

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 5 JUNE 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 Peter Weir MLA

In Attendance: Mr Shane McAteer (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Phil Pateman (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Adrian McQuillan MLA

The meeting opened at 10.07am in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

Mr Girvan and Mr Weir joined the meeting at 10:08 am.

Agreed: that agenda items 5, 6, 7 and 9 are covered by Hansard and the Official Record published on the Assembly's website.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 29 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.

4. Consideration of Submissions Received on the Legislative Consent Motion: Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill

The Committee noted written submissions on the Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) from the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church, the Rainbow Project, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission. Members also noted that the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance LGB&T Group had indicated that it would have welcomed the opportunity to make a stakeholder submission but was unable to do so because of the time constraints arising from the LCM process.

Agreed: that the written submissions are released to the DFP officials for information ahead of their evidence session later in the meeting.

Agreed: that the written submissions and any other relevant papers on the LCM are published on the Committee webpage as soon as possible and in advance of the debate on the LCM.

Agreed: that short oral briefings would be scheduled for later in the meeting from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Rainbow Project in order to obtain clarification on issues raised in their written submissions.

Ms Fearon left the meeting at 10.24am and re-joined at 10.29am.

5. Financial Provisions Bill – Policy Briefing

The Committee took evidence on the proposed Financial Provisions Bill from the following DFP officials: Cris Farmer, Head of Financial Reporting and Accountability Branch, DFP and Fiona Hamill, Treasury Officer of Accounts, DFP. The session was recorded by Hansard.

Mrs Cochrane joined the meeting at 10:25 am.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 10:30 am.

Members noted that initial responses had been sought from the other Assembly committees with an interest in the proposed Bill and to date the Committee for Social Development and the Public Accounts Committee had indicated that they were generally content with the proposals at this stage.

Agreed: that any further written responses from the applicable Assembly committees in relation to the Bill are forwarded to DFP for information and comment as necessary.

Agreed: to seek clarification from DFP on the rating provisions which may be added to the proposed Bill.

Agreed: that the papers relating to the proposed Bill are published on the Committee webpage.

Agreed: to write to the Justice, Regional Development and Social Development committees highlighting the issues raised during the evidence session.

Mr McQuillan joined the meeting at 10.55am.

Mr McLaughlin left the meeting at 10.59am and re-joined at 11.01am.

Mrs Cochrane and Mr Girvan joined the meeting at 11am.

6. Review of Rates Liability for the Landlord Sector – Briefing from Housing Rights Service

The Committee were briefed by the following representatives: Nicola McCrudden, Policy and Communications Manager, Housing Rights Service; Peter O'Neill, Policy and Participation Manager, Housing Rights Service; and Jan Branch, Client Representative and representative of the Northern Ireland Private Tenants Forum. The session was recorded by Hansard.

Mr Weir joined the meeting at 10:43 am.

Mr McCallister joined the meeting at 10:57 am.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 11:05 and re-joined at 11:07 am.

Mr Bradley left the meeting at 11:24 am and re-joined at 11:33 am.

7. Review of Rates Liability for the Landlord Sector – Briefing from Landlords' Association

The Committee were briefed by the following representatives: Declan Boyle, Landlords' Association; Robert Greer, Landlords' Association; and Raymond Crooks, Landlords' Association. The session was recorded by Hansard.

Ms Fearon left the meeting at 11:35 am and re-joined at 11:46 am.

Mr Weir left the meeting at 11:47 am and re-joined at 11:51 am.

Mr Girvan left the meeting at 11:57 pm and re-joined at 12:00 pm.

8. EU Funding Programmes Evaluations – Assembly Research Briefing

The Committee noted a briefing paper from Assembly Research entitled Evaluation of the PEACE III Programme.

9. Legislative Consent Motion: Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill – Evidence from Stakeholders

Evidence from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

The Committee took evidence on the Legislative Consent Motion: Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill from the following representatives from the Northern Ireland Human

Rights Commission: David Russell, Deputy Director and Rhyannon Blyth, Caseworker. The session was recorded by Hansard.

Mr Girvan left the meeting at 11:57 pm and re-joined at 12:00 pm.

Evidence from the Rainbow Project

The Committee took evidence on the Legislative Consent Motion: Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill from the following representatives from The Rainbow Project: John O'Doherty, Director; Matthew McDermott, Policy and Advocacy Manager; and Gavin Boyd, Communications Officer. The session was recorded by Hansard.

Mrs Cochrane left the meeting at 12:30 pm.

Evidence from DFP

The Committee took evidence on the Legislative Consent Motion: Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill from the following DFP officials: Oswyn Paulin, Departmental Solicitor and Laura McPolin, Policy Advisor. The session was recorded by Hansard.

MrMcLaughlin left the meeting at 12:40 pm.

Mr Girvan left the meeting at 12:42 pm and re-joined at 12:48 pm.

Ms Fearon left the meeting at 12:50 pm

10. Subordinate Legislation

The Committee considered the following statutory rules:

SR 2013/142 Statistics & Registration Services Act 2007 (Disclosure of Pupil Information) Regulations (NI) 2013

The Committee noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had formally confirmed in his sixteenth report that he had no points to raise by way of technical scrutiny in relation to the rule.

Mr McCallister left the meeting at 12:58 pm.

Agreed: the Committee has considered SR 2013/142 Statistics & Registration Services Act 2007 (Disclosure of Pupil Information) Regulations (NI) 2013 and recommends that it be affirmed by the Assembly.

SR 2013/143 Statistics & Registration Services Act 2007 (Disclosure of Higher Education Student Information) Regulations (NI) 2013

Agreed: the Committee has considered SR 2013/143 Statistics & Registration Services Act 2007 (Disclosure of Higher Education Student Information) Regulations (NI) 2013 and recommends that it be affirmed by the Assembly.

11. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- Chartered Institute of Housing: Rates Rebate Replacement Arrangements;

Agreed: to forward the correspondence to DFP for information and comment as applicable.

- Correspondence relating to the Defamation Act 2013;

Agreed: to seek clarification from DFP on why it was unable to secure the necessary consents within the required timescale for a legislative consent motion in respect of the Defamation Act 2013, while the Bill was undergoing its Westminster passage.

- DFP: Analysis of forecasting performance;
- Member of the Public relating to PSNI Equal Pay
- DFP: Suicide Prevention Strategies
- DFP: Third Sector Mapping Exercise
- Northern Ireland Assembly & Business Trust: Invite to Educational Programme in the Oireachtas
- DFP: Stormont Security Guards

12. Committee Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft of the Committee work programme.

Committee Meeting 12 June 2013

Agreed: to invite two Derry/Londonderry based projects in receipt of PEACE funding projects to provide presentations to the Committee following its meeting on 12 June.

Defamation Bill

Agreed: that an oral briefing from DFP officials will be scheduled for 3 July 2013 in order to obtain responses to the issues raised from other stakeholders on this matter.

Agreed: that all papers on this matter are published on the Committee webpages in advance of the forthcoming oral briefings from stakeholders.

Agreed: that the draft Committee Work Programme is amended to reflect any decisions made today and published on the Committee's website.

13. Any Other Business

None

14. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday 12 June 2013 at 10:00 am in the Management Suite, Northland Campus, North West Regional College, Derry/Londonderry.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1:06 pm.

Mr Daithí McKay MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance and Personnel
12 June 2013