

## **COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL**

### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**WEDNESDAY, 20 MAY 2015**  
**ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Daithí McKay MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Dominic Bradley MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
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 Jim Wells 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: Ms Michaela Boyle MLA

*The meeting commenced at 10:08am in public session.*

*Agreed:* that agenda item 5 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 13 May 2015**

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

### **3. Matters Arising**

#### Changes to Committee Membership

The Chairperson welcomed Jim Wells who joined the Committee to replace Peter Weir following his appointment as the Chairperson of the Committee for Education. It was noted that the Declarations of Interests for the new Member were available on the Assembly website.

*Agreed:* to write to Peter Weir thanking him for his valued contribution to the Committee and wishing him well in his future role.

#### Roundtable Event on Branch Bank Closures

Arising from a previous query in relation to whether the ‘Big Four’ local banks had signed up to the Bank Branch Closure Protocol, which was recently implemented in Great Britain, members noted that efforts were ongoing in this regard and that the Consumer Council will monitor progress and update the Committee on any developments.

#### 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. Rating Online Retailers in Northern Ireland – Briefing from Assembly Research**

Members received a briefing on ‘Rating Online Retailers in Northern Ireland: preliminary considerations’ from Assembly Research.

*Agreed:* to forward the research paper to DFP for a response to the issues raised and for its assessment of the scope available within existing devolved powers to design a local sales or transaction tax for online retailing.

*Paul Girvan joined the meeting at 10:17am*

### **5. Rating Issues: Business Rates Review Terms of Reference & Small Business Rate Relief beyond 2015-16 – Briefing from DFP**

The Committee received a briefing on the ‘Business Rates Review Terms of Reference & Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) beyond 2015-16’ from the following departmental official:

- Brian McClure – Head of Rating Policy Division, DFP

This session was recorded by Hansard.

*Agreed:* that the DFP officials will provide follow up information on various issues discussed arising from the prior research briefing on Rating Online Retailers.

*Agreed:* that DFP will explore the possibility of also including the Rural Community Network in the planned Innovation Lab on the proposed Review of Business Rates.

*Agreed:* that DFP will provide follow up information on the number of small businesses being brought into the SBRR as a result of the Non Domestic Revaluation.

*Agreed:* that DFP will bring the draft Terms of Reference for the Review of Business Rates to the Committee for consideration, possibly before summer recess.

*Máirtín Ó Muilleoir joined the meeting at 10:40am*

## **6. A Comparative Perspective on Public Procurement Requirements: social, environmental and economic – Briefing from Assembly Research**

The Committee received a briefing on ‘A Comparative Perspective on Public Procurement Requirements: social, environmental and economic’ from Assembly Research and noted DFP’s response to the paper.

*Ian McCrea left the meeting at 10:56am*

*Ian McCrea re-joined the meeting at 11:08am*

*The Committee moved into closed session at 11:22am in line with normal protocol for considering draft reports.*

## **7. Review into the Operation of the Barnett Formula**

The Committee considered a working draft of the Committee Report on the ‘Review into the Operation of the Barnett Formula’, and members noted that a final draft report will be prepared for formal consideration by the Committee.

*Ian McCrea left the meeting at 11:26am*

*Ian McCrea re-joined the meeting at 11:28am*

*John McCallister joined the meeting at 11:28am*

*The Committee returned to open session at 11:33am*

## **8. Correspondence**

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

- The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsperson (NIPSO) Bill Ad Hoc Committee – Call for Evidence on NIPSO Bill and draft Committee response.

*Agreed:* to issue the Committee response as drafted to the Ad-Hoc Committee.

- EU Affairs – Consultation Directive 207766EC on public procurement

*Agreed:* to write to DFP to seek an update on any input it will be making to the consultation.

- Carnegie Trust Conference Invitation

*Agreed:* that Members wishing to attend will contact Carnegie UK directly.

- BBC News Article – Building Acquisitions

*Agreed:* to write to DFP requesting an explanation of the rationale for the recent acquisition of buildings for government office accommodation and for an assurance in terms of the business case projections and longer term value for money as compared to rental leases.

## **9. Committee Work Programme**

### Committee Visit to Edinburgh

Members noted that, due to membership changes on the Committee and cancellations, spaces had become available for the visit taking place on 27 - 28 May 2015. Members were advised to notify the Committee staff by close of play today if they were available to attend and had not confirmed already.

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

## **10. Any other business**

### European Commission Vice President Visit

Members noted that the Finance Minister recently met with EC Vice President Katainen to discuss investment plans and how the €315 billion Juncker Investment Plan (the European Fund for Strategic Investment) could complement the Northern Ireland Investment Fund.

*Agreed:* to write to DFP requesting a written report on the outcome of the meeting.

## **11. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee will be held on Wednesday, 03 June 2015 at 10:00am, Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 11:40pm.*

**Mr Daithí McKay MLA**

**Chairperson**

**Committee for Finance and Personnel**

**26 May 2015**