

# COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

## MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 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 Adrian McQuillan 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)

*The meeting opened at 10.07am in public session.*

### **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

*Agreed:* that agenda items 4, 5 and 6 are covered by Hansard and the Official Record published on the Assembly's website.

## **2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 10 July 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.

### Submissions regarding Banking Issues, including Branch Closures

The Committee noted a number of submissions from various banks and related items of correspondence provided as a follow up to the Committee meeting on 10 July 2013.

*Agreed:* to copy this correspondence to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (CETI) for information.

*Agreed:* to write to DFP for its views on what proactive steps it could take to address the apparent dearth of regional data on bank lending.

The Committee noted the Terms of Reference for the Westminster Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (NIAC) Inquiry into Banking in Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* that the Committee will be mindful of the need to avoid overlap with this Inquiry in terms of any further detailed scrutiny of banking issues.

## **4. Welfare Reform: Rate Rebate Replacement Scheme – Consultation Update**

The Committee received evidence on the progress of the consultation on the Rate Rebate Replacement Scheme from the following Departmental officials; Brian McClure, Head of Rating Policy Division and Andrew McAvoy, Rating Policy Division. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

*Megan Fearon joined the meeting at 10.15am*

*John McCallister joined the meeting at 10.23am*

*Paul Girvan left the meeting at 10.29am*

*Paul Girvan rejoined the meeting at 10.29am*

*Agreed:* that the DFP officials will provide additional information as requested by members during the session.

## **5. Review of Rates Liability for the Landlord Sector – Consultation Outcome – DFP Update Briefing**

The Committee received further evidence from the Departmental officials, Brian McClure and Andrew McAvoy, on the outcome of the consultation on the Review of Rates Liability for the Landlord Sector. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

*Dominic Bradley left the meeting at 10.55am*

*Dominic Bradley rejoined the meeting at 11.00am*

*Peter Weir left the meeting at 11.00am*

## **6. Financial Provisions Bill – Evidence from DFP on Rating Amendments**

The Committee received evidence from the Departmental official, Brian McClure, on amendments being brought forward by DFP to the Financial Provisions Bill. The amendments will make provision in relation to rating legislation. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

The Committee noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had highlighted a potential issue in relation to provisions within the Bill relating to the procedure for proposed Regulations by the Department of Justice. Officials in the Department had indicated that an amendment to the Bill would be brought forward to address this issue.

*Agreed:* that the Committee for Justice will be informed of this issue and related amendment when the Examiner of Statutory Rules reports formally.

*Peter Weir rejoined the meeting at 11.04am*

*Agreed:* that a further briefing from DFP officials will be scheduled when the draft rating amendments are available.

## **7. Public Service Pensions Bill – Consideration of written submissions**

The Committee gave initial consideration to the written submissions which were received from a range of stakeholders in response to the call for evidence on the Bill.

*Agreed:* that the written submissions are forwarded to DFP for an urgent written response to each of the issues/proposals raised by the stakeholders.

## **8. Public Service Pensions Bill – Consideration of Committee Stage Timetable**

*Agreed:* that the motion seeking Assembly approval to extend the Committee Stage of the Bill to Friday 29 November 2013 will be laid in the Business Office; and that oral evidence will be scheduled from the stakeholders who have made written submissions.

## **9. End of Session Report: Initial Consideration of draft Committee Report**

The Committee noted an initial draft of the End of Session Report 2012-13.

*Agreed:* to consider a final draft of the End of Session Report at next week's meeting.

## **10. Correspondence**

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- DFP: Civil Service Compensation Scheme Consultation Document;
- Department of Employment and Learning: Efficiency Delivery Programme;
- DFP: Dormant Accounts response;
- DFP: Update to Committee on outstanding Post Project Evaluations;

*Agreed:* to copy the correspondence to the other statutory committees and the Public Accounts Committee for scrutiny as applicable.

- Minister of Finance and Personnel: response to OFMDFM Committee regarding PEACE III;
- Email from member of public regarding delay in the Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill;
- DFP: response to Assembly Research paper on Financial Forecasting;
- NI Law Commission report - Unfitness to Plead;
- DFP: Titanic Replacement Expenditure;  
*Agreed:* to copy the correspondence to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment for information.
- DFP: Senior Civil Service Pay and Bonuses;
- DFP: Savings Delivery Plan for the Department of Education;
- DFP: Quarterly Labour Force Survey Results;
- DFP: Publication of final 2011 Census UK Population Estimates;
- DFP response regarding Provisional Outturn June Monitoring 2013;
- Letter from Member of Public regarding Property Management Companies;  
*Agreed:* to copy the correspondence to DFP for a response and for an update on this issue.
- Letter from Chair of the Public Administration Select Committee to the CEO of NISRA;
- DFP: Northern Ireland Civil Service People Strategy;
- DFP Annual Report of Progress on the implementation of its Equality Scheme;
- DFP: Draft Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill;
- Correspondence from a member of the public regarding Bricklayers and Public Service Contracts;  
*Agreed:* to copy the correspondence to DFP for a response. A copy of the correspondence, including the Department's response, will subsequently be sent to the All-Party Group on Construction for information.
- List of papers available in Room 419.

The Committee noted the following routine papers which were emailed to members on Monday 9 September

- DFP Press Release regarding Banking Issues; and
- Advice Matters Quarterly E News Letter

## **11. Committee Work Programme**

Members considered a draft of the Committee work programme.

### Meeting at Belfast International Airport

The Committee discussed the logistics of next week's meeting at Belfast International Airport and noted that further details would be emailed to members in advance.

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

## **12. Any Other Business**

### Launch of Consultation on proposed Private Members Bill on libel law reform

The Committee noted an invitation from Mike Nesbitt MLA to attend a consultation launch on his proposed Private Members Bill on libel law reform, which will take place on Thursday 19 September 2013.

#### Access to Finance for Local Businesses

Members discussed the difficulties being reported by businesses within their constituencies in gaining access to finance and related banking issues.

*Agreed:* to notify the Department that members will wish to discuss this issue as part of the wider briefing from the new Minister of Finance and Personnel on 25 September 2013.

*Agreed:* that the Clerk will enquire into the feasibility of the Committee, in conjunction with CETI, providing input to the ongoing NIAC inquiry into banking in Northern Ireland, in particular in terms of identifying local case studies on the experience of SMEs in accessing finance.

*Dominic Bradley left the meeting at 11.36am*

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

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday 18 September 2013 at 10:00 am in Room 3 of the Business Centre in Belfast International Airport.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 11.39am.*

**Mr Daithí McKay MLA**  
**Chairperson**  
**Committee for Finance and Personnel**  
**18 September 2013**