

## **COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**WEDNESDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2014  
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Daithí McKay MLA (Chairperson)  
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

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: Mr Peter Weir MLA

*The meeting commenced at 10:09 am in public session.*

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies are detailed above.

#### **2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 03 December 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.

#### Visit to the Oireachtas

The Committee noted a proposed agenda from the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform with regard to the proposed Committee visit and informal meeting in the New Year.

*Agreed:* that members will advise the Committee staff of any suggested additions or amendments to the agenda which will be agreed in advance of rescheduling a date for the visit.

*The Committee moved into closed session at 10:10am in line with normal convention for considering draft committee reports.*

### **4. Draft Budget 2015-16 – Initial Consideration of Draft Committee Report (Closed Session)**

The Clerk spoke to the working draft of the Committee's Report on the Draft Budget 2015-16.

*Agreed:* that members will forward any further comments to the Clerk by 12 Noon on Friday 12 December 2014, which will be reflected in the final draft Report to be considered and agreed on Wednesday 17 December 2014.

*Máirtín Ó Muilleoir joined the meeting at 10:13am*

*Judith Cochrane joined the meeting at 10:13am*

*John McCallister joined the meeting at 10:17am*

*Dominic Bradley left the meeting at 10:35am*

*Ian McCrea left the meeting at 10:40am*

*John McCallister left the meeting at 10:40am*

*Agreed:* that the Committee pack for next week's meeting is issued on Monday 15 December in order to provide time to reflect any follow up comments from members in the final draft of the Report.

*The Committee returned to open session at 10:42 am*

### **5. Devolution of Corporate Tax powers – Update Briefing from DFP**

The Committee received an update briefing on the Devolution of Corporate Tax powers from the following departmental officials:

- Mr Tony Simpson, Strategic Policy Division, CFG, DFP; and
- Mr William Dickson, Strategic Policy Division, DFP.

*Agreed:* to copy the Department's briefing paper to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment for information given the cross-cutting interest.

*The session was recorded by Hansard.*

*Michaela Boyle joined the meeting at 10:53am*

*Paul Girvan left the meeting at 10:59am*

*Paul Girvan rejoined the meeting at 11:00am*

*Máirtín Ó Muilleoir left the meeting at 11:08am*

*Adrian McQuillan left the meeting at 11:10am*

## **6. Building a Prosperous and United Community: Devolution of other Fiscal Powers suitable for Devolution – Update Briefing from DFP**

The Committee received a briefing on 'Building a Prosperous and United Community: Devolution of other Fiscal Powers suitable for Devolution' from the following departmental officials:

- Mr Tony Simpson, Strategic Policy Division, CFG, DFP; and
- Mr William Dickson, Strategic Policy Division, DFP.

*Agreed:* that the departmental officials will advise the Minister to consult the Committee on the up-to-date detail of the findings from the Department's work on this subject before it goes to the Executive for a decision.

*Agreed:* that DFP will consider the implications for the cost of devolving Air Passenger Duty arising from the related announcement in the Chancellor's 2014 Autumn Statement and will return to the Committee in due course.

*The session was recorded by Hansard*

*Judith Cochrane left the meeting at 11:19am*

*Daithí McKay left the meeting at 11:20am.*

*Dominic Bradley took the Chair at 11:20am for the duration of the meeting*

## **7. Policy Evaluation of Small Business Rate Relief scheme – Briefing from DFP and the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre**

The Committee received a briefing on the Policy Evaluation of the Small Business Rate Relief scheme from the following representatives:

- Brian McClure, Head of Rating Policy Division, Central Finance Group, DFP; and
- Richard Johnston, Associate Director, Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) – formerly the Northern Ireland Centre for Economic Policy (NICEP).

*Agreed:* that the Committee is content with the £20m provision in the Draft Budget 2015-16 for the continuation of the Small Business Rate Relief scheme and will wish to contribute its views on how the scheme should be designed for subsequent years.

*Máirtín Ó Muilleoir rejoined the meeting at 11:25am*

*Adrian McQuillan rejoined the meeting at 11:25am*

*Judith Cochrane rejoined the meeting at 11:29am*

*Judith Cochrane left the meeting at 12:00pm*

*Máirtín Ó Muilleoir left the meeting at 12:00pm*

## **8. Developer Rating Exemption – DFP Briefing**

The Committee received a briefing on the Rating of Empty Homes: Developer Rating Exemption from the following departmental official:

- Brian McClure, Head of Rating Policy Division, Central Finance Group, DFP.

*Agreed:* that the Department will provide follow up information as discussed during the session, which will enable the Committee to advise the Department of its position on the proposal.

*Máirtín Ó Muilleoir rejoined the meeting at 12:10pm*

*Adrian McQuillan left the meeting at 12:10pm*

*Adrian McQuillan rejoined the meeting at 12:11pm*

*Paul Girvan left the meeting at 12:17pm*

*Adrian McQuillan left the meeting at 12:17pm.*

## **9. January 2015 Monitoring Round: Departmental Position – Briefing from DFP**

The Committee received a briefing on the January 2015 Monitoring Round: Departmental Position, from the following departmental officials:

- Brigitte Worth, Finance Director, DFP; and
- Preeti Miller, Finance Division, DFP

*The session was recorded by Hansard.*

*Paul Girvan rejoined the meeting at 12:20pm*

*Máirtín Ó Muilleoir left the meeting at 12:20pm*

*Adrian McQuillan rejoined the meeting at 12:25pm*

## 10. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

- DFP – UK 2014 Autumn Statement;
- DFP – Response to Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action Report on 'A Land Value Tax for NI';
- DFP – Reform of Property Management;
- DFP – Rating of Commercial Window Displays;  
*Agreed:* to schedule an oral briefing on this issue upon conclusion of the consultation.
  
- DFP – Post Project Evaluations Report, Quarter Ending 30 Sept 2014;  
*Agreed:* to forward to the Public Accounts Committee and other statutory committees for information.
  
- DFP – New Civil Service Pension Board Governance Arrangements;
- DFP – Monitoring Round: bids made by DFP business areas in recent years;
- DFP – Consultation on proposed changes to defined benefit contribution arrangements;  
*Agreed:* to provisionally schedule an oral briefing upon the conclusion of the consultation.
  
- DFP – Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014;
- Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment – Legislative Consent Motion: UK Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill;
- Committee for Enterprise Trade and Investment – Northern Ireland Economic Strategy;
- Northern Ireland Assembly Research – Preventative Expenditure: further information on Invest to Save;  
*Agreed:* to forward the research paper to DFP for a response to each of the issues raised.
  
- Northern Ireland Law Commission – Consultation Paper: Defamation Law in Northern Ireland;  
*Agreed:* to schedule a briefing on the consultation at an appropriate time.
  
- EU Newsletter December 2014;
- Copy of First Division Association's (FDA) response to HM Treasury Consultation on the Small Business, Enterprise, and Employment Bill (Public Sector Exit Payments);  
*Agreed:* to send the FDA response to DFP for comment and to publish it on the Committee webpages as part of the Committee's report on the associated Legislative Consent Motion.

## 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

Adrian McQuillan notified the Committee that he will not be attending the meeting next week.

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

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday, 17 December 2014 at 10:00 am, Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:36pm.*

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