

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 21 JANUARY 2015
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
Mr Peter Weir MLA

In Attendance: Mr Shane McAteer (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Phil Pateman (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Clairita Frazer (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Miss Alison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

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

Agreed: that agenda items 4 and 5 are covered by Hansard and the Official Report published on the Assembly's website

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 14 January 2015

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.

Agreed: to write to DFP seeking a written explanation for the high number of outstanding responses to Committee requests for information.

4. Final Draft Executive Budget 2015-16 – Departmental Briefing

The Committee received a briefing on the Final Draft Executive Budget 2015-16 from the following departmental officials:

- Ms Joanne McBurney, Central Expenditure Division, DFP; and
- Mr Jeff McGuinness, Central Expenditure Division, DFP; and
- Mr Stephen Barrett, Central Expenditure Division, DFP.

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

Agreed: to seek an update briefing from DFP on the Dormant Accounts scheme, in light of the proposed provision in the Budget 2015-16 to use this as a source of £5 million finance for a 'Social Innovation Fund'.

John McCallister joined the meeting at 10:20am
Máirtín Ó Muilleoir joined the meeting at 10:20am
Ian McCrea joined the meeting at 10:20am
Adrian McQuillan joined the meeting at 10:20am
Michaela Boyle joined the meeting at 10:26am
Dominic Bradley left the meeting at 10:30am
Peter Weir left the meeting at 10:34am

5. Outcome of January Monitoring Round – Departmental Briefing

The Committee received a briefing on the Outcome of the January Monitoring Round from the following departmental officials:

- Ms Joanne McBurney, Central Expenditure Division, DFP; and
- Mr Stephen Barrett, Central Expenditure Division, DFP.

Agreed: the Committee agreed to consider the following agenda items next; Correspondence and Subordinate Legislation

6. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

- DFP – Budget 2015-16 Draft Savings Delivery Plan;
- DFP – Peter Fitzpatrick Ltd – Transport NI Procurement Process;

Agreed: to write to DFP seeking its view on the wider issues raised in relation to pre-qualification conditions attached to public procurement tendering opportunities.

Agreed: to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Regional Development for its consideration given that the specific issues highlighted fall within its remit.

Agreed: to respond to the correspondent setting out the Committee's approach.

- Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) – NI Water Pensions Dispute

Agreed: to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Regional Development for its consideration given that the issue raised falls within its remit.

Agreed: to write to DFP seeking clarification on what role, if any, it has in relation to the pension dispute in NI Water.

7. Subordinate Legislation

The Committee considered the following Subordinate Legislation:

SL1 - The Rates (Transitional Relief) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015

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

8. Banking Issues – Financial Institutions and Impacts on Consumers – Briefing from the Consumer Council

The Committee received a briefing on Financial Institutions and the Impacts on Consumers from the following representatives:

- Ms Kathy Graham, Director of Policy, The Consumer Council; and
- Ms Rachael Cray, Head of Money Affairs, The Consumer Council.

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

Agreed: to write to the Social Development Committee to establish what consideration the Department for Social Development has given to the potential banking issues arising from Welfare Reform.

Agreed: to forward the Consumer Council paper to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment for information and to seek and update on the Financial Capability Strategy.

Agreed: to consider the scope for hosting a stakeholder event on the banking issues identified during the session, potentially on a collaborative basis with other interested Assembly committees. A final decision in this regard, will be taken in light of further work being undertaken by the Consumer Council and of the forthcoming report from the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on its Inquiry into the Banking Structure in Northern Ireland.

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

Dominic Bradley re-joined the meeting at 11:09am

Peter Weir left the meeting at 11:10am

Ian McCrea left the meeting at 11:15am

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir left the meeting at 11:20am

Peter Weir re-joined the meeting at 11:27am

Paul Girvan left the meeting at 11:30am

Máirtín Ó Muilleoir re-joined the meeting at 11:30am

Ian McCrea re-joined the meeting at 11:37am

Paul Girvan re-joined the meeting at 11:50am

9. Subordinate Legislation (continued)

The Committee continued its consideration of various proposals for subordinate legislation, as outlined below.

In response to specific queries raised by members in relation to some of the proposals for subordinate legislation on rating issue, a briefing was received from the following DFP officials:

- Brian McClure, Rating Policy Division, DFP; and
- Andrew McAvoy, Rating Policy Division, DFP.

SL1 - The Rates (Regional Rates) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under The Rates (Regional Rates) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

SL1 – The Rates (Owner Allowances) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015

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

SL1 – The Valuation for Rating (Decapitalisation Rate) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

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

John McCallister left the meeting at 11:56am

Dominic Bradley left the meeting at 11:56am

SL1 – The Public Service (Civil Servants and Others) Pensions (Consequential and Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

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

SR 2014/296 The Marriage (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Agreed: that the Committee has considered SR 296/2014 The Marriage (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 has no objection to the rule.

SR 2014/297 The Civil Partnership (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Agreed: that the Committee has considered SR 297/2014 The Civil Partnership (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 has no objection to the rule

10. 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.

11. Any other business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time and place of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday, 28 January 2015 at 10:00am, Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:06 pm.

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