

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 03 DECEMBER 2014
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

- Present: Mr Daithí McKay MLA (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 Adrian McQuillan MLA
Mr Máirtín Ó Muilleoir 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 Jonathan Kerr (Clerical Officer)
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies: Mr Dominic Bradley MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

The meeting commenced at 10:10 am in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 26 November 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.

Draft Budget 2015-16

Members noted correspondence from the Minister of Finance and Personnel in which he had not agreed to the Committee's request for an extension to the deadline for its co-ordinated report on the Draft Budget 2015-16 and stated that it is his intention to have a final Draft Budget document for consideration by the Executive at its meeting on 8 January 2015.

Legislative Consent Motions (LCMs) on the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill (Public Sector Exit Payments) and the Pensions Schemes Bill - Public Service Defined Benefit Schemes

Agreed: that an additional Committee meeting will be scheduled for Wednesday 17 December 2014 to agree reports on the above LCMs.

Informal meeting with the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform

Agreed: that given the need to schedule an additional Committee meeting on 17 December 2014, the proposed informal meeting with the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform is rescheduled for early in the New Year.

4. Draft Budget 2015-16: Impact on the Local Economy – Written Briefing from the Northern Ireland Centre for Economic Policy

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (formerly the Northern Ireland Centre for Economic Policy) on the Draft Budget 2015-16. Members also noted that this submission along with those from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Irish Congress of Trade Unions – NI Committee (NICICTU) and Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) will be reflected in the coordinated report on the Draft Budget 2015-16.

5. Non-domestic Revaluation – Update Briefing from DFP

The Committee received an update briefing on Non-domestic Revaluation from the following departmental officials:

- Brian McClure, Head of Rating Policy Division, Central Finance Group, DFP
- Alan Bronte, Director of Mapping and Valuation Services, Land & Property Services

John McCallister joined the meeting at 10:14am

Ian McCrea joined the meeting at 10:25am

Judith Cochrane joined the meeting at 10:29am

Adrian McQuillan left the meeting at 10:46am

Adrian McQuillan rejoined the meeting at 10:48am

Agreed: that the departmental officials will provide follow-up information as discussed during the session.

6. Managing Convergence of District Rates – Briefing from DFP

The Committee received a briefing on Managing Convergence of District Rates from the following departmental officials:

- Brian McClure, Head of Rating Policy Division, Central Finance Group, DFP
- Samuel Connolly, Rating Policy Division, DFP
- Andrew McAvoy, Rating Policy Division, DFP

John McCallister left the meeting at 11:00am

Judith Cochrane left the meeting at 11:04am

John McCallister rejoined the meeting at 11:02am

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir left the meeting at 11:05am

7. Rate Rebate Replacement Arrangements – Briefing from DFP

The Committee received a briefing on Rate Rebate Replacement Arrangements from the following departmental officials:

- Brian McClure, Head of Rating Policy Division, Central Finance Group, DFP
- Andrew McAvoy, Rating Policy Division, DFP
- Roisin McRory, Rating Policy Division, DFP

Paul Girvan left the meeting at 11:10 am

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir rejoined the meeting at 11:11 am

Judith Cochrane rejoined the meeting at 11:11 am

Paul Girvan rejoined the meeting at 11:16 am

8. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): Review of Public Governance – Briefing from DFP

The Committee received a briefing on the Review of Public Governance from the following departmental officials:

- Dr Bernie Stuart, Head of Public Sector Reform Division, DFP
- Rachel McAfee, Principal Economist, Public Sector Reform Division, DFP

Agreed: that the departmental officials will draw the OECD Review Team's attention to the Committee's recent report on the Inquiry into Flexible Working in the Public Sector in Northern Ireland given the relevance to various themes in the Review terms of reference. In addition, the departmental officials will consider how Assembly committees will be consulted during the review process.

Adrian McQuillan left the meeting at 11:29 am

9. Public Sector Innovation Labs - Briefing from DFP

The Committee received a briefing on Public Sector Innovation Labs from the following departmental officials:

- Dr Bernie Stuart, Head of Public Sector Reform Division, DFP
- Malcolm Beattie, Head of Innovation Branch, Public Sector Reform Division, DFP

Ian McCrea left the meeting at 12:05 pm

Michaela Boyle left the meeting at 12:23 pm

Peter Weir joined the meeting at 12:24 pm

Agreed: that consideration will be given to the Committee observing one of the Innovation Labs in progress.

10. Subordinate Legislation

The Committee considered the following pieces of subordinate legislation:

SL1 - The Civil Partnership (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under The Civil Partnership (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2014 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

SL1 - The Marriage (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under The Marriage (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2014 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

11. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

- DFP – Savings Delivery Plan 2011-15: Update to End September 2014;
- DFP – Westminster Pension Schemes Bill – LCM;
- DFP – Air Connectivity Update, November 2014;

- Department of Agriculture and Rural Development – Response to Northern Ireland Audit Report on Sickness Absence in Public Sector;
- CBI – Response to Committee on Draft Budget 2015-16;
- FSB – Response to Committee on Draft Budget 2015-16;
- Consumer Council – Business Plan 2015-16 consultation paper
- Breezemount Manor – Issues with Ulster Bank;
- DFP – Update on the devolution of Corporation Tax and update on the devolution of further fiscal powers;

Agreed: to write to DFP to request sight of the findings of the Department's work on further fiscal powers in order to enable the Committee to offer advice to the Minister before the Executive makes any decisions in this regard.

- NICICTU and NICVA – Responses to the Committee on Draft Budget 2015-16.

12. 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.

13. Any other business

There was no other business.

14. Date, Time and place of Next Meeting

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

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:29 pm.

Mr Daithí McKay MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance and Personnel
10 December 2014