

## **COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**WEDNESDAY, 07 MAY 2014  
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Daithí 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)  
Mr Phil Pateman (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Joe Westland (Clerical Supervisor)  
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: None

*The meeting commenced at 10:03 in public session. The Deputy Chairperson took the Chair as the Chairperson would be briefing the Committee at agenda item 4 in his capacity as Sponsor of the proposed Private Members' Bill to Make Amateur Sports Clubs Exempt from Rates.*

*Agreed:* that agenda item 4 is 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 30 April 2014**

*Agreed:* that the minutes are published on the Assembly website.

*Mitchel McLaughlin joined the meeting at 10:05*

## **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. Private Members' Bill – A Bill to Make Amateur Sports Clubs Exempt from Rates**

The Deputy Chairperson briefed the Committee on the procedural advice received in respect of the handling of the proposed Private Members' Bill, which took account of the circumstances in which the Bill Sponsor was also the Committee Chairperson.

The Committee received an initial briefing on the proposed Private Members' Bill from the following witnesses:

- Mr Daithí McKay MLA, Bill Sponsor;
- Ms Katie Nixon, Executive Manager, Northern Ireland Sports Forum;
- Ms Patrice Hardy, Party Support, Sinn Féin; and
- Mr Ken Armstrong, Manager of Belfast Indoor Bowling Club.

The session was recorded by Hansard.

*Daithí McKay declared an interest as both Chairperson of the Committee for Finance and Personnel and sponsor of the proposed Private Members' Bill.*

*Ian McCrea joined the meeting at 10:12*

*Judith Cochrane joined the meeting at 10:30*

*Paul Girvan joined the meeting at 10:31*

*Peter Weir left the meeting at 10:33*

*Peter Weir re-joined the meeting at 10:40*

*Adrian McQuillan left the meeting at 10:47*

*John McCallister joined the meeting at 10:50*

*Agreed:* to commission an Assembly Research paper to follow up on various issues discussed during the session.

*Agreed:* to seek initial views on the proposals from applicable departments and public bodies, including DFP, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), the Department of Education (DE), the Department for Social Development (DSD), the

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA).

*Daithí McKay took the Chair at 10:55*

## **5. Legislative Consent Motion on Changes in Air Passenger Duty Bands in UK Finance Bill 2014 – Initial Consideration of Draft Committee Report**

Members considered an initial draft Committee Report on the Legislative Consent Motion on Changes in Air Passenger Duty Bands in UK Finance Bill 2014. The Committee noted that the draft report would require final consideration at next week's meeting.

*John McCallister left the meeting at 10:58*

## **6. Impact on Northern Ireland of UK Budget 2014 – Briefing from DFP**

The Committee received a briefing on the Impact on Northern Ireland of the UK Budget 2014 from the following DFP officials:

- Peter Jakobsen, Central Expenditure Division (CED), DFP;
- Jeff McGuinness, CED, DFP; and
- Tony Simpson, Strategic Policy Division (SPD), Central Finance Group (CFG), DFP.

*Peter Weir left the meeting at 11:00*

*Peter Weir re-joined the meeting at 11:02*

*Paul Girvan left the meeting at 11:02*

*Paul Girvan re-joined the meeting at 11:03*

*Agreed:* to write to DFP seeking further detail on the local implications of the support package for SMEs which was announced in the Chancellor's Budget Statement.

## **7. Preventative Expenditure - Briefing by Assembly Research**

The Committee received a briefing from Assembly Research on Preventative Expenditure.

*Ian McCrea left the meeting at 11:16*

*Judith Cochrane left the meeting at 11:20*

*Adrian McQuillan joined the meeting at 11:22*

*Peter Weir left the meeting at 11:25*

*Dominic Bradley left the meeting at 11:30*

*Dominic Bradley re-joined the meeting at 11:33*

*Adrian McQuillan left the meeting at 11:34*

*Peter Weir re-joined the meeting at 11:35*

*Agreed:* to consider the scope for an inquiry into developing a preventative spending approach that would be tailored to suit the governmental arrangements in Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* to seek a response to the research paper from DFP.

