

## **COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**WEDNESDAY, 8 MAY 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 David McIlveen MLA  
Mr John McCallister 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 Gavin Moore (Bursary Student)

Apologies: There were no apologies.

*The meeting opened at 10.04am in public session.*

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

## **1. Apologies**

As above.

## **2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 1 May 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.

### Committee Position on Welfare Reform: Rate Rebate Arrangements

The Committee considered the evidence it has received on the options for rate rebate replacement arrangements as presented in the Department's preliminary consultation paper.

*Agreed:* that, in terms of short-term arrangements, the Committee sees potential merit in both sub-option 1.1 and option 2, or a combination of these options, but is unable to reach a definitive position in light of the absence of impact assessments and fuller costings.

*Mr McQuillan joined the meeting at 10.15am.*

*The meeting moved into closed session at 10.18am.*

## **4. Review of the Efficiency Delivery Programme – preparatory briefing from Northern Ireland Audit Office**

The Committee received a preparatory briefing from Eddie Bradley, Assistant Auditor General, Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO); and Jacqueline O'Brien, Audit Manager, NIAO, on a number of issues relating to the NIAO's Review of the Efficiency Delivery Programme report.

*Ms Fearon joined the meeting at 10.29am.*

*Mr Weir left the meeting at 10.39am.*

*Mr Weir returned to the meeting at 10.43am.*

*The meeting moved into public session at 10.49am.*

## **5. Review of the Efficiency Delivery Programme – Evidence from Department for Employment and Learning Officials**

The Committee took oral evidence from Andrew Hamilton, Deputy Secretary, Department for Employment and Learning (DEL); Colum Bradley, Director of Employment Services, DEL; and Billy Lyttle, Head of Higher Education Finance, DEL. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

*Mr McQuillan left the meeting at 11.01am.*

*Mr Bradley left the meeting at 11.05am.*

*Ms Fearon left the meeting at 11.09am.*

*Mr Bradley returned to the meeting at 11.21am.*

*Mr McKay left the meeting and Mr Bradley took the Chair at 11.21am.*

*Mr Weir left the meeting at 11.27am.*

*Mr McKay returned to the meeting and took the Chair at 11.28am.*

*Mrs Cochrane joined the meeting at 11.29am.*

*Mr McCallister joined the meeting at 11.32am.*

*Ms Fearon returned to the meeting at 11.37am.*

*Ms Fearon left the meeting at 11.37am.*

*Mr Weir returned to the meeting at 11.40am.*

*Agreed:* that the DEL officials will provide a written response regarding the interaction between DEL and DFP Supply, in terms of the latter exercising a challenge function during the 2008-11 Efficiency Delivery Programme.

*Agreed:* that the DEL officials will provide the Committee with more information in respect of the surpluses generated by both Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster.

*Agreed:* that the Committee will forward additional questions to DEL for a written response, and that the Clerk will liaise with the Clerk to the Committee for Employment and Learning in this regard.

## **6. Review of the Efficiency Delivery Programme – Evidence from Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Officials**

The Committee took oral evidence from Julie Thompson, Deputy Secretary, Resources & Performance Management, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS); and Paul Gibson, Financial Planning Unit, DHSSPS. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

*Mr McQuillan returned to the meeting at 11.45am.*

*Mr Weir left the meeting at 12.04pm.*

*Mr Weir returned to the meeting at 12.10pm.*

*Mr McIlveen left the meeting at 12.11pm.*

*Mr McIlveen returned to the meeting at 12.23pm.*

*Mr McLaughlin left the meeting at 12.25pm.*

*Agreed:* that the DHSSPS officials will provide a written response regarding the interaction between DHSSPS and DFP Supply, in terms of the latter exercising a challenge function during the 2008-11 Efficiency Delivery Programme.

*Agreed:* that the DHSSPS officials will provide the Committee with details of the efficiency savings realised specifically from the rollout of the South Eastern Trust's regional pharmacy procurement project, as well as details of efficiencies realised, more generally, from regional procurement projects.

*Agreed:* that the Committee will forward additional questions to DHSSPS for a written response, and that the Clerk will liaise with the Clerk to the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety in this regard.

## **7. Review of the Efficiency Delivery Programme – Evidence from Department for Regional Development Officials**

The Committee took oral evidence from Deborah McNeilly, Director of Finance, Department for Regional Development (DRD); and Stewart Barnes, Head of Financial Planning and Management Branch, DRD. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

*Mr Girvan left the meeting at 12.30pm.*

*Agreed:* that the DRD officials will provide a written response regarding the interaction between DRD and DFP Supply, in terms of the latter exercising a challenge function during the 2008-11 Efficiency Delivery Programme.

*Agreed:* that the DRD officials will provide the Committee with further information on the pilot cross-departmental transport procurement project, which was referred to during the evidence session.

*Agreed:* that the Committee will forward additional questions to DRD for a written response, and that the Clerk will liaise with the Clerk to the Committee for Regional Development this regard.

## **8. Correspondence**

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- Assembly Research Briefing: Relevance of Explanatory Memorandum 34783 - harmonisation of public sector accounting standards in Member States;
- DFP: Dormant Accounts Scheme Consultation on Appointment of the Ulster Community Investment Trust (UCIT);

*Agreed:* to request an oral briefing from DFP officials on the outcome of the Dormant Accounts Scheme consultation;

- DFP: Air Passenger Duty block grant adjustment;
- DFP: Review of Rates Liability for the Landlord Sector;

*Agreed:* to request an oral briefing from DFP officials on the considerations in respect of any potential change to owner-based liability in the future.

- DFP: EU Competitiveness Programme;
- Index on Censorship: Defamation Act 2013;

*Agreed:* to seek a written briefing from DFP in response to the issues raised in the correspondence, including the reasons why Northern Ireland has not followed the provisions implemented in the Westminster Defamation Act 2013;

*Agreed:* to invite representatives from Index on Censorship to give oral evidence on this issue.

## **9. Committee Work Programme**

The Committee considered a draft of the Committee work programme.

### Visit to Derry/Londonderry on 12 June 2013

Members considered a proposed agenda for the Committee's visit to Derry/Londonderry on 12 June 2013, which will form part of a co-ordinated visit by Assembly committees to mark the UK City of Culture Year. Members also noted several projects/groups in the area that have availed of PEACE III funding, which could be considered for potential site visits on the afternoon of 12 June.

*Agreed:* that members are content with the proposed agenda for the meeting on 12 June but will decide which local projects/groups to visit at next week's meeting.

### Additional Scrutiny Topics 2013-14

The Committee noted a list of potential topics for scrutiny to add to the work programme from September 2013. The list had been compiled from a review of the issues highlighted in the predecessor Committee's Legacy Report and other outstanding matters.

*Agreed:* to proceed with scheduling briefings from NAMA and from the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, on the research which it has commissioned into devolved funding arrangements; and to review the other potential topics again at next week's meeting.

## **10. Any Other Business**

None

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

The next meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday 15 May 2013 at 10.00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.44pm.*

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