

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 28 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 John McCallister MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA
Mr Adrian McQuillan MLA

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

Apologies: Mr Máirtín Ó Muilleoir MLA
Mr Peter Weir MLA

The meeting commenced at 10:19am 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 21 January 2015

Agreed: that the minutes are published on the Assembly website.

3. Matters Arising

Minister of Social Development – Northern Ireland Housing Executive Procurement Process

The Committee noted a response to Adrian McQuillan MLA from the Minister of Social Development in respect of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Procurement Process.

Consumer Council briefing on Banking Issues

The Committee noted an Assembly Research paper into banking services offered by post offices, credit unions and other non-branch facilities, which had been received from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment. Members also noted that the Committee would examine the options for a potential stakeholder event on local banking issues following publication of both further Consumer Council research as well as the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee Report on the Inquiry into the Banking Structure in Northern Ireland.

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.

Judith Cochrane joined the meeting at 10:19am

Adrian McQuillan joined the meeting at 10:19am

4. Report on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland – Carnegie Roundtable Briefing

The Committee received a briefing on emerging findings by the Carnegie Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing from the following representatives:

- Dr Aideen McGinley, Co-Chair of the Roundtable;
- Dr Peter Doran, Member and Carnegie Associate/Queen's University School of Law;
- John Woods, Member and Carnegie Associate; and
- Theresa Donaldson, Member/Chief Executive Lisburn and Castlereagh District Council.

Adrian McQuillan left the meeting at 10:58am

Adrian McQuillan rejoined the meeting at 11:02am

John McCallister left the meeting at 11:19am

Ian McCrea left the meeting at 11:25am

Leslie Cree left the meeting at 11:29am

Dominic Bradley left the meeting at 11:40am

The Committee considered agenda item 6 – Review into the Operation of the Barnett Formula next:

5. Review into the Operation of the Barnett Formula – Briefing from Expert Witness

The Committee received a briefing on the Review into the operation of the Barnett formula from the following expert witness:

- Dr Graham Gudgin, Expert witness and Chairman, Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) Advisory Board.

Leslie Cree rejoined the meeting at 11:47am

Dominic Bradley rejoined the meeting at 11:55am

John McCallister joined the meeting at 12:10pm

Dominic Bradley left the meeting at 12:30pm

The Committee considered agenda item 5 – Family Law Reform: Contact with Children following Separation or Divorce next.

6. Family Law Reform: Contact with Children following Separation or Divorce – Assembly Research Briefing

Agreed: to reschedule the Assembly Research briefing on Family Law Reform and forward the paper to DFP for comment in the meantime.

7. Budget Bill & Spring Supplementary Estimates – DFP Written Briefing

The Committee noted the following papers from DFP: correspondence from the Minister of Finance and Personnel regarding Accelerated Passage for the Budget Bill 2015; a copy of the Budget Bill; the Spring Supplementary Estimates; the Vote on Account; and a written briefing from the Department on the Budget Bill. It was also noted that an oral briefing from departmental officials on this matter would be received at next week's meeting.

8. Subordinate Legislation

The Committee considered various DFP proposals for subordinate legislation, as outlined below:

SL1 - The Valuation (Telecommunications, Natural Gas and Water) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP's proposal for subordinate legislation under The Valuation (Telecommunications, Natural Gas and Water) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

SL1 - The Rates (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

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

SL1 – The Rates (Social Sector Value) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

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

9. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

- DFP – Business Rate Revaluation and draft schedule;
Agreed: to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment for information.
- DFP – Departmental Performance regarding Committee requests;
- DFP – Performance against Business Plan Targets: LPS Actionable Debt Recovery;
Agreed: to write to the Department seeking a copy of the Collection and Recovery Strategy once published and an indicative timeline of when the strategy will be agreed.
- DFP – Response regarding departmental financial planning 2015-16: Draft Budget 2015-16;
Agreed: to schedule an oral briefing from the Department on its finalised budget plan for 2015-16, which would also address outstanding queries from the Committee.
- DFP – Response to Assembly Question: public money paid to Trade Unions;
- DFP – Review of HR Connect - Full Business Case Expenditure Review;
Agreed: to schedule an oral briefing on the review to coincide with a scrutiny session on performance against business plan objectives for Enterprise Shared Services (ESS).
- DFP – The Public Service Pensions (Information about Benefits) Directions (Northern Ireland) 2014;
- DFP – Valuation Directions, Cost Cap & Level of Employer Contributions;
- Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment Inquiry into Jobs & Growth in a Low Tax Environment;
- Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment – Literature regarding the Determinants of foreign direct investments;
- Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (COFMDFM) – European Priorities 2015;

Agreed: to send the Assembly Research analysis on European Priorities, when received, to DFP for comment, in order to inform a Committee response to COFMDFM.

- Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety on an assessment of the performance of DHSSPS by DFP;
- Northern Ireland Retail Trade Association (NIIRTA) – Rates revaluation;

Agreed: to schedule an oral briefing from NIIRTA Members on the issues raised in the correspondence. Members also *agreed* to respond directly should they wish to attend NIIRTA's event on Rates Revaluation on 8 February 2015.

- Carnegie Trust – Invitation to Chairperson; and
- EU Matters Newsletter, January 2015.

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, 04 February 2015 at 10:00am, Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:40pm.

Mr Daithí McKay MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance and Personnel
04 February 2015