

COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY, 11 MARCH 2015
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Daithí McKay MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Michaela Boyle MLA
Mrs Judith Cochrane MLA
Mr Leslie Cree MBE, MLA
Mr Paul Girvan MLA
Mr John McCallister MLA
Mr Adrian McQuillan 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 Supervisor)
Mr Joe Westland (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Heather Graham (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Dominic Bradley MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Ian McCrea MLA
Mr Máirtín Ó Muilleoir MLA

The meeting commenced at 10:15am in public session.

Agreed: that agenda item 4, 5 and 6 is covered by Hansard and the Official Report published on the Assembly's website.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Draft Minutes of Proceedings of 04 March 2015

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

3. Matters Arising

Draft Motion on Sickness Absence Report

Members considered a draft motion for a plenary debate on the Committee's Report on its Review of Sickness Absence in the Northern Ireland Public Sector.

Agreed: to lay the motion, as drafted, in the Business Office to enable a plenary debate to be scheduled.

Agreed: to send embargoed copies of the finalised Committee report to the various stakeholders who had contributed to the evidence, including the other Assembly statutory committees, the Public Accounts Committee and the Northern Ireland Audit Office.

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. DFP Draft Business Plan 2015-16

The Committee received a briefing on the 'DFP Draft Business Plan 2015-16' from the following departmental officials:

- David Sterling, Permanent Secretary DFP; and
- Brigitte Worth, Finance Director, Corporate Services Group, DFP.

Agreed: that the DFP officials will provide follow information in writing on various issues discussed during the session.

Agreed: to request a finalised copy of the Departmental Business Plan when available.

Judith Cochrane joined the meeting at 10:18am

Peter Weir left the meeting at 10:18am

Peter Weir rejoined the meeting at 10:19am

Peter Weir left the meeting at 10:50am

Peter Weir rejoined the meeting at 10:52am

Judith Cochrane left the meeting at 10:55am

5. Review of the Operation of the Barnett Formula – Expert Evidence Session.

The Committee received a briefing on the ‘Review of the Operation of the Barnett Formula’ from the following expert witness:

- Professor Derek Birrell, School of Criminology, Politics and Social Policy, Ulster University.

Agreed: to publish Professor Birrell’s evidence on the Committee webpages.

John McCallister left the meeting at 11:14am

Paul Girvan joined the meeting at 11:17am

Peter Weir left the meeting at 11:19am

Peter Weir rejoined the meeting at 11:24am

Peter Weir left the meeting at 11:30am

John McCallister rejoined the meeting at 11:32am

Peter Weir rejoined the meeting at 11:34am

Adrian McQuillan left the meeting at 12:01pm

Peter Weir left the meeting at 12:04pm

6. DFP Response to the Committee’s Report on the Draft Budget 2015-16

The Committee received a briefing on the DFP response to the Committee’s Report on the Draft Budget 2015-16 from the following departmental officials:

- Joanne McBurney, Central Expenditure Division, DFP;
- Jeff McGuinness, Central Expenditure Division, DFP; and
- Rachel McAfee, Principal Economist, DFP.

Agreed: to publish the Department’s response to the Draft Budget Report on the Committee’s webpages alongside the Committee’s report.

Peter Weir rejoined the meeting at 12:12pm

7. SL1 The Whole of Government Accounts (Designation of Bodies) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015

Members considered a proposal from DFP for this subordinate legislation.

Agreed: that the Committee has considered DFP’s proposal for subordinate legislation under SL1 The Whole of Government Accounts (Designation of Bodies) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 and has no objection to the policy implications of the proposed legislation at this stage.

8. SR 2015/82 - The Rates (Social Sector Value) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

Members considered the DFP papers relating to this statutory rule.

The Committee noted that, while the Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules was not yet available, he had indicated informally that he has no points to raise by way of technical scrutiny in relation to the Rule.

Agreed: that the Committee has considered SR 2015/82 – The Rate (Social Sector Value) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and has no objection to the rule.

9. SR 2015/83 - The Rates (Transitional Relief) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

Members considered the DFP papers relating to this statutory rule.

The Committee noted that, while the Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules was not yet available, he had indicated informally that he has no points to raise by way of technical scrutiny in relation to the Rule.

Agreed: that the Committee has considered SR 2015/83 – The Rates (Transitional Relief) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 and has no objection to the rule.

10. SR 2015/12 – The Public Service Pensions (Employer Cost Cap) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

Members considered the DFP papers relating to this statutory rule.

The Committee noted that, while the Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules was not yet available, he had indicated informally that he has no points to raise by way of technical scrutiny in relation to the Rule.

Agreed: that the Committee has considered SR 2015/12 – The Public Service Pensions (Employer Cost Cap) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and has no objection to the rule.

11. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

- DFP - The Children's Services Co-operations Bill;

Agreed: to forward the DFP response to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (COFMDFM) for information, indicating a NIL return on this basis.

- DFP – Equal pay issue raised by PSNI and former NIO staff;

Agreed: to forward the DFP response to COFMDFM, the Justice Committee, and the original correspondent for information.

- DFP – Briefing on EU funding follow up;

- DFP – Rate Rebate Replacement Scheme;

Agreed: to schedule a briefing on this issue and to forward the DFP correspondence to the Social Development Committee for information given the cross-cutting interest.

- Department of Justice (DoJ) – Level of Bereavement Damages;

Agreed: to forward the DoJ response to the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers once a further response from DFP is received.

- DoJ – Request for briefing papers;

Agreed: that the relevant briefing papers are forwarded to DoJ as requested.

- Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure – Libraries NI; and
- Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (CETI) – Corporation Tax.

12. Committee Work Programme

Members considered a draft of the Committee work programme up to Easter recess.

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

Consumer Council – Proposed Stakeholder event on Bank Branch Closures

Members considered a paper on this proposed event from the Consumer Council.

Agreed: to jointly sponsor this event with CETI on the afternoon of Tuesday 26th May 2015.

Future items of business from DFP

Agreed: to write to DFP requesting notification from each business area of any forthcoming business applicable for Committee consideration between April and summer recess.

Visit to Edinburgh

Agreed: that, subject to business case approval, the Committee visit to Edinburgh will proceed on the one of the proposed dates in May which suits a majority of members indicating their availability and that this will be confirmed by close of play on Wednesday 11 March 2015.

13. Any other business

There was no other business.

14. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday, 18 March 2015 at 10:00am, Room 30, Parliament Buildings

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:23pm

Mr Daithí McKay MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Finance and Personnel
18 March 2015