meeting at 10.20am.

Mr Weir returned to the meeting at 10.23am.

Mrs Cochrane joined the meeting at 10.24am.

Mr McCallister joined the meeting at 10.34am.

Mr Girvan left the meeting at 10.35am.

Mr Girvan returned to the meeting at 10.42am.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 10.56am.

Mr Weir returned to the meeting at 11.00am.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 11.03am.

Mr Weir returned to the meeting at 11.04am.

Ms Fearon left the meeting at 11.06am.

Agreed: that the Committee will consider holding its meeting at one of the local airports when receiving further evidence from stakeholders on this issue, including on the outcome of the Air Connectivity Study being undertaken by DFP and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

5. Public Service Pensions Bill – Evidence from Trade Unions

The Committee took evidence from the following Trade Union (TU) representatives: Bumper Graham, NIPSA; John O’Farrell, Irish Congress of Trade Unions; Martin Toal, UNISON; Nuala O’Donnell, Irish National Teachers’ Organisation; Paul Hardy, Prison Officers’ Association; Jim Quinn, Fire Brigade Union; and Harry Baird, First Division. The evidence was recorded by Hansard.

Ms Fearon returned to the meeting at 11.34am.

Agreed: the TU representatives will respond in writing to any issues raised during the following evidence session with DFP.

Agreed: TU representatives will return to brief the Committee on the same date that DFP sets out the proposals for the way ahead on the Public Service Pensions Bill.

Mrs Cochrane left the meeting at 11.50am.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 11.50am.

Mr McIlveen left the meeting at 11.50am.

6. Public Service Pensions Bill – Evidence from DFP

Mr McIlveen returned to the meeting at 11.51am.

The Committee took evidence from the following DFP officials: Grace Nesbitt, Head of HR Policy, Pay and Pensions Division, Corporate HR (CHR); Blathnaid Smyth, Human Resources Policy, Pay and Pensions Division, CHR; and Margaret Coyle, Human Resources Policy, Pay and Pensions Division; CHR.

Mr Weir returned to the meeting at 12.18pm.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 12.28pm.

Mr McCallister left the meeting at 12.28pm.

Mr Weir returned to the meeting at 12.31pm.

Agreed: the DFP officials will provide additional information as requested during the evidence session.

Agreed: that the Committee will write to the Department to recommend that a number of measures are taken to more accurately assess the implications of the proposed pension reforms, including the cost of any decisions not to implement the reforms at a scheme level in Northern Ireland and the socio-economic impact of raising the retirement age.

Agreed: that the briefing papers received from DFP and other stakeholders are published on the Committee website.

Agreed: to write to the other relevant Assembly committees to inform them of the cross-cutting nature of the proposed legislation and provide notification that their views on the Bill will be sought during Committee Stage.

Mr Bradley left the meeting at 12.36pm.

7. Subordinate Legislation

The Committee considered the following proposal for subordinate legislation:

The Compulsory Acquisition (Interest) (Amendment) Order 2013

Agreed: to seek further information from DFP on the rationale for the change and the financial implications of the proposal.

8. Draft DFP Operational Plan 2013-14

The Committee considered the draft DFP Operational Plan 2013-14 and a related Secretariat paper.

Agreed: to forward a list of issues to DFP for response in advance of the oral briefing scheduled for 15 May 2013.

Mr McLaughlin left the meeting at 12.39pm.

9. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- Member of the public: NI Civil Service Equal Pay settlement.
- Committee for Employment and Learning: response regarding cross-cutting issues relating to a number of departments.

Agreed: to forward the correspondence to David McNarry MLA for information.

- Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Consultative Partnership Group on EU Funding;
- DFP: Forecast Outturn Reports March 2013.

The following items of routine correspondence were emailed to members on Monday 22 April 2013:

- Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (Amendment) Scheme (NI) 2013
- Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (Amendment No. 2) Scheme (NI) 2013
- Addendum to Census 2011 Key Statistics for NI Report
- Invitation to inaugural Ulster Business Festival

10. Committee Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft of the Committee work programme.

Welfare Reform – Rate Rebate Replacement Arrangements

Members noted that representatives from the housing association and the age sectors will each brief the Committee at its next meeting on 1 May 2013.

Review of Rates Liability for the Landlord Sector

Agreed: to take evidence on this issue from key stakeholders before the end of the DFP consultation on 28 June 2013.

11. Any Other Business

Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill

Agreed: that, rather than waiting until next week's pack, the response from the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland regarding the implications of the Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill, as amended at Consideration Stage, should be forwarded to Committee members today for information.

Security Staff in the Stormont Estate

Agreed: to seek an update from DFP on the position regarding the implementation of the judgement in the case taken against DFP by NIPSA on behalf of security staff in the Stormont Estate.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday 1 May 2013 at 10.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.43pm.

Mr Daithí McKay MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance and Personnel
1 May 2013