

# COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

## MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 15 JANUARY 2014  
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

- Present: Mr Daithí McKay MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Dominic Bradley (Deputy Chairperson)  
Ms Michaela Boyle MLA  
Mrs Judith Cochrane MLA  
Mr Leslie Cree MBE, MLA  
Mr Paul Girvan MLA  
Mr John McCallister MLA  
Mr Ian McCrea MLA  
Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA  
Mr Adrian McQuillan MLA  
Mr Peter Weir MLA
- In Attendance: Mr Shane McAteer (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Phil Pateman (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)  
Ms Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies: None

*The meeting commenced at 10.08am in public session.*

*Agreed:* that agenda items 4 and 5 are recorded by Hansard and the Official Report published on the Assembly's website.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies are detailed above.

## **2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 11 December 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 summary table of requests for information from DFP which provided an update on any matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

## **4. DFP Performance against Programme for Government, Business Plan Targets and Departmental Savings Delivery Plan for the period to 30 September 2013 – Evidence session from DFP**

The Committee received evidence on the above from the following departmental officials:

- Stephen Peover, Permanent Secretary;
- John Wilkinson, Chief Executive, Land and Property Services;
- Brigitte Worth, Finance Director;
- Kathryn Hill, Head of Business Planning and Corporate Governance.

The session was recorded by Hansard.

*John McCallister joined the meeting at 10.10am*

*Adrian McQuillan joined the meeting at 10.12am*

*Michaela Boyle joined the meeting at 10.24am*

*Judith Cochrane joined the meeting at 10.24am*

*Peter Weir left the meeting at 11.03am*

*Agreed:* that the departmental officials will provide follow up information as requested during the session.

## **5. Public Service Reform Division – Evidence session from DFP**

The Committee received a briefing on the remit and functions of the new Public Service Reform Division (PSRD) from the following DFP officials:

- Colin Sullivan, Strategic Policy and Reform Director;
- Paul Montgomery, Strategic Policy and Reform Directorate.

*Dominic Bradley left the meeting at 11.25am*

*Peter Weir rejoined the meeting at 11.26am*

*Ian McCrea left the meeting at 11.31am*

The session was recorded by Hansard.

*Agreed:* that the Committee will receive regular briefings on the progress made by PSRD.

## **6. Draft Memorandum of Understanding on the Budget Process**

The Committee undertook initial consideration of a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Budget Process, which, it is proposed, will be agreed between the Assembly and the Executive. The draft MoU, which arose from the previous Committee's *Inquiry into the Role of the Northern Ireland Assembly in Scrutinising the Executive's Budget and Expenditure*, was also being considered by the Minister of Finance and Personnel.

*Agreed:* that members had no proposed amendments to the draft MoU at this stage and were content with the suggested timetable, which included a target date of mid-March 2014 for sign off by the Committee.

## **7. Subordinate Legislation**

The Committee considered the following proposals for subordinate legislation:

- The Draft General Register Office (Fees) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014

The Committee noted correspondence from DFP on this proposal outlining processing times and fees for requesting copies of birth certificates.

*Agreed:* that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under The General Register Office (Fees) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

- The Draft Rates (Regional Rates) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014

*Agreed:* that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under The Rates (Regional Rates) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

- The Rates (Small Business Hereditament Relief) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

*Agreed:* that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under The Rates (Small Business Hereditament Relief) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

- The Rates (Unoccupied Hereditaments) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

*Agreed:* that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under The Rates (Unoccupied Hereditaments) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern

Ireland) 2014 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

- The Valuation Telecommunications, Natural Gas and Water Undertakings (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

*Agreed:* that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under The Valuation Telecommunications, Natural Gas and Water Undertakings (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

## 8. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- Committee for Employment and Learning: Blacklisting Subordinate Legislation and DFP response;
- DFP: Response to the CBI Northern Ireland Infrastructure Report;  
*Agreed:* to copy the departmental response to CBI for comment.
- Committee for Regional Development: January Monitoring;
- Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (COFMDFM): European Commission Work Programme 2014;  
*Agreed:* to seek a view from DFP on its European priorities including the European Commission Work Programme 2014. A draft submission to COFMDFM would be prepared in light of the DFP response.
- DFP: Consultation Document on the Energy Performance of Buildings;  
*Agreed:* to seek a written briefing from DFP on the outcome of the consultation in the first instance.
- COFMDFM: Competitive European Funding in Northern Ireland;
- Friends of Exploris: Business Strategy Assessment;
- DFP: Outturn and Forecast Outturn tables for the month of October 2013;
- Committee for the Environment: Inquiry into Wind Energy;  
*Agreed:* that the Committee would have no response to make to this Inquiry.
- Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development: Ulster Farmers' Union correspondence regarding falling beef prices;
- Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Report on Sickness Absence in the Northern Ireland Public Sector;  
*Agreed:* to schedule briefings from NIAO and DFP on this report.
- Committee for Social Development: Northern Ireland Housing Executive Pay Increase;

- DFP: Civil Service Pensions Future Service Delivery Project;
- Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment: EU Monies;
- DFP: response regarding Steps 2 Success Employment Programme;  
*Agreed:* to copy the DFP response to the Committee for Employment and Learning for information.
- Save the Children – Too young to fail briefing;
- DFP: Green Investment Bank;
- Anonymous correspondence on banking practices, including Report by Lawrence Tomlinson;
- Ulster Bank: responses regarding the Tomlinson Report and IT issues;  
*Agreed:* to schedule a briefing from the Ulster Bank once the various on-going reviews are concluded, including the inquiry by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, and to invite attendance by members of the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee.
- Breezemount Manor correspondence and draft Committee response;  
*Agreed:* to issue the Committee response as drafted to the correspondent.
- Northern Ireland Affairs Committee: Letter of thanks regarding recent evidence to banking inquiry;
- Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland, Investing Activity Report (DFP) December 2013;
- DFP: Proposed Amendment to the Public Service Pensions Bill;
- Quarry Products Association NI: response to the European Commission in relation to the investigation into certain Aggregates Levy exemptions;
- DFP: Budget Bill NI 2014 – Request for Accelerated Passage;
- DFP: Ministerial response to Committee Report on Public Service Pensions Bill; and
- Consultation on Draft Multi Agency Guidelines on Female Genital Mutilation.

## **9. Committee Work Programme**

Members considered a draft of the Committee work programme.

*Daithí McKay declared an interest as the Bill sponsor for the Private Members Bill to 'Make Amateur Sports Clubs Exempt from Rates'.*

*Agreed:* to schedule briefings on the Review of Fiscal Powers, arising from ‘Building a Prosperous and United Community’, and a Private Members Bill to ‘Make Amateur Sports Clubs Exempt from Rates’.

*Agreed:* that the work programme is updated to reflect any agreements made today and published on the Committee’s website

**10. Any other business**

None.

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

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday 22 January 2014 at 10:00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.12pm*

**Mr Daithí McKay MLA  
Chairperson  
Committee for Finance and Personnel  
22 January 2014**