

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2014
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Daithí McKay MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Dominic Bradley MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Michaela Boyle MLA
Mr Leslie Cree MBE, MLA
Mr Paul Girvan MLA
Mr John McCallister 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 Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mrs Judith Cochrane MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA

The meeting commenced at 10:08 am in public session.

Agreed: that agenda items 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 are covered by Hansard and the Official Report is published on the Assembly's website.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 12 November 2014

Agreed: that the minutes as amended 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.

The Committee moved into closed session at 10.09 am

4. Budget Scrutiny Preparation Workshop

The Committee participated in a workshop on budget scrutiny, which was facilitated by Assembly Research.

Paul Girvan joined the meeting at 10:12am

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir joined the meeting at 10:13am

Peter Weir joined the meeting at 10:30am

Adrian McQuillan left the meeting at 10:50am

Agreed: to forward the Assembly Research Paper ‘Draft Budget 2015-16: DFP’ to the Department for urgent response to the issues raised.

The Committee returned to open session at 11:10 am

5. Draft Budget 2015-16: Departmental Spending Plan – Briefing from DFP

The Committee noted that the Department had indicated at short notice that this scheduled evidence session on the Departmental Spending Plan could not proceed as the accompanying briefing paper had not been finalised.

In line with a previous Committee decision, members sought an explanation for the postponement of the session at such short notice from the following senior departmental official, in persons:

- Brigitte Worth, Finance Director, DFP.

Agreed: that the evidence session will be rescheduled for the next Committee meeting.

Agreed: that the following Committee motion for a ‘take note’ debate on the Draft Budget 2015-16 will be sent to the Business Committee for scheduling during week commencing 8 December 2014:

“That this Assembly takes note of the Draft Budget 2015-16 announced on Monday, 3 November 2014 by the Minister of Finance and Personnel”

*Adrian McQuillan rejoined the meeting at 11:11am
Dominic Bradley left the meeting at 11:12am
Dominic Bradley rejoined the meeting at 11:13am
Peter Weir left the meeting at 11:26 am*

This session was recorded by Hansard

6. Preventative Spending and “Invest to Save” Measures – DFP Briefing

The Committee received a briefing on Preventative Spending and “Invest to Save” Measures from the following departmental officials:

- Dr Bernie Stuart, Head of Public Sector Reform Division, DFP; and
- Peter Jakobsen, Central Expenditure Division, DFP.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

*Leslie Cree joined the meeting at 11:35am
Peter Weir rejoined the meeting at 11:42am
Daithí McKay left the meeting at 11:47am*

Dominic Bradley took the Chair at 11:47am for the duration of the meeting.

7. Draft Budget 2015-16 – Public Service Pension Provisions – Briefing from DFP

The Committee received a briefing on the Draft Budget 2015-16 – Public Service Pension Provision from the following departmental officials:

- Grace Nesbitt, Head of Pensions Division, Corporate Human Resources (CHR), DFP; and
- Blathnaid Smyth, Policy & Legislation, Civil Service Pensions, CHR, DFP.

Mr Bradley declared an interest as a member of the Northern Ireland Teachers’ Pension Scheme.

Agreed: that the Department will provide the details of both the employer and employee contribution rates for each of the public sector pension schemes.

This session was recorded by Hansard.

8. Legislative Consent Motion: Powers to prevent transfers out of unfunded Public service defined benefit pension schemes to defined contribution pension schemes – Briefing from DFP

The Committee received a briefing on the above proposed Legislative Consent Motion from the following departmental officials:

- Grace Nesbitt, Head of Pensions Division, CHR, DFP; and
- Blathnaid Smyth, Policy & Legislation, Civil Service Pensions, CHR, DFP.

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir left the meeting at 12:25pm

John McCallister left the meeting at 12:25pm

This session was recorded by Hansard

9. Legislative Consent Motion – Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill – Recovery of Public Sector Redundancy Pay

The Committee received a briefing on the above proposed Legislative Consent Motion from the following departmental officials:

- Grace Nesbitt, Head of Pensions Division, CHR, DFP; and
- Blathnaid Smyth, Policy & Legislation, Civil Service Pensions, CHR, DFP.

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir rejoined the meeting at 12:30pm

John McCallister rejoined the meeting at 12:30pm

Michaela Boyle left the meeting at 12:32pm

This session was recorded by Hansard

Agreed: to write to the applicable trade union representatives for views on the proposed Legislative Consent Motion.

10. Subordinate Legislation in relation to Public Service Pension Schemes

The Committee considered the following two pieces of correspondence relating to Public Service Pension Schemes:

SLI-The Public Service (Civil Servants and Others) Pensions Regulations (NI) 2014

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

Transitional and consequential provisions to be made under the Public Service Pensions (NI) Act 2014

Paul Girvan left the meeting at 12:45 pm

11. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following pieces of correspondence:

- Minister of Finance and Personnel: Transposition of EU Procurement Directives;
- DFP: Monthly Forecast Outturn Data – July 2014 (& August Analysis);
- DFP: Strategic Policy Division – Performance against Business Plan targets;
- DFP: Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill – Response to Assembly Research paper;
- DFP: Non-Domestic Rates Revaluation 2015;
- DFP: Public Governance Review – Northern Ireland: Improving Public Services;
- Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister: Sickness absence in the Northern Ireland Civil Service;
- Invitation from the Dáil Éireann Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform;

Agreed: that the Committee content, in principle, to accept the invitation to an informal meeting to discuss matters of mutual interest and to share knowledge and experience. The Secretariat will follow up by contacting members individually regarding availability and to establish the feasibility of a visit to Leinster House on the date proposed.

12. Committee Work Programme

Agreed: that the following items will be added to the Committee work programme:

- Non-Domestic Rates Revaluation update briefing on 10 December 2014;
- A Ministerial briefing on the Draft Budget 2015-16 on 26 November 2014; and
- Additional research briefings on various strategic budget issues to inform members ahead of the Ministerial briefing on 26 November 2014.

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.

Paul Girvan rejoined the meeting at 12:53 pm

14. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday, 26 November 2014 at 10:00 am, Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:54 pm.

Mr Dominic Bradley MLA
Deputy Chairperson
Committee for Finance and Personnel
26 November 2014