## **8. European Investment Bank – Potential Financial Assistance Opportunities for Northern Ireland**

The Committee received a briefing from Assembly Research on the European Investment Bank.

*Paul Girvan left the meeting at 11:39*

*Michaela Boyle left the meeting at 11:40*

*Michaela Boyle re-joined the meeting at 11:45*

*Paul Girvan re-joined the meeting at 11:45*

*Agreed:* that the Researcher will undertake follow up research on issues discussed during the briefing.

*Agreed:* to seek a response to the research paper from DFP and the Strategic Investment Board (SIB).

## **9. Rate Rebate Replacement Arrangements – Consideration of Proposed Options**

Members considered DFP's proposed options for interim rate rebate arrangements. The following DFP official attended in an advisory capacity:

- Roisin McRory, Rating Policy Division, DFP.

*Agreed:* that the Committee sees merit in applying one of the versions of Model 8 for the treatment of Universal Credit in assessing rate rebate (though it would not discount Model 7 at this stage), subject to Executive and Assembly agreement on the associated Welfare Reform.

The Committee recognises that a decision on Welfare Reform will also facilitate decisions on which of the existing rate relief schemes should be retained, removed or adjusted to help defray the cost to the Executive of the interim rate rebate arrangements.

*Agreed:* that, as part of the decisions on interim rate rebate arrangements, consideration should also be given to establishing transitional protection or a 'hardship fund' for those adversely affected by the changes.

## **10. Correspondence**

*Peter Weir declared an interest as a non-practising barrister and member of the Bar Library and withdrew from the Committee's consideration of the correspondence received in respect of the Bar Council.*

*Peter Weir left the meeting at 12:02*

*Ian McCrea re-joined the meeting 12:05*

- DFP: Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) People Strategy 2013 – 2016: Annual People Plan;

- DFP: Monthly Forecast Outturn March 2013-2014;
- DOJ: Procurement of Drug Testing in the Northern Ireland Prison Service;  
*Agreed:* to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Justice and to Randox Laboratories for information.

- DFP: Strategic Review of Rate Collection and Recovery;

*Agreed:* to write to DFP to seek detail on the actions arising from of the project plan and to request regular updates on the progress of implementation.

- DFP: Provisions of Departmental papers;

*Agreed:* to defer consideration of this issue until receipt of the outstanding report on DFP's performance in this regard.

- DFP: Memo on the 18th Report for the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Mandate 2011 - 2015;
- DFP: Letter and amended Assembly Research paper on Financial Transactions Capital;
- DFP: Air Connectivity Response and Air Passenger Duty Bands;
- Anonymous letter from group of Barristers;

*Agreed:* that, in the first instance, the Committee will seek a written response from the Bar Council to establish what safeguards, including applicable policies and procedures, exist to prevent such circumstances arising and what independent processes exist to investigate such allegations. It was also agreed to forward all the correspondence to DFP for consideration and advice.

- DFP: Post Project Evaluations (PPEs) Quarter Ending 31 March 2014;

*Agreed:* to forward the correspondence for information to each of the other statutory committees and to the Public Accounts Committee.

*Agreed:* to seek further detail from DFP on the PPE that is outstanding within the Department.

- DFP: The Public Service Pensions (2014 Act) (Commencement No.1) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014;

*Mitchel McLaughlin left the meeting at 12:10*

## **11. Committee Work Programme**

Members considered a draft of the Committee work programme.

*Agreed:* that the Committee work programme will be updated to reflect decisions taken today and published on the Committee's website

## **12. Any other business**

There was no other business.

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

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday 14 May 2014 at 10:00 am, Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:12*

**Mr Daithí McKay MLA**  
**Chairperson**  
**Committee for Finance and Personnel**  
**14 May 2014**