

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 04 JUNE 2014
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Dominic Bradley (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Michaela Boyle MLA
Mrs Judith Cochrane MLA
Mr Leslie Cree MBE, MLA
Mr Paul Girvan MLA
Mr Adrian McQuillan MLA
Mr John McCallister MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA
Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA
Mr Peter Weir MLA

In Attendance: Mr Shane McAteer (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Phil Pateman (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Sean McCann (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Joe Westland (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Daithí McKay (Chairperson)

The meeting commenced at 10:10 in public session.

Agreed: that agenda item 6 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 28 May 2014

Agreed: that the minutes are published on the Assembly website, subject to a minor amendment.

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. Draft Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill – Briefing by Assembly Research

The Committee received a briefing from Assembly Research on the Draft Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill.

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

Paul Girvan joined the meeting at 10:15

Ian McCrea joined the meeting at 10:20

Adrian McQuillan left the meeting at 10:20

Adrian McQuillan re-joined the meeting at 10:22

Peter Weir left the meeting at 10:22

John McCallister joined the meeting at 10:26

Peter Weir re-joined the meeting at 10:30

5. Draft Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill – Correspondence relating to the Bar of Northern Ireland

Peter Weir declared an interest as a non-practising barrister and member of the Bar Library.

The Committee considered written responses from DFP and the Bar Council relating to an anonymous letter received previously concerning the Bar of Northern Ireland.

Agreed: to seek clarification from DFP in terms of its assessment of how the Bill will provide for an enhanced oversight role in relation to such internal conduct and disciplinary issues pertaining to the Bar of Northern Ireland.

Agreed: to write to the Bar Council to establish a timetable for the ongoing external review of the professional practices of the Bar of Northern Ireland and to request an oral briefing on the review findings and recommendations.

Agreed: to commission research comparing arrangements in other jurisdictions for dealing with internal conduct and disciplinary issues within the Bar and other applicable bodies, including the level of oversight and independence which applies.

Peter Weir left the meeting at 10:40

6. Draft Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill – Briefing from the Lay Observer for Northern Ireland

The Committee received a briefing on the Draft Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill from the following witness:

- Alasdair MacLaughlin, Lay Observer for Northern Ireland

The session was recorded by Hansard.

Agreed: to schedule further evidence from the Lay Observer for Northern Ireland as required at a later stage in the Committee's scrutiny of the Bill.

Peter Weir re-joined the meeting at 10:49

Judith Cochrane joined the meeting at 11:00

Paul Girvan left the meeting at 11:02

Peter Weir left the meeting at 11:03

Paul Girvan re-joined the meeting at 11:04

Peter Weir re-joined the meeting at 11:12

Peter Weir left the meeting at 11:25

Peter Weir re-joined the meeting at 11:30

7. Civil Law Reform Division – Briefing from DFP

The Committee received a briefing on DFP's Civil Law Division from the following departmental officials:

- Oswyn Paulin, Head of Legal Services, DFP; and
- Laura McPolin, Departmental Solicitors Office, Civil Law Reform, DFP.

Michaela Boyle left the meeting at 11:41

Ian McCrea left the meeting at 11:45

Michaela Boyle re-joined the meeting at 11:48

Ian McCrea re-joined the meeting at 11:55

John McCallister left the meeting at 11:55

8. Correspondence

Members noted the following correspondence:

- Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (COFMDFM): Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) Budget Cuts

Agreed: to respond to COFMDFM highlighting the support afforded by NIHRC in the course of the Committee for Finance and Personnel's work and to suggest that COFMDFM considers further highlighting its concerns to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee given that the Northern Ireland Office is the sponsoring department in this instance.

- DFP: UK Budget and Small to Medium Enterprises;
- DFP: Outstanding Post Project Evaluations;
- DFP: European Investment Bank (EIB)

Agreed: that the Committee will further examine DFP's assertion that Northern Ireland departments cannot access EIB funding directly as this would score as Government borrowing, resulting in a reduction in the Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit budget by HM Treasury.

Agreed: to commission follow up research on this issue, including the identification of potential expert witnesses in this regard.

- Department of Justice: Flexible Working Inquiry Response;
- DFP: Private Members' Bill to Make Amateur Sports Clubs Exempt from Rates;
- DFP: follow-up response on the Land Registry Fees Order;
- Committee for Justice: Legal problems experienced by a member of the public; and
- Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment: Green Investment Bank – Energy Efficiency Workshop.

9. 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 is published on the Committee's website.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday, 11 June 2014 at 10:00am, Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:02

Mr Daithí McKay MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance and Personnel
11 June 2014