

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 26 MARCH 2014
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

- Present: Mr Daithi McKay (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)
Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Phil Pateman (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Joe Westland (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies: There were no apologies

The meeting commenced at 10:05 in public session.

Agreed: that agenda items 4, 6 and 7 are covered by Hansard and the Official Report published on the Assembly's website.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 24 March 2014

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. Health & Wellbeing Measures to Reduce Absenteeism – Briefing from the Institute of Public Health in Ireland

The Committee received evidence on ‘Health & Wellbeing Measures to Reduce Absenteeism’ from the following representatives from the Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPH):

- Dr Elizabeth Mitchell, Director of Development & Capacity Building, IPH;
- Mrs Teresa Keating, Public Health Development Officer (Policy), IPH; and
- Dr Joanna Purdy, Public Health Development Officer (Policy), IPH.

The session was recorded by Hansard

Adrian McQuillan joined the meeting at 10:09

Paul Girvan joined the meeting at 10:11

Judith Cochrane joined the meeting at 10:23

Peter Weir left the meeting at 10:29

Peter Weir rejoined the meeting at 10:31

Peter Weir left the meeting at 11:05

Adrian McQuillan left the meeting at 11:02

Peter Weir rejoined the meeting at 11:05

Mitchel McLaughlin left the meeting at 11:13

Dominic Bradley left the meeting at 11:16

Adrian McQuillan rejoined the meeting at 11:19

Paul Girvan left the meeting at 11:20

Agreed: that the IPH representatives would provide follow up information as agreed during the session.

Agreed: to seek an update from DFP on the implementation of the procurement guidance note in relation to food and catering services; and to forward the IPH briefing paper to DFP in advance of next week’s evidence from departmental officials on this subject.

5. Defamation Laws in Scotland and the Republic of Ireland – Assembly Research Briefing

The Committee received a briefing from Assembly Research on Defamation Laws in Scotland and the Republic of Ireland.

Paul Girvan rejoined the meeting at 11:21

Dominic Bradley rejoined the meeting at 11:29

Agreed: that the Researcher will undertake follow-up research to establish whether any other jurisdictions make provision in law for defamation of deceased persons.

6. Defamation Act 2013 – Evidence from Mike Gilson, Belfast Telegraph

The Committee received evidence on the case for Northern Ireland applying the provisions of the Defamation Act 2013 from the following witness:

- Mr Mike Gilson – Editor, Belfast Telegraph

The session was recorded by Hansard

Ian McCrea left the meeting at 11:55
Peter Weir left the meeting at 12:00
Peter Weir rejoined the meeting at 12:02
Judith Cochrane left the meeting at 12:12

John McCallister declared an interest as a regular contributor to the Debate NI website, which is undertaken in an unpaid capacity.

The Committee noted related correspondence on defamation law reform from Paul Tweed, Senior Partner, Johnsons Law Reform.

7. Outcome of Consultation on Defamation Laws in Northern Ireland – Evidence from Mike Nesbitt, MLA

The Committee received evidence on the Outcome of Consultation on Defamation Laws in NI from the following witness:

- Mr Mike Nesbitt - MLA

The session was recorded by Hansard

The Chairperson left the meeting and the Deputy Chairperson took the Chair at 12:26

John McCallister left the meeting at 12:26
Judith Cochrane left the meeting at 12:26
Paul Girvan left the meeting at 12:26
Paul Girvan rejoined the meeting at 12:28

Agreed: to write to the Northern Ireland Law Commission to request details on the terms of reference and timetable for its review into the case for reforming the defamation laws in Northern Ireland.

8. Subordinate Legislation

The Committee noted the following scheme amendment and proposal for a statutory rule in relation to public sector pensions:

- *Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (Amendment No. 2) Scheme (NI) 2014*
- *SL1 - The Pensions Increase (Review) Order (NI) 2014*

9. Correspondence

Members noted the following items of correspondence received:

- Ulster Bank: Employee concerns;
Agreed: to copy this response to both the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in advance of its session with Ulster Bank representatives on 10 April 2014, and to the original correspondent.
- DFP: UK Chancellor's 2014 March Budget – Northern Ireland Impact;
Agreed: to schedule an oral briefing from DFP on this matter.
- Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC): Public Procurement and Human Rights;
Agreed: to obtain a DFP response to the report before scheduling an oral briefing on this report from NIHRC.
- DFP: Monthly Outturn and Forecast, January 2014;
- Committee for Justice: Forced Marriage;
- Department for Regional Development (DRD): Response to Flexible Working Inquiry;
- Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL): Response to Flexible Working Inquiry;
- Department for Social Development (DSD): Response to Flexible Working Inquiry;
- Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD): Response to Flexible Working Inquiry;
- Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (CETI): NI Community Safety Training College at Desertcrete;
- CETI: DVA job losses;
- CARD: Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland;
Agreed: to forward this correspondence to the Carnegie Trust for a direct response to CARD.
- Assembly Research: Follow up briefing note on Financial Transactions Capital;
Agreed: to request a DFP response to the two issues raised in the briefing note.
- DFP: Monthly Outturn and Forecast, December 2013;
- DFP: Involvement with Barroso Task Force and Working Group;

- Committee for the Office of the First and deputy First Minister (COFMDFM): Barroso Task Force Inquiry Memo and Chairperson's Letter;
- COFMDFM: Barroso Task Force – Inquiry Terms of Reference and Plans;
- Committee for Finance and Personnel: Draft response to COFMDFM regarding Barroso Task Force Inquiry
Agreed: to issue the response to the COFMDFM as drafted.
Agreed: to seek further clarification from DFP on its role in relation to the compiling and monitoring of figures for the drawdown of EU competitive funding and on the potential scope for overlap of funding.
- DFP: Equal Pay Residual Issues;
- DFP: Response to Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure Inquiry into Inclusion in the Arts of Working Class Communities;
- DFP: Minute on the Direction of Accruing Resources;
- DFP: Procurement for provision of drug testing in the Northern Ireland Prison Service;
Agreed: to seek further clarification from DFP on the nature of the contract, including the advice that it was not a framework arrangement.
Agreed: to send the DFP response to the Committee for Justice and Randox Laboratories for information.
- National Asset Management Agency (NAMA): Response to Committee request for briefing;
Agreed: that a follow up letter is sent to NAMA to ask when it will be in a position to provide the Committee with an oral briefing and to request that, in the meantime, a written briefing is provided outlining the current assets held by NAMA in Northern Ireland; and
- COFMDFM: Invitation to the European Economic & Social Committee Presidency event on 3 April 2014.

10. Committee Work Programme

Members considered a draft of the Committee work programme.

Agreed: that, due to the elections on 22 May 2014, there will be no Committee meeting held on 21 May 2014, and that the Committee work programme will be updated to reflect decisions taken today and published on the Committee's website.

11. Any other business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday 02 April 2014 at 10:30 am, Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:44pm

**Mr Dominic Bradley MLA
Deputy Chairperson
Committee for Finance and Personnel
02 April 2014**