

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 14 JANUARY 2015
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Dominic Bradley MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs Judith Cochrane MLA
Mr Leslie Cree MBE, MLA
Mr Paul Girvan MLA
Mr John McCallister 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)
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Daithí McKay MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Adrian McQuillan MLA

The meeting commenced at 10:16am in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 17 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.

4. Performance Against Business Plan Targets – Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) – Briefing from DFP

The Committee received a briefing on NISRA's Performance against Business Plan Targets in 2014-15 from the following departmental officials:

- Dr Norman Caven, Registrar General and Chief Executive of NISRA; and
- Dr Tracy Power, Director of Analysis, NISRA; and
- Dr David Marshall, Director of Sources, NISRA.

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

John McCallister joined the meeting at 10:20am

Judith Cochrane joined the meeting at 10:36am

Peter Weir left the meeting at 10:58am

Peter Weir re-joined the meeting at 11:00am

Paul Girvan left the meeting at 11:25am

Paul Girvan re-joined the meeting at 11:29am

5. From Fixed to Flexible Working: A Proposal for Public Sector Bodies – Briefing from Omagh Enterprise Company Ltd

The Committee received a briefing on a proposal for flexible working facilities for public sector bodies from the following representatives:

- Dr Nicholas O'Shiel, Chief Executive, Omagh Enterprise Company; and
- Alan Mitchell, Data Analyst for the Smart Region, Invest NI.

Agreed: to forward the Omagh Enterprise paper to DFP for a written response to the general concept of the Northern Ireland Civil Service availing of such flexible location working facilities and on the specific proposal for a pilot project to be undertaken in this regard.

Judith Cochrane left the meeting at 11:30am

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir left the meeting at 11:30am

Judith Cochrane re-joined the meeting at 11:31am

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir re-joined the meeting at 11:31am

Judith Cochrane left the meeting at 11:31am

Peter Weir left the meeting at 11:45am

Peter Weir re-joined the meeting at 11:54am

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir left the meeting at 12:00pm

6. Subordinate Legislation

The Committee considered the following pieces of Subordinate Legislation:

6.1 SL1 - The Public Service Pensions (Employer Cost Cap) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015;

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under The Public Service Pensions (Employer Cost Cap) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

6.2 SL1 - The Rate (Temporary Rebate) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015;

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under The Rate (Temporary Rebate) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir re-joined the meeting at 12:05pm

6.3 SL1 - The Rates (Exemption for Automatic Telling Machines in Rural Areas) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015;

In response to specific queries raised by members, a briefing was received from the following DFP official:

- Andrew McAvoy, Rating Policy Division, DFP.

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under The Rates (Exemption for Automatic Telling Machines in Rural Areas) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage

6.4 SL1 - The Rates (Making and Levying of Different Rates) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015;

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under Rates (Making and Levying of Different Rates) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

7. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

- Ministerial Letter regarding Budget Bill 2015;

- DFP – Response regarding Public Sector Pension Scheme Contribution Rates;
 - DFP – Potential Devolution of Additional Fiscal Powers;
 - Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister – Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsperson (NIPSO) Bill;
 - Department for Enterprise, Trade & Investment – UK Small Business Enterprise and Employment Bill;
 - Advice NI – Response to the Northern Ireland Executive Draft Budget 2015-16;
 - Confederation of British Industry (CBI) – Final Response to the Northern Ireland Executive Draft Budget 2015-16;
 - CBI Press Release – Draft Budget 2015-16;
 - Colleges NI – Response to the Northern Ireland Executive Draft Budget 2015-16;
 - Investment Strategy for NI – Investing Activity Report: DFP Report (New Format);
 - Investment Strategy for NI – Investing Activity Report: DFP Report (Old Format)
- Agreed:* that, in order to inform the Committee’s response to the Strategic Investment Board, a view will be sought from the Construction Employers Federation on the extent to which the proposed changes in the report format address concerns it had raised previously regarding information on procurement opportunities arising from the Investment Strategy;
- Carnegie UK – Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland;
 - Chief Executives Forum – Reminder regarding Carnegie Roundtable Report – Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland;
 - Collaboration NI – Community Led Collaboration;
 - Inspiring Impact NI Invitation – Getting the Balance Right.

John McCallister left the meeting at 12:18pm

8. Committee Work Programme

Members considered a draft of the Committee work programme.

Validation Study of Welfare Reform Costs

Agreed: to proceed with the departmental briefing on the Validation Study of Welfare Reform Costs mindful of the recent developments arising from ‘The Stormont House Agreement’.

Review into the operation of the Barnett Formula

Agreed: to invite the previously identified expert witnesses to provide evidence at a suitable date in the work programme. Witnesses who are unavailable for oral hearings will be asked to provide written evidence.

Agreed: that the Committee work programme will be updated to reflect decisions taken today and published on the Committee's website.

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, 21 January 2015 at 10:00am, Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:20 pm.

Mr Daithí McKay MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance and Personnel
21 January 2015