

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

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

Present: Mr Dominic Bradley MLA (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 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 Christopher Jeffrey (Clerical Officer)
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Daithí McKay MLA (Chairperson)

The meeting commenced at 10:05am in public session.

Agreed: that agenda items 7 and 8 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 19 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.

Late provision of Papers from DFP

Members reviewed this issue in light of the continuing difficulties being experienced due to the late delivery of papers and postponement of oral briefings at short notice from the Department. It was noted the figures in DFP's report on its performance in 2013-14 in meeting the timescales for the provision of briefings and responses did not reconcile with the records held by the Committee.

Agreed: that DFP officials and Committee staff ensure that performance statistics are reviewed on an ongoing basis to remove the risk of the statistics being disputed in future.

Agreed: to write to DFP requesting three performance reports per annum to commence in January 2015

'Take Note' Debate on Draft Budget 2015-16

Members considered communication from the Assembly Business Committee which had noted that the Finance Minister is not available to respond to the 'take note' debate on the Draft Budget 2015-16 on the proposed date of 8 December 2014. This date had been proposed based on the Committee's recognition of the importance of the Assembly being afforded the opportunity to debate the Draft Budget before it is agreed by the Executive and at a point when committees have been briefed by their departments.

Agreed: to defer consideration of the date for the 'take note' debate on the Draft Budget 2015-16 until later in the meeting, when members have had the opportunity to discuss the issue with the Minister (Agenda Item 7).

John McCallister joined the meeting at 10:08am

Michaela Boyle left the meeting at 10:10am

4. Draft Budget 2015/16: Assembly Research Briefing

The Committee received a briefing on the Draft Budget 2015-16 from Assembly Research.

Agreed: The researchers agreed to provide follow up information on the issues discussed during the briefing.

Adrian McQuillan joined the meeting at 10:13am

Michaela Boyle rejoined the meeting at 10:14am

Paul Girvan joined the meeting at 10:15am

Paul Girvan left meeting at 10:26am

Peter Weir left the meeting at 10:30am

Peter Weir rejoined the meeting at 10:31am

Ian McCrea joined the meeting at 10:34am

Paul Girvan rejoined the meeting at 10:37am

The Committee agreed to consider the following agenda items next; Correspondence and Committee Work Programme.

5. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

- DFP: Legislative Consent Motion: Powers to prevent transfers out of unfunded public service defined benefit pension schemes to defined contribution pension schemes;
- DFP: District Rates Convergence;
- DFP: Renewable Energy in Public Sector Buildings;
- DFP: Options for the rating of online retailers;

Agreed: agreed to commission comparative research to establish how online retailers are subject to business rates in jurisdictions outside the UK.

- DFP: Commencement Orders – Financial Provisions/Rates Amendment;
- DFP: October monitoring Round;
- DFP: Business Plan Targets;
- Member of the Public – PSNI Equal Pay;

Agreed: to respond to the correspondent explaining that the Committee has not been included in the correspondence referred to and is not in a position to comment on the specific issues raised.

- Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) and Financial Conduct Authority Press Releases;
- Payments Council - Expansion of the mobile payments service;

Agreed: to request a written briefing on this issue in the first instance.

- EU Matters – November Newsletter;
- Chief Officers 3rd Sector – Invitation for February 2015;

Agreed: that members would consider the invitation and respond on an individual basis.

- Press Release from Consumer Council – Ulster Bank closure of 10 branches.

Peter Weir left the meeting at 10:50am

6. 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

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir left the meeting at 10:54am

Adrian McQuillan left the meeting at 10:55am

Peter Weir rejoined the meeting at 10:55am

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir rejoined the meeting at 10:56am

7. Draft Budget 2015-16: Ministerial Briefing

The Committee received a briefing on the Draft Budget 2015-16 from the following witnesses:

- Mr Simon Hamilton MLA, Minister of Finance and Personnel
- Mr Mike Brennan, Budget Director, DFP

This session was recorded by Hansard

Adrian McQuillan rejoined the meeting at 11:06am

Peter Weir left the meeting at 11:40am

Peter Weir rejoined the meeting at 11:41am

Agreed: that the Department will provide follow up information on issues discussed during the session.

Agreed: that, on the basis of the Minister's advice, the Committee will ask the Assembly Business Committee to reschedule the Committee's 'take note' debate on the Draft Budget 2015-16 to 12 January 2015 and that the time allocation for the debate be extended beyond the three hours indicated. This agreement was reached based on the Committee's understanding that proposals on the final budget allocations for 2015-16 will not have been put to the Executive by that date.

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

The Committee received a briefing on the Draft Budget 2015-16: Departmental Spending Plan from the following departmental officials:

- Brigitte Worth, Finance Director, DFP

- Preeta Miller, Finance Division, DFP

This session was recorded by Hansard.

Agreed: that the departmental officials will provide follow up information on issues discussed during the session.

Agreed: that the departmental officials will provide a copy of the finalised Departmental Spending Plan and a written response to the two, previously provided, Research papers as soon as possible.

Ian McCrea left the meeting at 12:40pm

Judith Cochrane left the meeting at 12:42pm

Peter Weir left the meeting at 12:43pm

Peter Weir rejoined the meeting at 12:46pm

Michaela Boyle left the meeting at 12:50pm

Adrian McQuillan left the meeting at 12:51pm

John McCallister left the meeting at 12:54pm

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir left the meeting at 12:54pm

9. Any other business

There was no other business

10. Date, Time and place of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday, 03 December 2014 at 10:00 am, Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:55pm

Mr Daithí McKay MLA

Chairperson

Committee for Finance and Personnel

03 December 2014